

World 171

Chapter 171: Rumor Of Big Guilds Meeting

Before Jack went up to ambush Goliath and The Real Man, he had cast Body Double. During the entire endeavor, he had controlled his doppelganger to run towards the capital. The copy created from his Body Double skill could last five minutes, hence he had been keeping a tab on the time. He let go of The Real Man when it was ten seconds left before his skill expired.

Unfortunately, his hostage could not let go of his grudge and decided to kill him, so he took him out instead. When Goliath charged at him, he finally switched place with his copy at the last second before the skill expired. The skill ended once he traded place with his copy.

He reappeared at the place where his doppelganger was a moment before. He looked at his surroundings and checked his map, he was actually ahead of Bowler and the others, so he decided to stay at his place and wait for them.

He could imagine the clueless expressions from the members of Warriors of Solidarity who were charging at him, or maybe they ignorantly thought that they had killed him when he disappeared into thin air? No, the others maybe, but the one called Goliath was not your regular player. He was one of the more well-known players amongst the Warriors of Solidarity.

Jack was still amazed by the fact that Goliath had managed to detect his attack at the last second when he ambushed the big fellow. If they fought with balanced stats, he was not confident he could win that easily against the giant.

Three tiny figures appeared on the horizon as the three green dots approached him on his map. He could see Bowler, Fierce Flame, and The Man running in his direction. When they got nearer, they were taken aback when they saw Jack.

They had seen his dot disappeared from their map and reappeared somewhere in front of them. They had difficulty understanding the phenomena and thought that maybe there was a glitch in the map system. But here Jack was, standing right in front of them. The guy even looked like he had been waiting for them for quite some time already.

"How do you...," Bowler was at a loss.

"Magic," Jack replied with a grin.

Bowler rolled his eyes at Jack for not telling them his secret, but Jack had been honest in fact. He indeed used a magic skill from his Mage class.

"Haha! I admire you more and more, boss!" The Man laughed without restraint.

"Let's go back to the city," Jack said.

On their way back, Jack asked them what exactly had happened. The Man and Bowler recited to him the events that had brought them to the woods.

"It was lucky that you arrived when you did," Bowler said. "We would have been a goner if you arrived any later."

"Well, it looks like you guys will have to be more careful in the future," Jack said. "It's unlikely they will be letting this slide, now that I have killed their leader."

"You killed The Real Man?" The Man asked.

"Yes, he forced my hand," Jack answered.

"Well, serve him right, that deceiving prick!" The Man uttered.

"He won't be able to find us so easily in the city," Bowler said.

"But he can post some men at the gates and called his friends whenever we go out of the city," Flame reminded.

"For the time being, maybe it's better if you guys stay in the city and do quests that can be completed within the capital. If there is a need to go out, then you should do it together. Try to find out if anyone is following you and take them out before their friends arrived."

The Man nodded, "guess that's all we can do at the moment. Damn that scheming prick! Ever since that boy was put in charge, the Warriors of Solidarity is getting off track day by day. They started to scheme for God's sake! Real men don't scheme! We fight if we don't like you, we yell and curse when we are angry, and we will never desert you if you are our brothers, but that boy just does not respect the values which have defined the guild at the start anymore... He is even involved in the scheme to unite most of the powerful guilds in the city to assert more control on the other players."

"What scheme?" Jack was intrigued by his last sentence.

"You haven't heard?" The Man asked back.

"No, I've been busy with my quest the past few days."

"There were talks on the street, about one of the top guilds had been arranging for a meeting with other prominent guilds in the capital. From the look of it, they were planning to make some big waves. The Warriors of Solidarity is among the guilds that would be in the meeting."

"When will this meeting be held?"

"Not sure. My group isn't among those invited. I assume The Real Man has something to do with that, but I reckon it will be within these coming few days."

"Do you know which guilds will be involved in this?"

"Only rumors, nothing to be sure of."

"I know one big guild which is not involved," Bowler joined in the conversation.

"Oh? Which one?"

"White Scarfs"

"You sure are buddy-buddy with them to know about that. But how come? Aren't them the biggest guild at the moment?"

"They are just biggest in term of member counts, probably because most of the players that came to this city were from Bay City, which was their base of operation. But in terms of expert counts, they are rather lacking."

"That still doesn't explain why they are not involved. They are big enough to make an influence in this city."

"In that case, it's probably due to the guild that is rumored to have initiated the meeting," The Man said.

"Who?"

"Death Associates. Words are they got a beef with the White Scarfs."

"Well, then we are partly responsible for that," Flame commented.

"This has nothing to do with us anyway, let the guilds sort it out between them," Bowler said.

"Don't say that," The Man disapproved. "When those with influence start to band together and make some rules, they will affect all of us. The worst thing is we have no say in it, and they will force their rules on us since they have the power. This freedom that we enjoyed right now will not last long, once those on top learn about the rules of the game, they will start to use them to their advantage and left us small people with only leftovers."

"In other words, it will be better for us small people if they do not band together?"

"That's the sum of it, or the alternative best we can hope for is the ones on top will not be so selfish and will still consider the needs of those small guilds and independent players."

"I think that's a bit unrealistic hope."

"We can also have all the small guilds and independent players band together to take them on! The total number of independent players easily outnumber those top guilds," Bowler exclaimed.

"That is also unrealistic," Jack countered. "Those independent players chose to be independent because they do not want to be bothered by all these power struggles. Unless those big guilds had proven to act unreasonably and abused their freedom in a big way, it's unlikely that they will give a damn."

The Man shrugged, "there is nothing we can do about it then, let's just hope for the best."

They continued to chat on the way back, but Jack was deep in thought about the rumor of that meeting. If the balance of power amongst the existing guilds were shifted to one side, it would certainly affect the way they live here. In the past, it was still ok since it was just a game, if they didn't like it, they could just quit and try another game. But here, they could not quit. They did not know how even if they wanted to. Was there really nothing he could do about this situation?

Chapter 172: Divine Being

When they got near to the city gate, there was a row of eleven men standing in wait. When they made eye contact with Jack and the others, their expression turned savage.

"Friends, our enemies had appeared! Let's avenge our leader! For Warriors of Solidarity!" One of them shouted.

The Man laughed, "idiots," he said.

When the eleven men were about to charge forward, they heard yelling from their backs. They turned around and saw six Fighters rushing at them.

"Your men?" Jack asked.

"Yep!" The Man replied before using Charge skill and crashed into the middle of the group from Warriors of Solidarity. His underlings arrived at the same time.

As the two groups were tussling, Bowler tossed a few spells to assist, while Fierce Flame shot arrows continuously with her bows.

Archer, Jack thought as he glanced at Fierce Flame. He would need to ask Peniel about this class' skills, in case if he met an opponent with that class in the future.

Jack looked at the two groups fighting, he didn't see the need to involve himself. This group from Warriors of Solidarity clearly were just a bunch of newbies, unlike the elites at the woods. Despite them outnumbering The Man's group, they were still at a disadvantage. In addition to Bowler and Flame's harassment, their enemy soon ran away with tails between their legs.

Out of the eleven that came to intercept them, four ran away into the city, seven lost their lives. Several low-level normal equipment scattered on the ground after their corpses vanished. The guards that kept watch on the gate did not take any action to interfere. As long as they didn't create too much disturbance that blocked others from entering the city, the fighting outside was none of their concern.

"Hahaha! What a bunch of jokers!" The Man exclaimed in high spirit. His people only lost a few HP, without any casualty. After picking up the dropped equipment, they went into the city.

They noticed the four that ran away were standing at one side and glared at them.

"What? Do you want to continue? Let's go out and have a few more rounds!" The Man uttered.

The four's faces went red from the provocation. "If you dare, wait until sir Goliath is back. We will take you on!" They retorted back.

"Hah! You jokers can only gang up on people. Don't think I will get tricked again! Everyone will learn how you agree on a duel but instead go back on your words and use numbers to fight. The Warriors of Solidarity, pah! You have truly embarrassed your piers!"

The Man went on to scold the four, his loud voice and vehement tone did not allow the four to make a retort. It also caused other passing players to turn to them. Since the four also knew about how their leader had shamelessly schemed on that duel, they had no comeback to say. They soon scurried away with reluctance.

