

World 1401

Chapter 1401: The Guests Inside the Chamber

Field of Swords gave Jack another ammunition for AOE assaults, which was the preferred assault during a war. The damage didn't seem like much but he would have to see how many swordlights were conjured to make a proper judgment.

Ghost Sword at first glance seemed inferior to Phantom Blade. Phantom Blade had the same feat of bypassing the enemy's defenses and blocks while the actual weapon could still parry the enemy's attacks. However, Ghost Sword dealt higher damage and it was soul-type damage. Additionally, Peniel told Jack that he could still use other skills while Ghost Sword was active. If he used Brave Slash when Ghost Sword was active, the slash would become unblockable.

Jack didn't pay much attention to the Lightning Mine and Magic Clone. Those spells would change once he fused them with Lightning Strike and Body Double. He would have to put fusing those spells on hold. He needed to see his grandfather first.

Before that, he wanted to use the souls inside the Container of Souls. After thinking for some time, he decided there was one spell that he wanted to fully max. Not just its level, but its star as well.

He opened his containers of souls and used 1,200,000 souls to upgrade Reset to its fourth star. Each star reduced the cooldown further by another 6 minutes. His Reset's cooldown was now four hours and thirty-six minutes.

Reset allowed him to use big skills with long cooldowns twice, which meant their usage frequency was doubled and thus increased the speed of their star upgrades. Fully reducing the cooldown of this spell would give the other skills a faster improvement pace.

A bunch of his other skills had their stars upgraded after repeated usage. A few received their first stars. They were Mirage Beast, Teleportation, and Ghost Form.

Each star of Mirage Beast increased the copy's HP and attributes by 5%. So, at max ten stars, the copy from Mirage Beast would have 100% HP and attributes as the real Terras.

Each star of Teleportation reduced its cooldown by 6 seconds. When Jack acquired the tenth star of this spell, he would be able to use teleportation every minute.

Ghost Form's every star reduced its speed penalty by 5%. If this spell was fully developed to the tenth star. The speed penalty would disappear, meaning Jack could move as fast as he normally did during ghost form.

Jeanny and Paytowin had left when Jack was reviewing and upgrading his skills. Grace was chatting with Tip and Captain Whitebeard while waiting for him.

"You've better not let Domon wait too long," Tip said when Jack was still not moving. "He brought a guest just for you, and this guest is rather impatient."

"You make me truly curious. Who is this guest?" Jack asked.

"If you want to find out so much, why don't you just go meet them?" Captain Whitebeard said.

"What do we have here? A wise mouse?" Jack teased.

"Hey, you show respect to my friend!" Tip exclaimed.

"That's right! I won't let you off if you hurt my captain's feeling!" Grace joined the chorus.

"Settle down, people. I can perfectly defend my honor," Whitebeard said and then turned into a giant shark-like rat. his current form was now taller than Jack and he was looking down at Jack from above.

"Do you feel lucky, punk?"

"Holy... Where do you learn to talk like that? All right, I apologize! My fault," Jack said with a laugh. "But you do know the current me can easily whoop your ass, don't you?"

As he said that, he noticed Whitebeard's level was higher than before. Previously when the mouse first showed this form, his level was 68. Now, his level was 73. As a native, such a leveling speed should be impossible.

"Hehe, he is my companion," Tip said with a grin.

Whitebeard turned back to a little mouse and gave Tip his palm. "My bro!" He exclaimed as the two did a high five.

"You shouldn't teach him all those street talks," Jack said to Tip. He then turned to Grace, "Let's go, Grace. Or if you want to stay and chat with this wise street mouse. It's okay."

Grace made a motion as if she was going to kick Jack, Jack dodged and ran out the door. Grace chased after him.

"Sigh... Young people. Love does make them act weirdly," Tip said.

"How old are you?" Whitebeard asked.

"Nineteen," Tip answered.

"... Don't worry, bro. You will find yours one day," Whitebeard said.

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Before Jack went to the Space-time Chamber, he made a stop first at the guild warehouse to take common-grade equipment and blacksmith materials so he could fuse them using his Transformation Prism. Aside from that, he also checked the available exchange items Jeanny had put in for members to exchange using their guild contribution points.

Most of the items were of no interest to him except for the gemstones. After so long and with many members' efforts, they had acquired a collection of legendary-grade gemstones. Inside the exchangeable list were all the six gemstones of the legendary grades. That's why Jack didn't bother to keep any legendary-grade gemstone he had gotten.

However, Jeanny set the contribution points needed for these legendary gemstones at the maximum possible. Jack never used his guild contribution points for anything other than to get the common-grade

equipment and material. He always donated a portion of the fused equipment back into the warehouse so he always ended up with more guild contribution points than the ones he had spent.

Even then, Jack only had enough to exchange for three legendary gemstones. Amethyst, emerald, and amber.

Jeanny only copied one gemstone of each type. She never put in two identical gemstones. Only after one of them was taken then she would copy the one that had been taken, considering if she had spare mana cores. Hence, Jack had to take three different gemstones.

He used the emerald on his Runestone of Marching, bringing its elemental energies to 54,900. The amber was used for the Runestone of Spellcasting, its elemental energies were now 32,500. The amethyst was consumed by his Runestone of Luck, increasing its elemental energies to 98,150. This runestone only needed another 1,850 elemental energies to reach its maximum potential.

Jack could have exchanged for a diamond instead of the emerald or amber to fully level up his Runestone of Luck, but he thought it was a waste to use a legendary gemstone for that amount of elemental energy. A unique gemstone would have sufficed.

Unfortunately, Jeanny didn't copy gemstones of lower grades because she considered it a waste of mana cores for copying lower-grade consumables. So, Jack had to leave the level-up of his Runestone of Luck for later.

Jack resumed going to the Space-time Chamber with Grace after leaving the warehouse. When they arrived at the entrance, they saw The Man standing guard there.

"What are you doing here? Are you waiting for someone?" Jack asked The Man.

"Master Domon said you are coming today, so he instructed everyone to leave the chamber. This chamber is restricted until your business inside is done. My job is to stop anyone other than you from entering."

"Me included?" Grace asked.

"Uh... Master Domon did say everyone except for Jack," The Man answered.

"What about the nightmares and the satyrs? He didn't chase them out, did he? They are our guests," Jack asked.

"No. But Master Domon requested them to stay in their corner. The nightmares' mother, or her spirit, I guess, erected a flame barrier that seals that corner. You will see a giant flaming dome when you enter."

"So, the old man is inside alone with his guest?" Jack asked.

"Guests. There were two of them, and Master Domon is with Haon," The Man answered.

"The hell? If he is allowed to bring company, then I should be allowed as well. Grace, you follow me in!" Jack exclaimed.

"But...," The Man tried to stop Jack.

"Hey, who is your boss?" Jack gave The Man a stare.

"Ugh... You are...," The Man stepped aside and let the two enter.

"You shouldn't be jealous that your grandfather has a favorite disciple," Grace said to Jack as they stepped inside the chamber.

