

World 1551

Chapter 1551: Fighting the Herald, Again!

When it came to the second half, everyone went all out to destroy as many supply carts as possible. They wouldn't be able to deal much damage to the Herald, anyway. The bonus scores for hitting the Herald didn't have a requirement. They would still get the bonus scores even if they caused only 1 damage.

Hence, the five who had Hope's Sanctification helped the others to destroy the supply carts. Those five destroyed only eight supply carts. After that, they helped deal damage to the supply carts but left the finishing blow to the others.

Jack used his Lightning God Barrage and Lightning God Incarnation here. He destroyed eight supply carts in a short time with those two divine skills. He then helped the others to destroy as many supply carts as possible.

Everyone outside the five with Hope's Sanctification destroyed at least sixteen supply carts in this manner. Those sixteen supply carts worth 80,000 scores. If they successfully hit the Herald once, which netted them 30,000 scores, they only needed another 10,000 scores. These scores should have been gathered from killing the black soldiers earlier. In this way, they should have no problem getting the legendary equipment.

Jack used Reset and gathered with the others when the Herald started taking action. As before, they advanced together and Jack used his cloak's Elemental God Barrier in its fire form when the Herald cast Hell Inferno.

Luckily, the Herald didn't remember the previous battle. This simulation was based on the original record from the past. It didn't record every run done by participants of the dungeon. So, the same move that was successful in the previous run still worked in this run.

The Herald was engulfed by Hope's Light. But same as the previous run, the Herald also managed to protect himself with the Chaos Armor.

Once Hope's Light ended, he found a golden eastern dragon flying toward him. At the same time, multiple ranged attacks were coming his way. The golden dragon was Jeanny's rune technique, Divine Dragon Spear. She formed it with the help of Jack's Superior Acceleration.

The others also attacked a split second before the Hell Inferno ended, based on John's cue. He had memorized the timing of the Hell Inferno and the Herald's exact position. This gave the Herald no chance to retaliate.

The Herald cast Teleportation to dodge all those attacks. When he reappeared, Jack also appeared next to him a split second later. With his enhanced mana sense due to his mana affinity talent, he could quickly detect where the Herald had teleported to and used the same spell to get close.

He then slammed his rune technique, which had also been completed with the help of Superior Acceleration, at the unsuspecting Herald. White flames burst out of the Herald's body.

The Herald felt the pain from Jack's Infernal Cleansing Flame, but not as intense as it should be due to his Chaos Armor. He still could concentrate enough and retaliated by using the exploding flame lance, which pierced and dragged Jack away.

That Jack was just a clone. Two other Jacks were heading the Herald's way with Jeanny's golden dragon.

The Herald dual-cast in response. An arrow came and hit him from his blind spot. One of the two spell formations above his hand was shattered. This was not because the Herald lost his concentration. This was because the arrow was Fierce Flame's Disrupting Shot.

Everyone spread out once they unleashed their ambush attack at the end of Hell Inferno. This was so the Herald's AOE spell couldn't hit everyone at the same time. Fierce Flame had moved into a position behind the Herald. She was very satisfied that she managed to avenge her previous failure by hitting this Herald.

She used Chaotic Arcane Shot and became a human gatling gun. She opened fire without restraint, but her arrows were stopped by the Herald's second spell. Multiple flaming shields revolved around the Herald, blocking any incoming attacks.

Fierce Flame then found herself engulfed by fire. She had been hit by the Herald's Immolation spell.

Even though Immolation was not a high-level spell. It was cast by a being with the highest grade. Fierce Flame's class wasn't a durable one. She was killed by this one spell. She was again the first one to go, but she at least had landed her hit. Her task was done.

The flame shields around the Herald stopped the attacks from the two Jacks and the golden dragon while the Herald prepared another spell. At the same time, John's multitude of minions, Brave King, and Jet's pets surrounded the Herald. Terras, Spark, and Jack's golden wolves were also in the mix.

The Herald tapped his staff into the ground. A huge runic symbol appeared on the ground and the gravity above that symbol was inverted. All those minions were lifted into the air. He also completed his spell and cast Chaos Black Hole in the middle of the floating crowd in the air.

Leavemealone's Fire God Barrage came then. The flame shields blocked the fireballs but their AOE explosion still hit the Herald. Jack also sent Lightning God Barrage from above.

The Herald ignored the damage from these divine skills. Even with his body still burning from the white flames, he concentrated on casting his ultimate spell, the Second Sun.

Under the inverted gravity around him, no one could approach him. He ignored all the ranged attacks. This was also the chance Domon and Jet used to score their one hit. Domon used Ki Wave. Jet had his silver griffin, which was still in agony from being burned by the Chaos Black Hole, to use its wind darts.

The only one who hadn't landed any attack was Giant Steve. He, unfortunately, didn't possess any range attack.

The Herald's Second Sun was completed. The sun appeared above, burning everyone with its glow.

Jack used his Lightning God Incarnation then. His lightning form could not resist the pushing force of the inverted gravity, but the final attack from this lightning form could. He consciously triggered this final

attack. Using this final attack would cause him to lose his lightning form, but stopping the Second Sun was more important at the moment.

Spark also used its finishing mode. Its finishing mode was slightly different from before. Before, it detonated everything in its vicinity. Now, it turned into a giant piercing sword that flew a distance away before detonating. This effectively turned the finishing mode into a ranged assault.

Spark could use mana manipulation. Its finishing mode had a very powerful push. Empowered by mana manipulation, it resisted the force from the inverted gravity and the Chaos Black Hole and rushed toward the Herald together with Jack who used the final attack of his Lightning God Incarnation.

Therras also fired its earth core bomb from above.

Jack's other clone used supreme dragon form and unleashed Soul Breath. He also cast Time Lock. The Herald's Teleportation spell was off cooldown already. Jack didn't want to risk the Herald escaping this combined assault. He also didn't forget to use his weapon's skill, Soul Mark, to increase the damage the Herald suffered.

These four explosive attacks landed on the Herald. The force was so devastating that it forced the Herald's hold over the sun to waver. The second sun fizzled out of existence.

Chapter 1552: Everyone Landing a Hit

The Second Sun was gone but the Chaos Black Hole remained. It was now in its final phase where it imploded and caused instant death to everything within its scope, which were all the minions still stuck in the air, including Therras and dragon-form Jack.

Dragon Jack used Gold Dragon Vitality. He was exempted from the instant kill but he still received a large amount of damage from the implosion.

Only Dragon Jack and Jeanny's golden dragon remained in the air. The golden dragon was not alive so it wasn't affected by the instant death. Without the pulling force from the black hole, Dragon Jack and the golden dragon flew back down.

The Second Sun was removed almost as soon as it was conjured, so no one suffered significant damage. Without the reverse gravity zone around the Herald, the melee players advanced.

Domon, Leavemealone in his tiger form, Jet in his form, Jeanny, Giant Steve, and two of John's summons rushed in at this time. John's two summons were ones he kept behind because he suspected the Herald would be able to mass-kill the first batch of melee combatants.