Jack chuckled, he then said to the others, "well, now since you are no longer in danger, please excuse me. I still have matters to attend to."

"Thanks a lot for your help, boss! You should come by to the Raven's Den sometimes, I will buy you drinks," The Man offered.

"Another time then," Jack replied.

"I will hold you to it! If you ever need anything, just give me a holler!"

Bowler came to Jack before he left, "bro, how about we go on a quest together again? I need to increase my level, everyone is leaving me behind now."

Jack had used his God-eye monocle to check on his three friends. The Man was already a level 17 Warrior, while Flame was a level 16 Archer, Bowler was the only one still at a basic class Magician of level 15.

"You should spend more time getting experience and less time chatting with people," Jack chided him. "I originally plan for a team quest as well, but something comes up, so I can't accompany you these few days. You are already level 15, why don't you try applying for an advanced class?"

"I heard the advanced class are pretty tough, I'm thinking of applying after I increase a few more levels," Bowler replied.

"Not every class application test is the same. For Mage class, you actually can pass it easily as long as you have good memory and concentration. But of course, if you invested more on high intelligence stat, that will help also."

"How do you know about that?"

"Uh... I have a friend who had taken the mage class, I heard from him," Jack quickly said.

"Is it so? Anyway, I intend to try for Healer class," bowler said.

"You do? Well, I guess that suits you as well, considering how a people person you are."

"I agree," Flame said. "You will be more useful that way."

"Hey! Are you saying I'm bad as a damage dealer?" Bowler protested.

Flame just looked away without replying.

"Well, I think you should give it a try," Jack continued. "The Warrior class' test penalty made you lose a level if you fail, but Mage class simply banned you for a few days before you can try again. I think the Healer class will be the same."

"Archer class test was also the same," Flame said. "And the test was testing my accuracy. I managed to pass due to my good eyesight."

"Well, since you two say so, all right, I will give it a try!" bowler uttered.

They parted ways after saying goodbye. Jack headed to the Adventurers Association, to cash in his rewards for the Duke's quest as he originally intended. On his way, he asked Peniel in his mind, 'If I used the Orb of Disguise, is there a way for others to see through my disguise?'

"There is no absolute," Peniel replied. "If someone had a Godly skill or Godly tool that can see through a disguise, there is no guarantee that you will not be found out. But then again, your God-Eye can be considered as a Godly tool that I am unfamiliar with, and even with that, you still could not see through Winston's disguise. So I guess it's a safe bet to say that this Orb of Disguise will provide you the best cover at this stage, unless you met an Eternal or Divine being of course."

'Divine? I remember you said Eternal was one grade above Mythical. Is Divine a stronger one?'

"Well, that is one way to say it. You can see Divine as a special kind of Eternal, and yes, they are stronger. In fact, you have met one already in the past."

'I have?' Jack was astonished. When did he ever meet such a powerful existence?

"Have you forgotten already the one that sent me to you?" Peniel replied with a tone as if she was speaking with a low IQ creature.

"The Goddess!" Jack blurted out loud after coming to a realization. 'She was a Divine?'

"That she is. You are the only person I have ever seen to have talked in such a rude way to a Divine being. She could slap you to death if she wishes so."

'Hm... I will keep that in mind the next time I see her.'

"See her? You wish. Do you think a Goddess will just appear before your lowly self again? You are extremely lucky to have met her the first time. Don't count your luck for a second time."

'Sometimes I really admire your optimism.'

"Are you being sarcastic?" Peniel said in a threatening tone.

'No, no, you are just imagining it,' Jack hurriedly said.

When he arrived at the Adventurers Association, he went directly to the Silver Hall. There were now a few other players in the hall. Everyone was progressing in a hurry, he could not afford to slack behind, he thought. Since there were not many players yet, a lot of the counters were still empty, he went to one of them.

"Hi, I want to submit a completed quest," he said to the girl at the counter while presenting his Adventurer Badge.

Chapter 173: Property Deed

The girl accepted his Adventurer Badge and processed his request. After a short wait, he heard a voice notification, "Congratulations on completing the quest Investigate a Duke's missing painting. Difficulty after a review is of S rank, thus rewards are increased. Receive rewards of 12 gold coins, 50,000 Experience points, and 1200 Adventurer Points."

Jack took a deep breath. S rank. Considering how the possessed Winston could kill him with one slap, it made sense that this quest's grade was way over his head. He was lucky to be able to survive as a matter of fact. The abundant experience that the quest completion provided also pushed his Warrior level to 17, now he was catching up to the others again after not gaining any experience for the past two days. The experience also brought his Mage class to 97% of level 15, just a small push then he would be a level 16 Mage.

'Good thing the quest provided high-level aides like Duke Alfredo and Captain Salem, and did not require me to be the one to defeat the possessed Winston,' Jack said in his mind. 'Otherwise, it would have been an impossible quest for anyone in this Silver hall.'

"I think the difficulty in solving the mystery behind the quest was also top tier," Peniel commented. "You have bagged this one all due to your own ability, even high-level adventurers are not guaranteed to be able to solve the case in this quest, so you deserve the rewards. But yes, despite solving the quest, you still need a certain amount of strength to survive the initial encounter against the possessed Winston. Now, ain't you lucky you have me who have helped you to make preparations?"

'Yes, yes, I am truly indebted to you,' Jack said as he received back his Adventurer Badge. He had collected 1311 Adventurer points, around one-tenth from the amount needed to become a Gold grade Adventurer. For the exchangeable points, there were 1211 Adventurer points inside his badge.

Now that he had so many Adventurer points, might be a good time to check the Silver hall exclusive item exchange list. He requested the counter girl to show him the exchange list. As he was more accustomed to the process already, he immediately scrolled to where the exclusive list was.

Moon Pendant (rare necklace) – 1200 adventurer points

Spellcasting gloves (rare cloth armor) – 980 adventurer points

Shield of Salvation (rare shield) – 1000 adventurer points

Expert Hammer and Anvil (rare Blacksmith tool) – 1100 adventurer points

Jack reviewed the four items in the exclusive exchange list for a while. Two out of the four were something he had no need of, so it only left the necklace and the blacksmith tool. The necklace appeared to be the more precious one considering the higher points it needed for exchange, but he already had a rare necklace. And the necklace he had was also exceptional, since its ability was one of the factors that had allowed him to survive when he was attacked by the possessed Winston. So should he pick the blacksmith tool?

Since he was at a loss, he turned to his trusted aide, 'okay, my dear fairy, which one do you propose for me to take?'

"Now it's 'dear' when you need me?" Peniel's voice replied with a mocking tone.

'Come on, you know I always have an utter respect upon you,' Jack said.

"Stop with your fawning, it's unbecoming of you," the fairy said. "If you really want to spend your adventurer points, take that spellcasting gloves."

'Huh? What for? I don't use cloth armor.'

"You forgot already about what I said regarding your disguise as a mage?"

'Oh, yes. I would need some cloth armor for that persona.'

"Yes, you've already got a chest piece. With this glove, you will have two rare cloth armor pieces. You can buy the rest of the cloth armor pieces in the shop but you will only get common grade armor in that way. With two rare armor pieces and a rare staff, at least your Mage disguise wouldn't be too shabby."

'I see... But I think it is a waste not to get this blacksmith tool.'

"Are you planning to become a professional blacksmith?"

'No.'

"Then what the hell is it a waste for?" Peniel scolded him.

'Okay, okay, geez. No need to raise your voice.'

Jack proceeded to exchange his points for the gloves.

Spellcasting Gloves, level 15/35 (Rare cloth armor)

Physical Defense: 18

Magical Defense: 26

Durability: 40

Intelligence +2

When forming spell formation, runes will not dissolve when concentration is broken, cooldown: 10 minutes

This glove was obviously tailored for advanced magic users, as only advanced magic users used spell formations for their spells. He stored the gloves in his Storage Bag and was about to leave when the counter girl called him.

"Before you go, I would like to give you this," she said. A piece of rolled-up paper was put on the table.

"What's this?" Jack asked as he picked the piece of paper up.

