

## World 1431

### Chapter 1431: Meeting Emperor Marcus

"What do you mean he didn't give us permission?" Jack asked.

"Well, he didn't exactly say no," John replied. "Here, read it yourself."

Jack took the parchment from John and started reading it.

"King Storm Wind. Come to Vacharest. Such a matter is better discussed in person."

"This is a short reply," Jack remarked.

"Not much is known about Emperor Marcus," Thaergood said. "But those who met him always describe him as a man with few words."

"Will you accept his invitation?" John asked.

"Yes. We can't afford to offend Sangrod at this time," Jack said. "If our army ends up clashing with Sangrod's due to a misunderstanding, we will have lost before our reinforcement even reaches Palgrost. Maybe this is a good opportunity to persuade Emperor Marcus to join the assault on Liguritudum. Liguritudum's intention on world domination should now be clear for everyone to see."

"Hm... I want to say you are too naïve, but then I will simply be stating the fact," John said. "Well, your instinct has helped you all this time. Even if they sometimes proved to be wrong, they somehow turned out all right, which is weird and illogical. Hm... Well, I guess it suits you. I will trust you on this. In the meantime, I will join the rallied army."

"Start marching," Jack said. "I will go to Vacharest at once, but don't wait for my news, just march into Jagara region. I promise I will make Sangrod see light. They should let us pass through the Jagara region even if they don't let us pass through Sangrod."

"We don't have an embassy in Sangrod, but we do have a few officers on regular visits to Sangrod," Thaergood said. "I've contacted one who was currently in Vacharest. He would meet and accompany Your Majesty to see Emperor Marcus."

"Oh, right. There is one person who will accompany you as well. That person is currently waiting at the teleportation chamber," John informed.

"Who?" Jack asked.

"See for yourself," John replied and went away.

'Maybe it's Grace,' Jack thought. She had continued training the Nine Yin Scripture in the Space-time Chamber. Maybe she ended her training and decided to join this campaign.

Jack discussed several more matters with Thaergood before leaving for the teleportation chamber. Entering the room, he was surprised to see that it was Leavemealone who was there.

"Took you long enough," Leavemealone said impatiently.

"Why is it you?" Jack asked.

"Do not be mistaken. I don't want to be here. Master Domon heard from John about you going to see Sangrod's emperor. He told me you should have someone accompanying you and instructed me to be that person."

"Why?"

"Exactly my question. How about you go ask Master and tell him to call someone else to accompany you?"

"Mm... No, I want you to accompany me. Come on, lackey. We are going," Jack said.

"Watch your mouth! Do you not believe I will punch you?"

"Cool down. I'm just messing with you. You are too stiff. No wonder my gramps asked you to join me. You need to go and do something else rather than keep on following him around like a puppy."

"Hmph. You are just jealous Master Domon enjoys spending more time with me than you," Leavemealone uttered.

"I don't have the time to argue with you. If you want to come, then come. You decide for yourself," Jack said and activated the teleportation device.

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Jack came out in a plaza which was Vacharest's zone portal. The houses were all medieval styles similar to Themisphere. Sangrod was probably the most similar to Themisphere in terms of architecture, except Sangrod's buildings had more gothic elements. The gothic in this capital was even more prevalent compared to Tranviste, a Sangrod city Jack visited before. This gothic style and the eternally dark sky above made everything look especially gloomy.

"Your Majesty, King Storm Wind?" Someone greeted Jack.

Jack used Inspect and saw the man was a level 55 special elite named Dave. He had the rank of a minister. Jack supposed this was the officer Thaergood said would accompany him to meet Emperor Marcus. Behind Dave were two Themisphere soldiers. Dave's bodyguards during his travel to this country.

"Minister Dave," Jack greeted back. "I believe you will guide me to the palace?"

"Yes, a carriage has been prepared. We have also notified the palace about our visit. They will be ready for us."

Leavemealone came out of the zone portal then. He decided to follow Domon's request even if unwillingly.

"This is my lackey. He will be coming too," Jack said to Dave. This caused Leavemealone to turn to him, fuming.

Everyone entered the carriage except for Dave's bodyguards, who followed the carriage using steeds.

They went directly to the palace. This capital was bustling with both natives and players. It was almost as crowded as Themisphere. According to John's intel, Vacharest was the next metropolis closest to becoming a megalopolis after Thereath.

He chatted a bit with Dave inside the carriage but found that Dave was not a talkative person. Leavemealone was even worse. So, he spent the time training mana manipulation and using Inspect on the pedestrians along the way. He found that a decent number of Saint Edge players were here. Considering their headquarters was nearby, it wasn't strange.

His Inspect skill increased to Advanced Expert after repeated usage.

Vacharest also rivaled Thereath in size aside from its population. It took them some time before they arrived at the palace. Jack came down and saw the palace was an intimidating structure that was mostly black in color. It had several pointed towers. Lightning and thunder regularly occurred above the palace. If there were any archetype of a haunted palace, this one should be it.

Jack looked at the dark sky on the other part of the capital. It was dark but it was clear. He turned back to the sky above the palace. He saw a flash of lightning and then heard thunder soon after.

He decided to not bother too much with this localized weather phenomenon. He followed Dave into the palace after Dave announced their arrival to the palace guards.

When they were about to enter the throne room. Everyone except for Jack was barred.

"Only Themisphere King is allowed entry," the guard said.

Jack nodded and told everyone to wait outside. The guard then opened the door for Jack to enter.

The throne room was as large and as impressive as Thereath's palace, except it still had its characteristic gloominess. The throne room was mostly empty except for two rows of soldiers by the side of the room and a person who was sitting on the throne with two people standing beside him. One of which was an ethereal. He wondered why an ethereal was inside a vampire's throne room.

The rows of soldiers by the side unnerved him. These soldiers all had bloodshot eyes. Were they some kind of special-type vampires?

He also sensed several spots along the floor where the mana felt hostile, similar to the sense from a technocraft's traps. He wondered if this was this place's standard security system.

Jack turned his attention away from those soldiers and the traps. He walked forward to greet Emperor Marcus on the throne. He couldn't help but looked at the ethereal next to the emperor. He realized then the ethereal was someone he knew.

The ethereal was Motherboard from World Maker.

### **Chapter 1432: Undetected Trap**

Jack stopped walking forward after seeing the ethereal. Motherboard smiled upon seeing Jack's reaction.

"King Storm Wind, why stop?" The vampire on the throne, Emperor Marcus, asked. "Come closer. I believe you want to talk about your army marching through my territory?"

The lighting inside this throne room was dim, just like the other parts of this capital. Marcus' feature was shrouded by this lack of illumination, but Jack's dragon eye could see him with clarity.

The skin of Marcus's face was tight and smooth as a baby's face. Yet, Jack couldn't shake the feeling he was looking at an old man. A very old man. Marcus was bald. His face was also free of any facial hair. There was not even an eyebrow. His ears were slightly sharp resembling an elf's ears.

Marcus tapped his fingers on the armrest of his throne while waiting for Jack's response.