The two summons were from his special class. One was the Dire Alligator. It was a large gator with metallic armor and six legs. The second summon was a goliath with thick red armor covering its entire body. It was called Seaspawn. Its appearance was a humanoid crustacean creature with gigantic shrimp claws for hands. Anyone could see these two monsters were extremely durable.

John still had another summoning spell after his Marine Keeper class reached level 70. This spell summoned a water serpent. This water serpent was now floating beside him as it shot waterjet from its

mouth. This water serpent joined John and Paytowin who attacked the Herald from a safe distance. Grace was also at the back using healing spells to aid the others.

Jack's true body who had lost his lightning form was next to the Herald. He activated Lightning God Suit and was currently using his sword art. The living flame shields were already gone after the final assault from Lightning God Incarnation, but the Herald was not paralyzed due to his Chaos Armor. His one hand conjured a magic shield while his other hand cast a spell.

The herald received some slashes from Jack, but those slashes didn't bother his concentration. His spell was completed and numerous fiery tentacles burst from the ground. These tentacles struck the approaching combatants and tried to entangle them.

The fiery tentacles couldn't entangle Jack due to his Lightning God Suit, but they struck him and forced him away from the Herald.

Domon executed Death Carrying Cyclone with his glaive already transformed into tiger armament, enhanced by Ki Weapon, and empowered by mana manipulation. Even with all those enhancements, he could barely cut those tentacles. To make matters worse, the tentacles quickly regrew. Domon was forced back.

If even Domon was having trouble getting through, the others had an even worse time. Giant Steve had it the worst. He was entangled by the tentacles and out of everyone, only he still hadn't landed a single hit.

"Haon, Steve, let's do it!" Jack exclaimed.

They had known that Giant Steve would have the hardest time getting the hit, so they had devised a strategy specifically for Giant Steve before entering this legacy dungeon. Leavemealone had purposefully advanced close to Giant Steve, and Giant Steve advanced to where Jack was located.

Jack used his weapon's skill, World Splitter. A pure light cut across the field in the Herald's direction. All the fire tentacles on the light's path were severed. It also hit the Herald and caused some damage.

Jack's purpose was not to wound the Herald but to open a path. They could now move more freely without the fiery tentacles constantly trying to hit them.

While these fiery tentacles were still regenerating, Haon used his Nine Yin Abyssal Finger. This martial art could penetrate almost anything. All the still-regenerating tentacles in his way were shredded to embers. These tentacles lost their ability to regenerate.

Jack used his Nine Yin Phantom Sword and cut the tentacles binding Giant Steve. He was now able to use this ancient art every two minutes. He understood now that the reason he was unable to do the art as often as he wished was not because of a secret cooldown. It was simply because his body was still adapting to the Nine Yin energy. This energy was very peculiar and used unusual mana. He believed once his body adjusted, this secret cooldown would disappear.

After unshackling Giant Steve, Jack used Flame Strike at the big guy. Giant Steve was ready. He placed his shield behind him and received Jack's Flame Strike. Giant Steve received damage, but the strike also sent him flying through the path opened by Leavemealone.

Leavemealone's Nine Yin Abyssal Finger pierced forward but the Herald dodged the ancient art with Flash Step. Leavemealone then found himself unable to move. He had been held by Telekinesis. But the opening was enough for Giant Steve to slip forward and use Shield Bash at the Herald. The Herald received minuscule damage but was forced back. The Herald's mouth opened and Chaos Breath poured out.

Giant Steve was swallowed by the Chaos Breath. He might have possessed high defense and resistance, but the Chaos damage from the breath bypassed his resistance. He had also suffered damage from Jack's Flame Strike, this Chaos Breath took out his remaining HP. He didn't despair though, he had already achieved his objective of landing a hit.

Now that everyone had landed a hit, all that was left was just scoring as much damage as possible. Jack rushed forward, using Soul Asura and Dances of the Brave to cut through the tentacles. The tentacles might keep regrowing but he had way more swords than an average person could wield. The speed of his cutting matched the speed of the tentacles regrowing.

Yet, he was stopped before he reached the Herald. A large fiery symbol appeared around him. The fiery symbol couldn't lock Jack's body due to the Lightning God Suit, but Jack also couldn't advance further. It was as if he was stuck in place. He could move his limbs around but couldn't escape the spot.

He still had another clone. Dragon Jack dove down using Wind Jet and slammed into the Herald. Jeanny's golden dragon followed behind him. When the dragon almost hit, the Herald finally cast Teleportation.

The Herald didn't want to use the spell because his position was quite protected due to the fiery tentacles around him. Now that he teleported away, he was outside of the area covered by those tentacles. He didn't have a choice. He could sense the danger from Jeanny's golden dragon.

Yet, as soon as he reappeared, he sensed danger again from right behind him. He turned and saw blurry images of blades, he then felt himself getting cut uncountable times.

Domon was coincidentally near where the Herald had teleported to. He didn't waste the chance. He performed Soul Pursuit Hurricane before following up with Tiger Ki Strike.

Domon's stats might not be exceptional, but his mana manipulation was. The Tiger Ki Strike was enough to send the Herald stumbling back. Domon even aimed so the direction was toward where the Herald had come from. Due to this, the Herald could finally not evade Jeanny's golden dragon.

The dragon entered the Herald's body and ravaged him from the inside.

Chapter 1553: Next Time

Golden spears started stabbing out of the Herald's body. He received damage every time that happened. His Chaos Armor mitigated the pain as it did when Jack's Infernal Cleansing Flame was burning his body, but it was still painful.

The Herald uttered a roar and a dark aura burst out of his body.

"Demonic possession...?!" Jack uttered. The visual cue was similar but the Herald's one was slightly different. It might be an evolved version of the skill.

With the golden spears coming in and out of the Herald's darkness-covered body, the Herald instead looked more intimidating. Several torrents of dark energy exploded from the Herald's two hands.

These torrents were ranged attacks and were very fast. They also hit multiple targets and dealt Chaos damage. Dragon Jack, Jet, and Jeanny who were rushing over were hit by these Chaos torrents. Domon managed to dodge several torrents while moving away but the torrents were just too many and he was too close. He ended up getting hit as well.

These torrents were continuous streams. They weren't a single-hit attack. Once they landed on a target, these torrents stuck on that target and dealt repeating damage every second. To make matters worse, these torrents were not a skill. They were the Herald's standard attacks under the effect of demonic possession, which meant they had no cooldown.

"Shit! He still has this up his sleeve," Jack cursed. His true body was still trapped by the fiery symbol.

"He must be getting desperate," John said. "Keep the pressure!"

"What pressure? We are getting slaughtered!" Jack said.

Jet, Jeanny, and Domon couldn't endure the Chaos damage for long. They also couldn't free themselves from the torrents. They succumbed. When Jeanny died, the golden spears continued to ravage the Herald. It didn't end even when its owner was gone.