"It was a gift from Duke Alfredo to compliment for the excellent completion of your job," the girl answered.

Now that she mentioned it, the Duke did say something about this. He inspected the piece of paper.

Thereath Property Deed

Can choose one ownerless plot of land within Thereath city's business district. Become an owner to the land and can build a business or residential facility in that land.

"The duke is rather generous to give you something like this," Peniel commented.

Jack agreed with her. Becoming a landlord in a VRPG like this was something that had been done in past games before, but it did not come cheap. Because like real-world land, virtual land was limited, while

players were abundant. There were bound to be fierce competitions. Some games even demanded you to become a noble or have some kind of title before you could own a plot of land. Since this Deed said he could build a facility, he guessed there was no need for him to worry about nobility or title in this game world.

'But what could I use it for?' Jack said. 'it would be a waste if I just use it to build a residential building like a house. I already got free lodging at Amy's Bakery, no point to waste it simply for a place to sleep.'

"You can always build a shop," Peniel offered.

'Can I build one and just hired someone to take care of it?' Jack asked.

"You can, but if you hired a bad storekeeper, you will end up with more loss than profit. There is also a possibility the one you hired will steal from you."

NPC could also do that? Jack thought silently. 'Well, then this thing is rather useless, don't you say?'

"Wait! Didn't you have those friends that sell their cookings by the side of the streets? You can build a restaurant and let them run it."

'That's right! How come I forget about them?' Jack recalled after being reminded by Peniel. He thanked the counter lady and immediately walked away as he opened his Friends interface. He only had six friends on his list so it did not take him long to search the name he was looking for.

He clicked on Master Chef's name and sent a message, "Friend, where are you. Remember when I tell you about helping you build a shop? An opportunity has come up. Contact me if you are still interested."

He went outside and walked around as he waited for the guy to reply, but after more than ten minutes, there was still no reply. After thinking about it for a while, he had the urge to facepalm himself. How could he forget about how clueless Bill is about all this game system? He might not even aware that he could send messages through his status windows. He had wasted 12 copper coins to send the message for nothing.

He opened his Friends list again, this time he clicked on Ellie's name, and sent the same kind of message. He knew he had made the right call this time when he heard a reply notice in his chat system. He looked at the reply, "you already have 100 gold? That was fast. Of course we are still interested, but not available at the moment. We can meet tomorrow morning and discuss about it."

Jack sent his reply, "sure. Come to Amy's Bakery tomorrow morning, it's a shop at the Southeastern edge of the business district. Just ask around if you can't find it."

Ellie's reply came promptly, "All right, see you tomorrow."

Chapter 174: Future Prime Area

It was closed to sunset already at the time, Jack decided to return to Amy's Bakery for a rest. He also would like to see the changes to the shop after the renovation. On his way, he visited a magic apparel shop and spent 10 silver coins to buy cloth armors for all the armor pieces he was still missing for his Mage disguise. He also spent 2 silver to buy ten common magic stone, which was required to replenish his staff's ammo. After completing the transaction, he continued his way back to Amy's Bakery.

When he arrived in front of the place, he was astonished by the changes to the Bakery. The shop had become bigger, it had also added another floor, from the previous two-story building into a three-story one. The façade was also more appealing now compared to the previous simple look. With a more polished exterior, it should attract more customers. And indeed Jack noticed how popular the shop had become, there were still many customers inside despite it's getting late already. For a shop located in such a quiet street, this many customers already announced the shop's success.

As Jack admired the shop he had invested in, he noticed that many of the customers were players. Not only that, when he inspected the players, there were some with additional information shown. It was written the name of their guild, White Scarfs.

"Mister Storm Wind! Fancy meeting you here," he heard a voice from behind.

He turned around and saw Silverwing and Bluedaze. He instinctively used Inspect on Silverwing.

Silverwing (Archer), level 17

HP: 310

Guild: White Scarfs

He had also become an advanced class and was level 17. In the past, Jack had been on the lead for levels, but after two-day hiatus, most top players had caught up to him. It described how intense the competition was. For the additional information of the guild, he supposed that Silverwing had gone ahead and used the Guild Creation Token to establish their guild formally in this world. Hence now every member of his guild was tagged with their guild name.

"I live here," Jack replied to Silverwing's greetings while pointing to Amy's Bakery.

"In the shop? How do you manage to do that?" Silverwing asked.

"It's some sort of additional reward from a quest," Jack answered truthfully.

"An intriguing quest that is," Silverwing commented.

"What are you doing here?" Jack asked back. "I see many of your guild members lingering around here."

"We are prospecting for a suitable plot for our guild base."

"Guild base?"

Bluedaze cut in to interject, "is it wise to inform outsider of our plan?"

"Mister Storm Wind is our ally," Silverwing said. "Don't forget we managed to become the first party to form a guild was all thanks to his contribution."

Bluedaze could not deny it, so she said no more. Silverwing returned his attention to Jack, "a guild base is a structure that we can build after establishing a guild. Apart from a safe place to gather, it also can grant us many benefits if we can upgrade it later."

"It must cost a fortune though," Jack commented.

Silverwing nodded, "It does. Fortunately, we got a monetary reward from the system due to being the first party to form a guild."

"Really? How much of a boost?"

"Thirty gold coins," Silverwing said with a wide grin.

Thirty, it was still less than the amount of gold coin he got from vanquishing the Monster Settlement, Jack thought.

Silverwing was expecting Jack to show an awed expression after hearing the monetary reward, but disappointingly, Jack was indifferent about it. Of course, he could not have guessed that the fellow had already received a higher amount of gold coin rewards, hence such an amount did not surprise him anymore.

"I guess you are still quite a distance if you are planning to buy a land," Jack said, he had heard from Ellie that one needed at least 100 gold coins to purchase the land.

"That's right, you are surprisingly well informed, Mister Storm Wind," Silverwing said.

Jack scratched his head. "I read a lot in the library," he said.

Silverwing rolled his eyes, where can you find about property price in a library? If you don't want to say your source of information, why don't you use a better excuse?

However, he was not too bothered by it, everyone was entitled to have their own secret. He said, "we will need at least 100 gold coins to buy a plot of land. After that, we will still need more to construct the base. Currently, our guild members were busy collecting coins by doing quests and grinding monsters in order to save enough coins for the base."

"Why choose your prospective base in this area?" Jack asked.

"Our members have made lots of surveys. This area is one with the most plot of lands which we can buy, with relatively cheaper prices compared to other areas. To be honest, I think this area will be the place where most of us players will focus our activity. Many other guilds or players with funds will choose this place to build their bases as well. So it will be better if we can take control of this area early."

"How many of your members have reached advanced ranks?" Jack asked.

Silverwing was lost at Jack's sudden change of topic, but he still answered anyway, "including my self and Bluedaze here, five."

Jack glanced at Bluedaze and made a quick scan, she was a level 17 Healer. "Five," Jack murmured. A top guild was indeed something.

Jack then told them about the Hunters Association, about how the hunting quests and trophy loots from the monsters would net them coins faster than normal quests and grinding. Their eyes glowed with excited glint after hearing Jack's info.

"Mister Storm Wind, it was indeed the right move of me for befriending you. Too bad you are unwilling to join our guild, but still I thank you sincerely for this information." Silverwing then turned to bluedaze,

"please send messages to Sinreaper and the others to make preparation, we will go to this Hunters Association first thing tomorrow."

Bluedaze acknowledged and went on to send the virtual messages.

"There is one thing I want to ask for your opinion," Jack said to Silverwing.

"What is it, mister Storm Wind?"

"Have you heard about the rumor regarding a planned meeting involving top guilds to discuss control over this city?"

Silverwing's eyebrows were lifted, but he did not seem to be surprised by the news. "So you have heard of it as well?" He said. "It was not a rumor, there was indeed such plan. My people have done some investigation, the initiators of the meeting are Death Associates, Corporate United, and Wicked Witches."

"Wicked Witches? They are involved as well?"

"Yes, apparently they had been in talks for some time already since they failed to get the Guild Creation Token. Their joint failures had prompted them to band together for a counterattack, ironic isn't it? My guild managed to take the lead but instead, we caused our competitors to join and become a greater menace. If they managed to influence the other prominent guilds in their cause, it will be troublesome for those that are not included in their circle."