Jack resumed walking. He stopped around ten meters from the throne, just before one of those traps he sensed.

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Marcus Maxius (Mythical Vampire, Ancient), level: 85

HP: 2,000,000

Strength: 4850

Physical Defense: 3900

Magical Defense: 4400

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Now that Jack's Inspect had increased to the Advanced Expert, he could also see the target's strength and defenses.

Marcus' strength almost doubled his, even with his three classes' stats. Jack wondered if it was due to Marcus' ancient age.

As for Marcus' defenses, it was similar to him. Except Jack's physical defense was higher than his magical defense. Marcus was also wearing a royal outfit, which was heritage equipment. This equipment leveled up following the wearer's level. Jack figured he didn't lose in terms of defenses because of his legendary-grade cloak which gave a big bonus on defenses.

Marcus was the strongest sovereign he had met. Considering this vampire was the oldest sovereign and had ruled the longest compared to the other sovereigns, he didn't find this surprising.

"Emperor Marcus, please accept my greetings on behalf of Themisphere," Jack began. "I came here today to ask for your permission to let my army pass through Sangrod. Considering our two country's friendly relationship, I hope that you permit us."

Marcus grinned, showcasing his two long and sharp vampire fangs.

"You are a direct person, King Storm Wind," Marcus said. "I was expecting a bit of repartee, but I like this better. The answer is no."

Jack frowned upon hearing the answer.

"The outworlder group that was now in charge of Liguritutum had also taken Aurebor and Hydrurond. They were now aiming for Palgrost," Jack said. "I believe Emperor Marcus can see where this is headed. If we don't join forces to stop them now, they will take us down one by one."

"Is that so?" Marcus asked. His tone didn't sound concerned. Motherboard was still smiling beside the emperor.

Jack could see now this was a waste of time. He announced then, "Since Emperor Marcus is not willing to lend a hand. So be it. My army will go through the Jagara region to get to Palgrost. I'm letting the emperor know this out of respect. We will not enter Sangrod's territory."

"I can't let you do that," Marcus said.

"Emperor Marcus, what do you mean by that?" Jack asked. He now noticed the soldiers with bloodshot eyes on the two sides of the hall had their hands on their weapons.

"I consider Jagara a part of my territory. I have an army stationed there. If your army passes that region, mine will consider it an act of aggression against my empire. If your army doesn't turn back, then mine will have no choice but to engage."

"... It seems that Emperor Marcus has made up his mind before I'm here. What's the point of inviting me here then?" Jack asked.

"Why do you think?" Marcus asked. His grin took a wicked turn.

The soldiers beside the hall acted then. They rushed at Jack who had readied his two weapons. Jack ran to the entrance door before those soldiers arrived. His speed far surpassed those soldiers.

However, Jack sensed someone before the door. He used the Sword of Light. Someone appeared then.

It was another bald vampire. This one had a larger and taller frame than Marcus. He also wore slick-looking black battle armor which made him more intimidating. He appeared because he blocked Jack's sword of light.

Jack used his Inspect and found the vampire was a level 90 Mythical by the name of Archibald Silas. Jack knew the name. This vampire was the leader of the three relic marshalls of the Sangrod Empire, which was a rank equivalent to Themisphere's Lord Marhsall.

Jack then heard a commotion from beyond the door. There was a battle outside. No doubt involving Leavemealone and Dave.

Jack took out his Companion and King Badges, ready to call for reinforcements. He didn't summon Terras because he knew the rune diagrams inside this palace could unsummon it, but Arlcard and his royal agents wouldn't be affected.

However, before he could summon his royal agents, a veil of darkness suddenly surrounded him. This took him by surprise. He immediately used Lightning God Suit, fearing that this veil was an enemy's attack.

The veil enveloped Jack completely and then he was gone from there.

Marcus stood from his throne. His forehead was scowling. He knew that spell. Someone had just used the thing that had been stolen from him to teleport Jack away.

"... Is that a trap you have prepared?" Motherboard asked.

"No," Marcus answered. He gave no further explanation.

He came down from his throne and said to Archibald, "Call the runecrafts and the guards who have watched this hall within this week! Someone entered this hall without permission and laid that trap. I want to know who! And take the ones outside alive. We will use them as bargain chips to lure the Themisphere king. He can't be far. Lockdown the entire capital. No one is allowed to go in or out until I say so!"

Archibald bowed in acknowledgment and went to carry out the orders.

Motherboard was unsure of what to do. The deal was to have Jack bound and given to her.

When she was about to say something, Marcus beat her to it.

"You are also not allowed to leave this capital. Not until we sort this out." He then turned into a shadow and left the place.

### **Chapter 1433: Taking Down a Regime**

Jack found himself in a different place. He looked around in confusion. He was in some kind of a basement.

He was still wondering what had happened. The throne room had mana all around the place. He sensed where the hostile traps were, but he didn't sense anything from the trap that created the veil which moved him into this place.

He was still battle-ready. He had his king badge in his hand, but what if there were more traps in this place?

"There is no need to be alarmed. You are safe here," Jack heard a familiar voice.

Horatio appeared out of a shadow in a far corner. The Book of the Damned which Jack gave him was hanging beside his waist. That book was tied to a chain that was linked to Horatio's robe. As Horatio approached, Jack sensed strong mana from the chain. It won't be easy breaking that chain to steal the book.

Horatio was level 74. It had been more than a year since Jack gave the Book of the Damned to this vampire. He was level 70 then. A four-level increase in that time frame was extremely fast for a native, especially one with such a high level. Jack wondered if it had anything to do with the legendary artifact that was hanging on the vampire prince's waist.

Jack still had his swords at the ready as Horatio came near.

"I told you already. You are safe. I mean you no harm," Horatio said.

"Your father tried to kill me," Jack said. "Or capture me, I don't know. He is just not friendly."

"I know. That's why I laid a special teleportation spell in the throne room and hid it with a concealment spell."

'Concealment spell? Is it like the one that hid Greed's rune diagram outside his sanctum? Maybe that's why I didn't sense anything from the trap,' Jack thought.

"I eavesdropped the discussion between my father and that outworlder woman," Horatio said. "That's how I know they are luring you here to deal with you when you have no allies."

"Allies?" Jack remembered Leavemealone then. "I came with my people. They are in danger. I have to save them!"

"It's too late now. By the time you return there, the battle is already over. Don't worry. I know my father. He will keep those people alive to lure you out. I do not doubt he has already activated an enchantment that places this capital under lockdown. You won't be able to use Town Return Scroll or other teleport functions to leave town. You need to lay low for the time being."

Jack didn't worry about the lockdown. He had Pandora who should be able to break through, but he needed to settle the matter with Sangrod otherwise his army couldn't proceed to Palgrost.

"... You said you knew about their plan and prepared spells to help me?" Jack asked. "How do you know I will step on your prepared spells?"

"I placed it near the exit. I know you will be running for the exit once my father reveals his intention."

