

World 211

Chapter 211: Arguing Over A Plot Of Land

He took the same trip which he had taught the guild. He saw an increased number of Death Associates and White Scarfs teams during his trip. He had even met one occurrence where the two teams of those opposite guilds were having a verbal dispute.

Fortunately, it didn't end with a fistfight. If it did, he would be troubled about which side to help. Helping White Scarfs would expose his disguise, while helping Death Associates would hurt his conscience. He tried his best to avoid the teams from these guilds along his remaining journey.

He did the quest half-heartedly. Nevertheless, he still scored 67 hunter points and 1 gold, 91 silver coins from the run, after subtracting the coins he needed to give to the guild. Since he had collected many hunter points, he used 90 points to exchange with one of the items in Bronze Hall's exclusive list. Well-Done Steak, a cooking recipe for Expert grade.

He sent a message to Ellie, who was about to close the restaurant, and arranged to meet. Before he went over, he visited the City Administration Bureau to hire another 3-star regular worker and one special worker with a cooking skill, they would start working tomorrow morning. He spent 2 gold and 35 silver coins for the two workers. The special worker alone cost 2 gold coins

The special worker was not differentiated by stars like the regular worker, instead they were classified based on the level of their skill. A worker with Apprentice level cooking skill cost 1 gold, which was actually lower than the cost of hiring a 5-star regular worker. While one with Expert level cooking skill cost 2 gold, which was the one Jack was hiring.

There was also a worker with Master-level cooking skill that he could hire but cost more. He saw no point for him to spend the coins, because the administrator informed him that the worker only came with their skill, they weren't equipped with any recipe. They could only cook recipes that were registered under the restaurant, so there was no point to hire a Master-level cook since at the moment he still had no Master-grade recipe.

After completing the procedure, he went to the restaurant, Ellie and Bill were already waiting outside the restaurant. Jack gave Ellie the recipe for the Well-Done Steak. She was surprised by the gift, she knew how difficult to get a recipe of expert grade. She didn't stand on ceremony, she learned the recipe at once.

"What effect does the food gives?" Jack asked.

Ellie didn't answer, she instead just show Jack the projection.

Well-Done Steak (Expert grade)

Recover 300 HP

Increase experience received by 20%, effect last for 6 hours

Ingredients: Beef, Salt, Butter, Rosemary

Increase experience received? Jack was pleasantly surprised. This was a very popular effect for every player who wanted to level up fast. It might not give any boost in combat ability, but everyone would want to eat this food before they went out for grinding normal monsters.

Ellie did not share his enthusiasm. She instead looked at the projection flatly.

"Something's the matter?" Jack asked after seeing her expression.

"The ingredients," She said. "Two of them are common ones, Beef is expensive, but we can still find it in the market. But Rosemary, we haven't seen this ingredient anywhere in the market."

Jack pondered about it, and said, "it was probably something that we get from the wilderness. Never mind, I will keep an eye on it. I will let you know if I find some."

Ellie nodded. She was happy enough to learn a new recipe.

Jack then told them about the two new workers that would join tomorrow. They were relieved after hearing it. They admitted they had been looking for an opportunity to talk with him about getting additional helpers. They did not expect Jack to be one step ahead of them.

After bidding them goodbye, Jack was about to enter Amy's Bakery when he noticed a group of familiar figures a few buildings away from him. His Dragon's Eye vision allowed him to see farther than normal players. He recognized several amongst the group as Silverwing and his buddies. He decided to go over to greet them.

While he was on the way, he noticed another person. He was surprised to find the person there, especially nearby White Scarfs' people. This other person was with his group standing at the opposite side of the street from White Scarf's group.

Silverwing noticed the approaching Jack and gave him a warm smile. "Brother Storm Wind, we meet again," he greeted.

"Are you guys having a showdown here in the middle of the street?" Jack asked as he looked between Silverwing and the person on the opposite street.

Silverwing gave Scarface a look, then replied to Jack, "no, they are the same as us, surveying the neighborhood to determine which place to build a guild base."

"You have enough money already to buy a plot of land?" Jack asked with a shocked expression.

Silverwing chuckled, "not yet, but in around two or three days more we should be able to scrounge enough to purchase one."

Two or three days, that was still impressive, Jack thought. If he remembered correctly, at least 100 gold coins were needed to purchase a plot of land. He had gotten lucky with the Property Deed. Otherwise, he was not sure when he would be able to collect 100 gold. Even if he spent every day doing hunting quests. With three trips each day which was already considered very fast for the average players, he could only collect around 6 to 8 gold coins.

Only three days had passed since he informed the two guilds of his efficient route, but in another two or three days more, these guilds would have 100 gold coins. A collection of people working together was

indeed more efficient than striving alone, this would always be an irrefutable fact. Not to mention, the numbers of advanced class players in the guild would only increase, which meant the speed by which they collect coins would only become faster.

"There is no more point for you to look at this plot, we will be the first one to buy it," he heard Scarface's voice who had come to approach them with Red Death by his side. She was giving a hostile glance at Jack, as if eager to ask him for a duel.

Silverwing laughed at the comment, "I thought brother Scarface was interested at the land on the opposite street."

"No, after checking, I prefer this one here. You will give face to me now, won't you?"

Bluedaze who was standing beside Silverwing frowned after hearing, she uttered, "we had marked this place first, how shameless can you be?"

Silverwing calmed her down, his amicable smile was still on his face. He then said to Scarface, "I will always try to give face to brother Scarface, but in this matter, I'm afraid I can't relent. After all, it was a matter of importance in guild matter."

Scarface didn't seem perturbed. "It doesn't matter, this plot will still be ours. I heard you said you still need two to three days to collect the coins? Our side will sure to get enough sum in two days. So I suggest you better look for an alternate option."

Silverwing didn't let go of his smiling expression, "I see... If brother Scarface is intending on fighting with us for this plot, then may the best guild wins. I do hope that you will go easy on us"

"Heh," Scarface chuckled. "Although I have no doubt as to which one of us is the best guild, I will still wish brother Silverwing the best of luck."

Jack had the urge to slap them both. This was what he hated the most from guild politics. So much pretension. Why didn't they just throw down the towel and had a fight to settle things once and for all? Rather than going with this roundabout conversation while anyone here already knew about the animosity between them?

Red Death who had been paying attention to Jack from the corner of her eyes, spoke out, "you seem to have an opinion?"

"Me?" Jack was clear that she was trying to provoke him. He wasn't one that liked to intentionally look for trouble, but he was not one that backed down easy as well. "I was just thinking, if I go around killing the teams you have working on the hunting quests. Would you still be able to collect enough coins in two days' time?"

Chapter 212: Day Of The Meeting

Scarface expression turned dark upon hearing it. "Do not think because we haven't done anything to you, we are afraid of you. Are you trying to pick a fight with us?"

"What if I am?" Jack was not backing off. "Do not think I don't know that incident with Blackjack was orchestrated by your guild."

"Let's fight then, you and me. Let's settle our bad blood," Red Death uttered.

"Okay, let's head to the East Gate," Jack agreed and started walking away.

Red Death followed him before getting stopped by Scarface, "halt!"

Jack looked back. "What's wrong?" He asked.

Red Death gave Scarface the same questioning look.

"You've promised to hold yourself back," Scarface said to her in a low voice. "We have a bigger picture to take care of, do not let your emotions make you lose sight of what we should be doing. We will deal with him later."

"You don't believe I can take him on?" Red Death asked.

"I believe there is a risk. I am not willing to take the risk yet unless absolutely necessary. You are needed for us to assert dominance in this city."

"So we just let him go after talking that way to us?"

"I repeat again, do not let your emotions blind you."

"Hmph!" Red Death harrumphed, but she did not insist. She turned around and walked away, no longer looking at Jack.

Jack was about to throw her some insulting remarks but decided against it. If he provoked them too much, they might forget rationality and gang up on him. He might not be afraid of them, but there was also no need for him to attract such trouble.

Scarface also didn't make any further comments. He turned to Silverwing and said, "I will take my leave first, brother Silverwing."

Silverwing replied with a smile, "of course. I heard brother Scarface had an important meeting coming up. You must have lots to prepare."

"That is true. I'm sorry that you are not invited, brother Silverwing. It's for a limited community, but do expect big change to occur after the meeting."

