

World 291

Chapter 291: Lies

He turned to his men and gave his command, "everyone only takes the loots from the ones you kill. Do not touch the others."

Radiant Phoebe came to William with discontent. "Are you going to just let him go like this?" She asked.

William looked at her and said, "it's a good thing his attacks had not kill any of our men, it's still salvageable." Then he left without giving further explanation.

The Knight who had stopped her before, whose full alias was Happy Felix, came over and said, "you better drink a recovery potion first. Your health is very low, if something happened suddenly and a stray hit comes your way, it will be a real shame..."

Radiant Phoebe was originally letting his Natural Body Recovery skill did the healing, but after listening to Happy Felix's words, she decided to be prudent and took out a basic healing potion.

William of Wellington walked towards Jack. "What class are you?" He asked. He had tried to Inspect Jack but was met with failure.

"Warrior," Jack replied.

"Then how come you can use magic?" William asked again.

"I was curious about that as well," Silverwing who was still speechless till then added.

Jack shrugged. "I have a second class, a mage," he answered them.

"How is that possible?" Silverwing said.

"I encountered an item that gave me a second class during the tutorial period," Jack answered truthfully. "Don't ask me how I get them. I also don't know. It just happened, it was a lucky encounter."

"So it's not possible for others to get it as well?" William asked.

Jack shrugged again. "If it is possible, I don't know how to," he said.

William of Wellington observed Jack in silence, probably trying to determine if he was telling the truth. He then said, "all right. I am William from Saint Edge, by the way. I hope we can become friends."

"Sure, I like friends," Jack replied. "It's just that some people like to look for troubles."

Jack was uttering the last parts loudly. Radiant Phoebe was gritting her teeth hearing it. William only gave a faint smile and say, "see you around, mister Storm Wind."

"Likewise," Jack replied. He received a friend notification from William of Wellington at the moment, which he accepted.

"Well, it has always been one surprise after another with you," Silverwing said to Jack after William left. "Tell me the truth now, how did these players from the coalition died?"

"I killed them," Jack replied.

"You know you can trust me, right?" Silverwing said.

Jack nodded.

"Then tell me, I can keep a secret."

"... I killed them," Jack said again.

There was a long silence between them.

"He really did," Fierce Flame finally came forward and said, "I know, it's hard to believe. Even we who witnessed it firsthand have difficulty believing it, but he really did."

Silverwing looked between Jack and Fierce Flame back and forth, before finally saying, "okay, I will take your words for it. The coalition's reputation will be ruined if this is the truth. On the other hand, your reputation will skyrocket with it, you have better prepared."

"Prepare? For what?" Jack asked in confusion.

"What do you think those well-known experts will do once they heard about your achievement? Even if it was just a rumor. Some might decide to seek you out and challenge you to find out the truth. It will be even more with those hot-blooded young experts who just came to their fame, they will surely come to use you as a stepping stone to push their names further into the limelight, even if they don't believe your achievement."

"Ah... I see. Don't worry, I will crush them as they come!"

"I admire your confidence... Well then, please excuse me. I need to talk with Sir William to discuss further on matters regarding the coalition."

"Okay, before you go. Can you tell me why you came here? You said you were not here as my reinforcement."

"I don't even have an idea that you are here, mister Storm Wind. Saint John came to me in private with Saint Edge leader, Sir William. He told me that the coalition will be having a confrontation with a strong force in this Crestfall Plain. He told me that if we are to deal a blow to the coalition, we will need to amass our troops within the hour and headed to this place in a hurry. He even gave me several Group Haste scrolls so we can use them during our travel to increase our speed."

"Like the one that Scarface used when they ran away," Jack said, remembering that he also saw those scrolls when he first visited the Magic Scroll shop. He didn't buy it as he had no need for it since he mostly did things alone.

"I see, that's why you managed to arrive here so soon. Those coalition leaders didn't expect you to arrive for another hour at least," Flame said, she had heard the coalition leaders' discussion when she was a hostage. "Scarface also complained why his spy, which now we know is Grimclaw, did not inform him of it."

"It was thanks to John's advice as well," Silverwing said. "He demanded that I kept the meeting with him and William a secret from my people. He also gave me a tool that jammed messages in my vicinity and asked to use it once we are outside capital walls. He requested to only reveal the Group Haste scrolls once the jamming tool was used. He asked me to keep an eye on my high-rank executives and demanded that none of them should leave my side after the jamming tool was activated. I was skeptical at first, but he stressed out that the success or failure of this sortie will heavily depend on whether I follow his demands to the letter."

"I don't like suspecting my people, but now I am glad I follow his advice... I still can't believe it. Grimclaw, that prick! I wonder how long he had been working for Death Associates."

"Perhaps since when we attempted the dungeon for the Guild Creation Token," Sinreaper offered his opinion. "Remember how he was absent despite knowing the importance of the matter? I bet Scarface asked him to find an excuse to be absent, so as to lower our chance of succeeding."

"Perhaps, never mind now. He is our enemy from now on. We will show no mercy the next we meet," Silverwing declared.

He turned to Jack and said again, "Please excuse me then, let's find some time to hang out later."

"Sure," Jack said. He watched Silverwing's back as he left, he couldn't help but think in his mind, 'that John sure has balls! To blatantly lie to those guild leaders like that.'

"Well, I doubt those guild leaders will come here if not for those lies," Peniel commented.

After Silverwing left, Bowler approached him. "Brother, you certainly are aggressive today," he said. "I don't even have the chance to scold that Saint Edge's bitch."

"You think so? Probably it's the leftover adrenaline from the fight," Jack said, then he remembered about a matter which he had been curious about. "Say, I could not send messages to any of you. I take it someone used a message jammer tool as well on you, right? Why did they do that? Is it so that I won't know their strategy? I don't think they still need to think of a strategy when they are only going up against one person, right?"

"Actually, it's because of this," Bowler said as he showed his necklace. It was the Amulet of Rebirth.

"Ah... So they don't want me to know that you are not in real danger. Even if they kill you, you will only lose 1 level," Jack said.

Bowler nodded. "Yes, they were afraid that you won't come anymore if you find out. And it's really unnecessary for you to put yourself at risk. Don't you remember I show you this amulet a few days ago?"

Jack was annoyed, was that how you talk to a friend who just risked his life to come to your aid? He thought. "How do I know if you still have that Amulet of Rebirth? Perhaps they had killed you one time and then kidnapped you when you were trying to go buy the second amulet. I could not contact you to make sure, did you forget?"

"Actually, I don't wear that Amulet of Rebirth," Fierce Flame informed them.

"Oh? Why don't you?" Bowler asked.

"I think knowing you are safe will make you stop pushing yourself. If I know my life is in danger, I can strive harder. Plus, it took up my necklace equipment slot. I have a good pendant that was really helpful, I would rather equip that pendant than waste a slot for a safety bumper."

"In other words, she is saying that amulet is only for sissy," Jack said, completely distorting Flame's meaning.

The Man who heard, chimed in as well, "yes, such equipment is only for a coward. It's a disgrace to wear it."

"F**k you! You were wearing it as well a moment ago, you changed it just now!" Bowler exclaimed with disgust.

Chapter 292: Creating Falsehood

The two men started to bicker with each other. Jack who was picking up the loots, said to Bowler to stop their quarreling, "hey, Bowler! Can you help me pick up these loots, please?"

"Sure thing, bro," Bowler replied and went ahead with the task.

"Hey, boss! You are being unfair, how can you leave me behind?" The Man complained.

"Uh... Can you help me pick up the loots as well?"

"You only need to ask, boss!" The Man started picking up as well, making sure to note Bowler's picking pace. Soon the two men started to compete to see who could pick up more.

Jack was speechless at them.

"Look there," Flame's call took his attention from the two busy men.

Jack looked at where Flame was indicating and saw a group of people approaching. His Dragon's Eye enhanced vision allowed him to see further and identify the head of the group as John. As expected, the guy was the one responsible for bringing the group that caused that dust cloud.

Hm? The group had many people but the numbers should not exceed fifty. He looked to their rear and expected to see many more players, yet there were none. The dust cloud was nowhere to be seen anymore.

When John came within earshot, he greeted Jack, "I see you are still here. So I assume my plan works then."

"Thank you, it's all thanks to you. If you haven't sent those two guilds here, and didn't bring those independent players... Where are the rest of the players with you?" Jack could not help but ask.

"What do you mean? These are all the cronies I could find," John said.

"Who the hell are you calling cronies?!" Many of them started to protest once they heard his words.

Some of them broke away from the group and ran at The Man. "Boss! They called."

The Man stopped picking up loots and found out they were his lackeys from Men of Solidarity gang. "It's you worthless lots! Where are you when your boss needs you?"

"You can't say that. We could not contact you at all, how do we know you are in trouble? Only after John told us that we rushed here with him."

While the Men of Solidarity were having a talk, another person from John's group came out and greeted Jack, "hey there."

Jack turned to the voice and was surprised to find a familiar face.

