

World 201

Chapter 201: Made A Killing Before Escaping

Jack continued to kill more players as he escalated the disturbance within the crowd. The rate of Trustaide's healing could not catch up with Jack's slaughter. By the time he healed one player, another had fallen to Jack's sword.

Jack himself continued to lose HP due to the skill, but the extra defense allowed him to tank the crowd's attacks. So in the end, the rate of his HP decreasing was roughly the same as before. His speed had also increased much so the others had a harder time trying to hit him.

"Get your ass down now!" Trustaide yelled to Faithstoooge, he couldn't care less if the pretentious guy outranked him.

Faithstoooge turned and was about to rebuke him, but he held back himself after considering the situation. He took out his mace and kite shield and jumped down among the crowd.

Jack noticed the Knight finally came down from his lofty height. He purposefully slowly moved away from him. The Knight class did not provide much dexterity. In fact, it was one of the two slowest classes among the advanced class. Both Knight and Mage only receive an increase of 1 point of Dexterity for each increase of level.

Faithstoooge found more corpses strewn on the ground as he proceeded forward. He was having difficulty moving as the useless players he had brought here were obstructing his path. He started shoving them aside angrily, trying to clear the way. The ones that got pushed initially thought a new enemy had appeared from behind.

Several magicians had turned frantic as they saw their comrades falling, so they started shooting out spells without reservation. The spells and attacks in this game world did not have a friendly-fire setup like other more aged VR RPG games, so they would still be hurt even though the spell caster was in the same party as them.

Jack had known about this hence he was utilizing the crowd. He went to the back of the player closest to him for cover whenever he saw a ranged attack coming. Sometimes he even used his overwhelming strength to shove his opponent into an oncoming spell, thus adding to his damage output.

Trustaide was shouting from above to give them instructions as he continued to heal, but it was futile. The players were too unorganized. That's the problem with this lot, they were too lousy. The guild was only using them for their dirty plan of robbing the masses. If things went out of hand, they could easily just discard this lot and feigned ignorance. Hence, Corporate United could not use their experts for this operation. The ones here were at the bottom of their list whom they had no intention to include as their official members.

Jack had killed a total of eleven people when Faithstoooge arrived in his vicinity. The knight pushed a fighter in front of him who was blocking his way, and found himself face to face with Jack. He grinned viciously as he swung his mace at Jack. Jack blocked the mace with his shield while parrying an attack

from another player with his sword. Faithstooge responded by slamming his shield onto the undefended Jack. Jack stumbled back from the blow.

'Was that a skill?' Jack still had the time to asked.

"No, it was a simple hit," Peniel answered. "Can't you tell from how little HP you lost from it?"

'What's a knight first skill?'

"It was a passive skill called Thick Skin. It increased the knight's defense. Oh, and Knight also receives an inherent skill that increases their HP by 10%. So Knight is the hardest to kill amongst advanced class."

Passive skill? so the Knight in front of him should have no unknown offensive skill to worry about. Jack used his speed to overwhelmed the knight, but other players were assaulting him at the same time, so he was having a hard time with them even with his attributes boost.

The timing was almost over, Jack thought as he kept track of time. He had prepared a precaution when he saw the group of blue dots which now had changed to black dots since the fight started. The precaution's time limit would be off soon. He glanced at the Healer at the back of his opponents' line. Trustaide was coming down the hill.

Since Jack was moving away, the crowd following him was getting further from Trustaide. He had difficulty in healing his team as his healing spell also had a limit to its range. He had to move forward if he was to continue healing. As he came down the small hill, he didn't notice a figure approaching from behind. The figure looked exactly like Jack.

The figure was a doppelganger created using Jack's Body Double spell. The spell was a precaution that Jack had taken before he engaged the robbers' group. He originally intended to use the spell as a means of escape, just like when he was dealing with Warriors of Solidarity, by sending his copy as far away from his position before changing place with it during the critical time. But after fighting the group for a while, he thought he should have no problem running away physically if the needs arose. So he commanded his doppelganger to return and approached the healer sneakily.

The five minutes duration time limit of the Body Double spell was almost up at this time. He activated the switch place ability of the spell and disappeared from the crowd. They were shocked by the turn of events. Did the guy use another unknown skill again? Did the skill turn him invisible? The crowd wondered. Faithstooge made sure by attacking the place where Jack was a second ago, only to have his mace passed through empty air.

They were all still wondering what was going on when they heard a painful scream from behind. They turned back and saw Trustaide being impaled by Jack's sword. They were bewildered, why had Jack appeared so far behind there suddenly?

While the enemies were dazed, Jack did not stop his attacks. He followed up his attack with two more rapid slashes. Despite the healer was an advanced class, it was still a fragile class. Especially since Trustaide just changed the class recently, he had not yet received the benefit of extra attributes from when an advanced class increased in level. Trustaide soon found himself losing all strength and falling to the ground unwillingly.

Faithstoooge was especially enraged. He didn't care about these other louts, but Trustaide was an official member of Corporate United, and was assigned under him. An advanced class was still rare at this stage, losing one would be a great blow to the guild. He would get blamed once what happened here was learned by his superior, not to mention that he also failed to get back the loots that were stolen.

Thinking about all this, Faithstoooge was even more furious. It was all this abhorrent player's fault! What was his name again? Oh, yes, Storm Wind. He swore he would not let this man leave here alive!

After getting rid of the healer, the others could only depend on their own potions to replenish their HP. Jack jumped forward to continue his assault. Due to the fight originally was happening on the other side, the current side which Jack was at was filled with Magicians. The magicians had been moving away from where Jack was and only attacked from afar, they were terrified when they suddenly found that Jack was behind them.

Jack used Swing accompanied by a few slashes and took down another two magicians before Faithstoooge and the other melee players came to their aid. The Rangers did not dare to engage Jack alone knowing his high damage hit, so they waited until Faithstoooge and the other Fighters to arrive before they started engaging. However, Jack surprisingly turned around and fled.

They were flabbergasted by their opponent's action. Why did he suddenly run away? And would they allow him to escape after killing so many of their brethren? Faithstoooge would not have it, he yelled furiously, "do not let him get away!" They chased after Jack at once.

Jack was still using his Life Burning Art, so his speed was faster than any of them, even the rangers. He canceled the art after putting a certain distance, no sense to let the skill continue to eat away at his life when he was just running. He had lost more than half of his life from all that fight. He took out another basic healing potion and drank it to recover a portion of his missing HP.

He looked back and saw everyone was chasing him, but due to the difference in stats between classes, the rangers were the ones at the front. He smiled playfully after seeing this. "Idiots," he muttered under his breath as he continued to run.

Chapter 202: Decimating The Group

Jack could not shake off the rangers but they had a hard time chasing him as well, they could only shorten the distance little by little. On the other hand, Faithstoooge and the other classes were getting more left behind as time passed, but they refused to give up. They believe once the rangers caught Storm Wind, they could hinder him long enough for them to arrive.

"You know, just now when you were fighting the crowd, it was a perfect time to use Disruptive Bombs. You could end the fight fast with it," Peniel spoke out as Jack was running.

"That thing cost 60 silver each! You think I have mountains of coins?" Jack replied. "Unless I'm in a pinch, I'm not going to use them."

"If you kept on holding back because you are unwilling to spend, it will be too late when you die suddenly. You will regret you haven't used all the options available to you and end up losing everything instead."

"Don't worry, I know when I shouldn't hold back," Jack said to her. He glanced back to check on his pursuers.

When the rangers were about to reach Jack, he suddenly turned around. The rangers were stunned by the sudden reversal. Jack had in truth been reducing his speed to make sure the rangers thought they had the opportunity to catch up to him, and allowed them to come near him. Once Jack turned back and lunged at them, the rangers suddenly remembered why they had been staying away at a distance from him during their previous contest. They immediately regretted their decision to chase after this man so vigorously.

One of the rangers chasing after him was Mouse, Jack targeted him first. He came in front of him and said to his shocked expression, "you should have stayed clean after our last encounter. Please don't make the same mistake again in your third life."

Jack slew Mouse effortlessly. He used all of his melee skills which had gotten off cooldown, Swing, Power Strike, even Sword of Light to nail the other rangers that tried to run away. There were seven rangers that chased after him, only three managed to escape and regrouped with the main force.

Faithstooge and the others watched helplessly as Jack slaughtered the Rangers. They were expecting Jack to turn back and run again after finished with the bloodbath, but instead, Jack just stood where he was.