"I walked past that trap when I entered the throne room. It didn't activate then," Jack said.

"If I bring you here before you talk to my father, you won't know my father's treachery. Will you believe me then if I told you he meant you harm?"

"This means you can see what transpired inside the throne room?" Jack asked.

"The spell that brought you here is special. Yes, I can see what happened in that room. I activated the teleport spell manually once I saw you approaching."

"Why do you help me?"

"Because I need a powerful ally," Horatio answered.

Jack heard a notification then. He had received a quest offer, Help Horatio Ascend the Throne.

Horatio continued, "Have you heard about what my father did these past few weeks?"

"If you are talking about him executing your brothers and sisters. Yes, I've heard about it," Jack said.

"Well, there is not much love between us, so their demise is not truly a loss. It was a problem though, because we vampiric brothers and sisters had one thing in common."

Jack stayed silent instead of asking Horatio what he meant.

Horatio smiled. He resumed, "We all hate our father. We can be said to have been his slaves for hundreds of years. We have grown old enough to break away from his psychic influence, but his hold on this dominion is too strong. We can't be free as long as he still rules. To end his reign, all of us brothers

and sisters have to work together. But now, we are the ones being ended before our revolution has even begun."

"How many of you are left?" Jack asked.

"Three," Horatio answered. "The first prince, Rain Maxius, and Marcus' seventh daughter, Lili Maxius. The three of us have influence over several big clans in the empire. My father can't just execute us without strong evidence. If he does that, we can rebel with the support of those clans. We might not win, but Marcus won't have it easy as well."

"So, you need the support from another country's sovereign," Jack said.

"That, and also preventing my father from handing you to the outworlder woman will delay him from getting the evidence," Horatio said.

When Jack gave him a questioning expression, he said, "The outworlder woman was the one who had been providing evidence of our attempted rebellion. She left the ones who are the most influential, Rain, Lili, and me, in exchange for your capture. If you are captured inside that throne room, the deal is complete. Marcus will be given the evidence to take us three down."

'So, this is all Master's doing,' Jack thought.

The disruption within the ruling power of the Sangrod Empire was also a good distraction to stop Marcus from bothering about the situations that happened outside his empire. In this way, it was less likely for Marcus to interfere with Master's invasion of Palgrost. It was killing two birds at the same time. Jack couldn't help but be impressed by Master's planning, or maybe this was John's mother's planning.

"By the way, I want to warn you. Capturing you is only one part of the deal," Horatio said. "The other part is to stop your army from going to Palgrost."

Jack received a message from John then.

"Hey, expert. I guess your meeting with the Sangrod Empire didn't go so well. We are now looking at a Sangrod army barring our way. They are telling us that we are trespassing on their territory, even when we are clearly inside the Jagara region. They told us to turn back. Any attempt to proceed further will be considered an act of aggression. Should we engage them? But their number is not that far different from ours. Even if I'm confident we can win, engaging them will seriously reduce the number of troops we bring to Palgrost."

"Shit," Jack uttered.

"What should we do?" Peniel asked.

Jack sent a message to John to stand down but not retreat. The Sangrod army shouldn't do anything as long as they didn't proceed. The deal was simply to halt Themisphere's army march. Jack didn't think Marcus would want to waste his army for nothing.

"What is your and your sibling's original plan to take down your father's regime?" Jack asked Horatio.

"Are you willing to help us?" Horatio asked back instead of answering the question.



"If you succeed, who is the next line for the throne between the three of you?"

"We can decide that once our father is taken care of, but I have an edge my two siblings don't," Horatio said while tapping his Book of the Damned.

"I see. In that case, I want your word! When you become the sovereign, you will ally with my country to defeat Liguritum and its allies!"

#### **Chapter 1434: Enslaved Blood Army**

Horatio was silent upon Jack's request. The promise to send an army out into war was not a simple request. War consumed resources. Not to mention there was also the risk of losing, which would put the country in a worse position than before the war.

After a while, Horatio said to Jack, "Very well. You have my word. I will help you defeat Liguritum and its allies if I become sovereign."

Jack nodded. He preferred Horatio to take the time to answer him. This meant Horatio truly pondered the term. If Horatio answered immediately without pause, he would be suspicious instead. Suspicious that Horatio would just deny the promise after becoming sovereign.

There was still the chance of that, of course, but Horatio had held his end of the bargain when Jack delivered the Book of the Damned. Jack figured this showed Horatio was a man of his word. But most of all, Jack didn't truly have many options to begin with. He had to deal with Emperor Marcus one way or the other.

Jack clicked the accept button on the quest offer. He then said to Horatio, "Tell me your plan."

"The plan is simple, we have to take out my father," Horatio said.

"By taking out. Is it like bringing him out for a walk?"

"How can you still joke at a time like this!" Peniel wanted to slap Jack's head but Jack expected it. He moved away when the fairy's hand came swinging.

"Sorry, I can't help it," Jack laughed. "But I think it is obvious about taking out the emperor. Do you mean by assassination or an active rebellion?"

"Any method is fine," Horatio answered. "Assassination is preferred since it limits the loss of lives. But several aspects made it very hard to claim my father's life. He has survived for a thousand years not just due to luck. My siblings and I could be said to already received approval from a majority of the clans in this empire to overthrow our father. My father is not a favored emperor. Most are displeased with him. Yet, they can't do anything to him.

"My father hides inside this capital most of the time. When he ventures out, no one knows how to track him. While inside this capital, he can be said to be almost invincible. This is because of his private army that is tied to this place and is completely loyal to him. No one can get to him as long as he is protected by this army."

"A private army?" Jack asked.

Horatio nodded. "A private army that is called the Blood Army. Rather than saying they are loyal, I think it is more appropriate to say that this private army is enslaved to him. This private army consisted of his past enemies, people who opposed his authority, or sometimes just prisoners whom he plucked to fill up the rank of his blood army."

"Why did these people want to serve him?" Jack asked.

"Because they have no choice," Horatio answered.

"Wait! Don't tell me Emperor Marcus has the Chalice of Blood?" Peniel asked.

Horatio made a surprised expression upon Peniel's statement. "I'm impressed that you know about this artifact, miss."

"What is the Chalice of Blood?" Jack asked.

"It's a legendary artifact," Peniel answered. "It bound someone with a blood pact. Once bound, that person will follow the chalice's holder every command."

"That's cruel...," Jack said.

"That's true. The Chalice of Blood burned the bound person's life force. Even the strongest one can usually last only a week. You said that Marcus has an army that is bound using this artifact?" Peniel asked Horatio. "How many are we talking about? Does this mean he constantly takes people to bind using the blood pact? The number of people being sacrificed will be tremendous. Are you saying he has that many enemies and prisoners?"

"He has almost ten thousand troops within this blood army. However, they don't expire like you say they will," Horatio replied.

"That's impossible! The Chalice of Blood..."

"I know the Chalice of Blood's function," Horatio cut Peniel's words. "The reason the bound person didn't expire is because something is keeping them alive."