"Jeanny? What are you doing here?" He asked. "Wait, you are not with the Wicked Witches people? It's good that you were not. I just killed a good bunch of them, it would be a pity if I wasted you by mistake."

"You did? I thought we are rushing here in order to save you." Her eyes wandered to the loots that scattered across the ground. "Are they..."

"Yeah, some of them were dropped by Wicked Witches players. You don't blame me for slaughtering your guildmates, right? Wait... why are you... Where is your guild description?" Jack asked when he used Inspect on her and no longer saw the guild's name under her name.

"I'm no longer with the guild Wicked Witches," she said.

"Why?"

"What do you mean why? Do you forget already what you said to me the last time we met?"

"Oh..." Now that she mentioned it, Jack remembered it now. "I didn't expect you to really leave them."

"You don't? You sounded so serious when you talked about it."

"Haha, never mind that. It's a good thing that you are no longer with that guild. Otherwise, we probably would have been fighting each other not long ago."

"Is this all your doing?" John butted in, indicating the loots scattered on the ground. He knew for a fact that White Scarfs and Saint Edge's groups had only arrived not long ago, so it was impossible for them to cause these many casualties. He was the one that sent a message to Jack about reinforcement was coming. He had someone inside the Saint Edge group who feed him with the intel of the group's movement.

Jack nodded.

"I expected you to be holding your own till reinforcements arrive, but I certainly did not expect you to cause this much damage," John admitted, and then asked, "so, did you reveal your Mage class?"

"He knew?" Jeanny blurted out in surprise.

"They knew?" Flame also did the same.

"Yeah, yeah, everyone knows now," Jack uttered, and then said to John, "now please stop distracting my question, where are the rest of the players you bring?"

"These really are all of them," John replied in exasperation.

"No way!" This time Bowler joined the conversation. "Do you know why the coalition army retreated? It's because of that dust cloud the people you bring created. There is no way such huge dust cloud was created with just you lots here."

Some of them laughed when they heard Bowler, even Jeanny giggled. Only John gave a sneering face.

"What is it?" Bowler asked, puzzled.

"It really is just us," Jeanny said. "We spread in a wide formation and moved along while dragging leafy boughs behind. The terrain was rather sandy, so the leafy boughs swept the dust on the ground and caused it to rise as we moved, creating the falsehood as if we were a large force."

Jack looked at John and asked, "you thought of this?"

"I was simply copying the tactic of a certain military old man from the past," he replied.

"What military old man? Are you referring to Zhuge Liang?" Jack asked. Zhuge Liang was the only tactician in history that he knew of.

"Zhuge Liang? I'm pretty sure the old man I was referring to was called Papirius," John mumbled.

"But we heard from Manager Steelhand that his people had seen you went out from the capital with a large mass of independent players," Bowler said, which Flame agreed with a nod.

John gave a wide smile, "oh, that? I simply choose the afternoon time when adventuring players had just finished their lunches and were going back out for monster grinding again. The traffic was always full at that time. The real folks who follow me were just these lots, the rest were walking behind them was simply coincidental crowd. That spy from Corporate United simply mistook it as all those players following me."

"So you have expected someone from the enemy was watching you?"

"I always assume someone was watching," John replied.

"That's why you asked for the extra hours, you needed to match your timing with the crowd," Jack came to a realization.

"That amongst other things," John said.

"Good thing the coalition fell for it," Flame said.

"Of course they are," John uttered confidently.

"Stop feeling so good about yourself," Jack said. "Another good thing was that you gave Silverwing the message jammer and asked him to keep their cooperation with Saint Edge and the group haste scrolls as secrets until the jammer was applied. If not, the coalition would have known about it."

"Of course, that strategy is called deceive the heavens to cross the sea," John exclaimed.

"The f**k are you talking about?" Jack uttered with annoyance. The guy was not talking at the same wavelength.

"So, did the spy reveal himself?" John asked, before quickly added, "or herself?"

"Yes. Don't you already know who he is?"

"Do you think I'm omniscient or something, friend?" John replied.

"Ugh," Jack felt like smacking the guy.

"So are you going to tell me who the spy is?" John said.

"It's Grimclaw."

"Hm... I had a feeling he was the one."

Now he felt like slicing the guy.

"All right, please remember that you owe me one for this," John said. "Seeing the numbers of loots on the ground, you slaughtered not a few of them. I'm very impressed. And glad, having someone like you owing me will be a good thing when it's time for me to use you."

"Can you please keep that kind of talk to your own self? You sound like an evil mastermind who is planning to use me for your nefarious plan," Jack said.

"I might just be, my friend. I might just be. Now please excuse me, I have to go have some words with the other pawns I have used. And you," John pointed at Bowler, "you can go back to pick up the rubbish."

"F**k you!" Bowler shouted.

Jack observed John as he walked towards the Saint Edge's acting leader, William of Wellington, and talked with him. They talked as if they were old acquaintances. He then thought of something. Saint John, Saint Edge? Was that a coincidence?

Then he remembered again that John had gone and disrupted the meeting out of behest from Saint Edge guild. His connection with the guild appeared to not be shallow. Did he have a history with that guild? But why was he not a member then? Jack was curious, but he decided not to pry. If his friend was not willing to share, then it was not his business.

Chapter 293: Aggressive

"Storm, I would like to introduce you to some of my friends," Jack heard Jeanny's voice.

Jack turned to her and saw several players standing behind her.

"Some of them followed me when I quit the Wicked Witches. The others I met on my adventures," she said.

She then proceeded to introduce her friends. There were eight of them, two men and six women. He recognized three out of the six women, he had met them in the past, when he saved them in the forest before he went into the dungeon with Jeanny and Silverwing. They were originally Wicked Witches members as well. These three must be the ones Jeanny mentioned to have followed her when she quitted her guild.

The three of them were still basic class, at level 18. Their names were Sweet Talk, Salty Trade, and Bitter Rain. Sweet Talk was a fighter, Salty Trade a ranger, and Bitter Rain was a magician.

One of the two men within Jeanny's entourage was a level 19 magician called Swellgoing. He sported a rather unfriendly look at Jack. Jack was wondering if he had met the guy in the past and offended him. He had no recollection at all.

The other man was a giant size youngster, probably the same age as him, Jack thought. But his size was certainly impressive, probably almost the same size as Goliath from Warriors of Solidarity. More impressive was this man was an advanced class already, a Knight of level 20. An appropriate class considering his bulky frame. He could be the ideal tank for a party. Jeanny introduced his name as Giant Steve. Not too subtle for an alias, Jack thought. The man sure was proud of his stature to use an alias like that.

The remaining three female friends of Jeanny, one was a basic class ranger at level 18, called Wondrouslife. The other two were both advanced class. One was a level 19 Rogue, named Viral Cora. She had a petite build with a lively disposition, she was eager to introduce herself with a vigorous handshake and a sweet smile.

The last female friend who had advanced class, was a level 20 mage called Trinity Dawn. Jack had an inkling that he had heard the name somewhere before. He was still racking his memory when Trinity Dawn greeted him, "It's an honor to finally meet the number one rank from the tutorial period."

The other gasped when Trinity Dawn mentioned it. They probably came to this world from other cities, so they did not see Jack during the tutorial period ranking. Or they had simply forgotten about him since Jack was not one of those well-known players. Swellgoing's gloomy expression became even darker.

"Trinity was also a fellow ranker, you know," Jeanny informed. "She was at rank eight."

Now that Jeanny mentioned it, Jack remembered it now. She was one of those independent experts who were pretty well-known in the gaming world. Silverwing had mentioned her in the past.

"The honor is mine to have met a well-known expert," Jack gave her a polite reply, but Jack was actually more impressed with Jeanny, who had managed to befriend an expert after only leaving her guild for a short time.

"He was just lucky to get the rank," Swellgoing uttered, breaking the mood.

Jack thought, why did this feel familiar? He remembered a moron from the past who gave the same remark as well about him winning the rank. But that moron was the second ranker, so he at least had the qualification to criticize. Who was this dude?

That dude continued, "he was nothing compared to you, sister Trinity. Jeanny, you should pick better friends. It is not wise for us to oppose the coalition. Actually, our life will be better if we join one of the three great guilds within the coalition. I have a friend in Death Associates, how about we go apply together?"

"Jeanny, why do you bring an idiot around?" Jack said, indicating Swellgoing.

"What did you say?! If you have the guts, let's—"

He did not have the chance to finish his sentence as Jack gave him a kick. He flew away like a loose kite. Everyone was flabbergasted by the sudden turn of events.

Bowler, who had just come near, said, "bro, you truly are aggressive today. I thought you need someone to help you bicker, I guess you don't need it."

"Probably the adrenaline has still not yet cool down," Jack told him.

Bowler gave him a thumb up, then scurried back to continue picking up the loots.

Swellgoing did not receive any damage from the kick, but it did not mean he didn't feel the pain. He rose up with difficulty. Jack's strength was not trivial, and he had sent his kick without reservation.