Jack waited for them as they approached. Faithstooge and the others slowed down their runnings as they came near Jack. Even though Jack stood alone, they could not help but get intimidated by the man. They looked around themselves, and found out that more than half of their original numbers had been decimated.

Including Faithstooge, there were only fourteen of them left at the moment. They suddenly regretted that they had chased after this monster, they should have left him be when he ran.

Faithstooge himself was not deterred. He came forward as if he was leading a bunch of righteous knights on a crusade to vanquish an evil lord. "Surrender, you devil! Or I shall purge you and punish you for your evil deed!"

Jack raised his eyebrows. He was speechless. He didn't know what else to say to this self-deluded guy. So instead of responding to his quip, he simply just charged over to the group.

"Don't be afraid," Faithstooge encouraged his flock. "He is no longer using that red light skill, such strong skill surely has a long cooldown. We can win if we work together. Fighters and rangers to me, magicians support us from the back!"

Faithstooge started to organize the remaining players as Jack was charging over. He must admit that despite the guy's weird trait, he was rather capable when leading people. Jack saw him gave more commands to the individual players around him, organizing them into a better fighting unit.

If the fellow had done that from the start, he might have to truly run away from them not long after the fight broke out. At this point, however, he was not too worried. There were only fourteen players with average skill left, even Faithstooge himself did not have much to show for his individual skill. Jack could

measure his expertise after their initial clash, he was only a bit harder to kill compared to the others simply because of his Knight class.

Hence Jack dived into them without hesitation. Even without the Life Burning Art, his overwhelming attributes and equipment still caused them headaches. Jack used the same strategy of utilizing his speed. He was no longer in the middle of the group. He circled around the edge as he dodged, blocked, and slashed at the spells and range attacks coming at him, making his way towards the weaker magicians.

Faithstooge saw through his intention and sent the rangers to intercept, yet Jack instead focused on them again while ignoring the range attacks. He lost a bit of HP but managed to take down another ranger, before disengaging again when the Fighters arrived. Now they only had two rangers left.

"Face us squarely, you coward!" Faithstooge yelled in rage.

Unbelievable, Jack thought in his mind. The dude was attacking him with a large group and still had the guts to say he was the coward that didn't fight fairly.

Jack ignored the guy's raving and again made his way to the magicians. Faithstooge changed his formation due to Jack's insistence on targeting the magicians, he stationed the fighters in a circle around the magicians to protect them. While he and the two rangers continued to chase after Jack.

Jack pulled away from them again and went out from the range distance of the magicians. He waited for Faithstooge and the rangers to come after him, but instead, they stood behind and waited for the magicians to come. Apparently, they had learned the lesson and not let Jack bait them to become easy pickings anymore.

Jack wasn't discouraged when no one was rushing at him. He instead took out another basic healing potion and an energy drink to leisurely recover his HP and stamina.

Faithstooge was brimming with madness when he saw that. When will they be able to take this guy down at this rate? He urged the Fighters and Magicians to move faster, which they reacted by giving him odd faces. Their speeds were determined by their Dexterity stat, how the hell could they move faster?

Jack was not too hasty at dealing with them. He did not worry about them calling for reinforcements. He doubted that Faithstooge would swallow his pride and asked for help. Furthermore, he would be able to detect if a large force was heading here through his radar. He could escape any time he wanted to, none of them would be able to match his speed.

The night also worked in favor of him, his Dragon's Eye skill allowed him to see clearly despite the lack of light, while his opponents had more difficulty in seeing him. This was another point that had allowed him to dance through within the crowds despite being encircled. His opponents had difficulty spotting him in the dark during such a hectic situation.

When the magicians came into range, they started throwing spells again at once. Jack charged forward, in a roundabout path avoiding Faithstooge. He rushed at the magicians who were guarded by the team of Fighters.

"Stop him! Stop him!" The magicians kept on shouting to the Fighters as they kept on shooting range attacks.

The Fighters moved forward to intercept Jack. Jack targeted one of them and sent him away using Power Strike. The other Fighters immediately covered the hole that the missing fighter had created. They would not let Jack reach the magicians. However, instead of forcing his way through, Jack turned and ran in the other direction. They were confused, but then realized after seeing the direction Jack was running to. He was running after the fighter that had been sent away by Power Strike.

They tried to go to the fighter's aid, but they were too slow. Jack also ignored the attacks from the Magicians. He sacrificed a bit of his life to concentrate his attacks on the lone fighter, who couldn't last more than a few seconds once he was separated from the others. His lifeless body fell to the ground soon.

Another one down. Faithstooge felt like pulling his hair. The guy was picking them one by one.

Jack was running around them again as he looked for an opportunity. He continued with the same tactic, using Power Strike to separate one of his opponents before finishing the poor fellow off.

Faithstooge was helpless to prevent it. He went from anger, to helplessness, to despair. There were now only eight people left after Jack continued to repeat the process.

The players around him were terrified. They couldn't deal with him when their numbers were more than thirty, now there were only eight of them, how could they fight? One of the two remaining rangers decided to run away, but Jack used Sword of Light on him. He suffered a critical hit and died in one hit.

The others looked at Jack with a frightened gaze. The demon did not intend to let any of them to escape. He wouldn't have bothered to attack a fleeing opponent otherwise.

Chapter 203: You All Know What To Do, Right?

"We will fight to the last! Stay close to me! I will hold him while you all attack!" Faithstooge tried to bolster the others' courage. Unexpectedly, one of them shared his vigor.

"Fight to the last!" The man roared, it was Ogre, who shared the same hatred against Jack. The seven of them moved forward at the same speed in a tight formation.

Jack tried to circle them and hit the ones at the back, but Faithstooge quickly readjust his position and stood in front of Jack again.

Jack decided to just give it a go. There were only seven left, he had fought against seven people before and this lot were only second-class players, he shouldn't have any trouble. He used Power Strike at Faithstooge, who blocked it using his shield.

Contrary to expectation, he was not pushed back, his body only swayed backward a bit from the force. Jack was confused, the guy's strength was supposed to be much lesser than him, he had crossed blades with him before, how did he resist the knockback force from his Power Strike.

Faithstooge returned the same skill in kind. Jack was forced to block with his shield as well. He was instead pushed further. He had to step back two times before he recovered his balance. Jack didn't have the time to ponder about the difference of effect between their Power Strike, as the others were pouncing at him. They used this opportunity to land a few hits. When Jack wanted to retaliate,

Faithstooge again placed himself in the line of fire. He was truly embodying his role as a tank in the group.

Jack had to disengage and put some distance to relieve himself off the pressure. A few Energy Bolts chased after him, he dispatched them as he retreated. He had lost an amount of HP in the engagement, he took another basic healing potion to recover. He glanced at his inventory and found that he only had another potion left. He had to make sure to stock up once he returned to the city.

He managed to land a few attacks on his opponents, but they quickly fell back after one hit, thus preventing him from killing them. They drank recovery potions as well while waiting for Jack to make another try.

Faithstooge had also suffered several hits, but his defense and HP were much higher than the others, so he could still stand Jack's repeated attacks. Jack could score a three digits damage to the others with his normal attack, but on the Knight, his normal attack only gave around 80 damage. When Faithstooge blocked his attack using a shield, the knight could nullify his damage completely. Jack reckoned the shield must be unusual. The guy was also rather good at using it, Jack had difficulty in landing a clean hit.

Jack made another try. He used his speed to try to confuse the group, looking for an opportunity to be able to separate them. But the six others stayed close to Faithstooge like glue. Their formation was so tight that they seemed to be hugging the armored knight while moving.

"Hah! Where is your arrogance now?" Ogre shouted out when Jack retreated again. "You think you are good? Try breaking our formation then!"

What was that annoying brute so content about? They were forced to go on the defensive until using this sort of turtle strategy because they couldn't deal with him, and now he acted as if this was something to be proud of. But since the guy was so satisfied with their turtle shell, then he should just break apart this turtle shell of them.

Jack made another lunge. Faithstooge readied his shield to receive his attack, while the others readied themselves to counter-attack once the knight did the blocking. While they were preparing with anticipation for Jack to reach them, they were appalled by the sudden change to their opponent's weapon. His longsword seemed to break apart at its seam, golden light enveloped it as black lightning coursed along its trail.

They were still captivated by it when the transformed sword made an impact with Faithstooge's shield. Previously every time the shield blocked an attack, Faithstooge suffered no damage. Even when Jack used Power Strike, the overspill damage received by Faithstooge was only around 30 damage.