"Who says I'm jealous?" Jack refuted.

Inside, they saw the flaming dome The Man mentioned. The flame that formed the wall was rather thick, they couldn't see what was inside the dome. On the opposite side, they saw four people standing and talking. Jack and Grace walked toward them.

As they approached, they could better listen to their conversation. It was mostly two of the four who talked. Rather than talk, it was more like arguing. The arguing pair saw Jack and they stopped their conversation.

Two out of the four were Domon and Haon. As for the other two, one was an old woman while the other was a teenage girl. Jack didn't recognize the old woman, but he knew the teenage girl.

It was the crazy girl from Cipher Flight whom Jack killed during the Verremor invasion war.

Chapter 1402: An Equal to the Nine Yang Scripture

"Hey, crazy chick!" Jack greeted the girl, which immediately ticked the girl off.

"Who the hell do you call crazy?!" Muilan yelled.

"This is your grandson? I can see where his insolence comes from," the old woman uttered.

"Hey, you can't just mouth off to me like that, you old—oof!" Jack didn't finish his words because Domon had come over and slapped him... using a fist.

"I apologize for my grandson," Domon bowed to the old woman.

"You also apologize!" Domon commanded Jack.

"Uh... What makes you so fire up?" Jack remarked. He bowed to the old woman. "I am sorry. Forgive my rudeness."

"Hmph," the old woman harrumphed and looked away. Muilan stuck her tongue out ridiculing Jack.

"This is Master Murong Shu," Domon introduced. "She will teach you and Haon some martial arts."

"Why don't you teach us?" Jack asked.

"Because he doesn't know it," Murong uttered. "What I am about to teach you is a secret ancient art handed down as a legacy in my family. It has never been taught to outsiders."

"Um... So, why teach us now?" Jack asked.

Murong glanced at Domon upon the question. Jack couldn't quite translate the meaning of that glance.

"There is no need for you to think about her reason. What's important is she is willing to teach you," Domon said to Jack.

"What's so special about her martial arts," Jack asked.

"You've told me about that Long guy using the Nine Yang Exploding Fist, remember?" Domon asked in return.

Jack nodded.

"I didn't explain it properly the last time," Domon said. "The Nine Yang Exploding Fist is an ancient art that comes in a collection of what we call the Nine Yang Scripture. Aside from the one Long used, there are two other arts within that scripture. The Nine Yang Scorching Blade and the Nine Yang Restoration. I hope Long only found one of those three arts. But if he has the other two as well, he will be an even more troublesome opponent.

"You have three classes and a lot of skills. Long has two classes. So, he is not too far off from you. The worrying thing is his martial arts talent. Throughout my teaching years, people who show such talent can be counted on one hand. He has been seriously practicing martial arts since childhood. You, on the other hand, only take it seriously recently. So, in terms of martial arts, I must admit that he is better than you."

"Thank you for your honesty," Jack said.

"Hence, if Long has the complete Nine Yang Scripture, you need something to counter it," Domon continued.

"There is such a thing?" Jack asked.

"The Nine Yang Scripture is both a very powerful and famous martial art during the golden age of martial arts in the past. As any good art was, an equally powerful martial art was created to counter the Nine Yang Scripture. The creator called this new martial art the Nine Yin Scripture. This Nine Yin Scripture was composed of three martial arts as well."

"And this ol... I mean, what Master Murong is going to teach us is the Nine Yin Scripture?" Jack asked.

"The deal is just for me to lay out the basics," Murong uttered. "Whether you can learn it or not, that's entirely up to you."

"Master Murong will only be here until next week," Domon said. "Which is nine days from today."

"We have been wasting time waiting for you," Leavemealone said to Jack.

"Then why don't you start learning first?" Jack asked.

"I don't like repeating myself," Murong was the one who answered. "I will only lay out the basics once. After that, I will only give pointers for the remaining of my time here."

"It might be only nine days, but in here, it is ninety days," Domon said. "I believe it will be enough time for you to learn the arts."

"Haha. What do you take my family arts for, you old fool?" Murong laughed. "I've been learning it for my whole life, and I've only managed to learn one out of the three arts in the scripture. Do you think these youngsters fresh out of puberty can fare better?"

"I ain't going to lie to you, I do think so," Domon replied.

"Hmph! We will see," Murong said. "The deal is that I only teach these youngsters. You are not allowed to be present during this time. Out!"

"Why?" Jack asked.

"She is afraid I steal her martial art," Domon answered.

"She is going to teach us, isn't she? What's stopping us from teaching you later?"

"She doesn't believe you can understand the scripture. Without proper understanding, even if you memorize the mantra and pass it to me, I won't be able to understand it as well."

"That's right, this whole week will just be a big waste of time," Murong uttered. "But a deal is a deal. Once this is done, we are even. You get that, Domon?!"

"Understood," Domon said. Then to Jack, he said, "I have faith in you. Pay attention and train hard!"

Jack nodded.

"Hey, what is she doing here? Bring her out as well!" Murong said to Domon while pointing at Grace.

Jack asked Domon, "Did you say how many youngsters are to be taught in your deal?"

"No," Domon answered.

"Then she stays," Jack said to Murong. "Or is Master Murong afraid that she can understand your teaching?"

Murong's eyes darted between Jack and Domon. She was vexed.

"Can she do mana manipulation?" Murong asked.

"I can," Grace answered.

"Hmph! Only three! No one else is allowed to come in!" Murong exclaimed.

"Okay," Domon replied. He gave Jack, Leavemealone, and Grace a nod before leaving the chamber.

Once Domon went out the exit, Murong gave the distant flame dome a look. The ones inside there shouldn't be able to see what was going on over here. She then turned to the three youngsters before her.

"All right, you three. First, I will recite the mantra of my Nine Yin Scripture. I will only do it once. If you can't memorize it, then it's your problem. After that, I will perform the movement flow as taught by my ancestors. These movements are not actual martial arts, but a specific practice that should help you understand the Nine Yin Scripture. I will only perform these movements thrice. The first time will be once I finish reciting the mantra. Another two times when you ask me to repeat. Outside of this, I will just give you simple pointers."

The three nodded.

"Then let us begin," Murong said.

Chapter 1403: The Nine Yin Scripture

Three days passed in the outside world. Inside the Space-time Chamber, it has been a month since Murong started teaching them the Nine Yin Scripture.

That day, Jack's human age reached the nineteenth month. His race skill, Ambition, increased to rank 2. When this skill was used, all damage received was reduced by 40%, movement speed was increased by 75%, became immune to mental status ailments, and cleansed ongoing mental status ailments. Its duration was increased to 60 seconds. The cooldown remained at 30 minutes.

Earlier this day, Jack and the others asked Murong to repeat the practice movement flow for the second time. They were now back to trying to understand the arts.

Jack, Leavemealone, and Grace had been practicing at different corners of the chamber. Leavemealone had always been a loner. When Murong stopped her lecture and it was time to practice, he separated away from the others and did his training.