"Yo... you... How dare you!" Swellgoing said, anger and shame overwhelmed him.

"You are such a retard! Don't you know that Jeanny had just quitted from one of those three great guilds you mentioned? Won't it be stupid to go back again after just leaving not long ago?" Jack scolded him.

Swellgoing's eyes were red already with fury. None of Jack's words registered into his mind. "You..! I will kill you!" He brandished his magic staff and aimed it at Jack.

"I admire your bravery," Jack said, and brought out his own magic staff as well.

Swellgoing shot a Mana Bullet, which Jack responded in kind. In fact, Jack pointed his staff at Swellgoing's staff. So when his Mana Bullet came out, it went directly to Swellgoing's Mana Bullet which was rushing over. The two Mana Bullets crashed in the air.

Just as how when the same melee skills clashed, the winner would be determined by the level of the skill and its user strength. The same thing went for spells that collided with each other. Their Mana Bullet might be similar in level since Jack only increased its level to 5, but Jack's intelligence stat trumped Swellgoing who was still a basic class Magician. Thus Swellgoing's Mana Bullet was obliterated when the two spells clashed. Jack's Mana Bullet continued on its way towards its target.

Swellgoing hastily summoned a Magic Shield for protection, but he still suffered damage when Jack's Mana Bullet crashed into his shield. When he was thinking about a counter-attack, Jack was already in front of him. Jack kicked at his legs, making him fall down, and placed the tip of his sword on Swellgoing's neck.

"Want to continue?" Jack asked.

Jeanny came at this time and gave a stern face, "Please stop, you two."

"He kicked me first!" Swellgoing complained.

"He acted like an idiot first," Jack countered.

"You two acted like idiots!" Jeanny uttered. "Now let him up, please."

Jack removed his sword and walked away. He could not bother with that idiot. Viral Cora came at him and whispered with a giggle, "Don't mind him, he was just jealous. Everyone knows that he was fond of sister Jeanny. And Sister Jeanny often spoke highly of you, so he has actually borne quite a grudge against you."

"Oh, no wonder," Jack said. "I was confused what's his problem with me. Such a shortsighted fellow."

"So, are you interested in our sister Jeanny?" She whispered in a teasing voice.

"What? Me? No, I just considered her as a friend," Jack replied.

"Ah, good then," Viral Cora said.

"Why is it good?" Jack was puzzled.

"Never mind," she giggled.

"So you really have two classes," Trinity Dawn came and said. "I'm still doubtful when I heard your conversation. It was hard to believe."

"Show us," Viral Cora said with anticipation.

"I'm not a showman," Jack said. "Any of you want to have a duel for that?"

"Let me!" Giant Steve said from the back.

"I'm interested to give it a try," Trinity Dawn said.

"Try what?" Jeanny approached. Swellgoing was behind her, wearing a downcast head. Probably had just received a scolding.

"They want to fight me," Jack said.

"What? No! I didn't bring you people here to start a fight," Jeanny said.

"It is just a friendly duel," Giant Steve said.

"No! I mean it! Any of you start fighting, I'm not bringing you out for questing anymore," Jeanny warned.

Jack looked around. From the look of it, it was apparent that Jeanny was the leader of the group. Jack was even more impressed by the girl now. She was a natural leader. Her quitting the guild was indeed the right move. She could now freely develop her real talent rather than getting constrained in a guild that did not value her.

"What was the commotion just now, did I miss something?"

Jack turned to the source of the voice and saw it was John.

"It's nothing, go away!" Jack said.

"All right. Call me if something exciting comes up," he then ran back to Saint Edge group.

Jack was speechless with the guy.

Jack continued to chat with Jeanny's group before White Scarfs and Saint Edge groups departed. Before they left, both guilds' leaders came and gave Jack a farewell, which astonished Jeanny's friends. They did not expect those big shots to be so polite with Jack. Their opinion on him was getting better, except for Swellgoing whose expression became even gloomier.

Chapter 294: Profits From The Battle

In the next few days after the battle of Crestfall Plain, Jack spent his time doing adventure quests and hunting quests, with one Faction Quest. He finally became a Baron after completing that one quest. He received 120 merit points, giving him a total of 520 merit points. Just a little bit over from the 500 points required for Baron.

Becoming a Baron had not yet opened the availability for him to use the Kingdom's facilities yet, so he did not yet have an outlet to use the merit points he had gathered. He was told that he needed to be a Viscount for that. He could spend his points at Commander Quintus' Training Ground, but he figured he would hang on to the points first. Just in case there was a better use for his points after he became a Viscount.

The Baron title, though, still had its perks. All the properties owned by him, had now gained a 5% tax reduction. He only owned one property at the moment, which was Ellie's Restaurant. This tax reduction should increase his income from the restaurant. For Amy's bakery, his status was still an investor, he would need to give them funds to upgrade it another two more times before his status became an owner. Funds which he did not have yet at the moment.

Apart from that, the Baron title also gave him a 10% discount if he purchased a property or constructed a building. The more subtle effect of the title was some kind of acknowledgment from the NPCs inside the capital. They seemed to give him more respect, even the patrolling guards sometimes gave him a small nod when they passed him by.

To become the next rank of Viscount, he would need to have a total of 2000 merit points. He was still a long way to go. The scarcity of the nobility faction quest was another element that contributed to his slow growth.

For the coalition, after the battle of Crestfall Plain, they were acting more subdued, less overbearing. They let go of some of their turfs which pleased the independent players and other guilds greatly. Jack thought that probably because they lacked the manpower. They had lost quite a number of players in the battle after all. Those players would need to level up again at lower level areas, and they would also be needing the higher-level members to power-level them. Which will strain the guilds' resources further. They simply did not have the luxury to act imperiously at the moment.

With the reduction of activity from the coalition, there had also arisen a rumor that the waning of the coalition was due to their loss at the battle of Crestfall Plain, where they lost four hundred members against a monstrous player who possessed both the classes of Warrior and Mage. Some even said the name of this monstrous player as Storm Wind. Many of course treated it as a simple rumor. After all, it sounded so far-fetched. And who was this Storm Wind fellow? No one ever heard of him.

Jack did not care about the rumor, but he still felt dismayed when he heard it. Perhaps he should have used his old alias. Perhaps then people would give him a bit more respect. He still did not understand the tendency where people like to link someone's actual ability with his or her fame. He thought it was just weird. Many strong experts maintained a low profile, you did not need to be famous to be strong.

Another skepticism on the rumor was also due to those independent players thought that it was due to themselves, not this mysterious Storm Wind, who had caused the coalition so much trouble. A mass of independent players had banded after John's speech in the capital. The coalition which had just retreated from Crestfall Plain in battered condition, was ambushed by these independent players and suffered further casualties.

Probably even John himself did not expect his speech to actually cause such an effect. He was simply making the speech to trick the enemy into thinking that he had roused a mob and was coming towards them with such a mob. Little did he know that such a mob was truly formed, and went on to ambush the coalition.

Perhaps it was the coalition's fault themselves. They had acted too arrogant and tyrannical, that they drew the ire of the common folks. John's speech was simply a fuse that caused them to band together and acted out their resentment. Still, if someone was to ask John if he had expected such outcome, he most likely would have confidently said, "It was as I have expected."

Despite no one believed the rumor. It was still hotly gossiped amongst the players who visited the tavern. A title was even given to Jack by the gossiping players. Jack was called the Demon of the Crestfall Plain. When Jack learned about it, he felt amused. From that one battle, he had actually received two titles. System title of Outworlder Slayer, and player bestowed title of Demon of the Crestfall Plain.

Despite getting no exp out of that battle, Jack still reaped large profits of 18 gold and 52 silver coins. With heaps amount of equipment. Some he kept and fused using the transformation Box, which gave him a few more rare equipment. He was still far from having enough to fuse them into Super Rare equipment though.

The rests he sold for coins. In the end, he still felt it was a hassle to fuse all the other equipment and spent the time looking for player buyers. The coins were not enough to replenish the coins he had spent before the battle, but it was not far off either. The gains he got from the adventurer and hunting quests these few days further refill his wealth.

Jack had offered some of the coin profits to his friends. Flame, Bowler, and The Man vehemently refused. They said that they felt bad enough that he had to come to save them, much else took his profits.

This caused Jack to give the incident some thought. He could not continue to come to the rescue every time they were in trouble. But he also could not just leave them to their fate. After all, those coalition people had targeted them to get to him. So he was somehow responsible for the incident as well.

Yet he could not think of a solution to this problem. As long as he was only one person, those guilds would never really consider him as a real threat. Did he need to join a guild? No, he would never allow himself to be tied down. Should he create his own guild? That was even more absurd. He was not the type of leader that could take care of a bunch of people. He liked to go wherever he pleased, he could not bear to stay around and babysit others.

Since he could not find a solution, he simply threw the problem to the back of his mind for the moment.