Now, he received 106 damage. Faithstooge was having the fright of his life. The attack appeared to be only a normal slash, but he still lost almost a quarter of his life just from a single slash, even after he successfully blocked it. Didn't this mean he would be done for if hit by another four slashes?

He instinctively jumped back, but his back bumped with obstacles. He turned around and saw his six underlings clinging to him closely. "Move away, you fools!"

But that's the problem when organizing a bunch of people. There were always some in the group that were a bit slow on the take. Out of the six players, only two moved to give way. The other four were still

having a blank look on their faces. In the meantime, Jack delivered his triple rapid spinning slashes while Faithstooage was pinned on the spot. The Knight's life was immediately down to a critical point.

"Argh..!!" Faithstooage roared frantically and sent his mace forward using Power Strike in a desperate attempt to push Jack back.

Jack returned in kind. Two Power Strike met, but Jack's attack devoured the other's one. Faithstooage's mace was completely repelled while Jack's sword continued in his trajectory and crashed into the Knight's body.

Faithstooage's eyes were wide as he stared intensely at Jack. How come it all turned out like this? He came here bringing so many people with the thought of enjoying the sight of his underlings bullying a single player. He was expecting to settle this matter quickly and return to the tavern in the city for a cold beer before turning in for the night.

Why did it end up like this? His thought made a quick flash on the events of the last hour since they met this player. He regretted not have called for reinforcements when he had the chance to. He regretted not let the guy go when he tried to run away. Then his vision turned dark.

The others were paralyzed with their mouths wide open. They just stood there looking at Faithstooage's corpse. How? They were still having difficulty processing it. Their one and only wall that defended them against this monster, was now gone. How were they going to proceed?

Ogre was still in a daze before he realized Jack was standing in front of him. "Yo... you..." He had difficulty forming a thought of what he wanted to say.

"Try not to be a robber again next time, okay?" Jack said, before he used a couple of quick slashes and sent him back to reset.

As he fell, Ogre wore an extremely unwilling expression on his face. This gig was supposed to be the turnaround for his future. He had been wiped out during the Tutorial Period and thus restarted again, he was far behind most others.

He had had a fortunate opportunity of meeting a member of Corporate United. He had been the one that had proposed this robbing idea, based on his experience robbing players during the tutorial period. He had been promised a respectable position within the guild if this all went smoothly.

It had been all sunshine since two days ago when this operation started. They had expected this gig to be able to run at least one week before they met with backlash from the general public, therefore they needed to reap as much profit as possible when it was still viable.

But who would think that a large obstacle would already appear so soon? His last thought before his vision gone dark was whether the people from Corporate United would consider this as a fail and reconsider their promise of accepting him into their rank.

Once Ogre's body touched the ground, the others snapped out from it, one of them tried to run, but soon froze when he heard Jack's yelling, "Anyone who tries to run away will be killed!"

They all turned back and looked at Jack timidly. Jack's sword had returned to its original condition, yet they were no less intimidated.

"You all know what to do, right?" Jack said with a wicked grin.

They looked at each other, before lowering their heads and gave Jack permission to intrude into their inventories.

"Say, wasn't you one of the guys I have robbed previously?" Jack said to the closest person. The guy only nodded weakly.

"Try not to do this evil deed anymore, okay? Robbing is not a good profession. You should learn from me, doing justice for the good of society!" Jack added. The guy made another slight nod.

Chapter 204: Outrageous Earnings

Jack chased them away after looting them. He didn't get much from the remaining five surviving players. They obviously came just to take care of him. If they had loots before, they might have delivered it to whoever their manager was.

He, however, acquired good stuff from Faithstooge. Now that the fight was over, the corpses of the players disintegrated and dropped some items. Jack picked up two pieces of equipment that were dropped by the knight. They were an uncommon heavy chest armor, which was of no use to him, and the kite shield he was using. Apparently, it was a rare shield.

Unyielding Kite Shield, level 15/35 (Rare small shield)

Physical Defense: 26

Magical Defense: 24

Durability: 50

Endurance +3

Reduce Knockback effect

Damage under threshold is nullified when block successfully, Damage above the threshold is reduced by 30%

No wonder Faithstooge could resist his Power Strike's knockback, it was this shield's effect. This was a good shield, he could use it when he did not want to reveal his Mage class. He could also use it for his mage disguise.

"Peniel, if I want to change the equipment of my mage disguise, do I need to use the Magic Furnace again?" Jack asked

"No, the Magic Furnace was only needed during initial setup," she replied. "If you want to change your equipment now, you can simply activate your disguise and then equip the new equipment. When you reactivate your disguise again the next time, it would automatically use the last equipment, providing said equipment was still inside your bag."

Since there was no one around. He changed to his Unrivalled Arcaner disguise and equipped the kite shield, before changing back to Storm Wind. He then picked up the drops from the other dead players.

He went back to the site where they started the battle, there were lots of loots on the ground when he arrived. He went ahead and picked them all up. When he came to the place where Trustaide had fallen.

"Another rare equipment?" He muttered as he picked up a pair of gloves.

Fast Heal Gloves, level 15/35 (Rare cloth armor)

Physical Defense: 16, Magical Defense: 24

Durability: 40

Wisdom +3

Increase the pace of spell formation when casting healing spells

Healing spells? These gloves were tailored for the Healer class. No wonder Trustaide could cast his heal spell so fast, it was actually due to these gloves, and here he thought the guy was an expert.

He was thinking about what to do with these gloves. He already had rare cloth armor gloves for his Mage disguise, he did not need these gloves. He was thinking at first that he would just use it as components to combine using the Transformation Box, but then he thought of Bowler. The guy said he wanted to try to become a Healer. He wondered if he was successful. If he did, maybe he should just give these gloves to him. He sent the guy a message.

He soon received an answer. The fellow had actually made it. Jack was impressed. The guy even bragged about it in a lengthy chat message. Jack had no time to read it all, so he just asked him if he had time tomorrow morning for going questing together.

Bowler replied, "absolutely." He also asked if he could invite Fierce Flame, Jack saw no problem with it. He also asked to invite The Man as well.

After finished looting all the drops, Jack returned to the capital. It was late at night already, but the capital was still lively. It was mainly due to the players, many had brought their habits of nightlife into this world. They spent more activity during the night compared to the day.

Jack had returned very late the past two nights. The Restaurant that he built with Bill and Ellie had already started their operation the night before, but it was already closed when he returned, so he had not yet seen it in operation.

Ellie had sent him a message informing him that they were doing well, though, so there was nothing for him to worry about. The building itself had an extravagant look with a more traditional theme to it. He thought the coins thrown into the renovation were well spent. And as he had guessed, the restaurant indeed consisted of three floors, with the topmost floor had an open roof design, providing an outdoor dining atmosphere for the customers.

He had a thought to talk with Ellie, maybe they should extend the restaurant's operating hours until midnight? Their main target customers were players, looking at their nightlife habits, prolonging the extra hours to late-night should rake in more profit.

After returning to his private room at the top of Amy's Bakery, Jack made a tally on his earnings. His Large Bag was filled to more than half, which was a lot considering it could fit 100 cubic meters of space. There was just too much stuff.

After spending a long two hours cataloging everything, he finally had a clear list. For equipment, he especially separated the one-handed swords, magic staffs, medium armors, and cloth armors, as those were the ones he could use.

There were 28 common swords, 1 uncommon sword, 34 common staffs, 28 common shields, 204 common medium armors of various parts, 217 common cloth armors of various parts. He put them at one side of the room first.

For the other categories, he had got 76 common melee weapons of various types, 83 common magical weapons of various types, 64 common heavy armors of various parts, 198 common light armors of various parts, 282 common materials, 15 uncommon materials, 162 common ingredients, 53 uncommon ingredients, 12 apprentice foods, 62 lockpicks, 12 pickaxes, 76 magic stones, 42 basic healing potions, and 16 basic energy potions. He stored these items back again, he would keep the materials, ingredients, tools, magic stones, and potions. For the weapons and equipment that he couldn't use, he decided to just sell them instead of breaking them into materials.

He then looked at the piles of one-handed swords, magic staffs, medium armors, and cloth armors at one side of the room. For other players, once they acquired higher grade equipment, these bunches of common equipment were useless no matter how many they had. But it was different for him, because he had the Transformation Box.

He could turn this pile of trashes into valuables. The more he had, the better. He placed the Transformation Box next to the pile and started throwing the equipment inside and combining them one by one.