"Oh, I'll be looking forward to it," Silverwing uttered.

Scarface turned and led their group away.

"You are truly amazing, brother Storm Wind. You have successfully pulled away their aggro in just a few sentences. I admire your taunting ability," Silverwing teased. "Do you really plan to kill their teams that are doing the hunting quests?"

"Of course not. Do you think I am such savage?"

"Ah, too bad," Silverwing sighed.

Jack rolled his eyes at him. Did he think he had so much free time to just go and challenge an entire guild?

"You must work harder then if you want to compete with them for this plot," Jack said to him.

"It's not really a problem. We can just buy that plot opposite. It's roughly the same size. It was just a matter of face who gets to choose first."

Jack was speechless. Then what was the dispute before for? He had intruded for something that was meaningless in the end.

"You know their meeting is tomorrow?" Jack asked.

Silverwing nodded. "You know as well? I am astounded by your ability to keep up with information despite not in a guild."

Jack shrugged. "So do you know what they are up to and where they will hold their meeting?"

"No, they keep a real tight lid on it, but we roughly have ideas on which guilds will be attending."

"Are you going to send people to spy on the meeting?"

"I will try, but I doubt it will be easy. I bet they will be placing lots of sentry around the place."

"I see. I will let you know if I find any information about it."

"Oh? Are you saying that you are going to try to infiltrate the meeting as well?"

Jack realized that he might have talked too much. "I'm saying that I will ask around in case the people I know are joining the meeting. It's late already, I bid you farewell."

Silverwing didn't hold him back. Their group also left soon after.

When Jack entered Amy's Bakery, Amy welcomed him and handed him a bag of coins. Jack looked at it in confusion.

"It's your share of the profit," Amy informed him after seeing his confused expression.

Jack counted the days in his heart, it was indeed seven days had passed since he made the investment. He looked inside the bag and gasped. There were 14 gold coins in there.

"So much?" Jack asked subconsciously. With this kind of earning, he would get back his investment in just four weeks' time.

"Business has been good lately," Amy said. "Come, let's have dinner. Mom had cooked an exquisite meal to celebrate our collaboration."

The morning after, Jack transformed into Unrivalled Arcaner and went to the meeting point advised by Scarface. When he arrived at the place, there were already lots of people. He didn't know many of them, but he could see that not all were from Death Associates. They formed clusters with their own group. The largest was Death Associates. He could see also that only a handful of Death Associates members were there. He assumed most of them were core members.

After reporting his arrival to Scarface, he asked, "are these all that are joining the meeting?"

"Yes, but not only the ones here. Corporate United and Wicked Witches were gathering other guilds at other spots. Once everyone had assembled, we will head out and convene at the final meeting place."

It will be a large crowd, Jack thought. It was impressive that they had managed to invite so many guilds to come together. Scarface went around with Red Death to greet the other guilds and made headcount, leaving Bigarm and Stonecleave in charge to arrange the security details.

Stonecleave was also an advanced class already, he was a level 17 Warrior. Jack remembered him to be one of Death Associates members that were difficult to deal with.

"Hmph, make sure you didn't embarrass our guild," Bigarm uttered grumpily, he clearly disagreed with Scarface's decision to include Jack in this meeting. "You will be with Warpath. You will take the backside of the left-wing as we proceed to the meeting place. Make sure to pay attention to your surroundings. Take care of any monsters we passed and chased away players that came near."

Jack turned and saw Warpath standing beside him. The guy had become a level 14 already. His speed of leveling was very fast, he might be challenging his advanced class trial soon. Jack was considering maybe he should find an opportunity to kill him again. The guy was sure to come looking for him to take revenge once he was strong enough.

Seeing his enemies growing strong, he couldn't deny that it put pressure on him. He would need to work harder to stay ahead of them. Otherwise, he would get swallowed alive if he gave them the chance to.

Some people came again to join their entourage as Bigarm and Stonecleave explaining about their security arrangement. After around half an hour, Scarface returned and told them that they would depart soon. Everyone spread out as they ushered the scattered groups to converge together, before they took positions as had been arranged beforehand.

After seeing everybody neatly getting into formations, Scarface gave the order to move out. They were very close to the city gate, so they were out of the city after a brief walk. Scarface and Red Death led the group in front as they eradicated any monsters that stood on their path. They headed in South Eastern direction.

A majority of the monsters seemed to be aware as to not try to provoke such a large crowd. They moved aside once the group drew near. Sparing Jack and the others the need to take action.

Jack could see from his radar several blue dots not far from them, most likely tailing them. Probably one of them was Silverwing's man. At one point he saw Bigarm took some men and broke off from the group, they went far away from one side of the group, while Stonecleave took another group of players and went to the other side.

They appeared to be out of view because the terrain was not flat. Hills and valleys with trees decorated the landscape, allowing people to sneak around unknowingly. However, Jack could see their movements clearly from his radar. The two teams from Death Associates roam around and clashed with the scattered blue dots. Either chasing them away or eliminating them on the spot.

The unknown blue dots dwindled as they progressed. Bigarm and Stonecleave teams continued to circle around by the sides, looking for any more players that were trying to tail them.

Chapter 213: Starlight Ruin

Jack was feeling pity for those trackers. It seemed that Bigarm and Stonecleave's purging was effective, as he could not see any blue dots outside the group any longer. Only green dots representing Bigarm and Stonecleave's teams were roaming around the group. Since Unrivalled Arcaner was registered in Death Associates guild, hence all members of his guild were shown as green dots in his radar when he was using this disguise.

As they were a large group, their traveling speed was slow. They needed to adjust their speed to follow the ones with the slowest movement speed, usually those of the Magician class.

They traveled for almost two hours before a dilapidated structure appeared in front of them. Jack could see several players standing inside and around the ruin. From the look of it, the ruin was the venue of the meeting. This was a wilderness ruin, which should be teeming with monsters.

To be able to assign players like that meant they had cleared out the monsters and stationed players to kill any monster that respawned. Jack was impressed that they could organize such arrangements just for a meeting.

Jack looked at his map. Since the ruin was in close proximity, it had also appeared on his map, replacing the grey fog that was previously covering it. The name on his map showed the name of the structure in front as Starlight Ruin.

Scarface led the troupe into the ruin. Some of the stationed players salute Scarface when they passed, some just gave an indifferent look. Jack scanned them and found out the indifferent players were from Corporate United and Wicked Witches. Of course, most of the female ones were from Wicked Witches. Jack wondered if Jeanny was attending this meeting as well.

The ruin covered a large patch of land, but was mostly in deteriorated condition. It possessed no roofing anymore so they felt like they were still outdoor despite entering the complex. Scarface led them to continue deeper into the ruin. After they passed through several broken-down walls, they came to what looked like a large central courtyard. There were already many players in the place.

Jack could see at one glance from their gender that the group in charge of the ones already present were from Wicked Witches. He saw the annoying Queen Magenta and the aloof Selena, but saw no sign of Jeanny. Scarface went up to them and made some small talk.

Bigarm and Stonecleave assembled the security team from Death Associates and arranged them at one section of the ruin. Jack could see that the arrangement had already been determined beforehand.

As they took their positions, Jack said, "I don't see people from Corporate United."

"That is not your concern," Bigarm replied in an unfriendly manner. "You just make sure to keep this area secured. I won't let you off easy if you don't do your job well."

Jack scoffed, "heh, like you are strong enough to do anything to me."

"Is that how you talk to your senior?!" Bigarm yelled.

"Stop it! We are one guild. You two will make us look bad." Stonecleave chided. Stonecleave's position within the guild was the same as Bigarm. However, his skill was in another league compared to Bigarm, hence the upper rank valued him more. Bigarm did not dare to rebuke him.

"The Corporate United people are indeed arrogant. We are the ones that initiated this meeting, yet they act like they are the main characters and dare to be late," Stonecleave said, expressing his dislike to the missing guild.

After making sure everyone's position had been assigned. Stonecleave handed over the supervision of this section to another core member called Earmouth. The man was a level 17 Magician.

Jack surveyed the surroundings. Half of the courtyard was encompassed with several elevated steps that circled around the central part of the courtyard. Making it looked like an amphitheater. Perhaps in the past when this place was still in its glory, this courtyard also served as a gathering place for its occupants.