Dragon Jack was still alive because of his high HP. He had to fly until he was more than sixty meters away from the Herald before the torrents let him go. His HP was critical by then. Grace and Peniel hurriedly healed him.

Leavemealone was freed from Telekinesis when the Herald was hit by Jeanny's Divine Dragon Spear. The Herald's fiery tentacles were also gone. Leavemealone tried to get to the Herald with John's two summons, but the chaos torrents also came at them.

Leavemealone was unable to get near due to the chaos torrents. John's two summons ignored the damage from those torrents. They endured the torrents and pushed forward.

"Follow behind!" John called. The Seaspawn and the Dire Alligator had very high HP. They were ideal tanks.

Dragon Jack flew back. Together with Leavemealone, they used the Dire Alligator and Seaspawn as meat shields. Meanwhile, John, Paytowin, and John's water serpent continued sending long-range attacks at the Herald.

The Herald used one hand to maintain his dark torrents. His other hand was casting a spell.

"It's his flame bloom spell!" John recognized the spell formation. It was the spell that conjured the huge lotus of flames.

"We have to get away!" Jack said to Leavemealone. The last time the Herald cast this spell, it hit the area around the Herald.

"The flame bloom doesn't always hit around the caster. It is a spell that can be cast to an area a distance away," Peniel informed.

John also knew this fact due to his Hope's knowledge. He couldn't tell if the Herald targeted Jack and Leavemealone who were nearby or he, Grace, and Paytowin who were further away. He couldn't do anything for Jack and Leavemealone, but he could do something on his side.

"Grace, Paytowin, come to me!" He called.

However, the Herald's casting was completed before those two arrived at John's side.

"Crap! His casting is faster than the last time!" John cursed. He had memorized the Herald's casting time from their last fight, but this one was significantly faster than then.

It turned out it was because of the Herald's evolved demonic possession. Some evolves had similar effects and it was difficult to differentiate even if John and Peniel knew about them. The one the Herald had also granted him increased casting speed aside from turning his standard attacks into Chaos torrents.

The fire lotus appeared where John was at. John couldn't wait for Grace and Paytowin. The water serpent next to him coiled around him, forming a water shell just as the fire lotus bloomed.

Grace and Paytowin were hit by this fire lotus. Grace tried to use her Nine Yin Devouring Palm, but she had still not mastered this ancient art. She seemed to survive for a while by absorbing the flame but she couldn't convert the destructive mana that entered her fast enough. Both she and Paytowin were killed by the fire lotus.

John survived but his water serpent was gone. He didn't have the time to celebrate his survival, because a flame lance came at him once the fire lotus vanished. This was the same flame lance that killed the first Jack. The spell had a short cooldown.

John was dragged away and killed by the ensuing explosion. His dire alligator and Seaspawn vanished when he was gone. Without those tanks, the Chaos torrents assailed Jack and Leavemealone.

"F*ck this...!" Jack cursed. He was too close. His HP was also not full. He wouldn't survive flying away from the Herald's Chaos torrent's range. So, he rushed forward. He used the Realm of Sword God as he advanced. Countless swords rained on the Herald. The Herald ignored all these swords and just continued firing his Chaos torrents.

Leavemealone also rushed forward.

Both of them used their Nine Yin martial arts. Their attacks hit but they didn't stagger the Herald. The herald had cast another spell, Flame Wrath. Multiple fireballs were launched at them.

Leavemealone already died before these fireballs even arrived. His HP couldn't bear the Chaos torrents for long.

Dragon Jack was raining his sword art to reap as much damage as possible from the Herald. He didn't bother dodging the fireballs. He was killed by the fireballs when the final sword from his Realm of Sword Got pierced into the Herald from above.

Only Jack's true self was left, but he was still helplessly trapped by the fire symbols. The Herald teleported in front of Jack. He lifted his hand slowly while staring at Jack.

"Next time then, mother*cker," Jack said before he was bombarded by the Chaos torrents.

Chapter 1554: God of Courage's Sword

The ten were at the reward space. Fierce Flame was sulky because she was again the first to die, but she felt better after looking at the scores she got. She was able to get a piece of the legendary equipment. Not only her, but everyone could get one this time.

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Storm Wind, scores: 171,300

Jeanny, scores: 155,048

John, scores: 150,234

Paytowin, scores: 142,800

Leavemealone, scores: 134,731

Unequaled Grace, scores: 133,370

Domon Fei, scores: 131,400

Fierce Flame, scores: 128,002

Jet Hung, scores: 122,291

Giant Steve, scores: 120,910

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"Dude... How did you get your scores so high? A little bit more and maybe you will get the 200,000 scores needed for that full set of legendary armor," Paytowin remarked when he saw Jack's scores.

"Well, we did grind the Herald to below half of his life," Jack said. "We probably don't need to wait until we all have legendary equipment before we beat that Herald."

"Hm... I seriously doubt that," Paytowin said. They managed to devise a way to counter the Herald's second sun, but the evolved demonic possession was not something that could be easily dealt with. They were killed by standard attacks once the Herald used that spell. How to bloody stop standard attacks?

"Anyway, let's get us legendary equipment first," Jet said. He was very eager to get one. He interfaced with the exchange list when it was Jack who usually did it first. Jack didn't mind. He waited behind for his turn.

Jet only had enough scores to get armor equipment, so he chose chest armor. The others who had scores below 150,000 scores did the same, getting armor equipment, except for Grace who chose a legendary accessory. A ring which cost 130,000 scores.

When Jack asked her why she didn't get armor, she replied, "The set armor I wear is sealed equipment given by God Greed. Once I reach level 80, the seal will be released and they will return to their original state which is legendary grade."

"Good lord...," Jack uttered. "We have to go through all this trouble just to get one piece of legendary equipment. You will get a full set of them just by leveling up..."

Everyone except Jack had increased one level from the exp points rewarded following the scores. Grace was now level 79. She needed only one more level-up.

"For your information, my mace here is also a sealed weapon from God Greed," Grace said.

"Sister Grace, do you mind putting a good word for me to your God?" Paytowin asked.

"Aren't you already have Ghost Callan? Go and ask him! Be careful or you will be branded traitor by the Council of Virtus," Jack said.

"I'm just kidding," Paytowin said.

Jack approached Grace afterward and said, "Grace, if only for me, maybe you can ask God Greed to give me some legendary armor? No, no... Even if only lending them to me is fine as well."

The others gave Jack a disgusted look. If the guy saying it was not Jack, they would have given him a boot to the butt. Grace decided to not entertain Jack's request.

Leavemealone already had legendary chest armor from the previous run, he took legendary battle bracers this time. As a battle monk, his arms could be used to parry. These bracers would mitigate more damage the next time he parried an attack.

Both Jeanny and John had enough scores to get a legendary weapon. They did so.

Jeanny chose a legendary-grade spear. With the chest armor from the previous run, she now had two pieces of legendary equipment. She replaced Abdu's spear with this new spear. Abdu's spear would be placed into the guild warehouse for guild members to exchange using their guild contribution points.