It took him almost another hour to combine everything using the Transformation Box. After the arduous task, in addition to sacrificing some of the equipment he was currently wearing, he actually found himself able to be fully garbed in Rare equipment, with some leftovers common and uncommon equipment to spare.

Without delay, he changed both his Warrior and Mage's equipment setup using these new armors and examined them in his status window.

Storm Wind

Head = Silver Guard Helmet, level 21/40 (rare medium armor), Physical defense: 38, Magical defense: 32, Durability: 40, Endurance +3, +30% resistance on dizzy and disoriented

Chest = Blood Guard Scale Armor, level 26/35 (rare medium armor), Physical Defense: 59, Magical Defense: 56, Durability: 50, Dexterity +3, Reduce all range damage received by 30%

Shoulder = Blue Wing Spaulders, level 21/40 (rare medium armor), Physical Defense: 36, Magical Defense: 32, Durability: 40, Dexterity +3, Reflex +3

Arms = Silver Beast Vambrace, level 21/40 (rare medium armor), Physical Defense: 37, Magical Defense: 31, Durability: 40, Strength +3, increase strength by 10% when HP is below 50%

Belt = Coin Snatch Fauld, level: 21/40 (rare medium armor), Physical defense: 33, Magical defense: 30, Durability 30, Reflex +2, 10% chance to increase coin drop from monster kill

Pants = Shadow Bear Tasset, level 25/35 (rare medium armor), Physical Defense: 45, Magical Defense: 41, Durability: 40, Endurance +3, When HP is below 50%, defense is increased by 80%

Boots = Silver Wing Leggings, level: 21/40 (rare medium armor), Physical defense: 35, Magical defense: 30, Durability: 40, Reflex +2, movement speed +10%

Physical Defense = 283

Magical Defense = 253

Unrivaled Arcaner

Head = Enduring Magic Hat, level 15/35 (rare cloth armor), Physical defense: 17, Magical defense: 25, Durability: 30, Endurance +3, MP recovery +1 every second

Chest = Flowing Lavender Robe, level 15/35 (rare cloth armor), Physical Defense: 30, Magical Defense: 36, Durability: 50, Intelligence +3, All elemental resistance +10

Shoulder = Unnatural Scarf, level 15/35 (rare cloth armor), Physical Defense: 17, Magical Defense: 24, Durability: 30, Strength +3, Intelligence +3

Arms = 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

Belt = Mage support Sash, level: 15/35 (rare cloth armor), Physical defense: 14, Magical defense: 20, Durability: 30, Intelligence +2, MP +50

Pants = Reactive Silk Pants, level 15/35 (rare cloth armor), Physical Defense: 19, Magical Defense: 26, Durability: 40, Reflex +3, 1% chance to nullify a physical damage, cooldown: 10 minutes

Boots = Speed Wind Shoes, level: 15/35 (rare cloth armor), Physical defense: 16, Magical defense: 23, Durability: 30, Dexterity +3, Wind resistance +10%

Physical Defense = 131

Magical Defense = 180

Chapter 205: The Busy Restaurant

He was probably the first player to have a full set of rare equipment. Apart from his Ring of Luck which was Uncommon grade, all his other equipment was at least Rare grade. Both his Warrior and Mage class' combat ability had further increased again.

His mage's equipment was still lacking compared to his Warrior's ones, he might need to increase them to level 21 as well. He thought about doing it when he had the time.

He had also produced one rare longsword, one rare staff, and one rare shield from the transformation Box, but all three were not as good as his current equipped weapon and shield, so he stored them first.

This rare longsword could be sacrificed to increase his Storm Breaker level, but currently its level had reached his level's threshold. If he increased the level again, he would instead end up cannot equip the weapon, because a player couldn't equip a weapon more than ten levels higher than their own level.

After tidying up, he realized it had already passed midnight. Now that his tasks were done, his fatigue sank in. He couldn't help but climbed onto his bed and allowed his exhausted body to rest.

He woke up late the next morning. However, his new restaurant was still not open yet. It would open its business at ten in the morning, still an hour to go. He had made an appointment with Bowler and the others to meet at the restaurant, so he could take a look at the business as well.

During the wait, he went to the blacksmith workshop, and paid for rent on the room that had rare tools. Since he had a large number of iron ores, he went and upgraded each of his cloth armor equipment to level 21, increasing their defense for his Mage disguise. The total of his Unrivalled Arcaner's physical defense was now 221, while his magical defense shot up to 280.

He also increased the level of his Unyielding Kite Shield to level 21. This would increase his total defense further when he equipped the shield.

Although he had many materials to use, he needed to go back soon as it was almost the appointment time with Bowler and the others. So for the remaining time he had, he spent making a few Whetstones and level up his Red Dawn Staff to level 26, failing three times in the process. But he didn't mind, these materials were originally not his to begin with.

Red Dawn Staff, level: 26/40 (rare magic weapon)

Magical damage: 83

Range: 10 meters

Attack speed 1

Energy: 80

Intelligence +3

All spell range +2 meters

He imagined if he going up against Scarface now, he would be able to take him down in a short time even if he only used his Mage skills.

After going out from the Blacksmith Workshop, he made some time to visit the weapon and armor shops to sell the excess weapons and armors which were useless to him. Checking on the coins he received from selling, he found out the price for selling equipment was around one-fifth of the price if he bought them. The number of coins he got from selling all those excess common equipment were only 2 gold and 11 silver coins.

Looking at the coins, he realized the significance of the Transformation Box. He could use those equipment to make a few rare grade equipment, even if he could not wear heavy armor, and light armor was not effective for him, he could still sell them. He bet the famous guild would gladly pay him a hefty number of coins for one rare heavy armor or one rare light armor. At least it would be worth more than these pitiful 2 gold coins he got from selling all the common equipment. He regretted now that he had sold them all. Why so hasty?

What's done was done, he didn't dwell on it too long. There was another benefit he got from selling the equipment, his non-battle skills Haggling had leveled up to Intermediate Apprentice. He looked at the effect of this skill, it increased the price of things he sold by 1% while decreasing the cost of buying by 1%. This was an essential skill for those who want to be a merchant, Jack thought.

He was happy with the huge upgrade he had gotten. He wondered if the robbers would go back to their activity again? Maybe he could go check again. Probably he could get a jackpot again, while at the same time, performing a community service by taking out scumbags.

He hailed a carriage to go back to the restaurant afterward, it was already past the appointment time. He had already received a couple of messages from Bowler asking of his whereabouts.

Using the carriage, he arrived back at the restaurant in a short time. He went in at once. The business was truly going well. There were already so many customers on the tables despite the restaurant had just opened not long ago. Some were players, some were NPCs.

It was a nice surprise to see a rather large number of NPC customers considering this street was usually rather deserted. He looked at the NPCs that he had hired going back and forth to serve the customers, he might need to hire one or two additional workers to cope.

He peeked inside the kitchen and saw Ellie and Bill hard at work. They were so busy that they didn't notice him. Maybe he should hire an NPC cook to help out as well, although the price of a specialized worker was higher than a regular worker, at least until they could find another player with Cooking skill that was interested to join. He didn't bother the two cooks considering how busy they were. He went up the stairs.

The first and third floor was for general public use, with the third floor provided an outdoor atmosphere. One-third of the second floor was also for the general public, while the remaining two-thirds were separated into several enclosed VIP rooms. It was for customers that prefer privacy and not stingy enough to pay extra cost.

In fact, in the last two days since this restaurant started operating, several guilds had rented these VIP rooms to hold their meetings. Considering none of them had a physical base yet, these VIP room venues were rather enticing for them.

Jack had made an appointment with Bowler and the others in one of these VIP rooms. He opened the door to said room and found Bowler sitting alone inside while munching on snacks.

"Huh? Where are the others?" Jack asked.

Bowler made an attempt to swallow the mouthful of snacks, before replying, "The Man was caught up with settling some matters with his gang first, he is on his way already. He should be here any moment

now. Fierce Flame was spending the night in the wild yesterday for her adventurer quest. She met some monster packs during her return. But when I last checked ten minutes ago, she had already entered the city gate. So she won't be long as well."

And here I am thinking I was late, Jack thought. He sat down beside Bowler and joined him in enjoying the snack.

"Say, bro. I didn't expect you to be able to secure a VIP room in this restaurant," Bowler said. "This restaurant just opened two days ago, but it is already a huge hit among the players. The cooks here are expert grades, their food provides nice bonuses. Almost every player will visit this place first before they go out to the wild. I've also come several times, and didn't manage to get this VIP room despite having the coins. Many guilds had already made reservations for these rooms."