Even though loots from the players he had killed were bountiful, it was actually their souls which Jack had reaped the largest harvest. After the battle at Crestfall Plain, he checked his Container of Souls and

found out that he had gained 8256 souls from that battle alone. Combined with the 2950 souls he gathered from these few days' hunting quests and the original 712 souls within the container. He had collected a total of 11,918 souls. The large number of souls from players must be due to their high level and also their advanced class, just as how high-level and elite monsters gave more souls.

Jack had enough points to increase one level of his advanced skill, but he decided to continue upgrading his basic skills first. He could upgrade his basic skills eleven times.

After a brief thought, he grinned and decided to dump all 10,000 souls to max out his Power Strike skill.

Power Strike, level 20/20 (Active skill, melee, require melee weapon)

Deal 350% physical damage, cause pushing force proportional to Strength stat.

Stamina consumed: 20

Cooldown: 3 seconds

Each level usually increased the percentage damage by 10%, but when it was upgraded to level 20, the increase was 20%, rounding the damage applied to 350%. Perhaps it was the additional perk for max level. The stamina needed, however, was doubled from the original 10 points at level 1. It was still an affordable cost though.

After Jack leveled up his Power Strike skill to the max, he soon heard a notification voice, "congratulations, for being the first to fully leveled up your skill, you have gained the title of Hard-working Achiever."

Another title? Jack was amazed. He had gained another title only a few days from his first. He went ahead and checked the title.

Hard-working Achiever (Title)

Increase the amount of experience received by 15%. Increase the amount of skill proficiency received by 15%

Jack was ecstatic by the title. He knew that as time progressed, he would have more difficulty in staying at the same level as the others due to his two classes. He would need special encounters and circumstances like the incident with the Ice Troll Sentinel in order to stay ahead in levels. But such an encounter was rare, not to mention was also extremely risky. There would not be Lieutenant Bailey to bail him out another time.

This title should lessen the handicap he had in terms of leveling speed. He went ahead and replaced his Outworlder Slayer with this title. The Outworlder Slayer was only effective when he was going against another player. The Hard-working Achiever title was better suited for general use.

Chapter 295: Challenges

He spent another 1000 souls and increased his Mana Bullet to level 6.

During the few days of questing, he had also increased his Mage level to level 20, catching up to his Warrior class and gaining the new spell Arcane Turbulence.

Arcane Turbulence, level 1/20 (Active skill, range, require magic weapon)

Affect an area with a diameter of 6 meters. Energy torrents will run havoc inside the area, causing disoriented status and dealing 100% magic damage every second.

Range: 30 meters

Duration: 10 seconds

Mana consumed: 70

Cooldown: 5 minutes

With this skill, he had a proper AOE spell already. He did not need to continue relying on magic scrolls which consumed lots of coins.

In terms of skills, some of his skills had also increased in grade to their first star. Those skills were Charge, Body Double, and Life Burning Art. Despite no longer using Commander Quintus' Training Ground, he had still practiced these skills diligently whenever he had the chance.

Charge in its first star increased the distance the skill traveled to by another half meter.

With Body Double, each star allowed one time in which the copy was not destroyed after switching. This skill had allowed him to trick his enemies numerous times, Peniel had been right when she advised him to get this skill. With this one star, he could do two times switching, giving him the possibility to go back to his original position again. This should give him more maneuverability in utilizing this skill.

Life Burning Art's star further added the increased attributes by another 10% when this skill was activated, effectively increasing its power.

He did not forget to collect the profit from Ellie's restaurant. Another week had passed since he last took the earning. At this time, he received 28 gold coins, which was more than the previous profit. He thought it made sense since the restaurant business continued to boom and there was also a tax reduction as well.

The lack of competitors which provide high-quality player-enhanced foods could be another factor for the restaurant's booming business. In fact, there were even some players who focused on their cooking skills who came to apply for a job in the restaurant. Jack gave Ellie the freedom to make the decision regarding these players.

Ellie selected some of the applicants and replaced the NPC cooks with these players. These players accepted less pay compared to the NPCs since they received benefits such as a supply of recipes and the opportunity to increase their cooking skills. Of course, the recipe that Ellie gave them were those common ones that could easily be purchased from shops. The rare ones were either learned by her or Bill.

With the additional income from the restaurant, Jack now had a total of 87 gold coins, which was more than he previously had before he spent them uncaringly for the battle with the coalition army. He felt rich again. Yet, the amount was still not enough for him to perform another upgrade to the restaurant. He might need to wait for a couple more weeks for that.

During these few days, although the coalition was acting low-key. It did not prevent some of its members to come looking for Jack. These members were the ones who did not join during the battle in Crestfall Plain, and they certainly did not believe that Jack had single-handedly killed so many of their guild mates.

The coalition's guild leaders had instructed their members to keep mum about the incident in Crestfall Plain. The news of how they were decimated by a lone player would surely ruin their reputations. Yet some of their members still spilled the beans. It was not possible for them to truly keep the lid regarding this matter. Not to mention White Scarfs and Saint Edge had instructed their members to spread the rumors regarding Jack, in order to ruin the coalition's reputation.

Thus, those members who were angry by this rumor and yet skeptical, had come looking for Jack to prove to others that the rumor was false.

Jack gladly accepted their challenges and proceeded to destroy them and send them back to level 1.

These challenges continued for several days until the guild leaders could finally ignore the matter no longer. A strict regulation was enforced on all their members, none of them were allowed to bother the player called Storm Wind anymore. Anyone who disobeyed would get severely punished.

As if getting killed was not punishment enough.

The reason the guilds imposed this rule was not because they did not dare to provoke Jack, but simply because if they didn't, they would continue to lose manpower. A significant number of their members had been forced to reset due to death in the Crestfall Plain battle. Their reputations had also been ruined, which caused a large number of potential recruits to decide to rescind their attempts in joining. Even a small portion of their current members had decided to quit. If they kept on just letting their members go and fight Jack only to get killed, they would soon run out of members before long.

And so the challenges abruptly stopped. Jack was confused and rather disappointed. He did enjoy having those ostentatious players coming to challenge him. Not only could he practice his dueling skill, he could also gain a small portion of loot, and a decent amount of souls. When the challengers were of advanced classes, Jack was even happier. Thus he was rather sad when it suddenly stopped.

However, not long after, another series of challenges appeared. But the challengers this time did not come from the coalition guilds. Instead, many were independent players or representatives of some unknown guilds. As Silverwing had predicted, many would come to challenge him due to the rumor.

Sadly though, most of the challengers were simple players. None of them were those well-known experts that Silverwing mentioned might come to him to look for trouble. Perhaps true experts did not find the need to prove themselves, only second-rate ones did. Jack did not show mercy to these second-rate challengers, he needed the souls after all. He gladly decimated them as they came.

And like these, the challenges slowly dwindled. The rumor of Jack killing every challenger had caused others who originally had the same thought to have a second thought. More and more people now believed Jack was indeed the Demon of Crestfall Plain, simply because of his ruthlessness.

Little did they know that Jack was not really that brutal because they dared to challenge him, he simply saw it as a chance to collect more souls.

Due to the challenges, he had collected another 2280 souls. Not as profitable as the battle with the coalition, yet a profit was a profit, he did not complain. Combined with the stock of 918 souls in his container, he leveled up another three levels of Mana Bullet, bringing it to level 9.

His Mana Bullet had also received another star after this period of challenges. He was no longer concealing his second class, so he freely unleashed all his Mage skills during the fight. Many players started to take notice of his existence who had two classes, more and more started to believe that he might really be the Demon of the Crestfall Plain. Though of course, there were still many who were skeptical.

His Barrier had also upgraded to its first star. The star gave the Barrier an additional duration of 12 seconds, which Jack thought was not so useful. Most of the time his Barrier would run out of its life instead of its duration.

It was almost a week after the battle with the coalition that Jack finally received a worthwhile challenge. He had gone back to Amy's Bakery to rest for the day. It was coincidentally the day where he received another profit from the bakery. This time he received a bit less, at 13 gold coins. He did not complain. Business had good times and bad times after all. As long as it still generated profit, then everything was fine. With these 13 gold coins, he finally reached the 100 gold coins mark.

He was just about to celebrate when he heard the bakery's doorbell rang. The store was supposed to close already. He turned around and saw a familiar face.

It was Red Death from Death Associates.

Jack stared at her in silence as she did the same. Amy who was also in the room, felt that there was something between these two outworlders, so she also stayed silent. The silence was too long that Jack started to feel awkward.

"Uh... Do you want to buy bread?" He finally broke the awkward atmosphere with an equally awkward question.

She was still silent.

Sister, do you come here just to have a staring contest with me? Jack complained in his mind.

"Open your map," she finally broke her silence.

"What for?" Jack asked, confused.

"I will send you a coordinate. Come there tomorrow morning. We will decide who amongst us is the better fighter."

Chapter 296: Spectators

"How do I know you are not going to set up a trap to gang up on me there?" Jack asked, yet he still opened up his map interface and received the coordinates.

"If we do, are you afraid? Didn't we do that already at Crestfall Plain and you still came?" Red Death retorted.