The members that he had come with and the ones that had arrived before all took their seats around these steps. Members of Death Associates and Wicked Witches took their position opposite from the steps, separating themselves as the organizers.

Most of the ones present formed their own clusters again as they took their seats. From here, Jack could roughly assume that one cluster representing one guild. The numbers of guilds present were bigger than Jack had expected. From his rough estimate, there were around thirty guilds present. They were still missing the third group led by Corporate United, which meant the final counts might reach forty or even fifty.

Jack did not recognize most of the guilds. He might know if they state their guild names, but he couldn't know just by seeing their members' faces. He was not that active in socializing with guilds in his past games after all.

He had to scan the players in order to know their guild names, but most of the guilds represented here had not formed a formal guild under this world system, hence he still could not see their guild name even if he scanned them.

After all, they need to pay a sum of gold coins to establish their guild. It was not easy to collect gold coins when most of them were still basic class. And most guilds still need to spend expenditure to aid their members' growth. Only top guilds with many experts like Death Associates, White Scarfs, and the likes could afford lavish expenditure during this early stage.

However, there were two groups he recognized amongst the audience. One group was led by a large man accompanied by another man with an even larger body. The people around him were all rowdy-looking men with rough temperaments.

The largest man with the bulky body was a level 18 Warrior, while their leader was a level 10 Fighter. Other people might be confused by why the leader of a group was the weakest one, but Jack was not surprised.

The reason was that he knew the leader had died not long ago, and it was by his hand nonetheless. Jack looked at The Real Man, the guy managed to get to level 10 in just six days. He must have utilized his

underlings to help power-level him. Even so, his progress was still slower than Warpath. It was apparent that Warpath put more effort into regaining his lost levels. Goliath who sat beside him was as intimidating as Jack remembered.

The second group was Weary Wolf gang. Boulder and Flowing Fox sat at the front. Jack didn't find it surprising to see this gang here. Flowing Fox had worked with Scarface before, he imagined they still make contact. Not to mention that they share the same common enemy, him.

"Remarkable, ain't it?" Earmouth said. The guy had been walking around inspecting the positions of the guards in this section before stopping next to him and Warpath.

"Huh?" Jack was not sure if the fellow was talking to him. Warpath was indifferent, acting like he didn't hear a thing.

"This gathering," Earmouth replied as he looked at Jack. Jack was now sure the guy was talking to him. "You didn't expect we manage to pull this off, did you? Look, there is Saint Edge," he pointed at one of the largest groups amongst the ones that present.

"There is also Warriors of Solidarity," he pointed to the spot where The Real Man was sitting. "Also Crowd of Sins, Destitute Repudiator, Prodigious Chronicler, amongst many others. They were big names in the gaming industry. But they were behind our guild now because only a few of their members were pulled into this world. Black Cloak will also be joining, they are on their way here with people from Corporate United."

"It sure is impressive," Jack concurred. "What is this meeting about anyway? Gathering so many well-known guilds. Do you have a clue?" Jack decided to pry since the guy was chatty.

"You will find out soon, the show is about to start," Earmouth replied. "I heard that you are the highly-skilled new recruit who had a duel with Scarface? He thought rather highly of you."

Maybe he shouldn't be so direct, Jack thought with wariness. What if Earmouth got suspicious if he thought of him being nosy. He decided to be humble and also quickly changed the subject, "Scarface was just going easy on me. What about White Scarfs? Aren't they currently the largest guild in the capital? Will they be here as well?" Jack pretended to not know.

"That guild?" Earmouth sneered. "They can enjoy their glory day for a few more days. Once the guilds here come to an agreement, their progress will get seriously impacted. We are not interested to work with them, so they are not invited."

Chapter 214: Another Familiar Person Amongst The Audiences.

"Really? I heard that they are doing pretty well lately. They are the first one to have established their guild formally in this world, and I also heard that they will be building their guild base soon. By the way, you sounded to not have a good impression on that guild? Are they our enemy? I'm a new recruit so I'm still not familiar yet with our guild relationship with the others."

"You can say they are our enemy, or maybe simply rival for now," Earmouth said. "You sound like you know them pretty well."

"I did some research. Before I join this guild, White Scarfs and Death Associates are the two primary guild choices that I planned to join."

"Then you had made the right choice, brother!" Earmouth clapped at Jack's shoulder. "That guild only managed to be the first to establish their guild out of luck. But for guild base, they will be the sore loser. Their financing is not enough for them to buy a land before us."

"Really? I know for a fact that they had been doing the same hunting route as us, since I saw their teams during my trip as well. So their speed of gaining coins shouldn't be far off. Now that we are having this meeting, I can see that most of our advanced class members are not out there doing the hunting quests. Won't that allow them to catch up to us?"

"Hehe," Earmouth gave an enigmatic smile. "The coins they had accumulated so far were still not enough. They need at least one more day to accrue them, more likely two days. While we had gathered almost enough. Even if we put a stop to our coin gathering operation for half a day for this meeting, we can still collect the required amount faster than them. Furthermore, we have another plan in place inside White Scarfs in case anything untoward was happening. Even if they somehow managed to gather the coins first, we will still take care of them sooner or later."

Jack maintained his expressionless face, but he was rather startled to have heard this chatty player's words. From what this guy had said, it strongly implied that Death Associates had inside knowledge of White Scarfs guild.

He knew planting spies within rival guilds was a common practice for most large guilds, but exact information of finance within a guild was one of a guild's most covered secret. To know that would mean that the spy that Death Associates had inside White Scarfs was not in a low position at all. He or she would have to be at least a core member of the guild.

"Wow, I didn't know our guild's information gathering was so incredible. It must take quite a lot of manpower and connections to get such information," Jack tried to probe without sounding too obvious.

"We have our way," Earmouth replied with a proud smile. Unfortunately, the chatty guy didn't take the bait.

"I guess there is nothing to worry about then, we will surely surpass Silverwing in no time," Jack exclaimed.

"That's right! And we won't stop there. We will be the number one guild in the city sooner or later," Earmouth laughed.

Jack laughed with him. He felt bad for White Scarfs, he considered informing Silverwing. But what would he tell him if he asked where he acquired this information? Furthermore, he didn't have the identity of the spy. He doubted Silverwing would go on a manhunt based on his dubious clue.

"I must say, you are not too bad," Earmouth said. "I heard that you are a difficult person to get along with, but you are pretty ok for me."

"I'm actually a friendly person," Jack replied. "I will treat anyone with the same kind of respect that they show me. But if it was an arrogant person like this one beside me, I will not hesitate to crush them under

my boots also," Jack said as he gestured to Warpath who stood beside him. Warpath glared at him indignantly.

Earmouth continued to chat with him about some trivial matters. After another fifteen minutes of wait, the third group led by Corporate United finally arrived. Scarface was already starting to show displeased expression before when waiting, but when the Manager Steelhand who led the Corporate United group approached, he put on a delighted expression as if he was greeting his best friend in the world.

Jack did not see Trustaide nor Faithstooze amongst the people of Corporate United. They might be busy trying to level up again as they had just died a few days ago.

The guilds brought by Corporate United followed the others that had come before them and took their seats on the elevated steps around the courtyard. Jack was surprised when he saw another person that he recognized. He didn't know that this person was a member of a guild. He was sitting with five other players nearby.

Jack inspected them, but he didn't see a guild name tag on their names. He guessed they were among the guilds who still didn't have enough gold coins to afford to make formal establishment on their guild yet.

But he was still surprised to find him here. The man didn't peg him as someone who was interested in a guild, or more accurately, he couldn't imagine a guild that would put up with his attitude. He scanned the man's name again to make sure that he didn't mistake him for another person. The name was written clearly as Saint John.

John was positioned at the front center amongst his group. And when the people in his group have a talk, Jack could see from their attitudes that John was the person in charge amongst the six of them.

John was also already an advanced class Mage at level 17. Jack thought it was not a surprise. With the man's photographic memory, the Mage test was a walk in the park for him. The five others in his company were strangely, all Fighters. John was probably the one that picked who to accompany him, treating the five others as his personal bodyguards.

Jack didn't go or make any gesture to the man. After all, he was here as Unrivalled Arcaner, so even if he went, John would not recognize him. So he just stayed in his position and observe.