Jack had a wry smile, what if he told him he was the owner of this place? But he decided to keep his ownership a secret first, he had already made enemies with several large guilds. If they found out he owned the place, they might decide to boycott it. Or worse, cause some trouble to it. He had told Ellie and Bill as well to keep his involvement in this restaurant a secret.

Jack took out the Fast Heal Gloves and passed them to Bowler. "Here, to celebrate you advancing to Healer class," he said.

Bowler inspected the gloves, before his mouth opened wide. "A... a Rare equipment...! Are you sure?" Bowler asked.

Jack gave an indifferent shrug. "Its ability is catered for Healer, and I don't use cloth armor. Don't feel troubled, my gloves are also Rare grade as well."

"... but you can also sell them for a large sum of money."

Jack's eyes twitched when he heard it. He was reminded of his impatience in selling all the unusable equipment from the robbing. "Do you want it or not? I will take it back if you don't want," Jack uttered.

"I want, I want! Of course, I want!" Bowler quickly replied. "Thank you, bro. You are the best! If I find any equipment that suits a Warrior, I will be sure to give it to you."

Jack just waved aloofly on the comment.

Chapter 206: Going On Group Hunting Quests

"Heya! How's it going?" The door opened and a loud voice reverberated around the room. The Man had arrived and took the seat opposite them.

"Fine, fine," Bowler replied. "You seemed to be in high spirit."

"Of course! If it's an invitation from Boss, I'm sure it will be good," The Man said with a smile.

"That's true," Bowler said with a wider grin, looking at the gloves on his hand. He had already received a benefit from Jack even before they started questing.

The door opened again, and the slim figure of Fierce Flame came inside the room. She quietly sat down to join them.

Since everyone had arrived, Bowler looked at Jack. "So, should we go to the Adventurers Association to pick up a joint quest?" He asked.

"We are going questing, but not from Adventurers Association," Jack replied.

"Oh? Do you have a personal quest you need help with?"

"No. You will find out soon. Before that, let's have a meal first before we depart."

As he was speaking, a servant girl came in bringing four sets of meals. They inspected the food.

Prawn Noodle (Expert grade)

Recover 250 HP

Increase HP, Stamina/MP by 100

Increase all stats by 10 points

Effects last for 6 hours

They gasped, this food had a good effect on low-level players. Normal level 15 Fighter usually only had a strength stat of 40. By eating this food, the level 15 fighter will receive an instant 25% increase in his strength. While all his other stats will receive an even bigger increase as they are usually less than his main stat.

This food might see a decline once players started increasing in level, which made ten points of increase not so large. But at the moment, this food was one of this restaurant's hot-selling top menu. Bill and Ellie had used their coins to purchase many different recipes, allowing them to cook a variety of food.

After they ate their meals, Jack bought a few sweet dumplings and split them with the others. They could use them once the prawn noodle's effect wore off. They could only have one food effect at a time.

They were impressed by Jack's generosity and offered to pay their shares of the food. But Jack just waved them off. He took them to ride a carriage after coming out of the restaurant, they were now impressed by Jack's extravagant ways of spending coins. The carriage took them to the front of the Hunters Association.

"Hunters Association?" Bowler read out the sign in front of the building.

"Yes," Jack then turned to Fierce Flame, "you still hold on to the Trophy items I asked you to hold on to before?"

Flame nodded.

"I've also got some more after last time. I keep them this time, didn't sell them anymore," Bowler said.

"Good," Jack said, and then brought them inside as he explained the mechanics and rules. He guided them to make the Hunter batch and brought them to the Bronze hall to pick up hunting quests.

He didn't pick the efficient trip which the Death Associates and White Scarfs had been using, they might end up competing with them. Peniel had devised another efficient hunting trip that took them further. Much further actually as it did not include a return trip. They were going to use the Town Return scroll for the return.

Jack gave them each one Town Return scroll out of the ten he had in his bag. They were excited to learn so many new things. Jack told them where to buy the scroll if they need it again later but he didn't take them there.

They picked up the same hunting quests following Jack's instruction. Seven of them were the ones he had done before, Silver Wolves, Goblins, Gnomes, Gremlins, Lizardmen, Grey Sabrecats, and Fire Jackals. The other three were new monsters that could only be found further from the capital, Horned Rhino, Swamp Boa, and Crowing Bird. These three new monsters were all D difficulty from Bronze Hall, so it would not be as difficult as the Rock Golem. The four of them should have no problem dealing with them.

Bowler and Flame cashed in the trophy loots in their possessions, and were nicely surprised by the coins they received in return. The Man was grumbling during the process. Apparently, he had gotten some of these trophy items as well, but he had sold them away as the description on the items said that they were junks.

Once they completed the process inside the Associations, they immediately went out of town and started hunting for monsters. Jack had already shown them the route they would be taking on their maps, just in case if they got separated. Jack also gave them each a Whetstone to be used before the hunt to increase their damage output.

Since they were all advanced classes, Jack found the progress faster than when he was hunting the monsters with the six others from Death Associates. Not to mention he had better synergy with this team and he was using his Warrior skills this time.

Before long, they had already completed the hunting quota for all monsters except for the Horned Rhino, Swamp Boa, and Crowing Bird. They had also journeyed further than they had ever been. Probably the furthest among all players at the moment.

Unlike the old VR RPG games, players tended to be more adventurous to explore unknown terrains. Because if they had the misfortune to encounter strong monsters, they would only lose a bit of experience or 1 level from dying. In this world, they would lose everything and start again from scratch.

This caused players to be more cautious. They would first scout out new areas carefully, in the safety of a group, or look for information about the area, before venturing out to the place. This had made the exploration progress of this new world very slow.

Even the big guilds focused on strengthening their members and kept their activities around the city, the thought of exploring the far-off places was only in planning at the moment.

Jack and the others found themselves in a vast expanse of savannah, covered by yellow-colored grass the height of their lower thighs. In the distance, they saw a couple of large four-legged beasts. They had horns at the front of their heads. They looked exactly like a normal rhino from the real world.

Every rhino had a horn, Jack didn't know why the ones here were called Horned Rhino. It was like giving a bird the name of Winged Bird. But the logic of names held no importance to him at the moment, he just needed to kill the beast to fulfill the quota of his quest.

There were two of the beasts. Since it was their first time encountering this type of monster, Jack told them to engage on one first to study its combat pattern. Luckily the two beasts stood quite a distance apart, so they should have no problem fighting one first.

"Eh?" Jack stopped his advance.

"What's wrong?" Bowler asked.

Jack didn't answer. He was looking at his radar. There were a couple of red dots on it but he could only see the two rhinos. It didn't make sense as the savannah was flat and wide, he could see the distance on the horizon. Doesn't make sense if he could not see the monsters in this open field. The logical reason should be they were hiding under this grass. The grass was rather tall, but not that tall. If the other red dots were monsters covered by the grass, they should only be small monsters.

After considering it, Jack thought that these small monsters shouldn't be a menace. He continued his advance towards the closest Horned Rhino.

"Okay, let's get in position," Jack said.

After battling together for a while, they had formed a habit in their formation. Fierce Flame would be at the rear and initiated a fight using her arrow. Bowler would be at the center and sent range attacks for support or heal when needed. Jack stood in front of them, giving him the flexibility to attack or return to defend the two ranged players if necessary. The Man was their vanguard, he would engage the enemy in melee once Flame's arrow attracted the monster's attention.

Fierce Flame pulled back on her arrow until the string of her bow became taut, she then released the arrow. It produced several circling sonic booms as the arrow sped in its trajectory. This was the effect of Archer's first skill, Precise Shot.

Peniel had explained the effect of the skill to everyone. It increased the arrow's speed to around 1.5 times compared to a normal shot and increased the damage. Again, Jack didn't know why the skill was not called Speed Shot instead. He won't question the developer's choice of names.

The arrow struck the Horned Rhino's thick skin and bounced off. 10 damage was caused.

"Eh...?" Each of them was startled.

Chapter 207: The Sneaky Birds

The Horned Rhino looked at the culprit who had just attacked, and uttered an enraged roar at the group. It lowered its head before charging forward at Jack and the others. The Man who stood at the front did not tolerate getting intimidated by a basic monster like that. So, he also lowered his stance before executing Charge.

Jack and the others were taken aback by his boldness. The Man and the Horned Rhino both charging at each other at high speed. Their collision produced a large impact noise, with a shockwave that flattened the grass around their point of impact.