"Huh?" Peniel made a confused expression.

Jack chuckled. "Rarely see you with such an expression. This is good."

"It's not the time for a joke!" Peniel scolded.

Horatio was amused Jack could still treat this all so lightly. Jack was practically stranded inside the enemy's territory. He did hear the Themisphere king was an easy-going outworlder, but he also heard that Jack was a reliable and trustworthy person. He had experienced this himself when Jack brought the Book of the Damned to him even when Jack could just keep this legendary artifact to himself. This was also the reason why he helped Jack escape his father's trap and asked Jack to aid him in overthrowing his father.

"Sorry, please continue," Jack said to Horatio. "Why are these bound slaves still alive when they should not?"

"It's because my father bound another entity inside the bound slaves," Horatio answered.

"Another entity? What entity?"

"Demons," Horatio replied.

"Demons? How did he..." Peniel's words trailed off before her eyes landed on the book by Horatio's side.

"Yes, it's because of this book," Horatio saw Peniel's gaze. "My father used the ability of this book to bind a demon from the underworld into the slave that has already been bound by the Chalice of Blood beforehand. The demon not only makes the bound person stronger but it also keeps them alive. The life force of the original person might have been sucked by the chalice but the demon inside the body was considered a separate entity, so the demon's soul was not affected by the chalice.

"Usually, such a possession would cause the possessed to become violent and uncontrollable. But the person was already enslaved under the effect of Chalice of Blood, so the demon was unable to resist."

Peniel made a realization. "He used the Book of the Damned to nullify the Chalice of Blood's side effect of killing the target, while he used the Chalice of Blood to neutralize the violent effect of the possession. That is a cunning way to combine the two artifacts' effects."

"My father is a cunning man," Horatio said. "He used these two artifacts to slowly build this blood army throughout his ruling years. He assembled a force of demonized loyal troops numbered almost ten thousand in this way, but this blood army stopped growing a hundred years ago."

"Because that book is stolen," Jack pointed at the Book of the Damned.

### **Chapter 1435: The Original Plan**

"Tell me, are bloodshot eyes one of the characteristics this blood army has?" Jack asked.

"That's correct," Horatio answered. "You shouldn't underestimate these blood troops. Because of the demonic possessions, these troops are stronger than what their level and grade indicated. They can easily defeat an opponent of similar level and grade to them."

"You said before this blood army is tied to this capital?"

"Yes. That's because once activated, the Chalice of Blood has to be stationary," Peniel answered. "If it is forcefully moved, all the enslaved subjects are freed."

"The enslaved subjects also cannot stray far from the artifact," Horatio added.

"So, they can only stay within this capital," Jack concluded. Jack thought this blood army was similar to the tethered puppets.

"Wait! This blood army can die, right?" Jack asked.

"They can, but they are harder to kill than your average soldiers because of the demonic possessions," Horatio said.

"Do you know where this Chalice of Blood is located?"

"Are you thinking about taking the chalice away?" Horatio asked. "It is protected by a strong defensive rune diagram in a restricted area in the palace's basement. That basement is guarded by the strongest within the blood army, the blood guards. They only allow my father in."

"I see... Tell me then. If all your siblings are still alive, what is your original plan to overthrow your father?" Jack asked.

"First, we gather all the clans that support us to lay a siege upon this capital," Horatio answered. "Once the capital's soldiers, the blood army, and the country guardian were lured to deal with the rebels. We will act from inside the palace and assassinate our father."

"He is not leading the defense against the rebels sieging the palace?" Jack asked.

"He won't do that," Horatio answered. "He will coop up in the basement, inside the same room where his precious Chalice of Blood was. In safety while his subjects and slaves do the dying for him."

Jack sensed the disgust in Horatio's tone. This vampire prince truly hated his vampire father.

"How do you get past the blood guards? I believe they won't join the blood army that is facing the rebels, won't they?"

"They won't," Horatio answered. "We figured that at that time, our father should have not yet known about our involvement. We will have no problem entering the palace. With all twenty-four of us, we should have no problem taking care of the blood guards."

"Twenty-four? You have twenty-three siblings?" Jack asked in surprise. He knew Emperor Marcus turned many humans into vampires during his long life. He just didn't expect it was that many. A vampire of Marcus' caliber was known to be very choosy when turning someone into a vampire. Sometimes they won't even turn one in a century.

"This means Marcus has executed twenty-one of his offspring?" Jack said. "That is nuts. I guess vampire sees offspring differently than humans do."

"My father just sees us as his property," Horatio said. "No more than his other slaves."

"How many and how strong are these blood guards?" Jack asked.

"There were fifteen of them. Fourteen are level 70 rare elites. The leader is a level 75 mythical," Horatio replied. "But remember that they are all possessed by demons. They are stronger than those levels indicated."

Jack thought about the matter for a while. He then took out his King Badge.

"Can you and your remaining two siblings carry on with this original plan? I mean calling those clans to rebel and siege the capital?"

"We can," Horatio answered. "But it won't mean anything if we can't take out my father. Just with us three siblings, even with your help, I don't think we can take out the blood guards. The rebels won't be able to get into the capital with the blood army and the country guardian guarding it. When the remaining army that is loyal to my father arrives, then our rebellion is finished."

"You said this lockdown preventing me from teleporting out, didn't you? This means I also cannot teleport someone from outside into this capital?"

"No, you can't," Horatio answered.

Jack tried it anyway. He tried summoning Duke Alfredo. A notification voice informed him that the summoning was blocked.

"The way I see it, we have one problem if we are to continue with your original plan," Jack said. "The rune diagrams inside the palace. Those rune diagrams will keep Marcus alive, won't they?"

"They will, but I can deactivate the rune diagrams," Horatio said.

"You can? What about the lockdown? Can you deactivate that also?" Jack asked.

"The lockdown is using a separate device outside the palace," Horatio answered. "I will get found out if I deactivate either the lockdown or the rune diagram. I won't have the chance to deactivate both of them. We can only pick one."

"I see... The rune diagram then. We can't kill Marcus if the rune diagram is still active," Jack said. "Wait! Are you still allowed to roam around the palace freely to deactivate the power source? I mean, with how Marcus is suspicious of you?"

"As I said, my father is not willing to do anything to me yet without evidence. Plus, when the rebel army attacks, most of the force in the palace will be drawn to the city wall. There won't be that many soldiers inside the palace to bar our way. Our problem remains with the blood guards. You say you can take care of them if I deactivate the rune diagrams?"

"I have an ace in the hole," Jack said. "As long as I am allowed to use my summon. I will take care of those blood guards."

"Can you show me? Carrying out the plan means no going back. I have to make sure that you can truly do what you claim."

"I can only do it once," Jack said. "Unless you have 50,000 mana cores you are willing to give me, you will just have to trust me."

Horatio sighed. "All right then. I'm out of options anyway. The more we delay, the more likely my father is coming after me."

"Too bad we can't deactivate the lockdown also. Otherwise, I will be able to summon my royal agents and my companion," Jack said while showing his King Badge and Companion Token.