Not long after everyone had settled down, some people from the three organizer guilds went around to have a brief talk with each representative of the guilds while jotting things down on a pad. They were probably recording down each guild that was present here.

After they went full round in taking the notes, they went back to the side of the organizers. Manager Steelhand from Corporate United came out and took a position at the center of the courtyard, where everyone could see him clearly. Jack Inspected him, he was a level 17 Knight.

"My fellow players," he called out. His voice was firm, not too loud and not too soft, while everyone including the ones that sat at the back could still hear him clearly. His expression showed no anxiety. It was obvious that he was no stranger to public speaking.

"We are all fellow comrades in this foreign new world, which we have no say when we are thrown here. Nevertheless, the rules that govern this world are not so foreign to us. Most of us here are veteran

players with long hours of experience in VR games, so I am sure everyone here is familiar with this type of world. The difference is, that we are stuck here, without the possibility to log off. Now I'm not saying that we are stuck here forever, but since none of us know the reason why the world has changed or how we are carried into this world, we should treat this world as the place where we will spend the rest of our lives on. In other words, the stakes here are much higher than any VR games that we have played in the past."

Manager Steelhand made a brief pause as he surveyed his audiences.

"Everyone that presents here is a member of a guild. Most of you are well-known and well-established guilds in past games, some are new but fast-growing guilds. By way of explanation, you all know the importance of banding together. In numbers, we become stronger. No one can achieve anything great by being alone!"

"Due to the unknown mechanism that pulled us into this world, each of our guilds is not in our best strength. Many of our members are nowhere to be found. They are not in the city that we currently dwell in, but did they also come to this world but are placed in a different city? I can tell you for certain that the answer is yes. It's not a certainty that everyone from our world was transported into this world, however, it is a certainty that there are other cities out there where people from our world had been transported to. In this meeting, we will show you the proof of it."

Some murmur from the crowd upon the revelation.

Proof of other players at another city? Jack did suspect there was a possibility of such, but he didn't expect these guilds had already possessed such proof. Did someone already made it to another city and found other players there?

Chapter 215: Projection From A Distant Place

Manager Steelhand held out his hand to signal everybody to quiet down. He then continued, "There is much we don't know about this world. Unlike traditional games, the dangers in this world are more palpable considering that we will lose all our levels and inventories if we die in the wilderness. With such danger, it is imperative that we work together in order to survive in this world. This meeting that we have organized serves none other than to bolster the cooperation between our guilds, to make sure that we can survive in this world, and if luck would have it, to allow us to become a prominent existence in this world. An existence that is not governed by the NPCs of this world!"

Jack must admit that the man knew how to speak. His demeanor was like those politicians he usually saw in the news on TVs. He even suspected that Manager Steelhand's real-life job might probably be one that dabbled in politics. After all, most of Corporate United players were known as high-profile or wealthy individuals who were mostly pay-to-win players.

Their pay-to-win method was useless in this world, as there was no method to transfer their real-life resources into this world. Nevertheless, their experiences and connections were not to be underestimated. Their experts were the real deal, who used to be professional players that were paid with real-life money to join their guild.

Of course, now there was no such payment, but considering they had been with the guild for so long, their loyalty would most likely still with the guild. For example, one such player was Supervisor Killmonger, who stood not far behind Manager Steelhand, the man was a level 18 Warrior and a well-known martial expert.

After a few more speeches, Manager Steelhand gave over his place to Scarface. Scarface came forward and gave a signal to his people, who brought out a peculiar device. It was a large octagonal thick plate with engraved runes around it. The thing looked heavy as it needed two Fighters to carry it. Jack wondered why one of the players didn't just store the bloody thing inside their inventory space.

"Not everything can be stored inside your bag," He heard Peniel's voice chimed in upon hearing his thought.

'really?' Jack asked.

"Yes, some things existed that you would need to carry with your hand. This kind of thing usually carries great significance, making it harder to move around."

'Also meaning that it can be stolen,' Jack added, and was reminded by the Second Soul Remnant which was also an item that couldn't be stored.

They placed the device on the ground next to Scarface, which had a similar octagonal indentation. Everyone only noticed the indentation at this time, there were too many engravings on the floor of this ruin. Most part of the flooring also had cracks with vegetation growing on them, making it hard to notice anything special. The inserted device started to give out a low hum. The runes around it glowed alight.

Three Magicians from Death Associates approached and stood around the device. A soft glow came out of the device and enveloped the three Magicians. Jack could see traces of mana seeped out from their bodies and entered the device. The runes on it glowed brighter.

"Our guild found this device when we were exploring this ruin," Scarface announced. "At first, we have no idea what it was for, but after further exploration, we found a record at one locked room within this ruin, depicting this ruin's function on its glory day. It was a gathering hub for people in the wilderness, with support facilities. One of these facilities was a long-range communication device."

Scarface took his place close to the three Magicians next to the device, "Before, we informed you about proof on players at other cities. We are going to show you now."

He turned to the device and uttered some strange syllables, and dropped what looked like a magic stone onto the device. The device consumed the magic stone while the glowing runes on the device started to float upward. They then spun around above the device. The spinning was slow at first, but quickly turning up in speed. It was soon difficult to see the runes as they became blur due to high-speed spinning.

The top of the device then released a bright beam upward. The beam soon coalesced into a vague shape before slowly formed a noticeable human body. The feature of the body gradually became distinct until it formed a clear holographic image of a man.

The man wore a white robe with lavish etching. His blonde hair was long and straight, if not for his masculine body and a strong face with a square jaw and thick eyebrows, people might have mistaken him for a woman. His expression and bearing showed a confident temperament.

While the players watching were still absorbed by the spectacle, the man in the image produced by the device made a sound, "greetings, fellow players."

"Wait, isn't that White Death?" One of the spectators shouted out.

Others who heard started to acknowledge as they too recognized the person in the image.

White Death? Jack had also heard this name before, although he never saw the man before. If he really was White Death, then he was one of the top echelons of Death Associates. In fact, his position outranked Scarface who was a High Elder. White Death was the co-leader of Death Associates. He was only second to the leader.

The crowd's buzz turned louder before Scarface lifted his hand, giving a signal to ask them to settle down.

After silence returned, White Death continued, "I bring this greeting from a city called Theneward. It is another city within the country of Themisphere, which is the country you are also residing in. In this city, we have many other players that had come from our world. Several who might be members from your guilds as well."

Another murmur from the crowd.

"The exact positions between our cities are still being worked out," White Death continued. "We have found this communication device in a similar ruin to yours, close to our city here. There are records of other towns and settlements in the library of our city. Once we worked out our position, we will send out an expedition to link our cities together. One thing to note, from our findings, we know that if one managed to get to another city, we can place a mark on that city and establish a teleportation point. This means we no longer have to travel back and forth between the cities, we can use the teleportation function and be transported directly to the city we have been to before. Unfortunately, this right to teleport only applies to the individual that has made the connection point."

Jack could see the visible excitements from the faces of the spectators.

"Another information that we would like to share with you, fellow guild players, is that from our research, we have found records about guild facility. After a guild built its guild base, it can be upgraded to allow more facilities to be built on it. One of which is the teleportation room, which allowed the guild members of a particular guild to travel to cities with which any of their guild members had established a connection point. That's mean only one guild member is required to travel to a city, and the other members of the same guild can benefit from it and teleport to this city via this guild facility. In this way, our fractured guilds will finally be one again, with all our members complete."

Some players in the audience were already having a heated discussion amongst themselves. Jack could see some that which still had no guild tag under their names were having a regretful look. Most likely they had spent their coins elsewhere instead of saving them to establish their guild formally. After

hearing White Death's information, the importance of a guild base and its facilities had been highlighted. But to build a guild base, they first need to establish their guilds formally.

During this time, the specter of White Death floating above the communication device turned dim. Many of the audiences noticed this development and turned their attention back to the hologram image.

"I guess we can only have a short conversation, it required a large energy to operate this communication device," White Death explained. Everyone could see that the three Magicians standing by beside the device had turned pale, their mana was likely almost exhausted. "I'll return your attention back to brother Scarface here. I hope we can form mutually beneficial cooperation and I hope we can physically meet soon."