Surprisingly, his Charge managed to stop the rhino. It stepped back with a dizzied look from the collision. The Man, however, was thrown back a few meters, with 62 damage on his head. The Horned Rhino's charge was obviously stronger than The Man's.

Jack was about to give a thumb up to The Man for his daring move, but his attention was distracted by the movements on his radar. The multiple red dots in their vicinity started to converge upon them.

Why? Jack had picked a route to avoid these small monsters that hid under the grass. Their distance should still be safe from their detection. He was initially planning to lure the Horned Rhino away so they could deal with it without fear of interrupting the other red dots. Could these red dots have some kind of link with the Rhino? Which triggered them to attack once the Horned Rhino was provoked?

Jack didn't waste his time to ponder, he immediately let the others know about the approaching critters. Fierce Flame also noticed the other monsters based on the rapid swaying of the grasses. She could see somethings were coming at them underneath the grasses.

Bowler only realized about them after hearing a series of loud cawing noises from their surroundings. The creatures were making noises as they approached.

Jack put himself close to Bowler and Flame. He instructed The Man to keep the Horned Rhino busy while they dealt with these newcomers. It was unclear whether The Man heard Jack's instruction, he didn't glance back.

He instead charged back towards the Rhino with a furious face once he got back up to his feet. He was clearly unsatisfied to have lost that first exchange. Jack let him settle his own matter and focused on the incoming red dots. Those critters went directly at them, probably because it was Fierce Flame that had initiated the first strike.

"Stay sharp! They've arrived!" Jack announced.

He turned in the direction of the closest red dot. The grass in that spot suddenly split apart as a bird-like creature leaped out. The creature had a large beak for a mouth. Its body was covered by yellow featherless skin, perfectly camouflaging itself with the color of the grass. It had two featherless wings that did not appear to be able to fly, and a pair of large legs with sharp claws. It extended its legs forward in a grabbing motion.

Jack went forward and met with it with his new Kite Shield. The bird was thrown away by the collision. Its strength was weak, Jack deduced by feeling the impact force. He used Inspect on the bird while it was down. It was the Crowing Bird which was also one of their targets. Peniel had mentioned that the bird and rhino lived in the same habitat, she didn't mention though that the two formed a symbiotic relationship.

Jack turned around at the next red dot that arrived. Now that he saw the way they attacked, he went on the offensive as well. He swung his sword as the next bird leaped out, and cut it mid-flight. Its weapon

was its claws and beak, the wings on its body were pretty useless, so he aimed at its defenseless mid-section. The slash gave 112 damage to the bird. Its defense was also weak, Jack thought.

He used his speed to intercept whenever the birds jumped out to attack. Apart from their numbers and their ability to hide inside the grass, he didn't find these birds to be troublesome.

Fierce Flame put aside her bow and used her dagger to deal with the birds. Her speed was not slow as well, she imitated Jack by waiting for the birds to attack before counterattacking with her dagger. Once the bird went back down to the ground, she switched back to her bow swiftly and gave additional damage by shooting the bird on its back. Jack was impressed by her speed of aiming and her accuracy. It seemed that she didn't choose archer class randomly.

Bowler was the only one that was helpless in the situation. He couldn't aim his magic at the bird as they were hidden in the grass. When they attacked, they were already in melee range, which was his weakness. Luckily, Jack was there to protect him.

Since Bowler couldn't provide any contribution to the situation, he looked at The Man and found that his HP had decreased more. The Rhino also suffered damage from The Man's attack but not much. At least it was not 10 damage like when Fierce Flame attacked it. That monster was probably almost immune to physical range attacks.

He cast Heal on The Man to recover his lost HP. Then cast Mana Bullet on the slow Rhino. The magic bullet hit the Rhino and produced 110 damage. He was astounded by the damage. "Hey, that beast is weak against magic attack!" He shouted.

Jack noticed it and replied, "good, then you go ahead and assist The Man. We will take care of these birds." This Horned Rhino apparently was similar to the Rock Golem. They were highly resistant to physical damage, although not as absurd as the Rock Golem.

Bowler nodded with excitement. He was not useless after all. He cast Energy Bolts and directed them towards the Horned Rhino while The Man kept it at bay.

The Crowing Birds were cawing ceaselessly as they made their attacks. The noise did nothing but annoyed Jack. Suddenly he heard Fierce Flame screamed behind her. He looked back and found her swaying while striking at empty air. A bird jumped up and struck her with its claws, before proceeding to peck her with its beak.

"Heal her!" Jack said to Bowler as he dashed forward and struck the bird that was assaulting Flame.

"I got this status effect called Dizzy!" Flame exclaimed once she got back her bearing. "It stunned me for a second and impaired my vision for a while. I couldn't see clearly during the effect."

Another bird jumped at them and cawed loudly as it attacked. Jack struck it away with Power Strike. "It must be their cawing. The noise is also their attacks, it probably has a chance to inflict that Dizzy effect every time we hear it."

"How do we defend?" Flame asked.

"I don't think we can defend against sound. Just pay attention to your position and the direction of the bird, don't panic when the Dizzy effect hits, and strike at the direction where you last remembered."

Fierce Flame gritted her teeth, she could not think of a better solution. Fortunately, the status effect didn't last long.

Jack was also hit by the mental attack and experienced firsthand the effect. The scenery in front of him spun around when the effect took place, creating a sense of vertigo. He almost fell over to the ground because of it. When he came around, he had two birds clinging on him while pecking him fiercely.

The damage of their attacks was decent but Jack's defense was much higher than average players, so they had difficulty inflicting serious damage on Jack. Jack used Swing and cut at both birds before following up with a few more attacks before they ran away.

It was difficult to kill the annoying birds as they kept on fleeing back into the grasses after making their attacks, making him unable to focus his attacks. They could only slowly chip away at the flocks as they continued to make sneak attacks on them.

Good thing that Bowler was a Healer. He could heal Flame's missing HP every time she was vulnerable after suffering from Dizzy. Jack himself did not need any healing because he only lost a little HP. Furthermore, Jack's resistance to Dizzy was 40% due to the boost from his equipment, hence he didn't suffer from the mental attack as often.

The fight was messy at first, but after they got used to the birds' pattern, it wasn't so hard anymore. They only lost some ground whenever the Dizzy effect hit, but Bowler's heals immediately alleviated the pressure. The birds started to fall one by one. By the time the last bird died, the Horned Rhino was at its death bed. Jack went over to assist and soon the Rhino also fell.

Chapter 208: The Moving Hill

They would need to hunt 100 Crowing Birds to complete their hunting quest. Good thing the birds were not as strong. For the Horned Rhino, they needed to kill ten. They proceeded to approach the second Horned Rhino in the vicinity. Around it was also some Crowing Birds, but not as much as the first. Using the same approach, they dispatched those monsters without a hitch.

After getting used to the two monsters, it didn't take long for them to complete their quota. They then proceeded to the next territory to hunt the last monster in their hunting quest. They went further North across the vast savannah. There were more Horned Rhinos and Crowing Birds as they passed through the yellow sea of grass. Jack led the way by utilizing his radar so they did not engage in any unnecessary fight.

While on the move, he noticed one red dot which attracted his attention. The reason was the red dot was larger and had a darker shade on it. He had encountered such a red dot before. The first time was when he encountered the Skeleton Captain.

At first, he thought that the dark red dot was indicating an elite or higher grade monster, but he had met several elite monsters but not all of them had the dark red color. The other time was when he went to fight the Horned Ogre boss. And the most recent was when he was facing Winston when he was possessed by the Cardinal of Phobos.

From those experiences, he could deduce that this different representation of the red dot was not showing that the monster was special grade, but instead indicating that the opponent was much stronger compared to his current self.

And the degree of dark tone was different. For the Skeleton Captain, its red dot was only tainted by a little bit of dark hue. While possessed Winston's red dot was much darker. He summarized that the larger the gap of power between them, the darker the hue was. This one on his radar at the moment was almost as dark as Possessed Winston. He immediately went alert from the revelation.

"Stop!" He said.

"What's the matter?" Bowler asked.

"We need to circle around, follow me," Jack said in a low voice. The large dark red dot was still a distance away from them, but he didn't dare to take a risk. If the thing could hear them or have a larger scope of sense, then they would be done for. The thing could kill them all in a blink of an eye if it possessed the strength in comparison to Possessed Winston.

"Why do we need to go around?" Bowler asked again with a low voice, imitating Jack, "and why are we whispering?"

"There is a very strong monster in that direction," Jack didn't keep the truth from them.

"How do you know?" The Man asked.