As he did, he noticed the information shown in his companion token. Although he didn't know where the exact place Arlcard was, he knew the companion's general whereabouts from the token. The token said that Arlcard was in the Sangrod empire and was pretty close to him.

'Is he in this capital as well?' Jack thought.

"Didn't Arlcard tell you before to let him know if you ever come to Sangrod?" Peniel said.

"I don't think I have the time to deal with his quest at this moment, do I?" Jack replied. But it was right that he should at least inform his vampire companion that he was in the country.

"If someone is already in this capital, then his summon won't be blocked by the lockdown, will it?" Jack asked.

"No, it won't," Both Peniel and Horatio answered.

Jack used his companion token then. Arlcard appeared next to them.

### **Chapter 1436: Arlcard's Quest**

Arlcard's eyes darted around the place. His eyes stopped on Horatio and Jack sensed an intense but brief hostility from his companion. Yet, his face was flat and cold without any emotion.

Arlcard's level was 76.

"A maxius...?" Horatio said after using Inspect on Arlcard. "I do not know another Maxius outside of my siblings."

"He is turned by Aubelard," Jack explained. He then said to Arlcard, "Are you already in Vacharest before the lockdown?"

"Yes, Arlcard said. I am here checking things out. You take too long a time to handle my quest," Arlcard replied. "I'm beginning to think that you have no interest and start doing it without you."

'Ugh... Is this him complaining?' Jack thought.

"I'm sorry. I'm caught up in a lot of things," Jack apologized. "Even now, I'm in a crisis."

"I figure you have something to do with the lockdown?" Arlcard asked.

"Yes," Jack confirmed.

"Good. I thought it was me at first," Arlcard said.

"What is your quest about anyway?" Jack asked.

"Oh, now you are interested?" Arlcard asked sarcastically.

'Ugh... I've never pegged him to be such a complainer,' Jack thought again.

"What did you do?" Arlcard asked Jack instead.

Jack explained to him about his situation.

"You people are targeting Marcus...?" Arlcard muttered. Jack slightly saw Arlcard's eyes glint when Marcus' name was brought up.

"All right, I will help you but you will have to help me with my quest first," Arlcard said.

'Dude, you are my companion. Doesn't the world system make it so you have to help me even if you are not willing?' Jack thought. He didn't voice this out, though. He said, "Will it take a long time? I need to

settle this incident with Marcus. I have an army that is being barred from passing. I need to get them a pass as soon as possible to get to Palgrost."

"I will need some time to organize the rebels to take action. We won't be able to do anything before that," Horatio informed.

"How long before the siege can be carried out?" Jack asked.

"We have already made preparations some time ago. The rebel army has been assembled under the pretense of training. I think if we are to go with our plan, it will take around four to five days before they can begin the siege on this capital."

"Let's go with it," Jack said. "It's as good a plan as any. We don't have time to waste. Palgrost might fall if we waste too much time."

"I see... I guess so. The longer we delay, my father might just decide to take me and my remaining two siblings out without caring about the consequences. All right, let's make this happen."

Jack turned to Arlcard. "We have three to four days. Tell me about your quest."

Instead of saying anything, Arlcard looked at Horatio.

Horatio caught the cue. He said, "I will leave and make the preparations. Please stay out of sight in the meantime. Every soldier in this capital is looking for you. We are in the basement of a property I secretly owned. You should be safe as long as you stay under here."

"Don't worry," Jack said and changed to Master Slayer, his ethereal disguise.

"Very good," Horatio praised. "Still, don't do anything that attracts attention, and don't wander into restricted places. Some of these places might have an enchantment that detects disguise. You will be targeted when that happens."

"Take this," Horatio handed him a small metal with a jewel in the middle of it.

"That is a communication device that is linked to mine. I will be able to contact you with it provided you are not too far away."

Jack accepted the device. Horatio excused himself and left afterward.

"What do you need my help with?" Jack asked Arlcard.

"I need you to help me break into the royal mausoleum," Arlcard answered.

"Mausoleum? What do you want from there?"

"That's my business, but I can assure you this will benefit you if you are going up against Marcus. He is not someone who can be defeated using normal means."

"Why do you sound like you know him very well?"

"... Let's just say he is also a target of my quest," Arlcard replied.

"Well, I guess breaking into one mausoleum won't take more than four days," Jack said. "Do you already know the mausoleum's location?"

"Yes, but there is a sealing rune diagram that denies me entry," Arlcard said. "There are also some guards guarding the place."

"Okay. Let's wait until nighttime. It will be easier to sneak in during the dark," Jack suggested.

"Sangrod is always dark whether it's day or night," Peniel reminded.

"Oh, right. Okay, we move out soon. Give me a few minutes first," Jack said. He sent messages to John and Jeanny to let them know about the situation.

\*

On a large natural path between a series of mountains, two large armies were facing one another. The two just stood there waiting for the others to act.

"Are we going to just wait like this?" Arther asked.

"His Majesty didn't want us wasting our soldiers on those fang-loving asses," John answered.

"So, we are just going to stand here like this and do nothing?" Meryl uttered. "This is not their territory! I don't give a rat's ass if they say it is. Let's just teach these f\*ckers what is the cost for standing in our way!"

"I've heard of your fierceness, my fine and fair lady Meryl," John said. "To see it directly truly opens my eyes."

Meryl was annoyed. This new royal advisor still liked to use those words she hated to describe her. Did he do this intentionally?

"Our king told us to not antagonize and clash with the Sangrod army, but he never said that we have to stay here," John said.

"I don't understand, are you saying we should turn back?" Salem asked.

"Hehe," John grinned. "Salem, gather all the illusionists we brought with this army to the center of our formation. Make sure they are out of sight from any possible enemy scouts. Once they gather, call me over."

"Yes, Royal Advisor!" Salem went and carried out the order.

"What is your plan?" Arther asked.

John again grinned without answering.

## **Chapter 1437: An Illusive Army**

The one who led the Sangrod army to block the Themisphere army was a vampire named Ezekiel Fanchon. He was also one of the three relic marshalls of the Sangrod Empire.



Ezekiel watched the Themisphere army which seemed to be rearranging themselves.

Upon seeing the movements, Ezekiel ordered everyone to be ready. Themisphere army might have lost their patience and decided to attack. Ezekiel was not keen on fighting the Themisphere army. He didn't understand why the emperor ordered them to block this army from going to Palgrost. The way he saw it, let these countries fight each other. Why involve themselves?

Still, it was an order. He had to obey.

The Sangrod army readied themselves. They adjusted their front line to be ready for the enemy's charge. However, they saw the Themisphere army turn back and start to leave.

'They decide to leave?' Ezekiel was confused but welcomed this outcome. If the Themisphere army were willing to return to Themisphere, that would be the best.