"What do you plan to do about it?" Jack asked.

Silverwing sighed. "I'm afraid there is not much we can do. We are still discussing if we should gather the other guilds ourselves to form our own alliance. But they had gotten a head start, we will need to see how the results of their meeting go before we can think of a suitable response."

"Do you know when the meeting will take place?"

"If our intel is to be trusted, it will be five days from now. For the location, we didn't manage to get that info, but words are it will be outside the safe zone."

"Outside the city?"

Silverwing nodded, "kinda make you think if there is another agenda there, doesn't it?"

Jack was deep in thought, it might actually be essential for him to get to the bottom of this. After all, Death Associates had a grudge against him. He did not think the guild had forgotten about their enmity. His bet was they were planning to strike after they got a solid foothold in this place, thus it was important for him to hinder their progress for his own sakes too.

After a couple more brief chats, the three bid farewell. After the two left, he looked at his surroundings. He might need to do a little prospecting of his own as well since he would be using the deed. The deed allowed him to choose any ownerless land, but if Silverwing's approximation was correct, the best area to choose would be here. Most of Bill and Ellie's customers at this time were already players, so if this area will become future players' bases of activity, their profit in building a restaurant here would be maximized.

Chapter 175: Profit-Sharing

Jack made a quick tour around the neighborhood. There were indeed many empty plots and unused buildings. After making the rounds, the most suitable plot in his opinion was actually the one beside Amy's Bakery. It was not the largest but it was not small either, it should be a good size for a fledgling restaurant. And the customers that came to Amy's Bakery would be easily exposed to the existence of the Restaurant, which would be a good advertising point. And it was closed to where he stayed, so it was another plus point.

The site he had chosen already had a building. He did not know if he could utilize it for reducing the cost of renovating the building into a restaurant, or if he even needed to pay extra to demolish it. He looked inside his pocket, he had 26 gold coins, he just hoped that it would be enough.

After deciding on the site for the restaurant, he went inside Amy's Bakery. Amy and Samantha were just about to close the shop when he came in.

"Good evening to you!" Both of them greeted.

"Good evening, I see business has been going well?" Jack said.

"Yes, it does! The renovation had managed to attract more customers. I would say your money was well-spent, I guarantee that you will soon see a return to your investment in no time!" Amy announced with a high spirit.

"That's good to hear," Jack said. If it was indeed as profitable as it sounded, he did not mind investing for the second upgrade once he got enough coins stored.

"All right, we can see that you are tired already. Amy, why don't you bring our benefactor here to see his new room. I will prepare the dinner in the meantime," Samantha said.

Amy was gleeful after hearing it, she grabbed Jack's hand and practically dragged him away. New room? Jack was intrigued. When they arrived at the second floor, Amy continued to pull Jack on, and brought him to the stairs up to the new third floor.

"Ta-da!" Amy exclaimed after bringing him to a spacious bedroom on the third floor. It was considerably larger than the small bunker he slept in previously. The room he saw now was a true bedroom with a double bed and some cupboards, there were also a desk and a chair, with a small sofa at the corner. Most impressive was the room had one side with fully glazed windows and a door to an outside foyer. He could see the main street outside from that foyer.

"Don't tell me this is the best bedroom?" Jack asked. "You or Samantha should use this room. I'm fine with that small bunker that I slept in before."

"No, no, no, we have agreed to let you have it," Amy insisted. "We are used to our old bedroom anyway, wouldn't be able to sleep here even if we want to."

Jack looked around the room. He didn't need all the cupboards anyway. He had an Inventory system to store all his belongings. So this room was kinda too much for him, but looking at Amy's demeanor, she was really looking forward to him accepting this room.

"Then I gladly thank you for your hospitality," Jack said to her.

She gave him a sweet smile before telling him to rest up while she helped her mom in preparing the dinner.

Jack walked around after she left, admiring his new cabin. He walked outside to the foyer and look at the scenery. Most of the buildings in the business district were one or two-story tall. So he could roughly have an unobstructed view from his third-floor height.

It gave him the time to think about the life he had now. He had always been living by himself in the real world, with no family to tie him up, except for that grandfather of him, hope that geezer was all right. Hence, when he was transported into this game world, it didn't bother him too much. In fact, he felt much more at home here than in the real world.

He had spent so much time in VR games precisely for this kind of escape. He was not sure if one day he was offered a chance to return to the real world, whether he would take that chance. Perhaps it was all right for him to just stay here in this game world.

"Not too shabby, eh?" Peniel's voice drifted to his ears, breaking his train of thoughts. She had come out of her hidden dimension and was flying around the room.

"Yeah," Jack replied. He came back into the room after collecting his thoughts.

He took out the Orbs of Disguise and asked Peniel, "How do I use this thing?"

"You will need a magic furnace," she answered.

"A what now?"

"Magic furnace, kind of like a forge for a blacksmith, but this is for magic tools," Peniel explained.

"And where could I find this magic furnace?"

"A Magic workshop, or I bet the Mage academy where you took the Mage class test should have it as well. You will need to pay a fee to use it though."

Tough luck, he thought he could work on his disguise tonight. It appeared that he could only do it tomorrow then. He spent his time practicing the rune forming of his Barrier skill until Amy called him for dinner. After the lovely dinner, he continued practicing until he was tired, then he ended the day by sleeping in his new bedroom.

Ellie and Bill appeared at Amy's Bakery around 9 AM. Jack had been waiting for a while since he woke up. The two had gotten lost a few times when they searched for this bakery.

"So you have managed to accumulate 100 gold coins to buy a land?" Ellie asked.

"No," Jack replied.

Ellie was caught off guard by Jack's reply. Her face was slightly dark, did the guy asked them to come all the way here just for a joke?

"Calm down. I don't have 100 gold coins, but I have this." Jack showed them the deed.

"Where did you get this?" Ellie exclaimed with a surprise after reading the deed's description.

"What about it?" Bill as always was clueless.

"Okay, before we proceed any further, we should talk first about the arrangement. How should we share the profit, what is each of our duty," Ellie stated seriously. "We should make everything clear from the start. I don't want there to be a discontent between us in the middle of the road."

Jack saw that the woman was clearly a business-minded person, it should be a good idea to have a partnership with her.

"An existing shop that we invested in will have a determined share given to the investor, but we have the freedom to set the financial structure for a business place that we built on our own," Jack explained to them. He had been asking several questions about opening a shop to Peniel when he was waiting for the two, so he more or less had understood the proceedings. "I would suggest for the start that we set 70% of the income we received to be used for daily expenses, like buying ingredients, paying workers' wages, etc. the remaining 30% will be distributed equally between the three of us. We could adjust the percentage later after reviewing the restaurant's progress."

"I'm not so sure about the condition in this place, but in real life, we usually had a loss on the first year in the food serving industry, not even need to mention 30% to share as profit," Ellie said.

"Don't worry about it, things work differently here. As a prove, you still managed to make a profit despite selling on the street, didn't you? And as your cooking skill level increased, you will make more profit, and more people will come to you, especially our kind."

"I have no idea what you are saying," Bill commented.

"You be quiet," Ellie reprimanded, which immediately made him pursed his lips tightly.

She then nodded and said, "All right, we will follow your arrangement then. How about the workload?"

"I just provide the capital, I will not do anything in the restaurant. I don't intend to focus my time here. You will have complete freedom to work the place the way you want. Will you have a problem with that?"

"Actually, I will prefer it that way," Ellie said.

"Marvelous, then we are in agreement. You can of course let me know if you ever need any rare ingredient or recipe, as long as you have the info, I will go get it for you."

"All right, so how do we get this started?"

Chapter 176: Building The Restaurant

"We will have to go to the City Administration Bureau to process this deed and legalize the ownership of the land. I have asked around, it was nearby where the Academies were located."

"Where are the Academies?" Bill blurted out.

"I will take you there..." Jack said.

Ellie gave Bill a stare which shut him up again. She then said to Jack, "do you already have a property in mind?"

Jack nodded, he then took them to see the plot next door. After looking for a while, Ellie glanced at Amy's Bakery which seemed to have many customers coming and going. She nodded, "all right, let's go with this plot."