John chose a legendary magic staff that facilitated the summoner class. The weapon gave all his summons an additional boost in stats and damage output. In addition, it also had an active skill that summoned a level 90 mythical-grade Emperor Lion.

"You know, for a legendary weapon. I would have expected it to let me summon an eternal-grade creature. This is such a letdown," John remarked.

"If you want that, I think you will need the magic staff that cost 170,000 scores," Jack said. It was now his turn and he was scrolling up the list.

"Do you want to get a legendary magic staff?" Jeanny asked.

"No, I'm getting another longsword," Jack answered.

"The God of Courage's Sword?" Peniel asked. "You can't feed that sword to your Storm Breaker."

"I know, but I can imprint it to my Magic Weapon," Jack said. "This way, when I use the Magic Weapon spell, I will be wielding two legendary swords."

Jack proceeded to exchange his scores for the God of Courage's Sword. A golden longsword descended from above. It had a cross-guard with the shape of a lion's head and two paws extended to both sides. Its pommel was a large jewel that glowed with rainbow colors.

The sword shone a bright golden radiance. Jack thought at first that this glow only accompanied the sword to give it a striking entrance. But after it landed in Jack's hand, the radiance persisted. The glow didn't seem to fade anytime soon.

'I don't need the Illumination spell with this sword around,' Jack thought amusingly. He used Inspect on this sword.

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God of Courage's Sword, level 80/99 (Legendary one-handed sword)

Physical damage: 1350

Attack speed 2

Indestructible. Bound to: Storm Wind

Strength +55

Every fifth successful hit is guaranteed to be a critical hit

If there are more than 10 enemies within a 100-meter radius, increases attributes by 50%, HP and stamina recovery by 100%, and all skills' cooldown is reduced by 25%

Avenging Spirit (Response skill): Each time an ally falls, heals 50% HP, overall damage is increased by 10% (up to 100%), and all attributes are increased by 20% (up to 200%). The damage and attribute increase last until the end of the battle.

God Annihilating Sword (Active skill): Deals 4000% light damage to a single target. Decreases target's defense by 50% for 2 minutes. Stuns the target for 3 seconds and inflicts Fatigue for 1 minute. Range: 100 meters. Cooldown: 3 hours.

Chapter 1555: Elayne's Growth

Same as Jack's current equipped regal outfit, this God of Courage's Sword also followed Jack's level. He didn't need to spend blacksmith materials to upgrade this sword.

The damage stat from this sword rivaled Jack's level 77 Storm Breaker. The God of Courage's Sword might be three levels higher, but Storm Breaker boosted the damage of the sword it fused with and it also had Orb of Eurus etched into it. This meant if he could fuse God of Courage's sword with Storm Breaker, Storm Breaker's damage stat would become even higher.

Unfortunately, that was not an option.

Each of God of Courage's Sword's abilities was also impressive. Others might think it was better to get a legendary magic staff, but he didn't regret getting this sword. He stored the sword for imprinting later.

When they came out of the legacy dungeon, Jeanny asked if they wanted to do the medium difficulty of the Ancient Battleground Legacy Dungeon. They wouldn't get any legendary equipment even if they killed the Herald, but they could get other items to help the other guild members.

Since they were already gathered, everyone agreed.

They again killed the Herald of the medium difficulty. No one got scores reaching 120,000 so nobody could afford legendary equipment, but they exchanged for various items under Jeanny and John's instructions to distribute among the core members.

Afterward, they also did the Hard difficulty of the Ice Throne Legacy Dungeon. Jack used his legendary-grade Runestone of Luck when they killed the boss. It dropped two Hearts of Ice, two bottles of Thousand-Year Wines, and several super-rare-grade exp pills.

Seeing these loots reminded him. He asked Peniel, "Why the Herald didn't drop anything when we kill him?"

"Every dungeon has different rules," Peniel explained. "You don't get any scores and exchange list from this dungeon, do you?"

Jack thought that made sense. The Hearts of Ice were given to Jeanny for building improved Ice Cannon Tanks, as were the exp pills, but he asked for one of the two Thousand-Year Wines.

The bottle was given to him without any fuss. Everyone else then rolled for the one remaining bottle. Leavemealone was the one who got it. The exp pills were also rolled among them, Jack didn't win any despite his crazy luck. He guessed his luck only worked when it had something to do with the world's game system.

Jeanny copied the Thousand-Year Wine from time to time when she had spare mana cores, but there were just too many core members to develop. Every wine they got from loot was a blessing.

Jack drank the wine on the spot. He still had twenty-six days before his human age was added another month, it was now reduced to eleven days.

Everyone lamented that they wouldn't be able to do another run of the Hard difficulty of the Ancient Battleground for some time. The five-day cooldown was coincidentally the day of the Outworlder Convention. After that, everyone would be busy with the coming war. It would be some time before they had the spare time to fight the Herald again.

Everyone dispersed to do their things. Grace asked Jack where he was going. Jack told him he was power-leveling his newest royal agent. He asked her if she wanted to join.

After a brief thought, she declined. If she joined, she would just slow Elayne's progress because the exp would be further divided. She had been training martial arts in the Space-time Chamber with the Cipher Flight members. She would resume training until the time when she left with the others for the Outworlder Convention.

After leaving the others, Jack teleported to Thereath and went to the Mage Academy. There, he used the magic furnace to imprint the God of Courage's Sword to his Magic Weapon spell. He received his Themisphere's King Sword back after the process.

He also received a notification after imprinting the sword, "Legendary grade weapon detected. The duration of your Magic Weapon is now doubled."

"Oh? It has such a hidden effect?" Jack turned to Peniel, who just shrugged. She was not aware of this mechanism.

"Wait, my max-leveled Magic Weapon has a duration of twenty minutes. The cooldown is Twenty-five minutes. If the duration is doubled, the duration is longer than the cooldown. I can recast the spell every time it runs out of duration!" Jack exclaimed.

Before this, he always had a five-minute gap where he had to fight with a sword and a magic staff. Now, he could dual-wield two swords all the time while still able to cast spells. This was a small change but the convenience was very welcomed. The fluidity of his fighting rhythm would be even better now.

Coming out of the mage academy, Jack transformed into Iamanorc and used the guild return scroll to Wind Island. From there, he rode Pandora.

It was already late afternoon by then. He had Pandora fly at full speed. Although the royal agent page inside his status window showed that Elayne was okay, he couldn't help but worry. The girl was alone in a hostile zone, after all. Now that he thought about it, he should have been firm with her and brought her to a safe place to wait for his return.

As he got nearer, he saw on his radar that Elayne's green dot had lots of red dots surrounding her.

"What the... F*ck! Did she get careless and go into the Volatile Firefly Ants' territory?" Jack cursed. He hurriedly had Pandora head there.

She saw it then. The uncountable Volatile Firefly Ants flew in the sky as they chased after a small pink figure.