Jack and Grace stayed close and had discussions about the training at first. As time passed, Grace noticed Jack was fully focused on trying to understand the teaching. She moved away so Jack had no distraction. She also dedicated herself fully to learning.

Whenever each of the two had a breakthrough, they communicated with one another so both of them could have a better understanding. Jack went to talk to Leavemealone when such a thing happened, but Leavemealone's response was just too cold for Jack's taste.

Grace took over to communicate with Leavemealone when they had the next breakthrough.

However, despite the seeming progress, they still couldn't completely understand the scripture nor could they perform the Nine Yin martial arts.

"You have just been sitting there for days. Have you given up?" Muilan teased Jack. "It's good if you do. You, people, are wasting your time. Master Murong has been teaching me this scripture for years. Even I have not managed to learn it. Do you think you can learn it in a few months? You have only two months left. After that, Master Murong and I will end this pretense and leave."

"Master Murong can leave later, but you can just leave now," Jack said. "Why don't you leave? No one needs you here. Go, shoo!"

Muilan's face turned red from anger. "You...! Do you not believe I will teach you a lesson?!"

"Do you not remember you lost to me already?" Jack returned.

"Muilan! Leave them alone," Murong commanded. "Otherwise, that old fool will make an excuse that his precious grandson fails because of your distraction. Come back and do your training!"

"Yes, master," Muilan said obediently. She stuck her tongue out to mock Jack before she left.

Jack returned to his training. He didn't mind the girl. She was just bored.

Murong also trained Muilan inside this chamber. With how the mana was denser inside this chamber, it was an ideal place to train. Murong might be annoyed that she had to comply with Domon's deal, but after spending time inside this chamber, she thought it might not be a bad thing for her. She also trained her martial arts while she trained Jack and the others.

Jack manipulated the mana around him. With his mana affinity talent, it was an easy feat. He was glad he got the talent before he started training here. Otherwise, the training would be that much harder.

One similar thing among the ancient arts was that they all required mana manipulation to perform. That was why ancient martial arts were generally more powerful than modern martial arts which only required movements.

This was also the reason why Murong asked Grace if she could do mana manipulation. If she could not, then there was no point for her to be here.

Hence, Jack believed that the key to learning this Nine Yin Scripture was in the flow of mana. Murong had shown them the movement to practice the arts, but those movements were not the actual method to perform the arts. That was why even though Murong memorized the movements, she still could only do one out of the three arts from the Nine Yin Scripture.

The one she had learned was the Nine Yin Abyssal Finger. During the past month, there was one day when she was feeling generous and she performed this art to them. Out of her finger, a black cold energy shot out. The energy was the opposite of the vibrant hot energy Long showed when he performed the Nine Yang Exploding Fist.

Even though the display was not as impressive as Long's ancient art, Jack's mana sense could grasp how sharp the energy from Murong's finger was. If that energy hit him, he believed it would still pierce through his excellent defenses.

From that one presentation, Jack vaguely grasped a similarity between Nine Yin Abyssal Finger and the practice movements Murong showed earlier. The similarity was not in their movements but in how the mana flow was copying the practice movements when the abyssal finger was unleashed.

Thus, he simply sat and focused on the mana flow. He had been doing hundreds of simulations on how to move his mana around his body.

Within the Nine Yin Scriptures, the three ancient arts were the Nine Yin Abyssal Finger, the Nine Yin Phantom Sword, and the Nine Yin Devouring Palm.

Out of the three, Jack focused his learning on the Nine Yin Phantom Sword. The reason was that he felt his sword's heart resonated with that art. This should help him to increase his chance of learning it.

Jack's hundred synchronous thoughts brought all his contemplations together. The mantra Murong had taught them at the start, the practice movements Murong had shown them, the mana flow following those practice movements, Murong's technique when he performed the Nine Yin Abyssal Finger, and his sword's heart.

All these thoughts were brought together and linked with one another, like pieces of puzzles that slowly formed a picture. When the last piece was inserted, the picture was clear. Enlightenment followed.

Jack opened his eyes. His mind became exceedingly clear. So clear that it might as well be empty. He was devoid of any thought. His mana moved following his instinct. He felt it building up and welling up within him. He didn't fight it. He let it flow as if it was natural.

Murong, who was not far away, sensed this unusual mana movement. She turned to where Jack was still sitting.

What she saw made her eyes turn extremely wide. She saw the space directly in front of Jack started to shimmer. The shimmering increased in intensity. The shimmering space became distorted as if something was trying to break out.

Then all of a sudden, a black thin light tore out from the shimmering air and pierced through the space beyond it.

"Nine... Nine Yin Phantom Sword..." Murong stammered.

Chapter 1404: Mana Perception

Everyone in the chamber turned in Jack's direction. They all felt the explosive power when the black light pierced out. Murong was still frozen at her place. She could hardly believe what she had seen.

Grace came over to Jack.

"You've learned it? Congratulation!" She exclaimed.

"Mmm... I can't tell for sure," Jack said. His face didn't look happy for someone who had managed to learn an ancient art. "I do feel like it is in my grasp, but it all feels so unclear. I will have to try doing it again later. I can't now, it's as if my entire mana has been drained. Even my mana sense turns numb. I can hardly sense anything."

"Ma... Master... Is it true? Did he just perform the Nine Yin Phantom Sword? It's not true, is it?" Muilan asked. She had heard Murong muttering the name of the art. She couldn't believe someone who had just started learning the ancient art for one month could have successfully learned it. She had been doing it for years, for goodness sake!

Murong was even more shaken than her. She had been practicing for decades! She had only managed to learn one art, the Nine Yin Abyssal Finger. She had been trying to master either the phantom sword or the devouring palm since then but met with little success. How could this brat do it in just one month?

While the pair of master and disciple were gaping at the impossible event, Jack was discussing with Grace how he pulled the feat just now.

Leavemealone was conflicted if he should go and speak with Jack, but he ultimately turned away. If Jack could do it, then so could he! He declared in his mind. He doubled down on his effort so he didn't lose to Jack.

Jack tried his best to explain to Grace, but he himself was rather unclear about how he did it. He had to try it again later before he could be sure. But one thing was for sure, the mana movement was the key.

"This is all thanks to your mana perception. Otherwise, I won't be able to get a grasp on it," Jack said.

Grace had a talent called mana perception. She acquired this talent recently when she was still in Greed's sanctum. Greed watched Jack in secret when he was using the talent pill. After Jack left the next day, Greed gave a talent pill to Grace as well.

After using the pill, Grace gained the Mana Perception. This talent allowed her to perceive mana using her eyes as if they were colorful fumes. Jack guessed it was similar to the time when his eyes perceived mana when he was inside the Council of Virtus' ancient battleground.

When she gained this talent, Grace panicked a little because she thought something was wrong with her eyes. After a while, she came to understand her eyes' new ability. A talent wasn't something that could be turned on and off. She had no choice but to accept that she would never see the world as it used to be now.