The three of them went to the City Administration Bureau. Jack decided to use a carriage to the Bureau. This saved them traveling time and also the time that might be wasted if they searched for the place themselves, since he was only being told its rough location.

The building was not as impressive as its name. It was a simple box-shaped building with clean white finishing. It was so simple that none of them would perceive the structure as an important place. The interior inside was the same simplistic design as its exterior. The building was purely there only to serve its function. They were guided by a uniformed guard to a clerk, who was an old woman with thick glasses.

"State your business here," the old woman spoke.

Jack presented his Thereath Property Deed to her. She took the deed and lifted her glasses to take a close look at it. She shifted her gaze to Jack for a moment, before turning his attention back to the deed.

"You have a friend in the high place, young man," the old clerk said with his eyes still on the deed.

Jack didn't know what to say to that, so he just kept silent.

The old clerk finally put the deed down. She took out some kind of a device, worked on it for some time. A holographic map suddenly appeared in front of them. Bill made a loud startled shout, he then kept on asking Jack and Ellie what that was. Jack and Ellie's faces were red with embarrassment. Ellie finally scolded him after his incessant ramblings and ordered him to pipe down. Jack, on the other hand, ignored him and studied the holographic map.

After observing it for a while, he recognized it as the map of the business district of the capital. The buildings were portrayed in three different colors, blue, green, and red. After studying it more, he surmised that the blue represented plots that had been owned, while green ones were ownerless. For the red one, he assumed it was important facilities or government buildings. The Associations and Academies were depicted as red on this map.

As if confirming Jack's inference, the old lady said, "choose one from the green color ones."

Jack searched for the landmark which could point him to Amy's Bakery. It took him some time as the plot was not as big as those Associations and Academies' buildings, but he finally found it. He used his finger to point at the small plot on the holographic map. The small plot lighted up with his touch.

"Are you sure about your choice?" The old lady asked with her hoarse voice.

Jack nodded, "yes."

The old clerk input something into her device, she then said, "Okay, that land is now registered under your name. Do you intend to process it as well into a facility?"

"Yes," Jack answered.

"Residential or business?"

"Business."

The old clerk made some swift input, a list of choices came out, shop, hotel, restaurant, factory, hospital, school, warehouse.

"Take your pick," the old lady said.

Jack clicked on the restaurant option. Another series of options appeared.

Simple: 10 gold coins

Medium: 50 gold coins

Large: 150 gold coins

Luxurious: 500 gold coins

The medium to luxurious prices were the same as the amount needed to invest in shops, so he guessed the simple grade was the same as Amy's Bakery grade when he had not yet invested in it.

Ten gold coins, luckily he could still afford it. If not, they would just have an empty plot of land without being able to use it yet.

"By the way, this deed comes with a construction fund attached to it," the old lady said.

"Oh? What does it mean?" Jack asked.

"It means the noble that gave you this deed included a fund when constructing on the land you choose. There are 50 gold coins here, so you can at least build a medium-grade restaurant."

Jack was dazed, he did not expect the Duke to be so generous. He would have to make sure to thank him when they met again.

"So are you going to build a medium one or do you have more funds to build a higher grade?"

"Medium one please," Jack said. The next grades were way out of his reach at the moment.

The old lady nodded and inputted some more commands into her device.

"Okay, now for the management. Do you have your own workers or do you want to hire some workers via our services?"

Jack turned to Ellie, "How many people do you think are needed to run that restaurant?"

Ellie gave the matter some thought, she then said, "well, I will be the manager and cook, Bill here will be a cook as well. Considering the size of that place you showed us. I would say we need at least one cashier and two waitresses."

Jack relayed the request to the old clerk. The clerk then showed another list of options.

1-star worker: 7 silver coins

2-star worker: 15 silver coins

3-star worker: 35 silver coins

4-star worker: 70 silver coins

5-star worker: 1 gold, 40 silver coins

"The prices indicated here are for general workers and their weekly salary. For specialized workers with specific skills, for example a cook, the prices will be different. Please make your choice," the old lady said.

If he hired three 5-star workers, their total salary would be 4 gold and 20 silver coins weekly. He could still afford it, but how much would the restaurant generate for income? Spending too much on the workers' salary might end up lowering their profit, despite the workers' high productivity.

He turned to Ellie and asked, "What do you think?"

Ellie shrugged, "I don't know, I have no idea how much difference is this 5-star compared to the 1-star."

"How much profit do you usually generate on a weekly basis, when you are selling on the street?" Jack changed his approach.

Ellie gave the matter some thought. "Well, average after deducting the cost for buying ingredients, I will say around 3 to 5 gold coins weekly."

3 gold coins, not much. If they hire three 3-star workers, they would instead get a loss. However, by opening the restaurant, the profits should easily increase by three or five folds. In that case, they should be able to afford it.

After giving a bit more thought to the issue, Jack finally decided. "We will take two 3-star workers, and two 4-star workers."

"Four?" Ellie whispered. "I thought I told you we should only need three?"

"The existing building you see should be if it was the simple grade version. We have built a medium grade restaurant, I bet it would be larger than the building you saw," Jack explained. Jack was using Amy's Bakery as a reference. There was a chance this medium-grade restaurant would end up having three floors as well.

"Okay, it was your money," Ellie said.

"That will be 2 gold and 10 silver coins. I will need their first-week payment in advance please," the old clerk uttered.

Jack took out the coins and passed them onto her. She accepted it and proceeded with the required steps. Not long after, she said, "All right, you are set. The construction of the restaurant will begin immediately. It takes twenty-four hours to complete. Once finished, you can start your activity. In the restaurant, you will also find a package containing recipes and ingredients. Different recipes and ingredients will be provided based on the grade of the restaurant. These registered recipes are only available for the cooks who work in the restaurant. If said cooks left the restaurant, the recipes will no

longer available to them. The workers will stand by at the restaurant once the construction is finished. I advise you to be present when the restaurant opened, so you can set all the necessary procedures to start your restaurant's activity."

"Can I entrust the procedures to someone else?" Jack asked.

"You can, I will need to register the person though," the old clerk said.

"These two will be the ones who run the restaurant," Jack pointed to Ellie and Bill.

The old lady proceeded to register their name into the restaurant, giving them management rights to operate the facility.

"One other thing," the old clerk said, "there will be a 20% sales tax on all revenues under registered business. The tax will be automatically deducted when you receive payments from your customers."

Chapter 177: Creating A Disguise Persona

After finishing all the necessary processes. Jack, Ellie, and Bill came out from the City Administration Bureau.

"As the old lady said, the construction will take one day time. You can go there tomorrow morning to start everything," Jack said.

"All right. Will you be there as well?" Ellie asked.

"I will try to be, but there might be a chance I will not be available."

"Fine, we will take care of it. Don't worry about it."

"Okay, I will be off now. Where will you go from here?"

"I think we will go and take a peek at the ongoing construction."

"You know the way?"

"We will manage."

After they departed, Jack made his way to the nearby academy buildings. Since he had gone to the Mage academy before, it didn't take long for him to find the place. When he entered the Mage Academy, it was still the same quiet atmosphere. Not a single soul at sight except for the stoic old mage from before. He was still reading a book, but he was sitting down and reading at a table this time.

The old mage's classic pointy wizard hat was on the table this time, so Jack could better see the mage's feature. Even though there were wrinkles all over now, Jack could see that the man was very handsome at his young age. The more striking aspect was his hair, which was long and neatly combed to the back. The hair was white but some strands appeared to have plum color.

Jack came before him and made a polite greeting.

"Good day, sir. We meet again. I'm looking to use a magic furnace, I was told that this academy should have one?"

The old mage lifted his gaze to look at Jack. Jack was worried that the old mage would be chasing him away. Then he closed his book and stood up. "Come," he said and headed directly to one of the corridors. Jack hurriedly followed after him.

He didn't go up to the magical foyer by the second floor this time. Instead, he was taken down to the basement. The place was gloomy with dim lightings. He did not realize it at first, but after a while, he noticed that the small lights that illuminated the basement were in fact following them as they moved.