Jack rushed over and was about to charge in but he stopped.

"Huh? Why do you stop?" Peniel asked.

Jack didn't answer. He just pointed ahead, telling Peniel to watch.

It was a fact that the Volatile Firefly Ants were chasing Elayne, but the girl didn't appear flustered. Her expression was calm. Her body moved in the air with the grace of a seasoned flyer even though she just learned the Fly spell not long ago. Her hands never leave her zither. Her music continued to play. Jack recognized the music. It was the Melody of Death.

The mass of Volatile Firefly Ants lost HP as they crowded around Elayne. Sonic darts shot from her zither every time she picked her zither's strings. These sonic darts struck the ants accurately and sent them flying back. These ants then exploded.

Elayne's sonic darts could now somehow trigger the ants' kamikaze detonation. Jack did sense peculiar mana accompanying those sonic darts.

When the ants almost caught Elayne, she used her Air Skate to get away. When her Air Skate was on cooldown, she used Sound Shield. Her sound shield was empowered by mana manipulation. The ants were unable to penetrate the shield. Some of the ants triggered their suicide explosion to break the shield but the shield persisted.

During some rare moments when both skills were on cooldown and she couldn't dodge. She smacked the ants away just as they touched her. Her timing was so precise that the ants did their kamikaze explosion without harming Elayne. She was copying Jack's technique.

After witnessing this, Jack understood then that Elayne didn't accidentally wander into the Volatile Firefly Ants' territory. She purposefully lured them out.

Chapter 1556: Power-leveling Continues

During that half a day when Jack left Elayne, the girl had increased another two levels. The speed by which she defeated the Volatile Firefly Ants was much slower than Jack, but during the time Jack was away, all the exp from the ants was received solely by her. There was no one else to share the exp points. Hence, her level still increased as rapidly as when Jack power-leveled her.

Elayne was now level 50. She was already eligible to join a war campaign, but Jack wanted her to be stronger before that.

She learned another music, spell, and skill, after becoming level 50.

The new spell was Teleport. With this spell, she had more options in dodging the ants' encirclement.

The new skill was Sound Cannon. When she used this skill, a powerful sonic boom blasted out. This sonic boom was like an invisible beam that destroyed everything in its path. The sonic beam traveled a distance of 180 meters away. Jack believed the original Sound Cannon only traveled 60 meters. It was due to her talent that the range of this skill was tripled.

As for her music, she had an easier time dealing with the Volatile Firefly Ants with this new music. Her new music was called Alluring Symphony. When this music was played, every monster who heard the music had a 5% chance of receiving Charmed status every ten seconds.

As a result, a small portion of the Volatile Firefly Ants turned on their comrades every ten seconds. These ants used their kamikaze detonation, killing their friends and themselves. The rate by which the ants were decimated increased the longer this music was in effect.

Jack continued to watch Elayne from the side as she dealt with the thinning ants. When it was down to just seven ants left, Elayne finally noticed Jack's presence. She had been so fully concentrating on the battle that she wasn't aware Jack was back.

This lapse caused her to let her guard down. She showed a surprised expression after seeing Jack and stumbled in the air when she realized the ants were dangerously close.

Jack acted then. He swung his sword using Wind Slash. Five wind energies swept forward. The wind energies traveled at a curved path. Jack used mana manipulation to further control their flight paths. One wind energy was able to hit up to two targets. All seven ants were sliced by these wind energies.

"Thank you, Your Majesty," Elayne came over to Jack and said after the situation was safe.

Jack gave her a stern stare.

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty. It's just that I want to see how well I do without Your Majesty's protection," Elayne said timidly.

Jack chuckled. He tapped the girl's head. "You seem mild but you are more hot-blooded than you appear. That is okay, but you have to be careful. Recklessness will get you into unnecessary trouble."

"I don't think you have the right to lecture her about that," Peniel remarked.

"You stay out of this," Jack scolded the fairy.

"Thank you, Your Majesty, for your understanding," Elayne said.

"By the way, what do you do with your sonic darts?" Jack asked. "The last time I saw you used them, your sonic darts were unable to cause those ants to detonate."

"When I fought the ants at close range, I used my mana sense to study their mana flow when they exploded. I instilled my sonic darts with mana and struck them at their body part where I sensed the explosion was triggered. I was trying to trigger their explosion deliberately. It took me several trial and error but I finally managed to get them right."

"Wow, you are truly gifted in mana manipulation," Jack complimented.

"Thank you for your praise, Your Majesty," Elayne said softly. "It all thanks to the tutelage of an old outworlder who accompanied me on the team you sent to help me level up."

"An old outworlder?" Jack asked.

"His name is Domon," Elayne answered.

Jack chuckled. He didn't know if Jeanny intentionally arranged for his grandfather to be a part of Elayne's power-leveling team, but Domon's tutor instinct must have been aroused when he noticed Elayne's gift in mana manipulation.

"Well, since I see that you can take care of yourself, I think we should go find a better grinding spot," Jack said. This place was fine, but as Elayne's level became higher, the exp points generated by these Volatile Firefly Ants became less. These monsters were only level 60, after all.

"But this next place will be dangerous, you have to promise to be careful and listen to my instructions. Is that clear?" Jack asked.

"I obey, Your Majesty," Elayne replied.

Jack nodded. She summoned Pandora. "Let us go to the underworld then," Jack declared.

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Jack spent the next three days in the underworld with Elayne. Before, he mostly used the place to grind draconic essences, but Peniel did inform him about several spots suitable for exp grinding. He brought Elayne to one of those spots.

This spot was one that he had never visited before, so he did not worry the underworld force traced him to this place.

At this place, they were again fighting insect-type monsters. The insect type was one that usually appeared in large numbers and had the least HP. For Jack who could annihilate monsters en masse, this type was the most suitable for power-leveling.

The place where they spent those three days was infested by three types of monsters. The most common was the demon ant. This demon ant was bigger than the Giant Ant that Jack fought a long time ago when he was still using basic class. These ants' bodies were covered by dark red metallic carapace.

These ants were fast and their bite packed a punch. Every bite had a chance to cause Poison status. They could also shoot acid pellets from their mouth. These demon ants were mostly level 70 to 75 special elites. They provided insufficient exp for Jack but gave an abundance of exp for Elayne.

Unlike the Volatile Firefly Ants, these demon ants didn't explode and kill themselves. Jack and Elayne had to slaughter them the normal way. This wasn't a problem, because the ants didn't have high HP. With Jack's insane damage output, he killed them almost as fast as he killed the Volatile Firefly Ants especially when all his skills were still available.

When those skills were on cooldown, his pace indeed became slower. But these demon ants had higher levels, so the average gain was evened out. The reason Jack brought Elayne to fight higher-level monsters was to hone her battle instinct. After seeing how she fought, Jack didn't think this was too early for her.

Jack also summoned Therras and Spark. Among the four of them, they made short work of the demon ants.