White Death continued to wear his confident smile as his image slowly dissolved. The device soon died down. The three Magicians returned back with a weak stride.

Chapter 216: Troublemaker

Scarface scanned the crowd before uttering, "we offer you this information, in the hope that we can work together. We have sent scouts to the wilderness, as I believe some of you have as well. The farther it is from the capital, the stronger the monsters are, and the more dangerous are the terrains. As mentioned by Manager Steelhand before, the risk is higher here as we will lose all our belongings and levels if we die in the wilderness. Hence, it is a top priority for us to become strong in as short a time as possible."

Scarface looked at the group of Wicked Witches behind him, "I will hand over the explanation regarding our plan to Queen Magenta."

He went back to his seat as Queen Magenta took over his place.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," Queen Magenta began, "thank you for your presence on this great day. This day will be marked as the day where our kind will start on the journey to dominate this world. Outworlders, they called us. Such arrogance! To us, they are nothing but NPCs. They were made to serve our purpose, and that was how it should be. We will show them whether in the real world or this world, we are the undisputed rulers!"

As expected of that presumptuous bitch, even her speech was considerably haughty, Jack thought.

"To do that," Queen Magenta continued. "Not only would we need numbers, but we also have to be stronger! To do that, we need to level up quickly. As all of us experienced gamers know, the most common way to level up is by grinding monsters. Unfortunately, the areas with suitable monster levels are limited, while the numbers of players existing are massive. Most of us had already experienced these limited resources. Our guild members were crowding in an area where the numbers of players are too high. The respawning monsters are not enough to keep pace with the speed we are killing them. This competition hampered our leveling speed."

Jack saw many from the audience nodded their heads. Was it really that bad? Jack thought about it. He didn't really feel that much competition, the only time he saw these so-called competitions was when he

was doing the hunting quests for Death Associates. But after thinking about it, he realized he didn't really do much grinding. Even when doing his own hunting quests, he had gone to an area where the monsters were stronger, like the Misty Swamp.

Most of the players here arrived at the same time, so their range of levels was not that far apart. Considering everyone was looking for the same monster difficulty, it made sense that fierce competition would happen. It was not apparent at first as everyone spent most of their time in the safety of the city, doing quests and familiarize themselves with this strange new world.

But now, everyone had decided to put a step on the gas for leveling, more and more of the players had started to brave the wilderness, doing out-of-city quests, and killing monsters for experiences. Thus creating an overpopulation in the areas most suitable for current standard players.

Queen Magenta never stopped with her speech as Jack was having his thought, "many compete for the same resources, but why do we have to waste them on the lowly players who contribute nothing to our society? Those so-called independent players and small-scale guilds only do what they like, without any real achievement and purpose. If this is just some games as in the past, then fine, let them satisfy their ego and do whatever they want. But this is no game anymore, this is our life, whether we like it or not. How can we let them leech the resources while we can use them to advance our society as a whole? We should learn from real life. We should form a governing party to regulate the available resources. So that we can allocate these resources for those that are more likely to benefit our society as a whole..."

A hand lifted up amongst the audience, cutting Queen Magenta's speech. Queen Magenta looked at the person annoyingly. Jack was amused when he saw that it was John who had interrupted.

John made a lurch back as if he felt guilty after seeing Queen Magenta's hostile gaze, "I'm... I'm sorry, am I not allowed to ask a question?"

Due to the man's reaction, Queen Magenta which was just about to ask the guy to hold his opinion until she was done, became unable to utter out the strict words. She looked at the other audiences, if she was to rebuke the man now, she would appear like a dictator who could not accept critics. She said unwillingly, "what do you want to ask?"

Jack was struggling to hold his chuckle. If he didn't know John, he would have also thought that the guy was genuinely feeling guilty.

"I thank you, elder ma'am," John spoke sincerely. Queen Magenta's mouth twitched. Was this guy trying to pick a fight? Calling ma'am was already sufficient, why did he have to add an elder? Was he saying that she was old? She was only thirty-eight years old! Even if such age was considered old among gamers, but thirty-eight in real life could still be considered young!

"I only have one question, who decides on the ones to be allocated the resource or not?"

"That will be the responsibility of the governing party," Queen Magenta answered briefly, as she wanted to continue her speech, she was halted again.

John was now standing up with his hand raised.

What now? Didn't you say you only have one question? Queen Magenta wanted to scream out, but she just glared at John with an unfriendly gaze.

John did not even pretend to show a guilty face anymore, he simply asked away, "who will be sitting in this governing party position?"

Queen Magenta paused for a bit before answering, "it will obviously be the strongest guilds."

John continued firing, "do these strongest guilds happened to be Death Associates, Corporate United, and Wicked Witches?"

Queen Magenta narrowed her eyes. Even a fool could see now that John was trying to stir up troubles. However, his remark did point out the crux of the problem. No one would want to give themselves freely to be commanded by others. The three large guilds were initially planning to rephrase the audiences' perspectives through their speech to persuade the other guilds to submit to them. They planned to also give promises and incentives in exchange for accepting them as the ruling body. But with John's blunt remark on the issue, it had put the perspective out in the open, making it appeared as if the three guilds were trying to subjugate them.

"I'm sorry, please continue," John said, but before Queen Magenta could utter a word, he blurted out again, "how are you going to regulate the monster grinding of an area? Are you going to form a patrolling unit that will hunt down and chase away any that enter the area?"

Queen Magenta's face was red with anger. She was never good at concealing her emotion. She was trying her best not to holler at this annoying prick.

Manager Steelhand could see that she was having a problem. He had known from the start that the woman was not a suitable candidate to be put on stage, but since this is a joint cooperation between their three guilds, he had to give each representative sufficient time to be in the spotlight. He quickly came up to alleviate the pressure from Queen Magenta.

"Thank you for your questions, my good fellow," he said with an amiable smile. "However, please refrain from further questions until after we are finished with our presentation, we..."

"Are you already ruling us now?" John cut him off.

"What?" Manager Steelhand didn't expect the man to be so crude.

"I am asking, do you already consider us as your subjects that we don't even have the right to ask questions?"

"You know that's not what I mean," Manager Steelhand used a steely tone that was bordering on aggression. "If this friend here is trying to cause trouble, I'm afraid we would have to remove you from this place."

"Yeah, just throw this nobody troublemaker out!" The Real Man chimed in from his seat. He had expressed his support to the organizing guilds with this statement.

Chapter 217: Monster Grinding Monopolization Plan

"I actually agree with him, I'm interested in the answer to his question," a different voice sounded out. Everyone turned to the source and saw a middle-aged man with a sharp eye and a mustache. There was

a hood covering a part of his head, giving him a mysterious bearing. However, everyone recognized the man.

Jack scanned him using his God-Eye monocle, and realized that he had seen the person before. He was Kill Order, the third rank winner during the tutorial period, and was also an elder to another prominent guild, Black Cloak. This guild was not lower in prestige if compared to Death Associates. Kill Order was a level 18 Rogue at the moment.

Because of him, Manager Steelhand was in a difficult place. He could still dismiss a nobody like John, but he could not treat Kill Order the same way.

John wore a very wide grin, "so, how are you going to regulate the monster grinding areas? Or do you still asking me to piss off?"

Manager Steelhand had a frown, before he gave a sigh, "we will surely come to this issue in our speech, but since this friend is so hasty. Fine, we will speak on this matter early. Our plan did indeed to form a scouting party that keeps an eye on the boundary. We will peacefully advise any players that come into the area to hunt elsewhere, or wait until our teams are done in the area."

"What if they don't comply?" John asked.

"We will try our best to persuade them to accede."

"What if they still don't comply?"

Manager Steelhand eyes twitched, he glanced at Queen Magenta beside him, who had a look that said, "now you know what it feels like."

He gave his best cordial display, such childish debate was beneath him. In the past, he ate this kind of crap for breakfast. "Then we will persuade them harder, we might use some sort of intimidation to make them understand if we have to, but nothing too extreme. I'm sure they will get the message before things get out of hand."

"You mean beat them up till they comply?" John uttered.

"You're twisting my words," Manager Steelhand said with annoyance. He took a deep breath before saying, "what I meant was we will deal with it like how a law enforcer would warn a would-be criminal."