They soon came to a wooden door with several runes inscribed on its surface. The old mage uttered several unusual syllables, which made the runes on the door light up for a few seconds. He then opened the door. He didn't enter inside but instead stood next to it and looking at Jack. He seemed to be instructing for Jack to go in by himself.

Will it kill you to speak a few words? Jack wanted to utter, but of course, he kept his mouth shut. He had tried to inspect the old mage, but for some reason, the device was not working. It was the first he encountered such happening, as if something was obscuring his monocle. That's how Jack knew for certain that the mage was not simple.

When Jack passed through the door, the old mage unexpectedly asked him a question, "do you have a magic stone?"

Jack took out the common grade magic stone which he had bought before, "this one?"

"Don't work, you need at least uncommon grade," the old mage said.

"Oh... I don't have it," Jack answered worriedly.

The old mage took out a magic stone of his, and said, "1 silver."

The guy was selling? Jack took out his coin and gave it to the mage, the mage handed his magic stone to Jack.

The old mage then said, "one uncommon magic stone for one usage of the magic furnace, how many times do you need to use it?"

"One time, I think?"

The mage nodded, then walked away, leaving Jack to his own device. Jack looked at the inside of the room. It was similar to the room where he had taken the Mage test, it was a simple circular room with no openings, only one door for entry and exit. At the center was a blue tall pedestal with a round shape. There was a large hole at the center with glowing lights that were swimming inside. Jack approached the pedestal, he assumed this would be the Magic Furnace.

Jack was speechless, with that stoic old mage that provided almost no guide, what would other people do when they came for their mage test or to use this magic furnace? Luckily, he had a personal guide.

"So how do I use this thing?" He asked Peniel.

"Put the Orb of Disguise inside, but before that, you equipped your mage garbs and weapon first."

Jack followed her instruction and put on the Flowing Lavender Robe and Spellcasting Gloves, he then replaced his other equipment with the common grade cloth armors he had bought, except for his cloak and accessories, since those equipment were accessible to all classes. He then unequipped his sword and equipped his magic staff onto his main hand.

"Can a mage use a shield?" Jack asked Peniel.

"You can."

He then equipped the Guard's Round Shield on his off-hand.

After finished adjusting his equipment, he took out the Orb of Disguise and inserted it into the hole inside the pedestal. A prompt appeared asking him for one uncommon magic stone. Jack used the magic stone from the old mage for it. After making the payment, the swimming lights swarmed the Orb of Disguise. It then glowed bright blue. The bright light extended out and encapsulated Jack. He felt like a soft warm cloth was wrapping around his body, it felt comfortable. A holographic image then appeared beside him. It was an exact copy of himself.

"Now you can start modifying your look," Peniel said.

"Modify? What for?"

"Hello, it's called a disguise. What's the point if you look the same?"

"How do I do it?"

"Start by touching at the parts you want to modify."

Jack went ahead and touch the nose of his holographic copy. A series of pictures of different kinds of noses appeared. He assumed he should choose one of them to change the look of his current nose. He then proceeded to pick one. After knowing the drill, the rest was easier. He proceeded to change his hair, his eyes, his mouth. He added some beard to his face and made himself look older. That would make him more like an archetypal mage. In fact, he was using that stoic old mage as a reference model, except not as old as him, he set his appearance so that he looked to be around late thirty years of age.

After finishing with his facial look, he touched his robe, a series of pictures of different robes appeared.

"I can change the look of my equipment as well?" He asked.

"Yes," Peniel replied.

"Then why do I need to change to cloth armor? Might as well just wear my original armor and made it looked like a mage armor."

"Look at the selections first before you make your comment. Do you see any of that look like medium armor? You can only change the look but the type will always have to be the same. You can only change a cloth armor of one look to a cloth armor of a different look. You cannot change a medium armor to make it look like a cloth armor."

"Oh...," now that she mentioned it, he did only see robe-like looks in all the selections.

Since the Flowing Lavender Robe was already having a cool appearance, he didn't make any change to it. Same as his Spellcasting Gloves. He made changes to the other common-grade equipment to make it more in tune with his two rare equipment. He didn't forget to change the look of his magic staff as well. At one point he might be forced to reveal his dual-class trait. At that time, he didn't want people to recognize his disguise due to him using the same staff as his original one.

He also changed his God-eye monocle look. It was a rather unique-looking piece of equipment, so it would be easy to be recognized if he didn't change its appearance. He made it look like common glasses. A mage with glasses, that should add a touch of smartness to his disguise.

He looked at the modifications he had made. He was quite satisfied with it. After double-checking again to not forget anything, he clicked on the holographic confirm button. An error prompt was heard, a floating text appeared that informed him that he would need to enter a new alias for this disguise.

"Are you seriously thinking of walking around in disguise while your name still clearly points to your real self?" Peniel said to him with a hint of ridicule.

Jack ignored her, he gave it some thought. What name should he use? He was planning to use this disguise soon and it needed to attract attention, so he would need an overbearing name. After spending some time thinking, he typed in his mage alias, Unrivalled Arcaner.

"That was one cocky name," Peniel commented.

Jack ignored her again. He clicked again on the confirm button. This time the image of his copy vanished and the light went back into the Orb of Disguise. The orb then came out of the pedestal by itself. Jack took the orb back.

Chapter 178: Looking For Death Associates

"To change into the disguise, just link your consciousness with the orb and activate it. You can also do it with the bag in your inventory," Peniel said to him.

Jack was about to try it before Peniel interjected, "wait! Put back your original equipment first."

"Why?"

"Just do it! You will see."

Jack followed her instruction and reequipped all his previous equipment, and stored the mage version ones inside his inventory. Afterward, he did it as Peniel had mentioned. He sent a wisp of his consciousness into the Orb of Disguise inside his inventory bag. An image of the disguise he had created previously surfaced in his mind. A prompt asking him if he wanted to activate the disguise. He accepted.

He felt like a strong gale suddenly swept past him. When he looked down, he had transformed into the copy he had created before. He was wearing the robes and equipment which he had fashioned in the holographic image. He touched his face, he could feel the beard and the roughness of an older face.

He was astounded by the transformation, the change had happened in an instant.

"Take a look at your equipment window," Peniel said.

He opened it. "Hey, I automatically equipped the equipment I have worn when I made the disguise!"

"Yes, and when you change back to your real self, you will automatically wear back your original equipment as well. As long as you didn't drop or sell that equipment, it will be done automatically. You don't need to reequip everything manually."

"That was convenient. It would be a hassle if I have to equip and reequip every time I change into disguise."

He checked his status window. His overall stats were roughly still the same, it's just that his current mage equipment didn't provide as much stat boost as his original equipment. And his defense was almost only half from when he was wearing Warrior class armors. Couldn't help it he guessed, since most of his mage equipment were only common grade and were still mostly level 15.

He was thinking if he should go to the blacksmith workshop and upgrade them to level 21 like his medium armor, but decided against it. He didn't want to invest too much time and coins just for a disguise. Perhaps when he had collected at least uncommon grade for all the cloth armor set, then he would upgrade them.

Since he had no further use for the Magic Furnace, he left the room. On his way out, the old mage was back to sitting and reading his book.

Jack went over to bid him farewell, there was no response from him, so Jack didn't disturb him further. He walked out from the Mage Academy. He took a short glance back at the academy. How come it was so lonesome inside? Did no magician reach level 15 and come to apply for a test? He didn't think too much about it, he walked away from the place.

From the academies' street, Jack headed back to the center of the business district before making his way to the slum district. On the night before, Jack had checked via messages with Bowler and Silverwing regarding Death Associates members' center of activity. When Jack asked about it, both of them had thought that he was going to look for a fight. They kept on advising him to stay away from the guild. He had to waste many copper coins for repeated messages to explain to them that he was not going to look for trouble, that he just wanted to check on things.

Finally, they relented and gave him the information. Death Associates members mostly operated out of the western edge of the business district, where it was adjacent to the Slum district.

Before Jack arrived at the place, he looked for a secluded alley and went inside. After making sure no one was in sight, he activated the Orb of Disguise and transformed into Unrivaled Arcaner. After making sure that the transformation had proceeded without a hitch, he came out of the alley and continued on his way.