Chapter 1557: Everyone Departs for the Convention

The loot was another benefit of fighting the demon ants compared to the Volatile Firefly Ants. These demon ants dropped better loot, but not many excited Jack except for the mana cores and gemstones.

They also dropped some rare-grade equipment. Jack was collecting the robe armor to be fused using his Transformation Prism. All his unique-grade equipment had been donated to the guild for Jeanny to distribute. He had no use for them since the unique grade was the highest grade his Transformation Prism could fuse.

He was now collecting them again for Elayne. When he returned to do the Ancient Battleground Legacy Dungeon, he had taken out all the low-grade robe armors from the guild warehouse and fused them. He was now adding those to the newly gained gears from these demon ants.

The second type of monster at this place was less numerous but stronger. The monster was called Scorpilion. Their level range was around 75 to 80, and most of them were rare elites. They looked like a cross between a scorpion and a lion. Hence, the name. Jack supposed Wilted's monster design team enjoyed slapping two or several animals into one monster and called it a day. A simple but effective method. He did realize many past games also applied this formula.

The Scorpilion had the head and forelegs of a lion, and the rear half was a giant scorpion complete with its poison tail. This tail could not only dispense lightning-fast sting attacks, but it could also discharge poisonous spikes. The lion's head could unleash poisonous fumes that caused earth damage and also caused the Weakness status effect.

They were still not a match for Jack and his team.

The third monster type was the strongest that roamed that part. It was a Hell Beetle. they only encountered two during their time here. Both were level 80 mythical grades. These Hell Beetles were the size of a tank with the armor to match. They could shoot a stream of melting fire from its mouth and had a long horn that discharged electrical rays.

They had very high defenses and resistances. They could also fly and create stunning shockwaves.

Even though these Hell Beetles were usually accompanied by a horde of demon ants, they never appeared two at a time. Thus, all Jack had to do was engage the Hell Beetle and let Therras, Spark, and Elayne deal with the demon ants.

Then again, even if more Hell Beetles appeared at the same time, it was still no problem for Jack. Especially if he activated the Strength of Hope.

In those three days, Elayne leveled up seven times. She was level 57 now. Therras leveled up once to level 79. Jack sadly didn't gain any level. His current level took tons of exp to level up, especially since he divided the exp gains into his three classes.

Jack gained plenty of equipment dropped from all the monsters they farmed. From the dropped equipment, he managed to fuse two unique-grade equipment for Elayne. A shoulder piece and a boot. The Hell Beetle also dropped a unique-grade cloak which Jack gave to Elayne.

His accumulated mana cores now numbered 45,000. He only needed 5,000 more before he could summon another Archdemon Lord.

For the gemstones, he obtained several that allowed him to upgrade his Runestone of Duration to a super rare grade and his Runestone of Probability to a unique grade. His Runestone of Marching, Runestone of Spellcasting, and Runestone of Enhancement gained a few elemental energies but they were not enough for the runestones to level up.

Luckily, nothing colorful happened during these three days, either in the underworld or the upworld. Between Jeanny organizing the players to go to the convention and John organizing the Themisphere army for the offensive campaign, everything proceeded smoothly.

Jack sent Elayne back to the upworld and then sent her to the Brave Academy in Therimdell. Most of the players would be heading to the convention, so no one was available to power-level her. He could send her to do quests with his other royal agents but he figured she would gain more benefit by learning additional skills and spells. The Brave Academy was the perfect place to do that. She would still gain exp points in this Brave Academy, albeit not as bountiful as power-leveling.

On that day, the players started traveling toward the convention venue located between the Jagara and Khan regions. They teleported to the cities near the border and then went from there. It was said their number was staggering that the spectators at first mistaken them for the native army.

Jeanny and John joined these players. John had finished with the army arrangement and left the remaining matters to Emris and Duchess Isabelle. At the convention, there would be talks. John wanted to be there and made sure Master didn't sway a majority of players who were still oblivious to his true intention.

Jack himself had to deal with the quest concerning the league faction leaders. He didn't travel to Hydrurond where the trap was prepared, though. He went to the Order of Magi's hut. Going inside, he greeted Young Janus behind the desk.

"Mister Storm Wind," Janus greeted back.

"So... Is your true self decided to join Master Ragorth in Hydrurond?" Jack asked.

"Yes, he is on the way as we speak," Janus answered. "Aren't you going with the other outworlders to this convention arranged by the Liguritudum ruler?"

"I can depart tomorrow," Jack replied. "My steed is much better than the others had. I will spend today doing the challenges. If that's okay with you."

"Our door is always open to you," Janus said, before adding, "So long as you use your mage persona."

"Right, I'm sorry," Jack said, transforming into Unrivaled Arcaner.

"Nice disguise," Janus remarked. "You've never told me what item you use for your disguise. Don't you have one to transform you into a different race? In that way, you can join that operation in Hydrurond."

"I don't. My disguise cannot change my race," Jack lied.

Chapter 1558: Snooping Around

In a wilderness region within Hydrurond, a dilapidated hut stood on a rocky ledge. The ledge oversaw a vast tundra. Some sort of ruins were in this tundra. A lone figure was seen walking toward this ruin.

Inside the hut, a towering draconian stood by the window and watched the lone figure in the distance. He had the face of someone who had been through much hardship. A long scar decorated his face passing through his right eye which was covered by an eyepatch.

His large body was covered with white plate armor. A humongous greatsword hung diagonally on his back. The greatsword was even longer than his height.

The draconian sensed something from his back. He looked behind him as the space distorted. Janus walked out of that distortion. This was the real Janus, who was older than the ones Jack usually met.

The draconian's gaze remained on Janus.

"Master Ragorth, it has been some time," Janus greeted.

"It certainly is," Ragorth returned. This draconian was the leader of the League of Champions. "You didn't seem to age."

Janus' cheek went up in what seemed like a brief smile.

"I didn't know you are a descendant of the religious sect from the Eltis Shrine," Janus said as he came to the window and looked at the ruin in the distance.

"We can always be surprised by how many things we don't know about other people. Even from those who we think we are familiar with," Ragorth replied.

"I agree with you, Master Ragorth," Janus said. "Is that the bait?" He indicated the lone figure who had now entered the ruins of the Eltis Shrine.

"That's correct," Ragorth answered.

"Don't you find this plan a bit strange?" Janus asked.

"Why do you say so?"

"That bait might be pretending to be you out there, alone. But here you are, also alone. If the assassin happens to see you in this hut, aren't you still vulnerable?"

"... I'm not alone. You are here with me," Ragorth said.

This time, Janus did smile, albeit slightly. "But you didn't know if I would come," he said.

"No, I don't."

Janus leaned on the side of the window. His eyes continued to gaze outside. "So, we just wait here until something happens?"

"That's the plan," Ragorth said.

The two stayed like that, gazing out the window in silence. It was Janus who spoke again after some time.

"What do you make of the announcement by the Liguritudum Ruler?"

"Are you referring to that rubbish about him being the creator of the world?" Ragorth asked.