Because of this Mana Perception, Grace was able to see the way the mana flowed when Murong performed her Nine Yin Abyssal Finger and gained a better understanding of it. Jack's mana sense might be advanced enough to detect how Murong articulated her mana during the performance, but it won't be able to rival the way Grace saw it using her eyes.

She told Jack and Leavemealone what she saw. This was how Jack managed to gain a better understanding of how the mana was being articulated.

"I'm glad I can be of help," Grace said.

"Don't say that. I believe you can learn this art as well," Jack uttered.

"Really?"

"Yeah. You are very talented. You just have to believe in yourself."

Grace nodded. "I will try my best."

Grace went and practiced again. Jack rested and waited for his mana to recover before he gave it another go.

"Kid... How do you do it?" Murong asked. She came after Grace left. Muilan was behind her.

"Hehe," Jack grinned.

Seeing that, Muilan scolded, "There is no need to gloat! You just happen to do it by coincidence. I don't believe you will be able to do it again!"

"Who is gloating? I just find it amusing because you two kept on saying it is impossible that we learn the arts," Jack said. "And now you come to ask me how I did it. Well, I'm not a petty person. I don't mind telling you how I did it."

So, Jack explained to them the same as what he told Grace.

"You practice sword's heart?" Murong asked.

"Yeah, Arthur taught me," Jack replied.

"Arthur Bagrat? That sword loner? Why did he teach you?"

"What do you mean why did he teach me? We are friends. He saw me using swords. He taught me, what's the big deal?" Jack asked back.

Jack didn't know, but Murong knew it was a big deal. The Arthur she knew was a rather stingy man when it came to his swordsmanship. Arthur always kept to himself and rarely accepted disciples. So, teaching Jack the pinnacle of his sword zen when Jack was not even his proper disciple spoke volumes about the act.

"The sword's heart did help me a lot in understanding the Nine Yin Phantom Sword, but it didn't help the other two arts. I understand the phantom sword is one of the two arts within the scripture you are still unable to learn, isn't it? If you want, I can teach you the sword's heart."

"You are willing?" Murong was surprised by Jack's offer.

"Yeah, why not? We are allies, aren't we? You are a good friend to my gramps and I'm a good friend to your disciple, Four Winds," Jack said.

Murong was slightly irked Jack said she was a good friend to Domon, but she didn't bring it up. She instead asked, "Won't Arthur be angry with you if you teach it to me?"

"Huh? Will he? He never said anything about I'm not allowed to teach it to someone else."

"... In that case, teach Muilan," Murong said.

"Master?" Muilan was confused by the request.

"I'm not that proficient in swords. Even if you teach it, I will find it hard to learn," Murong explained. "Muilan is different, she is talented with swords. It will benefit her greatly if she can learn the sword's heart."

Jack turned to Muilan, grinned widely, and said, "Call me master and I will teach you."

"In your dream!!" Muilan yelled.

"Haha, I'm just joking. Okay. First, you have to memorize the sword's heart mantra. It goes like this..."

Chapter 1405: New Disciple

Another three days passed in the outside world, which was equivalent to another month inside the Space-time Chamber. Some of the guild members started complaining about not being allowed to use the chamber. The Man was adamant about not allowing anyone to enter. He told these members they could file their complaints either to Jeanny or Domon. These members had no choice but to turn away.

Inside the chamber, everyone had a better progression compared to the first month.

Once Jack started teaching Muilan the sword's heart, Murong's attitude to them also softened. She no longer minded repeating the scripture's mantra nor performing the practice movements when asked. Now, she was properly training them.

Muilan's understanding of the sword's heart also progressed at a rapid pace. She was indeed talented in the sword technique, even if not as talented as Jack.

Murong herself started joining the discussion about the Nine Yin Scripture with Jack and Grace. Even Leavemealone came near them to listen when they started discussing. Murong found herself having a better breakthrough from the discussion than when she tried to train alone by herself all these years.

She was not able to perform the phantom sword yet but she felt like she almost grasped the essence of the Nine Yin Devouring Palm.

She thought perhaps the condition within this Space-time Chamber also helped. Such a mana-rich environment was a dream for any martial arts practitioner.

Grace and Leavemealone also achieved some breakthroughs in this second month. They couldn't yet fully perform the ancient arts, but they were touching its surface. Even Murong admitted it.

Leavemealone showed promising development in using the Nine Yin Abyssal Finger, so Murong asked him to focus on that art. Since Murong had mastered this art, it was easier for her to give Leavemealone pointers.

Leavemealone absorbed Murong's teachings like a sponge. Murong was secretly surprised. Leavemealone was a silent person and rarely asked questions, but he could understand everything that Murong explained.

Leavemealone also had a talent that had been activated for quite some time. This talent was also why he could learn so many of Domon's martial arts in such a short time compared to Jack.

His talent was called Martial Art Prodigy. This talent increased his understanding of learning and practicing new martial arts. It also boosted any damage he inflicted using a martial art by 30%.

As for Grace, Murong found her to improve tremendously in grasping the Nine Yin Devouring Palm. This ancient art was said to be the most powerful among the three arts within the Nine Yin Scripture. It was also the most special because it was an art that somehow altered the practitioner's constitution before it could be mastered, and Murong found that Grace's constitution was very much aligned with the Nine Yin Devouring Palm from the start. Hence, she required less effort to learn that art.

This special constitution was also very much attuned to the yin energy. This was the energy utilized by many of Murong's martial arts which adopted the principle of the soft beating the hard. Realizing this, she became extremely interested in Grace.

At one point, Murong asked Grace, "Who is your martial art master?"

"Me? I don't have any. The last time I was taught by Jet," Grace answered.

"That childish old ox?" Murong scoffed. "This will not do! Someone like you is a waste for getting taught by that brute. If you don't mind, I am willing to teach you more martial arts."

"You will?"

"But you will have to acknowledge me as your formal master and swear to uphold our Murong family's principles."

"What are the principles?" Grace asked.

Murong laid it out to her. They were basically old-fashioned decrees where the disciple swore loyalty to the master, to never betray nor harm the master and fellow brethren, to uphold justice and defend the weak, to protect their learned martial arts and not teach them to an evil person, and so on, and so on.

Grace didn't find it to be a problem, but she asked one question. "Do I have to always follow you around?"

"No. But if you are willing to do so, it will be more convenient for me to teach you my martial arts," Murong answered.

"In that case, I accept," Grace said and bowed. "Master, please accept this lowly one as your disciple."

"Ooh, seems like you got a new martial sister," Jack said to Muilan, who was still practicing the sword's heart.

"Yes, seems like a got a little sister," Muilan said.

"Kid, you are obviously younger than her," Jack uttered.

"So what? In a martial arts institution, the one who becomes a disciple first is considered the elder! Age is just a number."

"Sigh. I've no interest in arguing with a kid like you. I'm going away to practice," Jack said.