He used his God-Eye monocle to inspect the players around. He expected Death Associates to have gathered enough gold coins to establish their guild formally in this world. As expected, he soon found some players with Death Associates guild name attached to them. Several of them were harassing other players who passed nearby where they hang out. Some had even straight out bullied another player physically, while his friends watched out for patrolling guards.

Jack had heard about the depravity of Death Associates, now he had seen that the rumors were indeed true. He thought back to the first time he met Fierce Flame, she was also being harassed by this very guild. The difference was he could not play the hero role this time.

During his inspection process, he heard a voice notification that his Inspect skill had increased to Intermediate Apprentice. He was surprised. At first, he thought that because he kept on inspecting using the God-Eye monocle, it had been the tool's function, not his own Inspect skill. That's why even though he had used it for a long time, his Inspect skill had still not yet increased compared to others who he heard to have achieved a higher grade of this skill. But probably it was simply because he had not used it as much as those others who had increased their Inspect level.

He continued to use his Inspect skill to find a place where more of the Death Associates members were hanging around. But instead of finding more members, he found someone who he was familiar with from the guild. Inside a small park which seemed to be the guild's temporary base of activity, was Bigarm. He was already level 16 but was still a Fighter. Considering his average skill, it was reasonable.

Meeting an upper echelon of the guild was a better outcome he was hoping for. Although he would prefer that it was Scarface or Red Death that was here, they should have more power in making a decision on the group. He purposefully went into the small park despite knowing that all the players inside were Death Associates members.

Some Death Associates people who saw him soon came forward to block him. "What the hell do you think you are doing here?" One of them said.

"Yeah, you have no idea whose turf this place is?" Another chimed in.

"Turf? Are you hooligan?" Jack replied with an expression that was not less arrogant than the one they were showing.

"Are you trying to get yourself killed, boy?" The one blocking him took out his dagger and played with it in front of Jack's face.

"Boy? When I started playing VR games, you are still sucking on your mom's tits!"

"You...!" The man was speechless. They were clearly a large group here, but this guy waltzed in here brazenly and speaking with a loud voice as if purposefully looking for a fight. Was he really not afraid to get killed by them? Even though this was a safe zone, it was not impossible to kill people. They just need to face the penalty of dealing with the city guards.

"What's going on here?" Finally, a man who seemed to have enough authority among the group came to them after hearing the commotion.

Jack was actually speaking in a loud voice intentionally in order to attract the attention of the people in charge. As he expected, Bigarm came.

"Big bro, it's this guy. He came here looking for trouble," the one that was blocking Jack's way said to Bigarm.

"Is it so?" Bigarm said to Jack with a hostile glare. Lots of the other members of Death Associates had also gathered and stood around Jack.

Jack did not show any sign of fear, "huh! I thought Death Associates is an impressive guild, I guess rumor will always be just a rumor. Nothing but a street gang who bully people with numbers."

Some of the members encircling Jack were immediately riled up after hearing his words.

"Who does he think he is? Let's just dice him!"

"Yeah, I'm gonna burn this mothaf**ka!"

"Burn your ass, do you think this is the other game? Do you think you have a fireball spell?"

Many were speaking at the same time, which made it difficult to hear what was spoken. But none of them taking any action, because Bigarm had not given the words. Despite them acting like a hooligan, they possessed a certain amount of discipline.

Bigarm lifted his hand, which caused everyone to quiet down. He maintained his stare at Jack, he was actually rather impressed by Jack's calm disposition despite being surrounded. Anyone else would have felt intimidated by the situation. He said, "is your intention for coming here only to look for a fight?"

Jack did not shy away from the stare. He looked right back at Bigarm's eyes and said, "I am looking for a guild that is worthy enough for my skill. I've heard that Death Associates is one of the best guilds out there. Yet after witnessing it, I'm not sure if I'm interested to join anymore."

Chapter 179: The Test To Join A Guild

"A**hole! You are looking down on us!" One of the members shouted, but was soon shut down by a punch from Bigarm's fist. "Control yourself!" He said.

He then returned his gaze to Jack. "You sound pretty full of yourself."

"For people who only have a mediocre ability, saying things like what I said indeed sound full of themselves."

"So you are saying you are not?"

"I'm saying I have the right to sound full of myself!" Jack exclaimed with an imperious voice.

Bigarm was slightly taken aback by Jack's confidence. This was the first time someone came up looking to join their guild with such cockiness. Usually the ones that came to join had to beg and even paid for it, and that will only get them to the entrance test.

To be honest, they actually did recruit members actively at this time. Due to them being stationed in Bay city which was only a branch of Death Associates, those that came to this city were only a small fraction of the actual Death Associates guild. They were badly outnumbered by guilds such as White Scarfs. Hence, they needed to increase their number to be able to compete.

After they registered their guild into the formal system of this world, they found out that there was a limit to the member counts. The guild also had levels. At the start of their level 1 guild, they could only have a maximum of 500 members.

White Scarfs which was currently the largest guild in terms of member counts, immediately filled up their maximum number once the formal guild was formed. There were even some that cannot be included as formal members so they had to continue to stay as unofficial members. While for their guild, they were only a little over 300 members, that were already included many new recruits from over the past few days.

"Everybody can say what they want," Bigarm said. "you will need to show me your ability if you want to join our guild."

Jack smirked, "I'm not that interested anymore after seeing this rabble, but I wouldn't mind showing off my ability so you lot can understand what a true expert is."

He could clearly see many of those guild members' faces were red with anger from his words, but they kept their mouths sealed after witnessing the previous one that voiced out his discontent got smacked. The expression on Bigarm's face himself was also dark. Could he have overdone it? Jack thought.

"You!" Bigarm pointed at one of his members who was wearing a magician robe. The guy came forward.

"You will race with him and compete to hit the most targets that we had set up."

Bigarm then instructed the others to start setting up the targets. It appeared that they had chosen this park as their gathering place because they could use it to set up trials for testing the new recruits.

"Race? Don't make me laugh!" Jack snickered. "What are we, toddlers? If you are gonna give a test, just throw people for me to fight. I don't mind tackling three or five of you at the same time."

Bigarm was speechless with him, he said helplessly, "dude, if we do that, the guards will be swarming at us."

"Then let's go outside the city," Jack said without hesitation.

Bigarm was hesitant, they did need strong recruits, but this man was a little too full of himself. Was he for real or was he only a show-off? After thinking about it for a while, he said. "Fine, let's go. But let me warn you. Don't expect us to let you go unharmed if you turn out to be a weakling and wasting all our time."

Before they left, Bigarm sent a short message to Scarface explaining the situation. He then led the lots towards the nearest city gate, Jack walked together with them. The sight of them walking on the street was pretty intimidating,. It was like those gangster movies from the olden days.

Whether they were NPCs or players, those who saw the crowd coming would immediately part way to let them through. Some guards who noticed them also decided to derail from their regular patrol routes and followed them. Such a crowd could easily incur problems, thus they needed to be there if it happened.

Many players who saw and identified them as Death Associates started to have their curiosity picked, and followed after them.

"Isn't that Bigarm from Death Associates?"

"Where are they going?"

"Are they on some kind of a quest?"

Jack could see Bigarm was enjoying the walk and the attention, it was evident from his face. With so many people following him from behind, he would feel like a big boss or a king in a parade. After traveling for some time, they finally arrived at the city gate. The city guards who were following them could finally let out a relieved sigh after seeing them walking out of the gate.

The crowd had actually become bigger due to those players who were curious about the procession. They formed an outer ring at the open field outside the city gate while the Death Associates people formed the inner ring. Jack and Bigarm stood at the center.

"What are they doing exactly?" The crowd who came due to curiosity said. They couldn't see what's happening inside due to Death Associates members blocking the view.

Bigarm picked three people from his lot, a Fighter, a Ranger, and a Magician. A complete set of the basic classes. Jack scanned the three, the Fighter was level 16, while the Ranger and Mage were level 15.

"You want to prove yourself, ain't it? So you wouldn't mind going against the three of them at the same time, right?" Bigarm said with a mocking grin to Jack.