Janus nodded.

"I thought about it as what it is. Rubbish," Ragorth stated.

"It is always nice speaking to you, Master Ragorth. You are always so direct and so sure about everything."

"It is not by nature. I don't have the luxury to doubt myself in the heat of battle. Doing so will just open you up for mistakes."

"Then how sure are you of this plan? Do you think the assassin might show up?" Janus asked.

"... He probably already has. He might be studying the situation to see if it is truly an opportunity or a trap," Ragorth answered.

"Then I hope he doesn't take too long to decide," Janus said. "I still have other matters to attend to."

"As do I," Ragorth said.

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When Jack came out of the portal into the obelisk plaza, there were two Jacks instead of one. Both Jacks looked around and spotted the young Janus overseeing the plaza. He was coming at them.

"Magic clone spell?" Janus asked when he arrived.

"You recognized the spell?" Jack asked back.

"I am a partial head of the most renowned magic institution. Don't you think it will be weird if I don't recognize it?" Janus returned.

"My mistake," Jack chuckled.

"Why do you use the spell here?" Janus asked.

"We outworlders have a peculiar way to train mana manipulation. I want to continue training while my other self faces the challenges inside the obelisk."

"That is pretty confident. Don't you think you need this spell inside the challenges?"

"I don't plan to break new record. I'm just here to farm knowledge points, so I will be entering the low-difficulty stage."

Jack walked to the obelisk number 89 while his clone sat cross-legged on the floor. The one in front of the obelisk soon vanished into the challenge stage.

"Don't mind me," Clone Jack on the floor said. "I will be unresponsive for a while, so please don't be offended if I don't respond to your call."

Janus nodded. He was both fascinated and curious about Jack's actions. Jack closed his eyes and became still. Janus stood beside Jack trying to sense anything out of the ordinary. He sensed nothing. He stared at Jack and wondered how outworlders improved their mana manipulation by sitting and doing nothing.

What Jack was doing was not training mana manipulation. He was using his incorporeal state. His senses were now roaming around the space. He had come to this place several times. He understood that this place where the Order of Magi inhabited was a series of connecting pocket worlds, similar to the dimension Euphosine created to host her gruesome games.

However, they were also different. Jack's mana sense had further improved since then. In only a brief moment, he could sense that the dimension here was more ancient, more stable, and independent. It wasn't like Euphosine's dimension where she needed to constantly pump energy to maintain.

This dimension had no master. The members of the Order of Magi simply inhabited it. Janus or the faction founder, Majus, probably stumbled into this dimension by chance and made it their own.

Jack quickly identified the multiple exit nodes in this space. He went into one of these nodes and interfaced with the links between the pocket worlds. Trying to understand the dimension's structure.

Lucky for him, the Order of Magi didn't place any barriers between these worlds. The members were free to travel around. They had to be careful, though, because it was a huge maze. One could easily lose their way.

Jack didn't waste time. His Double Clone lasted only thirty minutes. He focused and expanded his consciousness as much as possible. He was trying to identify the nexus world.

Because this dimension was more stable, Jack found it in a shorter time than when he was in Euphosine's dimension. His improved mana sense also played a factor.

Once he did, he immediately returned to his body. He stood up just as another Jack came out of the obelisk.

"You did only one challenge today?" Janus asked when the two Jacks headed to the exit.

"I just remember I have something I need to do," Jack replied.

"In that case, see you again, Mister Storm Wind," Janus said. He watched the two Jacks walk into the exit portal. His eyes were contemplative, trying to understand what Jack was up to.

Chapter 1559: Suspicion

The two Jacks walked out of the Order of Magi's hut. They continued walking away and went into an alley. Inside the alley, they looked around to make sure that no one was following them. The Double Clone ran out of duration then. The two Jacks disappeared. Both of them were clones.

Half an hour ago, when Jack stepped into the portal into the obelisk plaza, he did several things while in transit. There was a one-second gap between the time he stepped into the portal and stepped out to the obelisk plaza.

During this one second, he cast multiple spells. He first used Dragon Eye to expressly cast his first spell, Superior Acceleration. Once accelerated, he cast Double Clone and then Invisibility on his real body.

When he came out of the portal, he quickly located Janus' position. While invisible, his real body used mana concealment and moved away from Janus.

His real body then waited until his incorporeal body found the nexus world before he went into the link between the pocket worlds. His invisibility lasted fifty minutes. He was still unseen moving between the pocket worlds when his two clones vanished outside.

He saw some other faction members, both natives and players, as he roamed between worlds. Normally, there would be more players than natives. This time, the players' number had significantly reduced. No doubt it was because of Master's convention.

Because he was also a member of the faction, he should be able to blend in once his invisibility ended, but he preferred that no one saw him. Luckily, fewer members were roaming around as he neared the nexus world. He paid attention to his radar and used stealth to avoid passersby when there was one.

He continued his journey. After some time, he felt weird. He should have arrived by now. He had walked for longer than he should have. He looked for a secluded place and went into the incorporeal state again. He found himself walking away from the nexus world.

He understood then. No barriers were set around the links between the pocket worlds, but some sort of illusory maze was placed around the nexus world. Without knowing the proper pattern of moving, one wouldn't reach the nexus world.

Jack was dejected. He didn't know the pattern. He also couldn't sense this pattern using his mana sense. The links seemed to just change randomly, sending him in a circle around the maze.

Since he didn't see any option, he just continued doing what he did. He walked through the maze. In intervals, he went into the incorporeal state to get his bearings. He spent hours doing this without success, but he didn't want to leave. He didn't know if he could fool young Janus again the next time he tried infiltrating this place. So, he persevered.

He was getting restless. He could end up spending a day trying to go through this maze. If he did, then he had no choice but to leave. He needed at least half a day to get to the convention venue.

As he was having the thought of giving up, he found himself in a place that he vaguely remembered. It was a hall with dark walls. He stopped and looked around the place. He remembered then. This was the place young Janus teleported him to when he brought the Eye of Illios.

There used to be a pedestal near where he stood, but Jack was sure this was the same hall from then. After thinking for a while, he walked toward the hallways Janus had led him to that last time.

He wasn't aware at the time, but probably Janus had brought him via the secret pattern to reach the nexus world, where the real Janus was located. He was now retracing the paths he had taken back then. Thanks to his high intelligence stat, he remembered the paths as if he had taken them just yesterday.

After going through a series of dark corridors, including the fenced wall where Janus had shown off the Ghost Form spell, he arrived at the large hall where he first laid eyes on the real Janus.

No one was around.

'Good, he is not back yet,' Jack thought in his mind.

"You think you can find anything here?" Peniel asked.

"That is the entire purpose of me sneaking into here," Jack replied. "Natives don't have our inventory system. They have to put their belongings somewhere. This should be the place where he is most likely to store his most valuable secrets."

"Are you sure it is him?" Peniel asked.

"I'm not. That's why I am here. To find proof of my suspicion... Which I hope I don't," Jack answered.