"You are also a kid!" Muilan stuck his tongue out at Jack.

"Be careful you lose it if you keep on sticking it out," Jack made fun of her.

Jack also experienced a great improvement during the second month. After he performed the Nine Yin Phantom Sword one month ago, he tried doing it again. It was harder than expected. He couldn't repeat the same feat, even when the mana in his body had returned to normal. This went on for several days.

Muilan was even starting to mock him and said that what he did before was not the nine yin art, but just some anomaly that happened accidentally. Jack then proved her wrong by doing it for the second time. Afterward, he was again unable to repeat for several days.

At this moment, he could already perform it twice a day. However, what he performed cannot be used in real combat. Aside from it needing great focus, he couldn't yet aim the art properly. The phantom sword that was conjured just seemed to lash out at random. He was still far from mastering the art.

He wasn't discouraged by such slow progress. He was aware that martial arts were something that took a lot of effort and a long time to master.

Even so, he made use of his time efficiently. In between his practice, he also cast his spells. Especially the big ones, but it was not simply casting. He cast it by training mana manipulation to empower them.

Chapter 1406: Spells Empowered by Mana Manipulation

Jack had been able to use mana manipulation to empower some of his skills. He was getting more and more proficient in it. But for his spells, he was mostly still unable to. It was not a problem for basic spells

such as Ice Bullet or Electric Bolts. But for advanced and elite spells, it was harder to incorporate mana manipulation into them. The degree of difficulty was higher than his melee skills.

Before this, he had been able to use mana manipulation to change his spell's trajectory. Now, he focused on training to increase the spell's power.

His mana affinity gave him better control over his mana and allowed this feat to be possible. He first tested it using Ice Bullet. The ice ball shot out was significantly larger. No dummy was available inside the Time-space Chamber, though, so he couldn't gauge how much damage his mana manipulation had increased. He would have to run to the Training Ground if he wanted to find out.

Empowering all the basic spells was easy with his new talent, but the big spells required more concentration. When he empowered his Arcane Turbulence. The chaotic torrents of energy swirling around the affected field seemed to be double than usual.

Different spells required different mana flow, which meant a different approach. If he wanted to get used to all his spells and empower them naturally during a battle, he would have to practice for a very long time. Hence, he decided to select a few spells and focus on training these spells.

The ones he chose to practice on were Perpetual Lightning Judgement, Time Realm, and Tracing Beams.

When he empowered the Perpetual Lightning Judgement, the lightning snakes were thicker. The number of lightning snakes was also more than usual, and they could travel significantly farther distances.

The first time he did this, he underestimated the empowerment. The lightning snakes spread everywhere and almost hit everyone in the chamber, even after he moved to the furthest corner in the chamber.

Murong sensed the danger and quickly put herself in front of Muilan and used Ki Shield. Her ki shield was powered by mana manipulation so it was thicker and sturdier than normal. But even then, the ki shield shattered after being hit by three lightning snakes.

Luckily, the lightning snakes were spread out everywhere, so she was not hit by more.

Leavemealone and Grace also sensed the incoming lightning. Leavemealone transformed into White Tiger Emperor form and used his fists to block the lightning. Grace activated Armor of Ego and relied on her defense and resistance to survive the punishment.

The lightning snakes even reached the fiery dome erected by Luna. The dome's defense was high enough that the damage caused by Jack's spell wasn't able to destroy it. Luna's image appeared above the dome afterward. The ghostly image of the fiery horse stared at Jack with a reproaching stare. The others in the chamber did the same.

Jack looked at all of them as sweat came down his forehead. "Sor... Sorry... It won't happen again," he said.

The next time he cast it, he made sure to redirect all the lightning snakes into an empty corner.

For the Time Realm, he noticed the barrier by its edges was thicker and more solid. Enemies who were trapped inside his time realm would find a harder time to escape. Not only that, but he sensed the mana

inside the time realm was also much heavier. He believed the enemy's speed would be decreased even slower than usual.

When he empowered his Tracing Beams, the produced beams were thicker and moved much faster. They also traveled further and lasted longer. Additionally, he found he could easily control their flying directions. He could make the beams turn at a sharp angle, multiple times. This should allow him to perform feints with the beams, giving the enemy a harder time blocking those beams.

Jack continued alternating the practice between the Nine Yin Phantom Sword and the three spells. When the cooldown of the three spells was over, he cast these spells and practiced empowering them to get used to doing it naturally during a battle.

The last month slowly trickled by inside the chamber. During this past month, everyone was starting to see better results from their training.

Muilan had incorporated the sword's heart into her sword technique, even if it was still at the beginning stage. Her swordplay was much more fluid and accurate than before. She even requested Jack to spar with her once in a while.

Jack happily complied. He also enjoyed crossing swords with Muilan and took his mind off training for a brief period.

Leavemealone could already perform the Nine Yin Abyssal Finger. Murong praised Leavemealone's learning speed. He was also a very obedient and disciplined disciple. Murong repeatedly mentioned how lucky Domon was for getting him as a disciple.

Jack's learning speed was even faster, he could already summon the Nine Yin Phantom Sword as he wished. But he still couldn't do it often. He felt as if his mana reserve was depleted after the execution. His mana sense became numb and he couldn't do mana manipulation.

His mana sense returned rather fast. Around one minute after execution, he could sense mana again. It took longer for mana manipulation. He needed around ten minutes before he could properly manipulate mana again. Even then, he couldn't immediately execute another Nine Yin Phantom Sword. If he tried to, he would get the sensation as if he didn't have enough mana to do it. Only after half an hour had passed that he could unleash another Nine Yin Phantom Sword.

Because of this limitation, he couldn't use this martial art as he wished. He would be vulnerable for some time after using it. Murong consoled him that this limitation would reduce when his expertise in mana manipulation increased.

Murong also praised that Jack's current level of mana manipulation was already a feat never before seen at someone his age. Jack had to attribute that praise to his mana affinity talent.

As for Grace, she still couldn't execute the Nine Yin Devouring Palm. She was dejected. She felt left out and even thought of herself as not talented enough.

Jack and Murong consoled her. Murong said she also couldn't perform that art yet despite feeling close to learning it. She said this last art within the Nine Yin Scripture was the hardest one. But once Grace learned it, it would be worth it.

At the end of their third month inside the chamber. Domon entered the chamber with The Man and Bowler. Following behind them was a mass of players who had been dying to enter the chamber for some time.

"How does it go?" Domon asked.

"Do you mind if we use this chamber for a little while longer?" Murong asked back.

Chapter 1407: Letting Friends use the Space-time Chamber

Domon was genuinely confused by Murong's request. "I thought you can't wait to leave?" He asked.

"Well, I guess these kids are okay. Furthermore, my new disciple here still needs a little bit more time to learn the ancient art," Murong answered.

"New disciple?" Domon asked, but he soon understood whom the disciple Murong was talking about since her hand was on Grace's shoulder.