"Bro here can detect the positions of monsters and players around him," Bowler explained.

"Really?" The Man exclaimed, impressed.

"Really, now keep your voice down," Jack said.

"But I see nothing, except for a hill there," The Man said in a whisper.

"Maybe it's hiding behind the hill."

Just as Bowler finished his sentence, the small hill budged. At first, each of them thought something was wrong with their eyes. They blinked and wiped at it, when they realized all of them were doing the same action, they realized the problem was not with their eyes. They looked back at the hill, it was shuddering now, yet they felt no earthquake.

"Could it be...," Bowler uttered with a shaking voice.

A loud roar was heard as the brown hill rose up on four legs. Now they could see the full appearance of the creature. Even from this distance, they could see how colossal the monster was. It had a jagged back with a hardened surface, which was the reason they had mistaken it for a rocky hill when it was lying down.

Its four massive legs were covered by rocky scales, with large and sharp claws at the ends. Even without the claws, Jack had no doubt the weight of the leg itself could pummel them into meat paste. It had a tail that swung around wildly, as if it was flexing after a long nap.

Its head was covered with sharp spikes all over, with equally sharp teeth along its elongated mouth. Its eyes were small considering its proportion, but Jack was sure it would be larger than a basketball if he could measure it. The brown snake-like eye darted back and forth, surveying the surroundings.

The four of them instinctively laid flat on the ground, didn't dare to make any noise. Even the reckless The Man was pale as if he had seen a ghost. They heard the creature started moving as the sound of its footsteps echoed in the air. Their bodies tensed when they realized the footsteps sounded louder with each step. They could see its silhouette through the gaps between grasses. Was it coming towards them?

Jack felt bad for had brought them out here. It was fine for him since dying for him only meant losing some experience due to his Immortal Soul, but it was not the case for the others. If this creature had discovered them, he would put himself to block it while the others tried to escape. It was the least he could do. Although he was not sure how much time he could provide, considering the monster could probably kill him with a single slap.

As they were lying still with their hearts beating at an insane rate, the sounds of footsteps slowly receded. They looked at each other. The creature was leaving? They stayed down for some more time, didn't dare to lift their heads to check. Only after the footstep sounds were very faint that they gathered their courage to take a look.

They could still see the large monster in the distance. It was trampling around the Savannah, scaring the other monsters away. It was heading to a landscape with rows of mountains in the distance. After making sure that they were out of danger, they finally exhaled a breath of relief.

"That was insane! I don't know monster like that exist here," Bowler exclaimed. "Anyone did an inspect on that thing?"

"Are you stupid or something? We were busy hiding from it, where did we get the time to take a peek and inspect on it?" The Man spat.

"Good thing that it was a distance from us. If we entered its range of detection, we would be done for," Flame added.

"I think we do enter its range, but since we were hiding, it didn't notice us," Jack said as he remembered to have seen the silhouette through the grass. That meant the creature was passing close enough to them.

"But how did it not notice us?"

"As long as the creature didn't discover us with its sense, they would not know we are nearby even though we stood right next to it," Jack explained.

"What? Really?"

"Wait, you guys don't know? You guys never tried ambushing a monster before?"

"What ambush, mostly it was monsters ambushing us," Bowler said.

Jack looked at Flame, "You have the Silent Step skill, you never used it to your advantage?"

Fierce Flame shook her head weakly. But Jack didn't blame them, he had also rarely ambushed a monster, the first was when he first met the Skeleton Thug. Since then he mostly just faced the monsters directly.

"You should try it," Jack said. "You can score extra damage from a sneak attack that way. It was a good way for initiating combat."

Bowler smiled wryly, "easy for you to say, bro. You have the ability to detect monsters' positions. Most of the time we don't even know there are monsters until it was right next to us. By then, it would have seen us already."

"What was that monster anyway?" Flame asked. Her gaze was still on the monster that was now very far already.

"I don't know, but if not for Bro's detection skill. We might have stumbled onto it unknowingly," Bowler said.

They went silent afterward, contemplating it. The wilderness of this world was much more dangerous than they imagined, if they could stumble into such a monster unknowingly. The guilds had made the right decision by being careful and focused on strengthening themselves first before exploring.

"It was a young Land Behemoth," Jack suddenly heard Peniel's voice in his mind.

Chapter 209: Misty Swamp

'That was young?!' Jack almost blurted out loud.

"Yes, the adult one is at least three times that size," Peniel replied.

Jack was speechless, he couldn't imagine it. How to fight such a colossal monster? He shook his head as he cleared his mind. No need to think about such a thing at the moment. If he met such a monster again, all he could do was run away. Better concentrate on the task at hand. They only have one more hunting quest to complete. After that, they could use the Town Return scroll and go back to the safety of the city.

He led them to continue Northward. They came onto a place that was slightly covered by a thin layer of mist. The soil underneath was saturated with water. As they went deeper, the area covered by water increased, and the water went deeper. The water level was almost to their knees now. The mist also became thicker, it was a hindrance to their vision, they couldn't see their surroundings clearly.

"If we have a fight here, we will have difficulty moving," Fierce Flame told the group. She was indicating about the water which would curb their leg movements.

"I have to warn you, there is another type of monster in this area apart from the Swamp Boa," Peniel's voice echoed in his head.

'Oh? Was the monster too strong for us?' Jack asked.

"Not really, they were usually level 18 to level 20 Basic monster."

'Then it could still be defeated. Why didn't we pick up the hunting quest for this monster so we could do them together with Swamp Boa?' Jack complained.

"Because the quest for this monster is in Silver Hall, I thought you are only looking for the ones in Bronze Hall."

'In other words, we should avoid this other monster to avoid wasting time as we don't need it for our quest, is that right?'

"Avoid it or not, it's your choice, I'm just letting you know so you can prepare."

'All right, what is this other monster's name?' Jack asked.

"You can Inspect it yourself. It's over there on your right," Peniel answered.

"It's...", Jack was lost in words when he heard Peniel's reply. He turned his head to the right and saw nothing but a dead tree log floating on the water. But his radar suddenly flared as a single red dot suddenly appeared on it, at the same time the tree log burst out of the water. He saw a large mouth with rows of sharp teeth lunging at him.

It's a good thing that he had his sword and shield ready on his hands, and also a good thing that he was looking at his right side, thus he managed to put both his shield and sword in front of him as the creature rammed into him. He skidded back from the force, creating a large splash of water, with 73 damage above him. Jack was stunned, he had managed to use his shield at the last moment to block the attack, but so much damage still went through. Considering his shield was already rare grade and his total physical defense was high. This attack if it hit any other players other than him would most likely put them into a critical state.

'Why didn't you warn me earlier?' Jack complained in his mind.

"Don't you feel grateful that I warn you at all?" Peniel countered back.

Jack didn't bother to argue with her. But how did it trick his radar? This had never happened before. He only saw the red dot after the creature was so close to him. Jack inspected the creature which had now fallen back into the water. It was a large crocodile, he had mistaken its back for a floating wooden log.

Swamp Croc (Basic monster, Reptile), level 18

HP: 2700

The Swamp Croc didn't stay still and go back to pretending to be a dead log again, it swung its massive tail, which hit Fierce Flame and sent her flying backward. The croc then bit on Bowler's leg. They had been standing together, so the croc was in close proximity to them all and could easily reach any of them. With its mouth tightly clamped at Bowler's leg, the croc shoved him high into the air and away, deeper into the swamp.

Jack observed the damage received by Bowler and Flame, he was relieved that they were not as dangerous as he had thought. The first strike on him might have been boosted by a sneak attack effect which increased the damage, similar to when he had ambushed the Skeleton Thug.

The Man was the last to be targeted by the croc which also gave him time to react. He cleaved his two-handed axe down onto the croc's back, it received 67 damage. Its defense was high, but still manageable.

The Man lifted his axe to do another hit again, but the croc didn't stay still. It pushed its body forward and coiled to The Man's side in an instant, He was shocked by the creature's movement speed despite its size. His already swinging axe slashed down on the empty water. He felt pain in his leg before feeling himself getting pulled violently. He fell into the swamp water while the croc swung his body back and forth savagely.

Jack came at this time and used Power Strike on the Swamp Croc. The blow forced it to release its jaws from The Man's leg. The powerful skill which usually sent an opponent flying, could only push the Swamp Croc three meters away. It ate away 171 HP from the Croc.