Jack shrugged, "I was forced to come, somebody held my friends hostages, remember? By the way, now that you mentioned it. Why didn't I see you during that battle there?"

Red Death was back to her silent mode for a while before answering, "I was tied up with important matters at the time."

"Oh... I guess I was not considered important enough then," Jack commented.

"Enough with the crap, are you going or not?"

"Are you planning an ambush or not?"

"No."

"Okay, it's a date then," Jack said.

"It's not a date. It's a duel," Red Death corrected.

"I know... I was just teasing you. You don't need to explain, you know."

"Don't be late," she said, then turned around and walked out the door.

Such a no-nonsense woman, Jack commented in his heart.

"Is she your friend?" Amy finally spoke.

"No," Jack shook his head.

"I should have scolded her then, I thought she is your friend. She was so rude, coming in without knocking even though we are closed already."

"Well, you should have locked the door then," Jack said, then turned around. "Oh, I'm beat! I will take an early rest. Need an early start tomorrow morning."

The next morning, when he woke up, he was greeted by a system notification, "congratulations on reaching the age of 1 month, receive skill: Limitless potential."

"Huh?" He was still drowsy from waking up. He reactively opened up his stat window. There was a new category under inherent skill, called Race Skill. There was one skill under this category.

Limitless potential, Level 1 (Passive skill). HP +100, Stamina/MP +20, all attributes except luck +1

"Race skill?" He asked absent-mindedly.

"It's a skill you get when you reach one month of age. You will get an upgrade to the skill or another skill altogether when you reach the second month and so on," Peniel flew beside him and explained.

"Doesn't that mean every player gets them as well? What's the advantage then?"

"Yes, for every human outworlder, they will be the same. Another thing, if you die, the age is set back to zero. You have to start all over again."

"Hm, ok," Jack said off-handedly. He didn't give this race skill much thought. He had an appointment to keep this morning.

At the appointed place. It was in the woods outside the capital, where Warriors of Solidarity had hunted Bowler and The Man in the past. Inside these woods, there was a small clearing. Jack came out to this clearing to find out a small crowd there.

He was rather startled to find this many people here. The last night he only had some message conversations with Flame, Bowler, and The Man. He had asked them to keep it a secret. They had expressed their interest to come and watch, so it was normal to find them here. From Red Death's side, it was also normal to find Death Associates' big shots there, and also a few from the coalition guilds.

He even saw some of the leaders who he had killed before, they were sporting him a rather hostile look. They were around level 7 to 10. He was rather surprised to find out about their levels, he had expected those guild leaders to be wearing Amulet of Rebirth. Guess they had never bothered to wear one considering they never expecting anyone to dare to kill them.

He also saw Earmouth among them. The guy was a mage now, he had just managed to recently become one at level 20.

Those folks were roughly the ones he had expected to see here. However, apart from them, there were also John, Silverwing and his team, William of Wellington and Radiant Phoebe from Saint Edge together with several of their people. There were even the people from the Black Cloak guild. Jeanny and his friends were also present. Together with several other people who seemed to not associated with any of the guilds. Why did they all come here?

For the guilds, only their highest executives were present, which was a good thing. Otherwise, the clearing would not have enough space to hold all the crowd. However, there was no telling that some of their members might be hiding within the woods, in case if something went wrong. You could never tell with these scheming people.

The one he knew nodded to him when he approached. It seemed like he was the last to arrive. He came to his friends' side and his attention was taken by a small creature beside Fierce Flame. It looked like a cute small cub.

"What's that? A dog?" Jack asked.

"It's my pet, and its kind is called Savage Wind Wolf," Flame answered. "It is a variant from the Silver Wolf. I found it when I was raiding their nests looking for a suitable pet."

"Wow, so you managed to tame one?" Jack knelt down to look at the wolf more closely.

'Is this monster strong?' He asked Peniel in his mind.

Peniel gave her answer, "your friend is pretty lucky to find this cub around here. Savage Wind Wolves rarely frequent this part. They are usually of Special Elite grade. Since your friend raises it from a cub, there is a chance that it can even grow into a Rare Elite grade."

'That does sound like a good one for a pet,' Jack thought.

The cub gave Jack a curious stare as well. Jack offered it his hand. He said, "its name does sound imposing, but it doesn't look so dangerous."

When Jack's hand got near, the cub's maw snapped open and tried to take a bite. Jack instantly retracted his hand.

"I take my words back," he said.

Flame chuckled, "it was still a youngling. Ain't you the one that said it will be better to raise them from the infant stage? I have been feeding it expensive pet foods. Its growth was rather rapid. Perhaps in one week's time, it should reach its mature stage and I can bring it out for battle."

"Hope it grow into a strong wolf," Jack said as he stood up. He observed the crowd again and asked, "where do all these people come from? Did the coalition invite them all?"

Bowler made an awkward laugh. "Well... I sort of have some conversation with White Scarfs people last night."

Jack lifted his eyebrow at him, he sort of understood what had happened here.

The Man came to him and said apologetically, "you see, boss. I also had talked a bit about this with John. We were hanging out at the tavern at the time. So, it kinda happened..."

John appeared behind them, with a not so apologetic expression. "Friend, I've brought along everyone to oversee this match, so you have nothing to worry about."

"What do you mean?" Jack asked him.

"You have to be vigilant about this. What if they try dirty tricks? What if they use numbers when they can't win? With these many people watching, they will not dare to cheat. I have invited Saint Edge and White Scarfs guild, also the Black Cloak guild."

"What about those independent players?"

"Oh, I invited Jeanny as well since she seemed to be such a good friend with you. The others, we met them along the way when we were on our way into this woods. They were just curious about what we are doing. With so many famous guild members, I would say we were quite eye-catching. So I invited them along as well. I told them there will be a match between the famous Red Death against the Demon of Crestfall Plain. Weird thing was there were only a few of them initially, they seemed to have grown in numbers."

"Weird my ass! Of course it would grow if you told them like that. I bet they were calling their friends over even as we speak."

"It does seem to be the case," John said innocently as he saw several more players emerged into the clearing.

"You did this on purpose now, didn't you?" Jack said to him.

"Friend, there are strengths in number. The coalition would not be able to do anything with these many spectators."

Jack shook his head, the guy did not even bother to deny. There was no use complaining about things that had happened. He turned to Red Death and walk towards her. The crowd around had positioned

themselves into a ring formation with an empty space in the middle. Jack stopped halfway through this empty space.

While Jack appeared and had a chat with his friends. Red Death spoke to Scarface on her side without looking at him, "remember what I said before. If you dare to interfere in any way in this match, I will not give you any face. Do you understand?"

Instead of answering her question, Scarface said, "is this match really necessary? It does not really profit the guild much. Many people are still skeptical that Storm Wind is the Demon of Crestfall Plain, or even such a demon exists. Even if you beat him, people will just consider the rumor as false, it does not really help with our reputation. On the other hand, if you lose, not only will it drag down our guild's reputation even more. It will also cause a severe setback on that quest. You know how important that quest is to our guild. We have no time for distractions."

"Distraction? Like that fiasco you arranged at Crestfall Plain?"

Scarface winced at her words. That operation was truly a massive failure. He was confident that their numbers at the time were more than enough to settle this small problem called Storm Wind. How could he know that person to be so monstrous? If he had known, he would not have wasted his time and effort on it. He still shivered when he thought about the battle.

"You were not there when it happened. If you know, you won't be requesting this match," Scarface said.

They saw Jack came out to the center of the clearing at this time.

"Whether I win or lose, this is for my own. I'm not doing this for the guild," Red Death said, her hands were folded on her chest. She was still not looking over to Scarface when she talked. "And make no mistake, I'm still furious you have gone after him behind my back. I don't care for your reason. If you deny me this duel by interfering it in any way, or if any of your underlings did, I will say it again, I will not show you any mercy. Even if I am on the verge of dying, I will not, let me repeat again, I will not forgive anyone who interferes."

Chapter 297: The Duel

Red Death then turned to Blackjack, who had come to this place together with Death Associates' group.

"Watch him! Kill him if he did anything funny. And Blackjack, the same warning goes for you as well."

With those warnings, she left them and moved towards Jack. The crowd which was lively with their own talks a moment before suddenly turned quiet.

"Quite a crowd, eh?" Jack tried to open a conversation.

"You are worried my guild use petty tricks. It is understandable. I don't mind," Red Death uttered.

"You have misunderstood. It really was not my intention for this many people to show up," Jack told her.

"How about this? Let's ditch these people and we go find someplace else where we can be alone."

The others who heard his words were scratching their heads. Why did his talk sound more like two lovers on an interrupted date than two enemies who were about to have a deathmatch?

"That is not necessary. Whether there are people watching or not, it does not matter to me," Red Death maintained her cold expression. "What's important is that you take this seriously. Are you ready?"

She took out her weapons. It was twin large daggers. She held them one on each hand. The two daggers looked identical. Jack surmised they might be set weapons. In an RPG game, there were set equipment where if you equipped them together, it would give extra buff.