"Master Murong here thinks this chamber's environment is very good for martial arts training, hence she wants to stay longer," Jack said, which drew Murong's glare.

"Hahaha. If you want to, just ask. There is no need to beat around the bush," Domon laughed. "Just use it as long as you like."

"Uh... What about the others?" The Man asked. He was not looking forward to being a guard for another week. He had things to do.

"It's okay," Murong said. "I've already laid out the important points. Letting the others see their training after this is no problem. One other thing, do you mind if I call my other disciples over to train?"

Instead of answering, Domon turned to Jack. He was one of the leaders of this guild, after all.

"Which disciple? Are you talking about Four Winds?" Jack asked.

"Four Winds and a few others," Murong nodded.

"If it is Four Winds and his friends from the Cipher Flight, then I'm okay with it. But we can only allocate ten spots for you. That is already including you and Muilan. We have to prioritize our guild members. I'm sure you understand."

"That is very generous of you. Thank you. I will send them a message about this," Murong said.

"Aren't you going to talk this over with Jeanny and John first?" Bowler asked.

"I'm still one of this guild's leaders, aren't I? I'm sure I have the right to just ten spots in this chamber," Jack said. "It will benefit us to build the relationship with Cipher Flight. They might one day hold Verremor's power in their hands."

"Don't you want to at least ask for some sort of payment from them? Such as gold coins or mana cores?" Bowler asked.

"Do you think I am one of those egoistic douchebags?" Jack asked. "Like those materialistic MCs inside a lot of those internet novels in our past world who always ask for rewards even from their friends?"

"Ain't it a bit conceited calling yourself an MC?" Bowler asked.

"If I'm not the MC, who is? Master?"

"Well, he does fit the characteristics of those MCs who happened to be in those internet novels you mentioned. He is cold, smart, calm, capable, selfish, has knowledge the others don't, has overpowered abilities, and is aiming for the top and rule the world."

"... Shit. Now that you mentioned it... He can't be the MC, can he?" Jack asked.

"I hope not... Wait, why are we talking about this?! We are not characters in a novel...!" Bowler yelled.

"Well, it doesn't matter! MC or not, I'm still going to beat him!" Jack declared. "Isn't that more interesting? Beating an MC that everyone prefers."

Bowler decided to no longer entertain this conversation.

Since she had gotten the permission, Murong took Muilan and Grace to a corner and resumed their training.

"How is your training?" Domon asked Leavemealone.

"I can use the Nine Yin Abyssal Finger already, but I still need some time to get used to it so I can execute it during a fight," Leavemealone answered. "After that, maybe I will try to train the other arts in the Nine Yin Scripture."

Domon nodded. He then turned to Jack. "What about you?"

"Hehe," Jack grinned instead of answering.

Suddenly, Domon moved away just as a piercing black light stabbed out from the ground he was standing on. The black light shot up into the ceiling.

"Why are you so disrespectful...?!" Leavemealone scolded.

Domon didn't show any sign of anger. He was instead nodding with approval. "Nine Yin Phantom Sword... Such a powerful ancient art. Unpredictable too. If I don't know any better, I will mistake this art for a game skill of this world."

"Yeah, it's a good ambushing art or something to use when I need to get out of a tight spot," Jack said. "But I can't do it often. I feel tapped out after using it every time."

"Both the nine yin and the nine yang scriptures are the most mysterious martial arts in existence. It is not strange if these arts are difficult to execute," Domon said. "It is already a great feat that you manage to learn one art from the scripture. I have confidence you will overcome this limitation with enough training. Are you going to continue learning the other two arts?"

"I already know the basics. I will train them when I can," Jack said. "I can't stay cooped up in here for too long, I got responsibilities out there."

"That reminds me. John asked for you two days ago. He said once you are done, go to the palace."

"Why didn't he just send me a message?" Jack asked.

"Well, everyone in the guild knows you have special training for the week. Maybe he doesn't want to bother you."

"He is not that considerate. Most likely it is not urgent, but I will still go see what it is," Jack said.

"You do what you have to do," Domon said.

Before leaving, Jack went to Grace and told her that he was going to Thereath. Grace said she wanted to stay here and train. She told Jack sorry she couldn't accompany him.

Jack chuckled and told her to train hard. He then left and teleported to Thereath.

Entering the throne room, he was greeted by John and Thaergood.

Seeing Jack, Thaergood reported, "The people from the Council of Charites had just entered Themisphere this morning. We have arranged for a legion to go and escort them to Themonium."

"It's good to hear they arrive without incident," Jack said.

"It's not like they need the escort. Their average level is higher than the legion we sent for the escort," John said, which made Thaergood roll his eyes.

"It is courtesy to make them feel welcomed," Thaergood said.

"By the way, my gramps said you were looking for me two days ago?" Jack asked John.

"Yeah. Two days ago, a native human was found dead at one of the border towns. The witness claimed the perpetrator was an orc."

Chapter 1408: Worsening Situation at the Border

"What?! That was a terrible incident! Why didn't you call me back?" Jack asked.

"Because it won't make any difference even if you are back. There is still too little information," John said.

"The six noble houses were starting to make noises again," Thaergood informed. "Currently we can still quell the masses. I must say the effects of Goddess Serenity's blessing and the Wonder Buildings do help, but we will need to provide an answer soon. Otherwise, things will still get messy."

"How is the progress of the investigative teams?" Jack asked.

"There are not many clues for them to go with when they first arrived," John answered. "But this murder has provided them with fresh clues to investigate. The last time I talked to them, they followed a promising lead."

"Do you think this murder is connected to the thefts and vandalisms from before?" Jack asked.

"I don't believe in coincidence. The timing, place, and situation were similar. Even if it is a coincidence, treating them as connected is better. Otherwise, we might miss something. We can treat them as separate incidents once we find proof supporting that."

Duchess Isabelle came in then. Her expression didn't show that she brought good news.

"I just received message transmissions from three different towns near our border with Verremor," Isabelle said. "A murder has happened in each town. The victim was native humans. Eyewitnesses again saw orcs leaving the crime scene..."

"How can so many murders happen at the same time? Haven't we increased the security in those towns?" Thaergood asked.

"I have not yet finished," Isabelle uttered. "The number of murders isn't the worst thing. One of the victims is a prominent member of the Orline house. It was the second son of Hans Orline."

"What?! This is a disaster!" Thaergood exclaimed.

"Yes... The report says he is currently on a crusade. He is inciting the masses. He even hired several adventurers to help him capture every orc in town for questioning."

"Tell the guards in that town to stop him! Bring every orc into a safe location and prevent Hans from getting to them," Jack ordered.

"I've already instructed so," Isabelle said. "However, I'm not confident the orcs will willingly comply."

Jack frowned. Knowing the orcs' nature, he was sure some would object to being forced to move away from where they were staying.

"Whatever this is. The situation has escalated rather unnaturally," John said.

"Are you saying this is planned by someone?" Isabelle asked.