When Jack was about to continue his attack, he was distracted by several other red dots coming to their vicinity. He then heard Bowler screaming, the fellow screamed like a girl. He turned to look at him and noticed the new red dots were in that direction. The Croc had thrown him deeper into the swamp and attracted other monsters. Two large snakes were coiling around his body. They were biting at him. Jack didn't bother to use Inspect, he assumed those are the Swamp Boas which they had come for.

"Help! I am poisoned!" He yelled. He impressively could still cast heal on himself despite his condition.

"Flame, Man, help him!" Jack said. He himself faced the Swamp Croc.

The croc was nothing special really, but the swamp environment was in its favor. His movements were hampered while the croc could move freely. It used its powerful tail and shot itself forward. Normally Jack would be able to dodge the attack easily, but his legs felt like a few bags of sand were holding them down. So he used his kite shield to block the ram. The blow pushed him back one step, but otherwise, he was unharmed. Looked like his hypothesis about the extra damage of the first sneak attack was correct.

Without the element of surprise, the Swamp Croc was only slightly stronger and faster than the average monster. This was no problem for him as he was much stronger and faster than average players. After all, it was only a basic monster, Jack slowly wore the monster's HP down.

He glanced at his teammates and found they were not in any kind of real danger. More Swamp Boas approached them, but the monster was weaker than the croc. The only thing they needed to pay attention to was its poison. Fortunately, they had prepared and stocked up on Antidote beforehand. The Man and Fierce Flame managed to release Bowler from the Boa's clutches. Bowler immediately drank an antidote and retreated a distance. He then supported Flame and The Man with spells and heals.

After Jack killed the Swamp Croc, he went and helped with the Swamp Boas. They didn't dare to venture too deep into the swamp. The mist on it was just too eery. They just wandered around its outskirts, afraid if the swamp hid any fearsome presence like the Land Behemoth.

During their hunt for the Swamp Boas, they encountered one more Swamp Croc. As before, Jack didn't see it on his radar until it started to attack. But since he had experienced the croc's cunningness before, he had paid attention to any suspicious dead log floating on the water. This had saved them from its deadly sneak attack.

'By the way, Peniel, why did the croc not show up on my radar at first?' He asked in his mind. He was not as flustered as when he first fought the monster, so he could still afford to chat.

Chapter 210: Enticed By The Coins

"How should I know? I already said before that monocle of yours is a new thing to me. How do I know how it works? However, this Swamp Croc does have a camouflaging ability that could deceive a hunter's sense. So maybe it works the same way to your radar."

'But my radar can still track creatures in hiding. Like that Land Behemoth from before, I can know that it is a monster despite it was pretending to be a hill.'

"It was not pretending, it was simply sleeping. You lot were the ones that mistook it for a hill. And I said ability, not simply hiding. This Swamp Croc had an inherent ability to trick sensing ability. I think it was more or less like the invisibility effect of your Cloak of Shadow. I bet if someone else uses that cloak of yours to become invisible, he or she will not be detected by your radar as well. That's why you can escape Winston's detection, do you think such a high-level being has no ability to sense your presence?"

Jack thought about her explanation. If that's true, he should not allow himself to become too reliable to his radar. There might be other monsters out there that could trick his radar as well. He would be in big trouble if he assumed himself safe because the radar was empty while there were such monsters around.

After they managed to kill one hundred Swamp Boas to complete the quest, they came back out of the swamp. During this trip, Bowler had increased to level 16, while Fierce Flame reached level 17. The Man stayed at the same level of 17. Jack himself managed to increase his Warrior level to 18 after the end of the trip.

Jack checked his status. He had 12 free attributes points, 6 free Warrior skill points, and 4 free Mage skill points that were still unused. He thought about them and decided to use his 12 free attribute points. He divided them equally into the three main attributes, Strength, Dexterity, and Intelligence, 4 points each.

While for his free Warrior skill points, he decided to spend 2 points to increase his advanced skills, Sword of Light to level 7 and Charge to level 5. He kept the remaining points for later use. He also checked his Container of Souls and found that it had 2132 souls inside. He used 2000 souls to upgrade his much-used basic skill Power Strike to level 5.

They then went and divided the trophy loots that had been collected in these hunting trips in four ways equally. The other three offered for Jack to get a bigger share, but again Jack insisted on equal distribution.

He ended up with fewer trophy loots compared to when he was with the Death Associates team since he only needed to turn over 40% share. But he preferred to quest with this team. It was better to receive less and share with his friends, rather than receive more but contribute to the enemy.

After they sorted out the shares. They activated the Town Return scroll to return to Thereath capital. Each scroll could only carry only one person, so each of them activated one scroll. A soft white glow enveloped their bodies and they found themselves instantly teleported inside the capital.

There was a huge central square in between the three districts of the capital. In the middle of this square was a large open structure for which they had no idea what it was used for. There were always four level 60 guards standing guard around this structure, they have no idea what they were guarding against. Now that they appeared at the center of this structure, they realized this place was a teleportation portal.

"That was efficient! I will buy more of this Town Return scroll!" Bowler exclaimed.

"Are you planning to go far away? What are you buying it for if you will only journey along the outskirts of the city mostly?" Flame asked.

"Well, you never know. It might come in handy. If we have this scroll when we were chased around by the Warriors of Solidarity, we can easily escape them," Bowler countered back.

"You are right. But you need to know, this Town Return scroll can't be activated if you are in combat," Jack told him.

"Oh, well, it can still be used as long as we can run far enough to break combat, so I'm still going to buy it," Bowler insisted. "By the way, I expect we to be teleported to the place where dead players resurrect. Turn out it was a different place."

"Where does dead player resurrect?" Jack asked.

"Over there," The Man pointed. Not far from where they stood was a large circular platform slightly elevated from the ground. There were another four guards stood over there.

"Well, you must have known because a lot of your subordinates had visited there," Bowler teased.

"How about I send you there then?" The Man threatened.

"Okay, let's us submit our request. Afterward, do you all want to repeat the quests again?" Jack asked.

"Maybe tomorrow?" Bowler said as he looked at the sky. It was going to get dark soon.

"What's the problem? We can always camp outside," Fierce Flame said.

"I can't tonight. Need to settle the boys. Tomorrow morning I'm free though," The Man said.

Jack nodded, "okay, let's do it again tomorrow morning. I can only do one run tomorrow, I will have other matters to attend to in the afternoon."

They went together to the Hunters Associations and turned in their quests and trophy loots. They received a bit of experience but lots of coins, Jack alone got 82 hunter points with 1 gold and 49 silver coins from the run. If they didn't split the trophy loots four-way, the total would be more than the incomes from the route Jack had given Death Associates & White Scarfs. Of course, they would need to subtract the earnings with the cost of Town Return Scroll.

Bowler and the others were thrilled by the number of coins they received. Jack bet they would faint if he told them he had 41 gold coins in his bag.

"Let's do this again tonight!" Flame said with excitement.

"This...", The Man was also tempted after seeing the number of coins he received. "Alright," he then said and sent a message to his subordinates telling them he would be unavailable tonight.

Bowler was not so dazzled by coins but since everyone was going, he tagged along as well.

They went and did the same route again. They camped outside in the night. Flame seemed to have gotten used to spending the night in the wilderness. She even had the uncommon grade tent, which would send out an alert if monsters were approaching.

In the morning, they repeated the same quests again. After a total of two runs, Jack had gathered a total of 164 hunter points, 2139 souls, and 3 gold, 12 silver coins from those runs. He used 2000 souls to strengthen the Power Strike skill again, bringing it to level 7. The skill would now deliver 210% damage, but the stamina required to execute had increased.

After finishing the third run, Jack bid them farewell. They seemed incline to take the hunting quests again by themselves. Jack thought it should not be a problem, they had gotten used to the monsters in the quest. As long as they were careful, there should not be a problem. The Man himself had become level 18 Warrior after their last run. Too bad Jack's Mage class had not yet leveled up, but it was close. He just needed a little bit more experience.

After separated from them, Jack looked for a secluded alley and changed into Unrivalled Arcaner. He sent a message to Scarface via the guild channel, who then had Bigarm gathered a team to go on a hunting quest trip with him.

He had informed Scarface before that he might not be available until the day of the meeting, but he decided to aid them another time before the meeting. Otherwise, they might get suspicious if he was missing and only appeared again during the time of the meeting.

Jack got the same member to his team except for Warpath. The guy was indeed an expert, he had managed to gain the attention of other prominent members of the guild and was recruited to join their team.

Jack was given another low-level member as a substitute. As expected of Bigarm, the guy was as narrow-minded as he could be. Jack did not mind, he was just doing this for show.