Ezekiel issued the order to march following the retreating Themisphere army. He made sure they didn't get too close. He didn't want to antagonize them and cause them to change their mind. He followed to make sure they returned to their country

The Themisphere army started marching before Jack teleported to Vacharest. They had been marching for half a day before they met the Sangrod army blocking the path. So, they had a long walk before arriving back in Themisphere territory. All the while, the Sangrod army kept escorting them from behind.

The terrains in the Jagara region were mostly mountainous. Not a lot of space to accommodate a huge army. Thus, the army had to stretch into a long line to traverse the path.

Ezekiel continued to follow the tail of the Themisphere army as they headed East in the direction of Themisphere.

After more than an hour, the Themisphere army suddenly made a sudden turn toward the South. Their steeds galloped at full speed.

This took the Sangrod army by surprise. Ezekiel was lost for a second before he hurriedly barked orders. The South was where the Sangrod Empire was located. "Chase them! Sierra, take a cavalry legion and intercept them before they enter Sangrod!"

"On it!" A vampire woman in red armor replied. She also barked some orders and a group of soldiers followed after her as she broke away from the main army.

Ezekiel led the main army to chase after the Themisphere army that was riding away at high speed.

The chase ensued for almost half an hour. The Themisphere army turned several times and slipped past a couple of valleys. Ezekiel ordered the fast-moving troops to charge ahead with him. He didn't bother to wait for the units with slower movement speeds.

He was wondering, though. How did the entire Themisphere army move this fast? The bigger the army was, the slower it moved.

Ezekiel called his pet, a blood vulture, to tail behind the Themisphere army from the sky. He couldn't afford to lose that army.

The Themisphere army made another turn behind a cliff. Ezekiel and his blood vulture followed into that turn. He then saw Sierra's legion rushing from the other end. The Themisphere army was nowhere to be seen.

"Where did the Themisphere army go?" Ezekiel asked once their two troops met in the middle.

"We don't see them," Sierra answered. "We've been going at full speed expecting to cut their advance, but you are the first army we see."

"What? That's impossible! We are right on their tails!" Ezekiel exclaimed. He commanded his blood vulture to fly around to look for the missing army.

"We are in a valley's path. Our two sides are mountains," Ezekiel continued. "Such a large army can't disappear into the mountains in such a short time without us seeing them. There should also be some trails left behind by that army!"

"My lord," a mage officer approached Ezekiel.

"What?!" Ezekiel hollered. He was not in the mood because he was stumped by the situation.

"The Themisphere army has a special unit called Arcaner. Our intel mentioned that these units upgraded into Illusionists not long ago," The mage officer said. "And the illusionists have the spell..."

"Illusion Copy!" Ezekiel made a realization. "Damn it!! We have been had... They must have made a turn somewhere when we focus our attention on their illusions!"

"Where could they have gone to? The path that we guarded is the safest and widest path through this Jagara region," Sierra said.

Ezekiel thought for a while before he gave his orders. "Sent scouts along the main path! If they return to that path, we will find out soon. We will also march in the direction of Palgrost. We know their destination. If they use the main path again, they will have to pass its end to cross into Palgrost's territory. We will prepare a barricade there!"

Ezekiel was dismayed. How could they get tricked like this? The emperor would be extremely displeased if he found out. As someone who had served the emperor for a long time, Ezekiel knew that Emperor Marcus was not a sovereign known for his benevolence.

Marcus' cruelty was not public knowledge, but the upper echelons were well aware of the punishment the emperor had dished out throughout his centuries of rule. It was not something Ezekiel was keen on experiencing.

Aside from the scouts that watched along the main path, Ezekiel also sent some scouts to explore the deeper path of the Jagara region. Themisphere army was huge. It would be difficult for such an army to stay undetected.

\*

The Illusion Copy was a spell that created a copy of a target. This copy could be controlled to move as the caster wished. The spell duration was two hours, and its cooldown was three hours.

Before leaving, John made sure that he brought almost all the Illusionist units from the entire Themisphere army, which was around 100,000 units. He had devised a battlefield strategy that utilized a fake army to distract the enemy. He just didn't expect he had to use it before a battle had even erupted.

The copy created from this spell didn't have a distance range. It could go as far as its caster willed it as long as the duration had not yet ended. The spell could only create one copy, though. That's why John needed almost all the available illusionists to create a fake army.

John slowly rearranged the army while they moved toward Themisphere so that the copies were positioned at the rear. When these copies blocked the Sangrod army's view, John had the real army turned North at an intersection. The fake army continued Eastward, leading the Sangrod army in the direction of Themisphere.

This fake army then made a sudden dash to the South after some time, further luring the Sangrod army away from where the real Themisphere army was. When they realized that they had been chasing ghosts, the Themisphere army had been hours away from them.

#### **Chapter 1438: War Tools Barricades**

In Palgrost, the Liguritutum army marched deeper into Palgrost territory.

Due to his brother's rebellion, Thelgrun couldn't muster a sufficient army to clash directly with the invaders. Furthermore, Boron's force was positioned at the region opposite where Liguritutum was attacking. If Thelgrun went for either Liguritutum or Boron, he would leave his back open.

If he went for Liguritutum, Boron would seize the capital. If he went for Boron, the capital would be defenseless when Liguritutum arrived. If he divided his army to go for both, he was not confident his army size was enough. Hence, Thelgrun was in a dilemma until he received Jack's offer for help.

He was very happy when he heard of the assist. At the same time, he felt regretful for not taking Jack's warning seriously. He vowed that if Palgrost survived this invasion, he would ally with Jack to take down Liguritutum.

Thelgrun gathered his force at the capital, ready for a defensive battle until the reinforcement from Themisphere arrived. Then, they would go for a counter-offensive.

He had to let go of several settlements because of this.

Unlike the war in Hydrurond, Liguritutum didn't rush toward the capital. Their zombie army was already public knowledge. Its shock value was no more. The enemy would be prepared. Thus, Linda chose a safer strategy this time. They took their time to take down the settlements as they advanced. Aside from procuring additional supplies, these settlements also acted as temporary bases for the supply line coming from Liguritutum. All this should be able to support their army in a protracted war.

John had expected this. Now that he knew his mother was on the enemy's side, he could roughly predict her moves. Hence, he instructed Jeanny to organize guerilla warfare against the advancing Liguritutum's army.

The forces that carried out this guerilla warfare were the guild players. This warfare was fitting for players because of the zone portals. The world system only banned the teleportation function between countries. If the destination was in the same country, players were still free to use the zone portals.

Players on the defensive side could utilize the teleport function between settlements that were not yet conquered by Liguritudum, while the players on the Liguritudum's side could only use the zone portals in the settlements they had conquered. Unless Master was willing to spend his time conquering every settlement in Palgrost, the players on the defensive side had the advantage in this field.

John had also predicted the route the Liguritudum army would take after he studied the terrains and the position where the Liguritudum force first entered Palgrost. He instructed Jeanny to place caltrops, the war tools that could slow the enemy's movement, along some strategic points.

The Caltrops John and the others used during the Verremor invasion war were war tools produced by Gluttonous Despot. The ones they used here were not. They were owned by Corporate United, who acquired the same recipe. They had been producing and stocking these war tools in case of an emergency. This was one such time.