"Do you remember what this situation reminds you of?" Instead of answering Isabelle, John asked Jack a question.

"The murders in Hydrurond?" Jack said.

John nodded.

"Do you think Master is behind this?" Jack asked again.

"I'm almost certain he is," John answered. "And if this is true, then the situation might be far more worrying than I thought."

"What do you mean?" Thaergood asked.

"If this is indeed their doing, they must be doing something big behind this operation," John said. "My mot... The enemy's chief strategist is not someone who does things without a reason."

"Do you think they will attack us?" Jack asked.

"If this is their strategy to destabilize us before they attack, it's possible," John said. "They couldn't do it as freely as in Hydrurond because of the blockades you placed on their guilds. In Hydrurond, the murders had gone long enough before the war started. Their guild was only banned when the war started. Before that, they were free to go around causing havoc covertly. Maybe that's why they target our border towns because the deeper they infiltrate this country, the higher the chance they can be caught."

"Even if it's only the border towns, they picked targets that are painful to us," Isabelle said.

"Yes, they are aiming at the stability between our peace with Verremor," Jack agreed.

"Are we sure it is truly their doing?" Thaergood asked.

"Frankly, I think it is still too early for them to attack us," John said. "Unless they have an ace-in-the-hole we don't know about. You mentioned that Master got Joy's divine heritage. Can that give him God's power as it did to Euphosine?"

Jack had made a short report about his time in the Council of Charites when he was inside the Space-time Chamber. He sent this report to John and Jeanny. He figured it was still better if they knew what had happened.

"I don't think so," Jack answered. "I have discussed this with Wilted via messages. Euphosine can utilize Joy's power from her divine heritage because they are both denizens of this world. We are outsiders. The way we interact with this world's objects is more instantaneous, like the way we can learn a technique book instantly while the natives have to spend time training them. That's why Master won't be able to utilize the divine heritage the way Euphosine did. He will most likely use it to craft another Godkiller or another unknown item. Plus, if he can get a God's power just by acquiring the divine heritage, why go through the trouble of collecting the seven divine treasures?"

"Hm... You are right. But the fact that he got that divine heritage is still worrying. Well, anyway, it should be safer to assume that they will attack," John said. "I've sent messages to the investigative teams about these new murders. They should be able to gather more clues from these fresh sites. In the meantime, I will start gathering the army just in case. It is better to prepare rather than get caught off guard."

"You do that, I will go to the town where Hans Online is and try to keep things from going out of hand," Jack said. He then asked Isabelle, "Which is what town?"

"It's Thenitsa," Isabelle answered. "It's also the border town that was occupied by Verremor's first army during their invasion. Many of the inhabitants there still have fresh memories of the occupation, so their enmity toward the orcs is rather strong there."

Jack nodded. "I will be going there then."

"I will notify the governor in Thenitsa so he will be ready for Your Majesty's arrival," Isabelle said.

Jack talked with John and Thaergood a little longer while Isabelle went to inform Thenitsa's governor. Afterward, he walked toward the teleportation chamber.

On the way, he sent messages to Four Winds informing him of the recent incidents. Four Winds told him that things were also in an uproar here. An emergency meeting for the council members had been called

which he would be attending shortly. One thing he knew for sure to appear on the meeting agenda must be about reclosing the border and halting any interaction between Themisphere and Verremor. This would severely hurt the peace they had been striving for.

Four Winds informed Jack he would try to influence the lord chiefs of the council so that the border stayed open, but he honestly admitted he was not confident. If the murders were not resolved in a short time, things might get from bad to worse.

Jack told Four Winds to delay the council for as long as possible, while he tried finding out the real cause of these incidents.

Four Winds told him to not take too long.

Jack teleported to Thenitsa's Zone Portal. Arriving there, a man with the age of around fifty wearing an ornate robe was waiting for him. A squad of soldiers was on standby behind him.

"Welcome to Thenitsa, Your Majesty," The man greeted with a bow. The squad behind him saluted. "I am Lance Guinan, this town's governor. I wish I could have welcomed you in a more favorable situation."

Chapter 1409: Eyewitnesses' Accounts

"I understand, Governor Lance," Jack replied, telling everyone to be at ease. "Tell me about the situation."

"We have implemented a curfew," Lance informed. "We sent out a call to every orc who is still in town to move to the inns of our choosing, which are close to the guard station. Unfortunately, some of the orcs are stubborn and refuse to follow our request. We have no choice but to have a couple of soldiers follow these orcs, which turns out to be the right decision. Some of these orcs got into arguments with the townsfolk. If not for the presence of the soldiers, things would have heated up to a fistfight. I wish very much to just drag these stubborn orcs to a safe place, but I assume you will not be happy about that, will you?"

"You have done the right thing," Jack replied.

"Also, I have barred entry for more orcs into this town," Lance continued. "If more orcs come and they also don't want to follow instructions, I won't have enough manpower to manage them."

It was not ideal, but Jack thought it couldn't be helped. It was already good that Lance didn't decide to chase out the orcs inside the town or use force to compel them to gather.

"How about Hans Online?" Jack asked.

"Well... He gathered a mob recently and was marching toward the inns I had designated to safeguard the orcs. It's a good thing I intercepted him. He was currently on house arrest."

"Good job, Governor Lance," Jack praised.

"Just for the record, Hans is a good friend of mine," Lance said. "It gives me a bad taste for detaining him, and to tell you the truth, I don't share any love for these orcs. I had a cousin who was killed during Verremor's occupation when they invaded us half a year ago. I understand it serves the kingdom's

interest to form peace with Verremor. That's why I go along with the order, but I'm afraid we are walking on thin ice. I can stop Hans because the mob that follows him is small, but this mob is growing, even as we speak. I'm afraid things will get out of hand sooner or later unless we catch the one who murdered Hans' son and bring that orc to justice."

"You are certain the murderer is an orc?" Jack asked.

"We have eyewitnesses who confirmed that," Lance answered.

"Can I meet these eyewitnesses?"

"We have already gathered them. They are currently talking with Your Majesty's guild members."

'That must be one of the investigative teams John sent,' Jack thought.

"Take me to them please," Jack said.

"Right this way, Your Majesty," Lance ushered Jack to a carriage.

The squad of soldiers followed their carriage on foot. Jack looked at the town from the carriage's window. It was still daylight but very few people walked the street. Many of the shops were also closed. The curfew had limited the town's activities. It would hurt the town's economy and happiness, but it was necessary under the circumstances.

They arrived at the guard station, which was where the eyewitnesses had been gathered. Jack saw a bunch of people leave just as they arrived.

"Those were the eyewitnesses," Lance told Jack. "The interrogation must have been concluded. Should I call them back so Your Majesty can question them?"

"No need," Jack said. The investigative teams were comprised of professionals. Anything he could think to ask would have been asked by the team. Aside from those eyewitnesses, Jack saw two people who walked toward them after sighting them. A young woman and a middle-aged man.

"Your Majesty," The young woman greeted.

"Sire," The man also greeted.