"But you are not a law enforcer. You have neither the training nor the legality. When a law officer faced a would-be criminal that is stubborn and insists on causing trouble, he would arrest the guy. So what would you do to these so-called trespassers? You can't arrest them, can you?"

"We will do as what the law enforcer does. We might not be able to arrest them in this world, but we can apply a little bit of force to..."

"So you're going to beat them up," John interrupted him mercilessly.

Manager Steelhand expression was dark despite his mouth was still forcing the smile. It made him looked weird.

"So what if we beat them up! Anyone who doesn't know their place needs to be taught a lesson," The Real Man weighed in from his seat.

"That's right, they can only blame their own weakness," Boulder from Weary Wolf joined in to support the organizer guilds.

"Well, considering your two guild's brusque reputations, I won't be surprised if you kill everyone that says no to you," John retorted to them.

"I think we better..."

"Another issue," John cut Manager Steelhand mid-sentence again. "This monster grinding monopolization plan of yours..."

"I wouldn't call it that. I call it Resource management plan."

"Yes, certainly. Now, about this monster grinding monopolization plan of yours, currently around our capital, there are roughly seven areas with difficulty suitable to current mainstream players. Other areas would bring higher risk or grant lower experience yield. One area roughly can hold around five hundred players if considering everyone grinds on the monsters in those areas comfortably without excessive competition, and I must say this number had already considering you do two shifts in grinding. How many members are in your guild alone?

"The maximum number of members allowed in a level 1 guild is 500 members. Although you are not in your full condition yet, I would say you three guilds have at least 400 members, am I right? What about the rest of us here? We are also some of the best guilds currently in the capital of Thereath, not as good as the three of you, of course," John then turned to where Kill Order was sitting before adding, "except for Black Cloak and Saint Edge obviously.

"I won't say that we have as many members as yours, but we have at least half of your numbers, around 200, I say? How many of us guilds are here apart from you three? Thirty? More than thirty I think, but let's just say thirty. Put all of us together, how much do we get? 7200 members. Seven areas accommodate around 3500 players if we are to grind efficiently. Which is less than half of our total numbers. So even when we are not considering chasing out outsiders, we are still competing between ourselves. Now, how are you going to apply priority? Will the members of Death Associates, Corporate United, and Wicked Witches get priority over the rest of us?"

Manager Steelhand chuckled, "you are blowing this out of proportion. There is no way we will all go grinding monsters at the same time. Some of us will be busy with other matters. In reality, I would say only half of us will most likely do grinding. We can still work around that way, right?"

"But you can't deny that there will be a special time when most of us coincidentally choose the same time to grind, right? The question is still the same, who will get the priority then?"

"That will just be an isolated case, you can't use such a case to judge the issue as a whole."

"You are dodging the question, aren't you?"

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are dodging it."

Kill Order weighed in again as they were going back and forth, "I'm interested in the answer to the question as well. How would you apply priority when overpopulation amongst our members happens? Black Cloak also has close to 400 members. So I would say the number this brother here..."

"John," John said.

"... Brother John here mentioned, can already be considered as underestimating our total numbers. I would say that if we all join hands. The matter of competition between our own selves will be a very real issue."

Manager Steelhand made a small laugh to feign casualness, his eyes darted from John to Kill Order. Are these two cooperating to mess with us? He couldn't help but have the thought.

"What is there to discuss? Of course, the strongest guilds will decide on the priority," Scarface suddenly came out and said his piece. He must have run out of patience hearing these continuous arguments.

Manager Steelhand gave him a wave and a look indicating for him to calm down, but another voice came from his other side.

"That's right, you should know your place! Who are you to keep blabbering in front of us? You should be honored that we even invited you to join our alliance!" Queen Magenta uttered fiercely.

Manager Steelhand looked at her with a glare. Seriously? You mad woman! He wanted to scream.

"Ah, so there you admit it. You meant for us to be nothing but your underlings?" John exclaimed. Others in the audience started to murmur.

Queen Magenta clearly didn't see Steelhand's glare, she continued with her heated remark, "Of course, weaker ones should know their places and listen to..."

"All right! All right! Everyone! How about we take a five minutes break?" Manager Steelhand said out loud, drowning the noises that had become louder. "I see that everyone is on edge. This is good. A discussion is supposed to go both ways. Let us stop for a while before we continue again. I'm sure we can find the best solution for this issue."

He then forcefully dragged both Queen Magenta and Scarface back.

Jack was trying his best to stifle his laughter. John was really a troublemaker. Jack wanted to disrupt the meeting as well, but he couldn't think of an effective plan, all he could manage to come up with was to record the meeting and gave it to White Scarfs for them to deal with it. But from the look of it, John alone might be able to turn this meeting into a mess all on his own. Though he was not sure what his reason for doing it, he was certainly in support of it.

Wait! A thought suddenly came up to him. He might have the thing that could stir up more trouble to this meeting.

Chapter 218: I Need To Take A Piss

Now how should he get that thing out in the open? Jack thought. He glanced at John who was having a talk with his people. He opened his friend chat message, he was relieved that he could still send a

message with the option of using his original alias, with condition that the friend was in that alias' list. He had a separate friend list for Storm Wind and Unrivalled Arcaner.

"That annoying prick! I will skin him alive if I got the chance," he heard Earmouth cursed, obviously referring to John.

"Do you know which guild that prick is from?" Jack asked him.

"Hm? Wait, I ask."

He then went silent for a while, probably sending a chat message to his guildmates who hold the guild name list. Jack also sent a chat message at the same time, using his original Storm Wind account, to the prick who was currently chatting happily with his friends.

Jack's chat message contained the following words, "John, I see you are doing well lately. Since when have you joined a guild? I have something that you can use to create more disturbance to this meeting. Are you interested?"

He saw John's surprised expression. He made a vague 360 degrees scan around the venue. Jack was amused by his attempt.

"He was from a guild called Handy Craftsmen," Earmouth said after he received the info from his friend. "They are a new guild which just became well-known a few years back. They mainly comprised of players who focused on non-combat jobs. Crafters, traders, and such. Many late VR games allowed players to perform well just by concentrating in these non-combat fields instead of the traditional monster-killing style."

"I see," Jack commented. "Well, if they are not a guild that bothered to fight monsters, why are they so fussy about the distribution of priority in monster grinding areas?"

Earmouth seemed to realize something, "hm? You are right..."

"He must be up to something," Jack added fuel to fire.

"I know there is something wrong with him since he first made his comment. I'll ask our management to arrange for them to be thrown out."

"You shouldn't be too hasty," Jack said. "Since the points he was arguing were not for his guild's benefit. He must be doing it under the command of another guild."

"Oh? Please share with me your thought," Earmouth was intrigued.

"I think there is a high probability that either Black Cloak or Saint Edge is behind him, or maybe even both of them."

"Oh? Why do you think so?"

"Think about it, those two guilds are the ones big enough to put pressure on the other famous guilds. They are also at the same level if compared to the three guilds who organized this meeting. If this meeting is successful, their status might end up below ours. Hence they are trying to stir up trouble to

prevent this meeting from success, or at least to cause enough trouble so they can secure benefit which doesn't make them any lesser than the three organizing guilds."

"What you said made sense," Earmouth commented.

Warpath scoffed from behind.

"If you have an opinion, then say it. If not, then piss off!" Jack did not give him any courtesy.

He gave Jack an eye screaming of murder, but then turned away silently. The guy knew he was not Jack's opponent at his current state.

"I'll convey this thought to the management," Earmouth said.

"You do that," Jack uttered with a nod.

Earmouth clapped Jack's shoulder, he said, "you are not only good at fighting, but you also have a sharp mind. Stay with us, work harder for the guild. I'm sure your future will be bright."

"That's my plan," Jack smiled.

Earmouth then turned around to send chat messages. Jack had also received John's reply a while back, he just could not open it as he was fanning Earmouth so that Death Associates might turn their hostility to either Black Cloak or Saint Edge. Either guild was not a timid guild, it would be better if they clashed between one another.

Jack read John's message, "it's so long since we talk, expert. I almost forget about you already. It was surprising for you to know about this meeting, considering your publicly acknowledged adversity with Death Associates. How do you find out about what happens in this meeting? Don't tell me you are here as well?"

Jack replied, "can you cut the crap already? You want my offer or not?"