Aside from the caltrops, two other war tools were used to slow down the Liguritudum army's advance. Cheval de Frise and Scorpio.

The Cheval de Frise was a super rare war tool owned by Saint Edge. It was a spiked wall that was ten meters long. It was considered a defensive structure with high defense. It had an HP of 500,000. Any attackers that struck it at melee range would get 20% of the damage reflected at them.

It also blocked teleport and had anti-flight enchantment. Any enemy that attempted to fly past this war tool would find himself getting dragged down to the ground. If the Cheval de Frise was lined up. Enemies would have no chance but to destroy them unless they wanted to take a long detour.

In terms of mobility, Cheval de Frise was similar to War Fire. It couldn't enter a player's inventory. It had to be manually carried. Its initial form was knocked down. It became a spiked wall once it was installed at a target space. It couldn't be disassembled anymore once it was activated. It had no duration. It would permanently stay at the place it was assembled until it was destroyed.

Saint Edge was able to bring these war tools due to the train system that connected Palgrost and Sangrod. When William of Wellington attended the meeting in Thereath Palace, their guild members had been transporting these war tools into Palgrost.

John's initial plan only included the caltrops and Cheval de Frise. The third war tool was not in the plan because they only found out about it later when Jeanny came to meet Thelgrun in Palgrost. This third war tool, Scorpio, was owned by a guild that was ranked second in Palgrost. The guild was called The Licth Squad.

The first rank guild in Palgrost, the State of Galhana, supported Boron's rebellion. The second rank supported President Thelgrun.

The Scorpio was a war tool that was similar to the guild's siege weapons. It could be placed inside the player's storage bag. But once it was deployed, it would stay in place until it was destroyed or its duration ran out.

The Scorpio resembled a small ballista. It had a range of 400 meters. Every three seconds, it shot a large bolt in either a straight or parabolic path. The bolt dealt 15,000 physical damage. The Scorpio itself had an HP of 100,000 and had a duration of three hours. Its defense was not so high, though. If an enemy managed to get to it, it could be easily destroyed. And since it had a duration, members of the Lich Squad had to be on standby on site and only applied this Scorpio once they laid eyes on the enemies.

These three war tools were arranged with the caltrops positioned at the front. Behind these caltrops were the Cheval de Frise that were lined up in front of the Scorpions. If the enemies wanted to get to the Scorpions, they had to get through the two other war tools first. And since the Scorpions had such a long range, longer than the reach of any ranged classes, the enemies were most likely getting bombarded first before they could retaliate.

John picked strategic positions to apply these war tools. Where the enemies were forced to go through natural choke points due to the terrain. These war tools won't provide much damage to the opponent. With careful planning, it was easy to block the Scorpio's bolt and nullify the caltrops. They just served to delay the enemies, causing them to take more time than needed in their advance.

Additionally, while the enemies were delayed by the war tools, Jeanny and the other guilds carried out their hit-and-run tactics at the enemy's rear.

### **Chapter 1439: Guerilla Warfare**

During the time Jack spent training while waiting for his army to gather, Jeanny and the others had been hard at work setting up the war tools at the strategic spots John indicated. After finishing the setup, they lay and waited for the enemy to arrive.

When Jeanny and the others were doing that, Master conquered three settlements while making his way deeper into Palgrost. On the day Jack went to Vacharest, the Liguritudum army encountered the first blockade.

The Scorpions attacked first. Their ranges allowed them to hit the front-most enemies when the Cheval de Frise were still very far away.

Surprised by this ambush, the commander of the front line called for a charge, only for the charge to be forcefully stopped by the caltrops. The bolts from the Scorpions never stopped coming at them.

Due to the stop, Master flew forward to see what was wrong. He used his Demonic True Eye to see the hidden caltrops spread around the ground. He commanded the front line to stop charging and then cast one of his AOE spells to destroy these caltrops.

He then cast Barrier and flew ahead. The Scorpions were now targeting him, but he blocked the bolts using his magic shield. Those that flew past his magic shield were stopped by his Barrier. He cast a spell while being showered by the flying bolts.

A huge meteor came down and it demolished the Cheval de Frise as well as the Scorpions that were blocking their path. The Cheval de Frise might have a high defense but the Meteor Fall spell dealt increased damage against structures, such as buildings and defensive walls. The Cheval de Frise didn't have as high an HP as actual structures. Thus, they were destroyed with one hit from Master's meteor.

"Hmph! A meaningless attempt," Master scoffed.

He returned to the army and commanded them to proceed, but he received a message from Linda at that time. Their rear was ambushed.

The strategic spots John picked were choke points where a huge army had to turn into a long line formation to proceed. This caused the rear part of the army to become extremely far away from the front, especially for an army as large as the one Liguritutum was bringing.

At this rear, Jeanny and the others struck. Each guild acted as a separate force and attacked from multiple sides. The enemies were not in a proper formation and since Jeanny and the others came from different sides, the enemies didn't know which sides to defend.

All the ones who did the ambush were players. Player forces now rivaled the natives. Expert players who never died now rivaled the high-rank officers of the native army. Those who had died several times but could still afford the Amulet of Rebirth rivaled the mid-rank officers. While those who had died and returned to level 1 but trained themselves back to level 50 filled up the ranks to fight against the regular native soldiers. Those who were below level 50 were prohibited from joining the war. They would just be cannon fodders.

Due to this, even when they consisted fully of players going up against a native force, they were no longer at a disadvantage as they were in the past.

The players also carried the exploding bottles, which Jeanny had distributed before the ambush. These bottles helped the players deal extra damage to the Liguritutum soldiers.

In the fight, Jeanny showcased her improved martial art. Her Seven Spears Assaulting Heaven had advanced. She was now at stage six. She had learned how to apply mana manipulation to push her thrusting motion into superhuman speed. Each thrust resulted in six stabs that dealt increasing damage, with the sixth and final stab scoring guaranteed critical damage.

She also used the Beacon of Hope, increasing everyone's fighting capabilities in her vicinity.

Flying above her was her new companion, an eaglefolk. She befriended one during her visit to the Council of Elgo. Her companion's name was Garuda. He was a promising young combatant from the eaglefolk and a level 70 Mythical.

He wore light armor and flew around the battlefield using the two large eagle wings on his back. He was armed with a spiked club. Whenever he saw an opportunity, he swooped down with his spiked club. He smashed the unaware foe from the sky, like an eagle pouncing at its prey.

His spiked club was enchanted with the wind element. The heaviness of its strike wounded foes wearing heavy armor while the sharp winds revolving around the weapon cut foes who wore light armor.

His wings, despite looking fragile, were very durable. Aside from allowing flight, the two wings also acted like two extremely large shields that blocked any attacks coming at Garuda. They also served as melee weapons that smacked enemies who came too close.