Jack Inspected her and found her to be at level 21 already, she was one level higher than him. As expected, slowly these true experts would surpass him in terms of level. His Warrior class was close to level 21 as well, if he continued grinding or questing today, he should be able to become level 21 as well. Still, he did not know how long ago Red Death had achieved that level. He felt the urge to work harder.

As the two got ready for the duel, the spectators had their own discussions.

"Who do you think will win?" an independent player who just arrived after receiving the message of his friend asked.

"Is there any need to ask? For certain it's going to be Red Death," his friend answered.

"Really? But I heard this Demon of Crestfall Plain is very strong."

"What demon? It is just propaganda created to undermine the coalition guild. It's a make-believe fairy tale, no such person exists. Only a three-year-old will believe such nonsense."

The guy was getting annoyed. Did his friend just call him a three-year-old? "I have a friend who went and fight with this Demon of Crestfall Plain. He told me the rumor is real. The guy really is strong, and he also does possess both warrior's and mage's skills."

"Is that friend of yours a well-known expert?"

"No..."

"Then how can he judge how strong his opponent is? A strong person seen by rubbish, will still be rubbish when said person met with a true expert."

"Are you calling my friend rubbish?"

"Is he not?"

"If he is rubbish, then you are more of rubbish. He is at least a better player than you!"

"Are you looking for a fight?"

"Come then! Do you think I'm afraid?"

"Can you people please be quiet!" A thunderous voice boomed out. The two squabbling players felt offended by the scolding and were about to scold back, but they stopped themselves when they saw who had scolded them.

It was Goliath from Warriors of Solidarity. His name was enough to intimate these common players, not to mention his towering frame lording over these two players.

"You got a problem?" He said to the two.

"No... No, sir..." The two replied in unison. They were as docile as kittens.

"Then still your tongue! Or I will cut them out for you!"

The two held their mouths with their two hands and nodded fiercely.

"Are you ready?" Red Death asked Jack again.

"Is there any rule for this match?" Jack asked back.

"Do you want it to have a rule?" Red Death returned the question.

Jack shrugged, "I mean, was there supposed to be a restriction or something like that? For example, are we allowed to use magic scrolls or tools?"

Instead of Red Death, it was the leaders of the coalition who stood behind Red Death who answered, "No! No tools!"

Red Death turned to look at them. Even Scarface had shouted out the objection just now. If those in attendant here were there during the battle of Crestfall Plain, they would not think those coalition leaders' reactions to being exaggerated. After all, a large portion of the reasons that Jack had survived the battle with the coalition army was due to his usages of tools.

After the coalition leaders regrouped, they had given their members priority in searching for information of where to acquire those disruptive bombs and the summoning tool that Jack had shown during the fight. But even till now, they still had no idea where to get those tools.

Red Death had read the reports regarding the battle, so she somewhat understood their reactions. She turned back to Jack and said, "no tools or magic scrolls."

"Okay," Jack said. "Any other things to note? Can we use potions? What about time limit? Or condition for winning?"

"No potions. No time limit. We fight until one of us died," she replied.

"Does it have to be that excessive?" Jack said.

"I heard you killed every player that had come to challenge you. Was that excessive?"

"Well... I guess you got me there. Let's start then. Oh, wait! Your members behind there won't interfere, right?"

"They won't," Red Death said.

"Don't worry, we will be the referee," Kill Order from Black Cloak exclaimed. "If anyone interfering the match, we will deal with them."

Since Black Cloak had stayed neutral all this time, everyone agreed that they had the qualification to be the overseer of this match. Red Death did not comment. Jack nodded to them and said, "we will trouble you then."

Kill Order then yelled out, "all right, everybody. Step back and give them more space!"

Everyone had spared the central part of the clearing devoid, but they still stepped back several steps after Kill Order's words, giving the two in the middle of the clearing more space.

After everyone moved back, Kill Order lifted his hand. "On my mark... Begin!"

Once Kill Order declared the start of the match, Storm Breaker and Red Dawn staff appeared on Jack's right and left hand respectively. He swiftly pointed his magic staff forward ready to cast Mana Bullet, but was startled to find a dagger was flying at him. Rather than shooting Mana Bullet, his staff generated a magic shield instead. The dagger hit the shield with a clang.

Red Death had also read the reports about Jack's dual-class. Though it was hard to believe, she knew there was no reason for her guildmates to falsify the reports. Hence, she had treated Jack as any other magic user, she used her Weapon Throw skill to disrupt him from casting a spell. At the same time, she rushed towards Jack. The dagger that she had thrown magically reappeared on her hand.

She was fast! Jack exclaimed in his mind. Red Death had appeared before him once he deflected her dagger. For a level 21 Rogue, her Dexterity stat was still higher than Jack despite Jack's combine Dexterity from Warrior and Mage class, because Rogue received a rise of 5 Dexterity for every increase in level. And she was like Jack, who had managed to directly change to the advanced class when he was level 15. Unlike other average players who had made the change at later levels.

Red Death's dagger shot out with extreme speed, a combination of her already high dexterity added with her Swift Stab skill. The dagger plunged into Jack's belly. Yet, Red Death frowned. She did not feel any resistance to the successful hit.

She then recalled another report regarding's the Crestfall Plain battle. She executed roll without hesitation as a Swing swept from behind her. Jack had used Flash Step to move instantly to her back before her dagger struck him.

Jack was impressed by her reaction. He lifted his magic staff, attempting to use range attack again, but he suddenly saw Red Death stopped her Roll midway and jumped back at him. She had canceled her skill once she was out of danger, she did not want the skill to take her far away as Jack had more options in fighting from long range compared to her. Thus, she needed to keep him nearby.

For the second time, Jack adjusted again from intending to use long-range spells, back to using Magic Shield instead. The dagger struck the shield, but Red Death held two daggers, the other dagger coming at Jack from a different angle. Jack parried the other dagger with his sword. Before he could feel safe, another stab came again. Jack was forced to block again with his shield.

Chapter 298: Sacrificing Oneself

It went on repeatedly that way. Each stab was trickier than the last, forcing Jack to continue to backstep in order to give him more room to cope with the repeated attacks. Red Death did not relent, her hands were a blur as she continued to attack. Jack had even activated Adrenaline Rush which increased his arm speed, but all he could do was using that speed to defend instead. He was not given the chance to attack.

Jack decided to brute force his way. He deactivated Magic Shield and started casting a spell as he defended against Red Death's flurry of attacks. He suffered a few stabs due to that. Each normal stab gave him around 70 damage, which was a lot more compared to when he received damage from the average Rogues during the previous battle with the coalition. Apart from her weapons being special set weapons, she must have increased their levels to the maximum as well.

Fortunately, a dagger did not carry as much damage as the other weapons, and Red Death herself did not invest any point into strength stat. Added with Jack's superb defense, her damage although was higher than average Rogues, it was still not too dangerous for him. Still, continuing to get stabbed would chip away his health to a dangerous level.

Red Death had known about Jack's superior defense, hence she was not flustered by how little Jack's HP went down from her attacks. She maintained her aggressive style. But she soon noticed a rune was forming at the tip of Jack's magic staff.

She hastily did several backflips before the rune formation was formed. The Ice Ring spell exploded out, but she managed to jump out of the danger zone right as the blue color ring came sweeping through.

Jack did not feel discouraged for not hitting his target, it had still managed to create a distance between him and that woman. For the third time, he aimed his magic staff at her. This time, his Mana Bullet shot out. He followed by casting Energy Bolts and continued shooting with standard range attacks after.

When Red Death saw the Mana Bullet coming, her feet were enveloped by a spinning green aura. She dashed forward receiving the Mana Bullet instead of running away. When the spell almost hit her, her body ducked down and it passed by above. She then made slashes at the incoming Energy Bolts while continuing to dash forward. She cut at the Energy Bolts which chased after her and side-stepped from the standard range attacks while continued to approach Jack. There was no wasted movement in her advance.

Jack was utterly impressed. The precision of movement that woman was displaying was certainly profound. He knew that green aura enveloping her feet was from Rogue's level 20 skill, Light Foot. It increased the Rogue's movement speed. However, only an expert like Red Death would use this skill to barge through a rain of spells like that.

He had asked Peniel about Rogue's skill the night before, hence he was aware of the ability Red Death had just used. Peniel warned him though, to not assume his opponent only having standard skills. If Red Death was as expertly as the folks said her to be, then she must certainly have gained other exclusive skills as well, the same as him who possessed many non-standard special skills. Jack was also fully aware of this point.

And it was at this time when Red Death arrived at a distance about three meters away from Jack, that she used one such skill. Her body split up into three. All three images rushed at Jack, all with the buff from Light Foot.

Jack could not afford to underestimate her. He had a feeling these images were not illusory like the one produced by his Body Double skill. He felt danger from all the three figures coming at him.