"Sure, whatever that can help me to ruin this meeting," John soon replied.

"Ok. Try to find a chance to have yourself excused and come out. Wait for my signal. I will let you know the exact place. By the way, why do you want to ruin this meeting anyway?"

"I'm just doing this for fun, do you believe me? All right, will wait for your cue."

The guy was as laid back as he was annoying. Jack didn't bother to pry further, it was enough if John could help him to cause trouble here. He went to Earmouth who was still in silence with a blank look to the sky.

"Brother, I think I saw a shadow over there, I will go to check it out."

"Huh?" Earmouth was dazed for being interrupted while he was writing his message. "Bring someone with you just in case."

"No need. It might be nothing. We cannot afford to lax the security here. Don't worry, I alone am enough if there is an intruder," Jack said and strode off without giving Earmouth the chance to say otherwise.

Earmouth watched him sped off and soon disappeared among the dilapidated walls around the ruin. Damn, it was as the rumor, his speed was really fast for a Mage. He thought.

Jack looked around to make sure that he was not followed, and that there was no other sentry in view. He then looked around trying to find a distinctive spot. He walked around, he passed some places where he could see a lone sentry monitoring the perimeter of the ruin. He was inside, so the sentry's back was to him. However, he still avoided the place where such sentry was in view. There was no guarantee that the sentry won't turn around at a critical time and saw him.

After looking around for a bit, he finally decided on a spot. It was a broken-down small garden with a withered tree at its center. Facing it was a battered fountain. There was a lion sculpture above the fountain with an open mouth, Jack assumed the mouth was where the water was coming out when the fountain was still functioning. After inspecting the fountain and making sure that no one was around, Jack placed something inside the lion's mouth.

He inspected it for a bit. The lion's mouth was slightly slanted down, so if he didn't bend down close to the sculpture, it would be difficult to notice that something was inside. He then went to a corner and stood still. He sent a chat message to John, describing to him the position of the place and to look inside the mouth of the lion sculpture.

At this time, the meeting was about to resume. After they had a discussion, the three organizing guilds had agreed that Manager Steelhand would take over for the discussion on the resource management plan. He started his speech but emphasizing for everyone to let him finish his speech first before engaging in a debate. He said this was necessary so that everyone could receive the message unfiltered.

After sounding out about the no interruption requirement, he was just about to start when John lifted his hand again. Manager Steelhand had the urge to go over and beat the guy senseless, but he forced himself to calm down. He spoke with a voice as affable as possible, "my friend, as I just said a moment ago. Can you please wait until after I finish first before voicing out your opinion?"

"I need to take a piss," John uttered with an innocent face.

Manager Steelhand mouth twitched, his mind was blank while several curse words surfaced in his thought. He was just about to scold the man to shut up and sit down silently until his speech was finished, before a thought occurred to him. Wait, if he went away, didn't that mean that he could not interrupt anymore?

Manager Steelhand immediately put on the widest smile possible and said, "sure, sure. It's not good to hold your piss. Please go and take your time."

John nodded and walked away. While the others looked at each other in confusion. Are we even able to piss in this game world? They thought. They had not piss nor shit since the world changed.

Chapter 219: Presentation

Jack's Unrivalled Arcaner persona was wearing Cloak of Shadow, same as Storm Wind since cloak and accessories were not affected by class. At this moment, he had been standing for a while at the corner. Jack had chosen a corner that still had its walls intact. The walls provided some shadow. His Cloak of

Shadow's ability was triggered after he stood still for a few seconds. His figure merged with the shadow and turned invisible.

He waited in the shadow for a while. He noticed from the faint voices in the distance that the meeting had resumed. Was he not allowed out? Jack thought with worry as he waited.

He soon heard footsteps and saw on his radar someone was approaching. Finally! Jack exclaimed in his mind.

A man came into the small garden.

Why was it him?

Jack was puzzled. Earmouth passed by in front of him. He looked around the room. He spent some time observing the withered tree at the center before turning his attention to the broken fountain. He looked at it for a while. Jack was nervous. If the guy put his hand into the lion's mouth, he would have no choice but to appear and slay him.

Jack realized that he had underestimated the man. Earmouth was not as simple-minded as he first thought. The guy obviously was suspicious of him, otherwise he would not have come out here. It was evident that he was looking for him, trying to find out what he was up to. Luckily, he had the Cloak of Shadow, allowing him to find out about Earmouth without the guy realizing it.

Jack saw the guy bending down slightly in front of the lion sculpture. His arm was moving forward towards the sculpture. Jack was just about to change into Storm Wind and equipped his sword when another person appeared from the other entrance.

"What are you doing here?" The new person asked, who was John.

"What are you doing here yourself?!" Earmouth shot back. He recognized the guy to be the annoying prick that tried to sabotage their meeting.

"I am taking a walk. Why? Is it not allowed as well? Do you consider me your underling already?"

"You truly have a sharp mouth. I've been tolerating you from the side, do you not believe I will teach you a lesson?"

"Can't you look at yourself first before you make a threat? You want to fight? Bring it on!" John took out his Magic Staff and made a pose as if ready to fight.

Earmouth was obviously overestimating himself, considering his opponent was a Mage, while he was still a Magician. But he was not about to back down.

"Why don't you look at where you are at. One call from me, and my people will come here swarming at you!" He said.

"Are you trying to scare me? Tough luck! Go ahead and call! Everyone will then see what kind of a guild you are. What kind of farce this meeting is. That you will silence a person who speaks out against you once you have the chance."

Earmouth hesitated after hearing it. He was right, they are still in the middle of the meeting. If he created a commotion and everyone found out that the troublemaker had been killed by the members of Death Associates. Everyone would be leaning more to what this troublemaker had argued before in the meeting, that the three organizing guilds were trying to dominate them. He must restrain himself for the bigger picture.

"Hmph!" He huffed. "I will not waste my time with the likes of you. Don't cause any more trouble, or I really will not let you off."

He walked past John with an unfriendly glare.

"Look to the front. Careful or else you will trip," John said to him.

Earmouth didn't reply. He found it pointless to argue with a guy like him.

John looked at him walking away. Earmouth looked back after walking a distance, and saw that John was still looking at him.

"What? You changed your mind?" John challenged him.

Earmouth turned away and grumbled as he continued to walk away.

After making sure that Earmouth had gone out of sight, John turned back to survey the small garden. He noticed the lion sculpture that Jack had mentioned in his message. He walked towards it. He looked around again to make sure that no one was looking before he slipped his hand into the lion's mouth.

He took out a stone with dull red color. He studied the stone for a while before storing it inside his bag.

After making sure John got the stone, Jack told him about how to use the stone and what it was for. John read the message and frowned, he looked around the room again. He was sure that no one was around.

Perhaps I'm too hasty, Jack thought. He should have waited a while before he sent the message.

John didn't seem too bothered. He followed Jack's instruction and sent his consciousness into the stone. His eyes turned wide after viewing the content of the stone. His mouth then slanted upwards into a mischievous smile.

Jack waited while watching his radar to make sure that John had left the premises before he came out of hiding. He then hurried back to his post, he wouldn't want to miss the coming show.

Manager Steelhand delivered his speech in express. He was not doing it deliberately. He probably didn't realize the extent of the influence John had inflicted on him, he ended up trying to complete the topics he was trying to deliver before John came back.

However, the speech was still delivered clearly. His experience in public speaking was not shallow. In his speech, he had addressed the resource management plan and that the governing party that regulates the plan will be formed out of an alliance of representatives of all the guilds involved here, making it sounded like a democracy.

Of course, he did not mention how many representatives each guild was allowed to send. Obviously the three organizing guilds would have more representatives on the seat while the rest would only have one seat for each guild, but such details would be discussed later after they secured the other guilds' allegiance.

Scarface and Queen Magenta were actually against this representative system, but Manager Steelhand told them that there was nothing they could do. At this point, if they still wanted this alliance to come to fruition, they would need to make a few compromises. If he had known, he wouldn't have invited the Handy Craftsmen. He never expected one of their members was such an instigator.

John returned as Manager Steelhand was wrapping his speech. He saw the guy coming with a poise. He wasn't worried, now that he had made his thoughts across to the audiences, he was ready for some arguments. He was never scared of speaking against opposition in a public setting, so long as it was on his terms.