Jack was amused by it. The guy must be thinking of him as a fraud and wanted to teach him a lesson. Very well, he needed to defy their expectation in order for them to treat him as an important asset. Otherwise, even if he managed to join the guild, being an ordinary starting member would be pointless.

Bigarm and the other Death Associates members moved back, giving the four some space. The empty space soon became a circular ring for them to do the sparring.

"There is one thing I need to say," Jack said to Bigarm.

"What is it?" Bigarm asked. He was annoyed by Jack's arrogance, he couldn't wait to see him getting beaten to a pulp. "If you are thinking of pulling out now, you can forget about it. We are not walking all the way out here just for fresh air."

"That's not what I wanted to say. I just want to tell you that I am not in the habit of easing off. I won't be held accountable if the three of them died during our fight."

Bigarm's mouth twitched after hearing it. His mind was blank for a moment. That's it! This guy was asking for it!

"That's what I am about to say! Actually, this fight is to be to the death. No one is allowed to leave if the opponent is still alive. You three! If the three of you fail to take him down, don't bother to come out, I will put the three of you down myself!"

The three Death Associates men inside the ring shuddered when hearing it. Bigarm was known to be brutal when he was angry. This arrogant stranger had provoked him, and the three of them were the ones that got scolded. They looked at Jack with hate in their eyes. They would make sure to not let him leave this place alive.

"Squid, you stay at the back and blast him with your spells. Us two will take him on at close quarter," the Fighter of the group said.

The Mage called Squid nodded his head.

"Let's teach this motherf**ka a lesson!" The ranger rushed ahead.

"Hey, wait for me!" The Fighter chased behind.

Squid began the fight by casting Energy Bolts. His bolts were surprisingly only four. So there was still a Magician at level 15 who did not invest their skill points to bring the Energy Bolts to at least level 8. The four bolts rushed past the two incoming melee players and arrived at Jack first.

Jack twirled his staff as if it was a sword and slashed at the incoming bolts. His movements were so fast that he slashed at the three bolts with one fluid movement, while using the round shield on his left hand to block the last bolt.

Chapter 180: Close Combat Magician

The Ranger who had almost reached him was stunned by the display, his running halted for a second. Was he a fighter or a magician? He thought for a moment. While he was lost in his thought, Jack had stepped to the front of him. In his consternation, the ranger used Swift Stab, but Jack had already ducked to his side. His slow response had made him waste the usage of his skill.

Jack spun his body and used the momentum to have his staff whacked at the Ranger's knee. His leg buckled and he went down half-kneeling.

Jack then left the incapacitated Ranger and went to meet the Fighter head to head. The Fighter was taken aback by Jack's fluidity and speed of movements, but he was not about to embarrass himself by losing a melee exchange with a Magician. He swung his swords wildly. The guy was highest in terms of level among the three, but the way he swung his sword carried no rhythm. It was clear that the guy was also like the Ranger, only an ordinary player with average skill.

Jack weaved and ducked through each of the guy's swings. He took an opportunity when the Fighter was making a wide swing, he used his shield to redirect his opponent's swing, making him lose balance and then sent a kick at his legs. This caused the Fighter to fall flat on his face.

Those spectating could not believe what they were seeing. A Magician fought two melee players at close quarter, and came out on top? Was the Magician a Fighter that dressed up like a Magician? Before they could understand what they were watching, the Magician left the fallen down Fighter and ran towards the Magician on the other side, Squid.

Squid was obviously not expecting to be facing the opponent directly. He was thinking this to only be a joking show, where he just threw one or two spells for show. His two melee comrades would be more than enough to take care of this Magician, he just needed to keep him distracted long enough to let the two of them approach him for a melee brawl.

Never in his wildest thought that he imagined the guy to incapacitate the two melee classes and went straight at him. And why was he dashing to him like this? Wasn't he a magic user too? Shouldn't he be throwing spells from afar and compete with him in range attacks? Why did he come onto him as if a melee player would do? And why was his pressure as suffocating as what he felt when he was getting chased around by an expert melee class?

All these wild thoughts slowed his response. His opponent had already covered half the distance before he snapped out of his trance and began to respond.

So fast! The others who were watching had the same thought. They were now thinking he was a Ranger disguised as a Magician, instead of a Fighter.

Squid aimed his magic staff and cast Mana Bullet. The bullet shot through in a straight line. Jack calmly ducked away and avoided the spell. Seeing his opponent effortlessly dodge his attack, he started to panic. He rapidly shot several standard range attacks out of his magic staff.

Since the standard range attacks traveled in a straight line too, Jack could easily predict their trajectories by paying attention to the direction his opponent's magic staff was pointing at. Jack moved away from the attack path once he saw the tip of the magic staff lit up, which indicated that it was about to fire.

Everyone was amazed by the movement skill that this unknown Magician had exhibited. His speed and reflex were unreal, how high exactly were his stats? Even those who were rangers were not confident that they could make the same maneuver in approaching a mage while kept on dodging the attacks.

When Jack got nearer, it became harder to dodge due to the shorter distance, the interval where he noticed the attack and dodging became shorter as well. So he compensated by using his shield and staff to block and parry. He could use Charge skill from the start to shorten the distance, but doing so would blow his cover. Using Parry however, was less obvious, people would just see the reduction in damage as a contribution from his outstanding defense.

When Jack was closed enough, he used a spell for the first time since the fight started. Squid was still firing his standard range attacks madly when Jack pointed his Magic Staff right at his face at point-blank range and cast Mana Bullet.

The light of the spell covered the entirety of Squid's vision since it was cast in such close proximity. It produced the illusion that he had been blinded. The spell crashed head on to his face. He was dazed for a second due to it, while a damage number of 148 appeared above his head.

After seeing the stranger casting a spell, the spectators were finally convinced that he was indeed a Magician and not a melee class player in disguise. But they were then shocked again by the damage number, especially the ones who had chosen the Magician class. When they used Mana Bullet, it would be lucky if they could cross the three digits mark. This guy took out more than half of their fellow Magician's HP in just a single Mana Bullet.

Jack didn't stop his attack after scoring a hit on Squid's face. He swiped his leg at Squid's legs while he was still in a daze, and caused him to fall flat on his back. He turned back and cast Energy Bolts at the other two melee classes who had gotten back on their feet and were making their way to him. While the five bolts rushed towards the two incoming enemies, he returned his attention back to Squid.

The guy was just about to try to get up, but Jack knelt down on him and put his entire weight to pin the poor guy down. One of his knees was on Squid's chest, while the other was on his hand which was holding the magic staff, preventing him to make an attack. Jack's strength stat was way over his opponent, hence the guy could not free himself despite his desperate struggle. Jack pointed his magic staff to the guy's head again. To his opponent's horror, he started to see the tip of the staff glowing up, then he can feel a sizzling pain on his face when the standard attack hit.

That attack took out 56 HP out of Squid's HP bar. Jack continued to fire off a second standard attack from his magic staff. Squid went stiff while still being baffled by what had just happened.

After finishing off the Magician, Jack stood up and faced his two remaining opponents, who had just break free from the Energy Bolts. They stopped dead on their tracks when realizing that one of their comrades had died. What exactly had happened? It was just a short moment. They found it hard to believe what they saw in front of them.

"Only three hits," one of the spectating Death Associates members murmured.

When the others were still in a stupor, Jack didn't let go of the opportunity. He shot repeatedly at the Ranger who had stopped his movement, thus scoring two free hits on him before he moved and evaded the third shot. Jack moved back while the Ranger tried to approach. It was now a standard tactic where range player kited the melee player.

The ranger was obviously not as skillful as Jack as he had much trouble avoiding Jack's range attacks. He was hit occasionally every other hit. And the most frustrating thing was, he could not seem to close in the distance. He was a Ranger who was supposed to be the fastest class, but the Magician who kited him remained at the same distance despite his effort.

Since Ranger class had a low HP pool similar to Magician, he soon found himself in critical condition. He quickly ran away to put a distance instead of continuing to try to charge in. He hid behind the Fighter who was slower and had been running behind him all this time, and took out a basic healing potion to drink.

"Hey, is using potion allowable?" One of the Death Associates spectators said.

His friend who was standing beside him knocked him on the head and said, "whose side are you on exactly?"