He used Magic Shield again and then activated Dragon's Eye. Red Death's movement slowed down to a crawl. He could see her attacks clearly. Yet his own movement was also at a snail speed, while three

figures of Red Death attacks came at almost the same time. Not to mention Red Death used two daggers for the attack, so it was like he was facing attacks from six directions at the same time. Even when he could see all the attacks clearly, he still had trouble defending all of them.

He was again forced to take a few steps back to reduce the pressure. He even combined his blocking and dodging maneuvers with Flash Steps. He still barely managed to defend himself from all attacks. If he did activate Dragon's Eye, many of the stabs from those three figures would have landed on him. This skill that Red Death performed was truly an excellent one.

Yet, the skill was not too overwhelming. After all, it was only at the level of advanced skill. At this stage, none of them could use any Elite skill yet except via magic scroll. Red Death's three images appeared to only move in an adjacent position from her real body. They could not split out like his Body Double skill, hence their assaults always came from his front. In addition to that, its activation time was brief. Her skill expires and her extra copies disappeared after only five seconds had passed.

Jack breathed a relieved sigh. He had suffered a few more stabs again just now, even with the help of Dragon's Eye. But before he could carry out a counterattack, Red Death vanished from in front of him.

He was taken by surprise for her sudden disappearance. He quickly glanced at his radar and found a red dot right behind him.

Red Death had used another unknown skill again. Despite him knowing that she had come up behind him, he knew he could not escape from her quick backstabbing. He resolved to lose some health as he swung his sword at his back, showing her the meaning of an eye for an eye.

Jack's sword came at her at a slightly lower angle. Jack knew if he just simply swung it at his normal hand elevation, she could easily duck from the slash. With a lower angle, she either had to let go of her backstabbing or accept to sacrifice receiving a hit as well.

Red Death was resolved to proceed with her attack. Her dagger went right into Jack's back, delivering critical damage. Her critical damage was higher than normal due to Rogue's Backstab skill. Even with Jack's massive HP pool, his health had still gone down to a little below half already after that last stab.

Even as she plunged her dagger onto Jack's back, her eyes never left Jack's incoming sword. Her other hand shot out and stab at the black longsword. Her stab was counted as an attack, not a parry. Hence her damage mitigated some of Jack's damage. But she still suffered almost half of the damage if the slash had hit normally, since her damage was nowhere near Jack's damage output.

Jack did not use Power Strike, hence she was not thrown away. She was a bit puzzled by why he did not use that skill. Then her attention was caught by the spell formation on the tip of Jack's magic staff. There were three runes on it, and it was almost at completion.

The spell formation had started when Jack's Dragon Eye was still in effect, hence it was formed rapidly. But the skill expired after two runes were completed, the last rune was formed with normal speed. Still, it was a bit late for Red Death to put a distance from him.

Red Death recognized the spell formation though, as he had seen Scarface performed it as well. It was Mage's standard spell that was acquired when they reached level 20. The Arcane Turbulence spell. The spell created a circular area on the ground.

Her position was very close to Jack, so he would have to place the area of effect just a little bit away in order for the spell to not hit him as well. In other words, she would be at the edge of the area of effect. If she paid attention to the spell's starting animation before it took effect, she would be able to escape from it entirely.

So she focused her attention on the ground beneath her. As expected, before long, the ground shone brightly. However, unexpectedly, she and Jack himself were right in the middle of the spell area. Jack had chosen to sacrifice himself just so that she had no chance to dodge this spell!

While she was still dumbstruck by Jack's recklessness, the spell took effect. The area flared and torrents of energy swirled within it, damaging the two players and causing Disoriented effect on them.

Red Death's Light Foot skill had expired, combined with the Disoriented which slowed her movement, she was having trouble trying to escape from the Arcane Turbulence spell area. Jack did not let her go, he dogged her while at the same time suffering from his own spell's damage.

Chapter 299: I Thought You Have Left

Jack's speed had originally been less than Red Death's. So when both of them were afflicted by the Disoriented status, the difference between their speed stayed the same. Red Death slowly put more distance from Jack. With great difficulty, she finally managed to break out from Arcane Turbulence's area of effect. At that time, she was three meters away from Jack.

When she thought she was finally free, Jack swung her blade as a crescent light shot out.

Sword of Light!

Red Death had seen his hand movement before it swung. She had also seen the execution of this skill when Jack killed Warpath in the past. Thus she could predict the Sword of Light's trajectory and made an appropriate evasive move.

The crescent light passed by her as she jumped to the side. But before she could heave a sigh of relief, Jack suddenly appeared before her using Flash Step. Jack's Flash Step was at level 3 and could cover a distance of 2.5 meters.

The instant movement caught her by surprise while she was still in the air. Jack kicked at her airborne legs and caused her body to flip. He then slashed at her while she fell. She was helpless as she was in the air, she had no foothold to perform a dodge. Jack had prepared to make a rapid second slash in case his slash swerved away from its target due to the Disoriented status, but luckily his slash hit.

Red Death was already wounded from Jack's spell, and this slash further brought her HP to a critical. She would not survive another hit. Jack pointed the tip of his sword right at her neck once her back hit the ground.

She was pinned down. If she forced herself up, the sword would graze her and took her life.

"What's the meaning of this?" She asked.

"It means I win," Jack replied with a smile.

"Didn't we agree that we fight until one of us perish?"

"You said that. I never agree to the rule. Of course, if you are so intent on dying. You can choose to be stubborn and force yourself up."

Red Death was silent for a while as her gaze stayed on Jack.

"Fine, I lost," she finally said. "But you will regret letting me live."

"Perhaps. We will see about that."

Jack removed his sword from her neck and stepped back. She pushed herself up as she took out a recovery potion to replenish her critical HP. Jack did the same.

"Don't expect me to feel indebted to you for this. I will still kill you in the future," she said before turning away.

"You are welcomed to try," Jack said as he watched her departing back. He then walked back to where his friends were.

The leaders of the coalition did not find the result too surprising, as they had tasted Jack's fearsomeness for themselves. White Scarfs and Saint Edge groups were slightly solemn. They had known a bit about Jack's prowess but they had not directly witnessed Jack's battle with the coalition. They were still reserved about their predictions on this match when it started. The independent players who did not know Jack, on the other hand, were completely blown away. They could not understand how this unknown player could defeat Death Associates' well-known expert.

Even Jeanny herself was slightly taken aback by Jack's display of prowess. The fight had only lasted for a short time, but it had been intense. The two challengers had both displayed unknown skills with profound executions.

"I didn't know your friend to be so impressive," Viral Cora said to her.

When Jack arrived at where his friends were, The Man exclaimed, "that was awesome, boss!"

Bowler, on the contrary, was expressing a rather sulky face.

"Someone dies when I was away?" Jack asked him after seeing his face.

"I don't understand why you let her live. She will surely be a problem in the future," he expressed his opinion.

"Oh, so that's what you are brooding about," Jack said. "Don't worry. I will deal with her again if she causes trouble."

"I still think it is unwise. You should have pulled out the roots when you have the chance, less the weeds will come back again."

"Crap! I was expecting this from John. Are you trying to act smart?" Jack said to Bowler.

John joined in when he heard his name was mentioned, "indeed, coming from you, it does sound a bit second-rate."

"Go f**k yourself!" Bowler said to him.

John acted like he did not hear him, he was speaking to Jack already, "retard as he is, he still spoke some sense. You should have just eliminated her when you have the chance. You have always killed the other challengers, why show mercy this time?"

The Man was holding Bowler who was trying to lunge at John.

Jack pondered John's question for a bit before answering, "well, I guess I never really bothered about the other challengers, since they were too weak. I simply kill them since I thought it won't make any difference. They will still be weak even if I let them go, so it is the same if I just kill them. While for her, I think you have mistaken my letting her go as a show of mercy. I just felt pity if a player as strong as her is killed and her growth is slowed due to it. I might not be able to enjoy another exciting fight like just now."

Bowler immediately gave his response, "are you for real, bro? It is precisely because she is powerful that you should have killed her, in order to remove a future thorn. People might see you as weak for letting her go."

"Heh, in my opinion. Not letting her go instead is the act of a weak person," Jack exclaimed. "Only a weak person will try to remove all the difficulties just to pave an easy path forward. I'm not afraid of those that I have beaten to become a threat to me in the future."

"You don't? I clearly remember the story about you killing Warpath," John said. "Ain't that you removing a future threat?"

"Firstly, that guy was super annoying. He kept on insulting me for no particular reason as if he was the best player in the world. Secondly, I do admit I was still not particularly confident at that time. We have just arrived in this world not long, all of us were still learning the ropes. Hell, we still are now. But at least now I have a better idea of how to keep on improving in this world."

"So you are saying you are pretty confident now?" John asked.

"Hell yeah, I am!" Jack declared strongly. "I feel like I am back to my old self."

"Who is your old self? What is your nick in past gaming?"

"Who I am in the past is not important," Jack avoided the question.

"What about Scarface then?" Bowler said, "You seemed to be very keen on killing him the last time you fought with him."

"Dude, that was a battle. This is a duel. Big difference. We fought fair and square here."