"Mr. Saint John, welcome back!" He greeted. "We had just wrapped up our speech. Now we can go to a Q&A session which I'm sure you are most eager to."

"It's done?" John asked.

"Yes. We still have the final phase of this meeting, but that phase would only be put forward after the forming of the alliance. So only those that agreed to work together would be privy to continuing this meeting, but we will go to that after your questions. If no one has questions then we will go on a short break before we go on a vote on who will join our alliance and who will not."

"Well, I don't have a question," John said.

Manager Steelhand smiled, this was unexpected, but was pleasant nevertheless, "in that case, we will..."

"However, I do have a presentation of my own," John interrupted him.

Manager Steelhand expression darkened slightly. He knew this guy's silence was too good to be true. "I'm sorry, but this meeting is not..."

"I believe what I'm about to show you will interest you greatly. You will need to see this before deciding anything," John didn't put Manager Steelhand in his eyes, he just strode up to the courtyard's center.

Queen Magenta who had been bearing a grudge on John, immediately called out, "security, take this troublemaker away!"

A couple of level 16 Fighters walked out and advanced towards John.

"Halt!" Kill Order called out from his seat, "I want to see what he wants to show us."

"What's to see? The guy is just trying to causing a problem!" Boulder countered from his seat.

Kill Order turned and gave him a cold stare, which silenced him down. Boulder was a typical bully. He might act brutish, but he was a coward when faced with another stronger, well-known party.

Chapter 220: Exposing A Scandal

"I also want to hear what he wants to say," another voice sounded out. William of Wellington of Saint Edge had made his support on John known.

Now that the two largest guilds who rivaled the organizing guilds had voiced out supports, the others who were curious with John were no longer hesitating. Soon a chorus of voices demanding to let John stay on the stage was rolling.

The two Fighters halted on their steps, unsure of what to do. In their confusion, they looked back at Queen Magenta, who was gritting her teeth. They then looked at Scarface, who wore a blank expression. Finally, they turned to Manager Steelhand, who helplessly gestured for them to retreat.

Supported by the crowds, John was getting bolder with his approach. He waved at Manager Steelhand to go away, "move aside, I need a wide space for this."

Jack had come back to his place again at this time. He could not see Earmouth, the guy was probably still searching for him.

"Find anything?" Warpath asked him.

"Nothing, just false alarm," Jack replied, feeling slightly strange for Warpath to talk to him first.

John placed a small stone on the ground after Manager Steelhand reluctantly moved away. The stone was the one that Jack had placed inside the lion sculpture's mouth. It was one of his recording stones, one that he had used to record an event before.

"I believe everyone here is aware regarding the strings of robberies in several days past. Some of you might even be one of its victims."

Several murmurs were heard from the audience upon hearing John's words.

"What does this have to do with that?" One of the audiences spoke out.

John smiled. Without talking further, he activated the recording stone. The stone flared up with bright red light, A series of holographic figures emerged around the place where the stone was at. John moved away in order to not interfere with its display.

The holographic image showed a large crowd of people. The focus of the crowd seemed to be on the lone warrior standing in the middle. The others were encircling him while not far from there, two men were standing on top of a small hill. The warrior was talking with the two men on the hill.

"It's him?" Scarface, Red Death, and Wicked Witches instantly recognized the lone warrior in the hologram.

Jack heard a weird sound from beside him and looked to the side. Warpath was gritting his teeth with a bitter expression. Jack imagined the guy was still bearing a huge grudge against him.

Everyone was confused about what the scene was about. But after following the conversations for a while, they started to catch up that this group of people was the robbers that had terrorized the wilderness several days past. One of the audiences had even recognized a person amongst the people in the image, "that... that is the guy! The one who had robbed me!"

Others started to utter out similar comments as well, as they recognized several people from the holographic image. The robbers never bothered to cover their faces when doing their evil deeds, so it was easy for their victims to recognize them.

They must not have expected some of their victims came from prominent guilds. Because most guilds had not yet been formally established, their guild name was not yet attached to their identifications. Some of these victims had asked for help from their guilds and came back to the place where they were robbed, but the robbers had prepared for this kind of retaliation. They had scouts that monitored the surroundings. When they saw a large group was coming, they would hide away.

Jack noticed Manager Steelhand's face darkened, he surely recognized his two subordinates in the hologram. Jack had made the recording and kept the stone as a precaution if Corporate United would look for him for retaliation. Although he was not afraid, too much disturbance would halt his growth as well.

He planned to use this recording to threaten them to back off if they came, but they never did. They were probably too busy preparing for this meeting, or did not want to associate themselves more with the robbery matters. Hence the recording stone had been sitting idly inside his bag till now.

The hologram show kept on going. They watched the lone warrior revealing the interest in joining their robbery act. Followed by their haggling on loots distribution, then finally where Supervisor Faithstooze admitted about the involvement of Corporate United guild.

The scene froze after that. Jack had stopped the recording after he got them to admit. The crowds gasped at the revelation, all of them turned to Manager Steelhand at the same time.

One of the people from Corporate United stood up and yelled, "this is slender! It was fake!"

"That's right!" Another beside him supported.

John took up the recording stone and walked towards the audience. He intentionally went to where Kill Order was sitting at. He showed the stone and said, "Any of you can try to Inspect this stone, and find out its function. As you know from the gaming experience, we players can't fake the description of an item."

The crowd at the front went ahead and inspect the recording stone, including Kill Order.

"It was genuine," Kill Order announced. The others who had inspected the stone nodded their heads.

John went to another part where Saint Edge's William of Wellington was at, and did the same. They also confirmed the recording stone was real, and its function was recording an event that really took place.

"Th—Then the people inside are all actors!" The man from Corporate United who had called the stone as fake did not relent. He continued, "That's right, they must have been paid to stage that show. It was all a ploy to bring down our guild's reputation!"

John scoffed at the person, "you must be a retarded to not try to make sure first before exclaiming. Here, I will show the image again."

John placed the stone and replayed the hologram again. "Now try using your Inspect on those two on the hills," he said.

"We can use Inspect on the image?" One of the audiences blurted out.

That was actually the info that Jack had given to John. Jack had done some experiments when he tried to view the recording. Peniel had given him some hints on what he can do with the image after the recording. If he had known that from the start, he wouldn't have wasted so much time to make Faithstooge admit his guild's name.

The crowds started to use Inspect on the players in the image. They found that it was true that they could derive information from it as if they were real players. All the players in the image were independent players except for the two leaders on the small hill. Everyone could check for themselves that their guild tags were clearly indicating them as members of Corporate United.

The crowds had gone wild with it. Some that had been the victims of the robberies started to call out for Corporate United to pay them back for their stolen goods. They were at the brink of rushing out and pounce at the accused guild. The guards that tried to maintain order were having difficulties controlling the rile-up crowds.

"Friends! Friends! Please calm down!" Manager Steelhand finally spoke up. "It was indeed true those people that were in that image were the ones that perpetrated the robbery, but you have to believe me that their actions had nothing to do with Corporate United. None of our core people here was aware of that dealings."

"How can you still say that? Those two on the leads were clearly from Corporate United!" One of the audiences yelled.

"It was true that those two used to be from our guild, but they are no longer a part of us," Manager Steelhand exclaimed. "those robbery acts were their private dealings. In fact, once we found out about their involvements, we have banished them from our guild. If you are not satisfied, I can take you to where they are staying in the capital. You can deal with them yourselves."

When Jack started attacking the robbers after getting confirmation from the two Corporate United members, Trustaide had been suspicious about it. Unfortunately, his wit had instead backfired. After he reported to the upper management. One of them pointed out that Jack's action could have because he was gathering evidence about their involvement in the robberies in some unknown way.

After a lengthy discussion, they had decided to pull the plug on that robbery strategy, and cut the link between them and the robbers, which included Faithstooge and Trustaide. The two were kicked out from the guild mercilessly, allowing the guild a shred of defense in case this thing came back to bite at them. At this moment, Manager Steelhand was relieved that they had done so

Cutting the tail to save the body, that's a common practice for these competitive guilds. Jack sighed, that's why he hated to involve himself with guilds. He pitied Faithstooge and Trustaide, the two had become Corporate United's sacrificial lambs instead.