"If you don't find anything, then you will go back to square one," Peniel said.

"I know, but I still wish it isn't him," Jack said. "I still have to make sure, though."

Jack went through the place while conversing with Peniel. There weren't things to store stuff in this hall. No chest, no wardrobe, no drawer. Jack went around the hall quickly without finding anything. He was now standing at the center of the hall, confused about what to do next.

"So, what now?" Peniel asked.

"There should be someplace where he stores his stuff," Jack said. He is not willing to give up so soon. "For example, the Eye of Illios. No way he brings that thing everywhere he goes. He must put it somewhere with his other belongings."

"You want to try some of those corridors?" Peniel asked.

"There were several exits from this hall other than the one they entered from.

"... I don't know where those corridors take me too. They might send me out into the start of the maze again, for all I know," Jack said.

"Well, you won't get anywhere by staying..."

Jack stopped Peniel's words. "Do you hear that?" Jack asked.

"Hear what?" Peniel asked back, confused.

"Listen...", Jack said.

Peniel focused on her hearing. She didn't hear anything. She was about to say something before she heard it.

"It's like the voice of someone calling," she said.

"It's from that corridor!" Jack pointed. "Let's go."

The two went into the corridor the voice was coming from. The corridor was a linear path that took them to a chamber. Inside that chamber, a person was caged inside some sort of a force field. That person was the real Janus.

Chapter 1560: Wasted Operation?

Inside the hut near the Eltis Shrine, Ragorth and Janus were still waiting for something to happen.

"It has been hours," Janus said.

"It has...", Ragorth remarked.

"I guess it was a bad intel, after all," Janus said. He moved away from the window. "I still have important things to attend to. I guess we will just deal with this assassin business another time. Anyway, it's good seeing you, again Master Ragorth."

"The feeling is mutual," Ragorth replied.

Janus used an item that caused the air in front of him to shimmer. A portal appeared. Janus stepped into this portal and disappeared.

Once the portal was gone, someone emerged from the shadow in the corner. It was an ethereal covered in a hood and cloak.

"The intel is indeed bad. Where do you get this intel, you said? The Themisphere king? You shouldn't have been so trusting of outworlders," the hooded ethereal said.

"Gruff trusts him. I trust Gruff's judgment," Ragorth said.

"The fact is, they are wrong. There are so many opportunities for him to act. Your back is exposed to him in more than one account. If he is truly the culprit, there is no way he let those chances go."

"... He probably sensed your presence," Ragorth argued.

"Are you underestimating me?" The hooded figure's tone carried unmistakable dissatisfaction. "I might not be the leader of my faction, but I am the deadliest assassin there is."

"You might be the leader soon. I heard your faction elders are convening to appoint Assassins Guild's new leader."

"I have no interest in that position. I am an assassin, not a leader. My current focus is to pay back the a*shole who have made my faction lose face by assassinating our leader. I thought I would get that chance today. Such a pity it was just a waste of time."

"You are as peculiar as I remember, Hashi," Ragorth said. "Whether today is a waste of time, I am not so sure about it."

"Why do you say that?" Hashi asked.

"You are familiar with my sixth sense, don't you?" Ragorth asked in return.

"It's a unique version of danger sense. You are the only native who I know to have that skill," Hashi replied. "What about it?"

"Most of my survival can be credited to my sixth sense. It is similar to danger sense but more refined. While danger sense warns the owner of an incoming danger, the warning comes without a sense of direction. My Sixth Sense gives me a clear direction where the danger is coming from. It can even warn me if someone much stronger than me is nearby."

"Are you saying..."

"Although Janus and I can't be called friends, we met a lot in the past. We are always on par with one another, to the point that we are being mistaken as rivals. Nevertheless, I do try to not get left behind by him. I believe he felt the same. Thus, we are always on the same level."

"My Inspect informed me Janus is a level 90 mythical grade. The same as you," Hashi said.

"Don't be too trusty of your Inspect," Ragorth said. "A mage of his caliber has a way to mask his information."

"Are you saying he is much stronger than his information indicated?"

"I don't know... But all the time when he stood beside me, my sixth sense never stopped urging me to move away."

"... Okay. Maybe he is stronger than he appears. Maybe he has a fortunate encounter. That still doesn't mean he is the perpetrator of the assassinations."

"That's true," Ragorth said. "Nevertheless, do you mind putting surveillance on him?"

"To be honest with you, our faction has a short list of the most troublesome people to keep track of. He is on that list."

"I will compensate your faction for the trouble," Ragorth said.

"Mm... All right. Just because we are old friends, you know," Hashi said.

Ragorth chuckled. "Thank you, old friend."

Hashi sunk back into the shadow and Ragorth couldn't feel his presence anymore. Ragorth went out of the hut and made a hand signal. Several people hiding not far away came toward him.

This operation had born no fruit, but Ragorth didn't think it was all a waste. One thing he didn't tell Hashi was that his sixth sense could also sense bad intentions from nearby people. Though it was faint, he sensed it when Janus was next to him.

He felt the cold on his back for quite some time due to exposing his back to Janus. He had been fighting his survival instinct to maintain a steady pose throughout all those hours. Even so, Hashi was right. This didn't prove that Janus was the assassin.

Nevertheless, this incident put him as a person of interest. Ragorth talked with his people once they gathered. He gave them instructions to look into the Order of Magi.

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"Ma... Master Janus...?" Jack called. He took another look at the person inside the force field. It was indeed the real Janus. This one was not as young as the ones he saw frequently and not as old as the custodian at the mage academy.

"Mister Storm Wind! I called because I heard someone out there. I never expected it to be you. How do you come here?" Janus asked. His voice was muffled through the force field. But from this close, Jack had no problem hearing his words.

"Never mind me. Why are you imprisoned?" Jack asked. He sensed strong mana from the force field. He didn't dare touch it. "Who did this to you?"

"It's... It's a long story," Janus said. "We don't have the time for that. He can return at any time. You need to get out before that happens."

"Who? What do you mean?" Jack asked.

"There is no time! Go out and warn the others of this," Janus urged.

Jack's mana sense had been monitoring the room. He found the mana diagram regulating the force field. After a brief study, he said, "Not before I free you from here. I should be able to deactivate this diagram in around ten to fifteen minutes."

"You can?" Janus said with surprise.

"Hehe. My mana sense and mana manipulation had improved much since we last spoke," Jack said. "Sit tight. You will be out in no time."

Jack started working on the rune diagram. He noticed something as he moved the nodes around using his mana manipulation. There was a layer of energy below this rune diagram he was working on.

'There is another diagram in concealment!' He realized.

His mana sense was now advanced enough to notice, but not quick enough to warn him. The concealed diagram took effect. A surge of energy washed over him and forced his eyes to shut.

When he opened his eyes again, he found himself inside a force field similar to the one imprisoning Janus.

"Well, well. Look what the cat dragged in when the host was out."

Jack turned to the voice and saw another real Janus entering the room.