Garuda was a melee combatant, but he also had several ranged skills at his disposal. His wings could conjure a hurricane that dealt AOE wind damage. He had the Chain Throw Weapon, which was similar to

Ranger's basic skill where the weapon returned to its owner's hand after being thrown. This Chain Throw Weapon produced much more damage than the basic skill. It also bounced off the hit enemies and hit up to ten targets before returning to the owner's hand.

He could conjure Wind Armor. This skill had raging winds circulating his body. This skill increased his movement speed and deflected attacks targeting him. Heavy attacks that couldn't be deflected would still have their damage reduced.

He also had a pet red-feathered falcon that followed him around. The falcon was very swift and attacked at opportune moments. With his falcon, Garuda caused havoc amidst the enemy's ranks as he used a hit-and-run tactic from the sky.

Garuda's most impressive skill was the Divine Eagle Smash, where he smashed the ground and conjured a giant eagle image. This skill blew all the enemies in a large radius from him into the sky before they were battered by raging winds unleashed by the giant eagle image. Enemies received high wind damage during the duration of this skill. Weaker enemies were also completely incapacitated in the air for the duration, making them vulnerable to attacks from allies.

Following John's instruction, Jeanny paid attention to the time while battling. After fifteen minutes, she issued the order to retreat. Every guild retreated simultaneously upon the call. They retreated before the enemy could adapt to their assault or the enemies' reinforcement arrived.

They didn't cost much loss to the enemy but their ambush still reaped a decent number of kills. Too bad the enemy's supply carts were well guarded in the mid-section of the army. Otherwise, their ambush would cause a higher toll on the enemies.

Master arrived at the rear and observed the loss. Jeanny and the others were gone by then. The loss wasn't much. He used the Necronomicon and brought the dead back as zombies.

He could be said to not have lost any troops in the ambush, but he knew this was not the purpose of the assault just now. The enemy was trying to slow them down. It was no doubt so that the Themisphere's reinforcement could arrive before they reached the capital.

Master sneered.

"A meaningless attempt," he said again.

## **Chapter 1440: A Secret Mission**

Doghbarum was a metropolis in Palgrost that neighbored the capital, Balgadur. It was also in this main city that Boron had set his camp while waiting for the Liguritutum army to arrive.

He wasn't worried if his brother, Thelgrun sent full force at him. In a direct clash, he won't win against his brother's force that had more than twice his army. However, if he played defense within the city wall, Thelgrun wouldn't be able to defeat him in a short time.

If his brother brought siege weapons, all he had to do was retreat to a further town. Although Doghbarum was a neighboring region to Balgadur, it still required around two days of travel for the army. If siege weapons were brought, it would require more days.

Boron just needed to wait for the Liguritutum army to get close enough before he coordinated with them and advanced together to Balgadir.

He couldn't wait to sit on the throne, which should be rightfully his. His brother was too weak. Too concerned about others' opinions. A sovereign should rule. His subjects should follow! That was the natural order of things. Why should a sovereign be concerned about his subjects' opinions?

"How far is Liguritutum from Balgadir?" Boron asked an outworlder who was sitting beside him.

The outworlder was unusually tall and large for someone of the dwarf race. He could be considered a giant among the dwarves. He was Sizhad Ruust, the guild leader of the State of Galhana. He was the mediator between Boron and Master.

"They were still five to six days away," Sizhad replied. "However, I heard that a portion of Thelgrun's force had gone to the Num Maldur Pass. The Num Maldur Pass guarded the passage through the Gonrum mountain range. Without going through this pass, the Liguritutum army would need to take a roundabout route to reach Balgadir."

"Num Maldur Pass? That pass is guarded by a medium-sized fort. It also has plenty of defensive mechanisms. Do you think the Liguritutum army can take over that pass?"

"I reckon they can, but they won't beat the force guarding the pass without losses. They will also spend a considerable amount of time defeating the fort. Hence, I don't think they will do that. It is safer to just ignore the pass and take the roundabout route. It will add an extra four to five days before they arrive at Balgadir."

"I heard the Liguritutum's ruler has plenty of Army Haste magic scrolls. Won't that shorten the time their army needs to arrive at the capital?" Boron asked.

"That is already considering the usage of those scrolls," Sizhad answered. "The problem is, some outworlder guilds have conducted a guerilla tactic to harass the Liguritutum army's advance. This causes the scrolls' effect to be wasted."

"Such impudence! Make sure to take a record of these guilds. Once the throne is mine, I will give these guilds proper punishment."

Sizhad simply smiled without giving a response. They heard a knock on the door.

"Who is it?!" Sizhad asked.

"It's me, Giddo," the voice from outside replied.

"Enter," Sizhad uttered, which displeased Boron. Sizhad should have asked his permission first before letting anyone enter the room.

The door was opened. A thin yet muscular dwarf stood before the opened door.

"What is it?" Sizhad asked.

"I will need to speak to you, sir... in private," Giddo answered.



Sizhad turned to Boron and said, "Please excuse me, Vice President Boron." He then stood and walked away without waiting for Boron's approval.

"Hmph," Boron harrumphed distastefully. If he didn't need Sizhad to be the bridge between him and the Liguritutum's force, he would have shown this outworlder what it meant to disrespect him. That's okay, once he sat on the throne, he would show all those who had looked down on him. Put them all in their places. He couldn't wait for that day to arrive.

"What's wrong?" Sizhad asked Giddo after they were outside.

"Our members noticed some players trying to get into contact with the ministers in our camp," Giddo answered. "It is probably an attempt from the opposite side of the faction quest World Maker warned us about."

"Have you tagged those players?" Sizhad asked.

"We can only identify a few. They seemed to be from the same guild, Corporate United. They are a guild based in Themisphere but they have a considerable number of members in this country as well."

"Take our members and eliminate all the Corporate United members in this city," Sizhad commanded.

"Do we need to go to such extremes? It is only a suspicion. They might be doing something unrelated," Giddo said.

"It is better to kill a few innocents than to let a guilty man go," Sizhad replied.

"Very well. However, Corporate United hasn't done anything that wronged Boron's camp. The native soldiers will arrest our people if we just attack their members in broad daylight."

"Then do it covertly. I don't think our members are strangers to that, but make sure they know it is us who do the deed. This should warn them about crossing us. If they still don't back off, capture and drag them out of the city before executing them. This should show them we don't f\*ck around."

"Understood," Giddo said.

\*

Inside a VIP room at a tavern in Doghbarum, Grace, David, and Paytowin were sitting opposite Assistant Manager Ironhand from the Corporate United.

Grace had stopped her martial arts training to join the effort in dealing with the crisis in Palgrost. She originally wanted to join Jack but Jack would be joining his army after meeting Sangrod's emperor. Jack wanted to increase his army's movement speed using his Runestone of Marching. Following Jack around in the army served no purpose. Jeanny asked her to come help in Palgrost instead.

After arriving, Jeanny paired her up with Paytowin and sent the two to meet David in Doghbarum on a secret mission to aid the Corporate United in an attempt to weaken Boron's rebellion.

The three were now listening to Ironhand's summary about the faction quest.