"Sherly, Canon," Jack addressed the two.

Jack knew the two from the investigative teams. The young woman's name was Sherly Homes. She was a famous detective in their past life who had solved many difficult cases even when she was still in high school. The middle-aged name was Canon Dole, a famous mystery author who also had a side occupation as a special consultant to the police department on many high-profile cases.

These two were as good as he could hope to handle the current sensitive case.

"Did you find anything?" Jack asked.

"The eyewitnesses gave matching statements," Canon answered. "We have checked their backgrounds. They aren't related to each other. The details in their explanation also don't seem fabricated, so we can rule out false evidence here."

"You mean..."

"The murderer is indeed an orc," Sherly answered before Jack completed his question.

Jack's forehead creased. If this was true, it was the worst thing to happen.

"Then one of the orcs in this city should be the perpetrator," Lance said. "I will gather all the orcs for the eyewitnesses to..."

"There is no need," Sherly cut Lance's speech. "I believe the murderer has left the town."

"How can you be so sure?" Lance asked.

"These murders happened in different towns at almost the same time. We can rule out crimes of passion as their causes. They were most likely planned. What happened should be similar to the murder two days ago. We have investigated that murder thoroughly. The orc that fit the eyewitnesses' description was seen leaving town not long from when the time of death was estimated. I believe the one here is the same."

"You didn't block orcs from leaving town, do you?" Canon asked Lance.

"No... we prevent additional orcs from entering. We didn't stop them from leaving."

"Because you consider the orcs who leave as good riddance," Sherly said.

"What are you implying?" Lance wasn't happy with Sherly's words.

"Please don't be offended, governor," Sherly said. "I wasn't criticizing your reasons. I was simply saying that it is a pity because we won't be able to capture the perpetrator."

"Perpetrators, if you consider the murderers in the other towns," Canon said.

"I believe the governors in the other towns did the same as you," Sherly added. She then turned to Jack, "Your Majesty, if you will. Please instruct all the border towns to start applying checks on all the orcs entering and exiting the town. If a murder happens again, the town should be in lockdown. No orc should be permitted to leave until we capture the murderer."

"... I prefer there to be no more murder," Jack uttered.

Chapter 1410: All the Evidence

"So do we, but we need to prepare for the worse," Sherly said.

"Is there no clue as to the perpetrator? What about their motive?" Jack asked.

"I'm afraid we have no idea about the motive," Canon said. "But we might have something about the murderers."

"It is still unclear, though," Sherly said as she gave Canon a disapproving look.

Canon chuckled. "Forgive my partner here. She disliked sharing things that are still ambiguous."

"After questioning the eyewitnesses just now, we might have found something that links the murderer in this town with the one two days ago," Sherly said. "But I don't want us to jump into assumptions, we are still waiting for the report from the other towns where the other murders occurred. Once we cross-check the facts, we should be able to make a better deduction."

"Let me know once you have something tangible," Jack said. He didn't want to push for an explanation if the two were not certain.

Jack turned to Lance and asked, "Where is Hans being held?"

We escorted him back to his mansion. I placed some soldiers there to keep him from leaving.

"Bring me to him, please," Jack commanded.

"Forgive me, Your Majesty, but is that wise?" Lance said. "He is currently not in an appropriate state of mind. His family is also still grieving."

"I understand... That's why I need to meet him. An emotional person might do things that harm himself or others, especially a person of his influence. I need to determine how unstable he is to make sure if a house arrest is enough."

"... If it's not, do Your Majesty plan to put him in jail?" Lance asked. "As Your Majesty mentioned, he has influence. Jailing him will just rile up his supporters. We will then have a worse situation to deal with."

"We will cross that bridge when that happens. Right now, I just want to meet with him."

Lance sighed. "Since it is Your Majesty's command, so be it."

Jack and Lance went back into the carriage. Jack invited Sherly and Canon to tag along. They had already finished the interrogation and investigated the crime scene. They just need to review the available evidence as well as wait for the reports from the other investigative teams.

Inside the carriage, Jack asked Sherly and Canon about the recent case.

Hans' second son, Neil Online, was a commoner, meaning he had no combat ability and was thus easy to kill. Canon suspected this was perhaps the reason Neil was targeted.

Neil also enjoyed hanging out with the civilians in the taverns around the business district. The incident happened an hour before dawn when Neil was leaving the tavern. He was with his friends, all of them were drunk. On their way, they bumped into an orc and an argument ensued. The situation had not been good between orcs and humans after the theft and vandalism two weeks ago. The news about the murder two days ago also caused the already tense situation to become worse. Many of the townspeople preferred all the orcs in the town to be chased out.

The orc they argued with chose to leave, but he threw some insults before leaving. This aroused Neil and his friend's anger. They ended up chasing the orc who ran away into an alley.

His friends continued to chase the orc through the alley until they came out to another street. The orc they were chasing was pretty fast. They soon lost the orc. At that time, they noticed that Neil was not with them.

Neil had always been the slowest among them, so they went back to the alley to look for him. As they walked, they saw another orc come out of the alley but went the opposite way. They ignored that orc and went into the alley, only to find that Neil was already dead inside the alley.

"Neil's friends hate orcs, don't they? Maybe they make a false statement about seeing an orc leaving the alley?" Jack asked.

"Although the street was mostly deserted during that hour, there are some people who start opening shops," Canon replied. "They collaborated on Neil's friends' stories."

Jack nodded. These two should have gone through the testimonies, he won't waste time second-guessing them.

"How was Neil murdered?" Jack asked.

"A stab wound to the heart," Sherly answered. "The wound pattern matched with the daggers that are common in Verremor which was slightly curved."

"There are also signs of struggle," Canon added. "We found trace evidence in Neil's hand. A small piece of torn fabric. We have analyzed the fabric by comparison. It was a special one that is only sold in Verremor."

"All the evidence pointed to the orcs," Jack summarized.

"They do," Sherly agreed.

"Don't you find them a bit too convenient?" Jack asked.

"Are Your Majesty implying that someone is trying to frame the orcs?" Lance asked. He was not too happy about Jack's statement. It was as if Jack was trying hard to find a reason to suggest that the murderer was not an orc.

"I'm sorry if I didn't say it out correctly," Jack said. "I agree that from all the evidence, the murderer is no doubt an orc. What I am saying is that this orc might be acting under command to ruin our country's relationship with Verremor. Do the witnesses tell what the orc that came out of the alley looks like? Have we tried searching for this orc among the ones that are still in this town?"

"I issued the search not long after the murder was reported," Lance answered. "But as we previously discussed, the murderer must have left town immediately. We didn't find any orc matching his descriptions."

"What about the one Neil's friends were chasing?" Jack asked. "There might be a chance the two were working together."

"I have thought of that probability and informed the good governor here earlier," Sherly said.

"This other orc is also no longer in this town," Lance said. At the same time, he peeked outside through the carriage's window.

"We have arrived at the Online mansion," he informed.