"So you are just gonna let her or other experts throw you another challenge next time?"

"A strong person will not be afraid of challenges! If she dares to challenge me again, I will accept her challenge any time and I will whoop her ass again! Only cowards fear the losers for overtaking them in the future. I am confident that I will stay ahead of her even in the future! I will pull even further ahead and... What's wrong with your eyes?"

Bowler slumped down his shoulders, he had been trying to give Jack a signal using his eyes. He said with a helpless expression, "bro... she is still there."

Jack turned around and saw Red Death who was glaring at him. "Oops," he said. "I'm sorry, I thought you have left. Please don't mind what I've said just now, it was the heat of the moment."

Bowler facepalmed. Were those words supposed to make her feel any better?

Red Death did not respond. She looked away and really left this time. The coalition people followed her and left as well.

Hm... was she angry? Jack wondered.

The coalition leaders were silent as they left the clearing. When they entered the woods, some players came out of hiding from behind the trees to meet them. The ones leading them were Bigarm and Stonecleave.

Warpath was also amongst the hiding troops, he had deliberately taking the position close to the dueling ground, allowing him to watch the duel. He was especially irked to see Jack took down Red Death using a finishing move exactly the same as when Jack took him down. The difference was Jack didn't slay her.

"Should we mount an attack?" Bigarm asked.

"No, there were too many people there. White Scarfs and Saint Edge might have people in hiding too," Scarface told them.

"You are still scheming behind my back," Red Death said.

"It was only a precautionary measure," Scarface replied. "I let you have your duel. However, I never say I would let go of a chance to take him down after the duel if an opportunity arises. You should be familiar with our way. We strike when our enemies show weakness."

"Hmph, I did not say I disapprove," Red Death uttered. She was quiet for a while before saying, "you could see from our fight just now. At first, we thought he was simply a lucky player who encountered special items that gave him high attributes ahead of others, but it is obvious now he was not an amateur player."

"Yes, I have caught glimpses of it during our battle with him at Crestfall Plain," Scarface agreed. "But it was after witnessing this duel that I truly realized his capability. It will become more difficult to deal with him in the future..."

Chapter 300: Instinct

"What are you two talking about?" Earmouth who walked behind them butted in. "It was clear that he only had the advantage due to his dual-class. He was not any better than an average player without it. Take for example the duel just now. If it was me, I would have used Barrier first before casting Arcane Turbulence. That way, even if I hit my own self with that spell, I will not lose any HP."

Red Death gave him a short disparaging glance before uttering, "imbecile." Then she walked away.

Earmouth felt wronged by the treatment. He said, "w— what is the matter with her? I know she had just lost the duel, but does she have to put that Storm Wind guy so high on a pedestal? Does she feel better if she imagines the one who defeated her is someone special?"

"It is you who don't understand," Scarface reprimanded him.

"What do you mean?" Earmouth still did not understand why these two leaders gave Jack so high of an opinion.

"If we take an example by doing what you have described just now, she would have last a bit longer in the fight."

"I don't understand," Earmouth said.

Scarface sighed. "If Storm Wind had cast Barrier first. Red Death would have been aware of his intention the moment she saw the spell formation of Arcane Turbulence. Then she would have used all her might to put in more distance. The reason why she had decided to stay close to Storm Wind, was the fact that she never thought for a second that Storm Wind would cast the offensive spell on himself. After all, when have you ever seen magic class players throw offensive spells onto themselves? Unless of course if the game system does not allow friendly fire, which is not the case in this world."

"Because of this, in her opinion, the safest place will be at Storm Wind's side. Even if he cast the spell close to him with the intention of hitting her, she will be at the periphery of the area of effect, thus allowing an easy escape from the blast area. And it was due to this kind of thinking, that she had been tricked into getting hit by the spell."

"That... that should just have been a coincidence, I don't think he had planned all that through," Earmouth was still unwilling to accept Jack's superiority.

"Oh, in fact, that is precisely why Red Death and I considered him to be much more of a menace now," Scarface said.

"Why?" Earmouth was getting more confused by that statement.

"Not considering their martial expertise, there are two types of experts in gaming, or you can say, two types of experts as a combatant," Scarface explained. "One is my type, who use careful planning. We use our smartness to plan out our victory. We can think of linking a series of combos and positionings to exhaust our foes to oblivion. However, all of us brainy type have one weakness though. When our careful plans are somehow disrupted, we will have that brief moment of vulnerability that our foes can exploit. The other type, on the other hand, does not have such weakness."

"Are you saying Storm Wind is one such type?" Earmouth asked.

"After witnessing his battle several times, I am sure of it," Scarface nodded.

"What type of expert is him then?" Earmouth asked, but his tone still carried disagreement with Scarface's explanation.

"Us brainy type process information through our brains and then plot out an appropriate response based on our analysis. But during a heated and fast pace combat situation, it is impossible to analyze everything, unless we have the ability to slow everything down and thought things through at our own

pace. Otherwise, we would most likely commit mistakes half of the time. The other expert type, did not rely on this brainy process. Instead, they relied on instinct."

"Instinct?"

"Precisely. This kind of expert, even though they will more likely to make mistakes compared to us brainy type. They can quickly rectify their mistakes with appropriate actions as if they had planned it beforehand. And their responses are also faster, since they do not have the tendency to think things through most of the time. They might appear sloppy and unsophisticated at first, but they performed best during critical situations. They practically shine under pressure. They are the kind that is the most troublesome to deal with, as they have no fixed combat pattern. They are like water which shaped themselves according to situations. This kind of expert is rare though. It needs tremendous experience and a long period of time to develop this kind of instinct, so I don't believe he became one overnight. I suspect he was a veteran expert in past games who is now using a different alias."

"Really? Who can he be?"

"I don't know. Most probably he was one of those unaffiliated independent experts which we have little knowledge of. But one thing is for sure, this kind of instinct type expert, the more skills or spells they possessed, the more deadly they become. Because his instinct will allow him to pick the most suitable skill or spell for a particular situation without having to go through the clutter of overthinking his every move. And The fact that he has two classes, means that he can acquire twice as many skills compared to regular players. That's why Red Death and I are worried about our prospect of going against him in the future, as he will only become even stronger than he already is."

Jack, who was the subject of their discussion, was oblivious of their talks. His friends had invited him to the tavern to celebrate, but he turned them down. He had the feeling of getting left behind after seeing Red Death's level 21. He had to work harder! He did not want to waste his time on a meaningless celebration.

In fact, he did not think there was anything to celebrate. It was just another challenge. Though Red Death was significantly better than his other challengers, he did not exactly feel threatened during the entire ordeal.

Red Death had managed to take out half of his HP because she had managed to take the initiative and put him in a passive state. Jack realized he might be a bit too overconfident to end up that way. Still, he had not completely gone all out as well. After all, he had not used his Life Burning Art nor his weapon's Overlimit. Heck, he had not even used a single Power Strike during the fight even when he had the chance to, simply because he was not trying to slay her.

Thus, Jack spent his remaining day doing hunting quests and monster grinding for experience. He continued to rack up on his hunter points, experiences, and souls. With the aid from his Hard-working Achiever title, the rate by which his experience bar filled up had increased. Soon his Warrior class reached level 21, catching up to Red Death.

His total HP broke over three digits and was now at 1010 points.

He completed all his hunting quests but he continued to travel further as he looked for stronger monsters. His God-eye monocle let him know when there were entities that were too strong for him, as

it was marked with a darker red on his radar. He saw again another Land Behemoth during his travel, one which was slightly bigger than the one he last saw. Despite the bigger size, it was still considered as a young version according to Peniel.

He also saw another of the stronger monster, a flying one. It looked like a wyvern in golden color. The creature was flying high in the air. He doubted that it would see him on the ground, but he still dropped down to the ground and stayed still until it flew past.

He arrived in an area filled with monsters which were averagely at level 25 when the sun was low on the horizon. He decided to continue his monster grinding at that place for a bit more.

The majority of the monsters that populated that part were Earth Salamanders, a creature that resembled an overgrown lizard. Its body was covered by thick hard scales of yellow color. It could spit out acid breath from its body. The damage from this acid breath was not high, but it ate on equipment's durability fiercely.

Once Jack found out about the peculiarity of this attack, he gave maximum effort in dodging each of these acid breaths. The Earth Salamander itself was not too dangerous. It had high defense and HP, but it was slow and its attack pattern was limited due to its short limbs and toothless mouth. Apart from the acid breath and its tail swipe, it did not present much of a threat.

One particular thing he noted about this area, was there were more presences of elite monsters, something that was pretty rare in the lower level area. He was happy though with the existence of those elite Earth Salamander, he could acquire better loots, more exp, and more souls from them.

He also gained several mana cores from the monsters' drops, the ones that Peniel said would drop from monsters starting from level 25 and above. He collected 12 of these mana cores from multiple monsters, bringing the number of mana cores he possessed to 22. He still had no idea what these mana cores were for, so he just chucked them all into his inventory.