

Chapter 331: World Races

"Sorry, must have slipped my mind. Orc is a race different than us humans. They have larger and sturdier physiology. In terms of physical ability, they are much stronger than basic humans. Their nation was governed by the council of ten, which comprised of the Lord Chiefs from ten of the largest tribes in their country. The head of this council is the Grand Chief, who was selected from among the ten Lord Chiefs of those largest tribes."

Jack was not foreign to Orcs. As a veteran player of RPG games, he had dealt with this type of creature in past games. Although their depictions were different from game to game, they had several common denominators. They were always portrayed as brutish, aggressive, and ugly as hell. They had different colors of skin in different iterations, but mostly it was of a darker tone.

'A nation ruled by monsters?' Jack thought.

"Orcs are not monsters, they are a race, same as humans," Peniel who heard his thought, said.

"Anyway, I urge you to be careful," Guss said. "Although it has been a long time since we last had a conflict with them, those savages can be pretty unpredictable. My scouts also mentioned that they had been showing provocative attitudes at the border. I am afraid they might be up to something."

"We will be careful. Did your scout noticed any large forces from their side?"

"No, just several small contingents. Nothing that would be a menace to the size of your army."

Commander Quintus nodded. "All right, if we meet them, we will act according to the situation. Now, let's talk about the details on our supply."

While they talked about the boring details, Jack turned his attention to Peniel, 'Hey, exactly how many nations are there in this world? And How many races are there?'

"There are many nations, but if we are talking about the main ones who hold the largest land and powers, there are seven of them. Coincidentally, there are also seven dominant races. Each race governed those largest nations."

'I assume Themisphere is the human's largest nation then.'

"Yes, as Verremor is Orc's. The other largest nations are Palgrost, which is governed by the Dwarfs, Aurebor by the Elves, Hydrurond by the Draconians, Liguritutum by the Ethereals, and the last is Sangrod, which at first impression, appears to be a nation governed by humans."

'But they are not?'

"Most of the denizens of Sangrod are indeed humans, but the upper echelons of the governing body is comprised of a different being entirely."

'Which is?'

"Vampire."

'Say what?!' Jack almost blurted out loud.

"Vampire. An almost immortal being who derives its sustenance from blood, mostly human blood, or the blood of the other dominant races."

'I know what a vampire is,' Jack said. He just never thought that this world would have this creature as well. There are werewolves in the form of beast transformation from Beastmaster class, and now there are vampires as well. The two famous classic monsters. This world had just gotten a lot more interesting.

"What are you getting excited for?" Peniel asked when she sensed Jack's excitement.

'I just thought this world is much more interesting than I originally thought. Tell me more about the Draconians and Ethereals. What are they like?' Jack didn't ask about the dwarfs and elves, those two are standard fantasy creatures, similar to orcs.

"The Draconians are human with the lineage of a dragon, so you can consider them half-dragon."

'Dragon? Wow, wouldn't that make them completely superior to the other races?'

"Every race had its advantages and disadvantages. Although the Draconians are related to dragons, their relation is very thin. Their race also has as many weak peasants as the human race does. All of them still need to train in order to become stronger, the same as other races. Although a draconian do tend to have higher HP and better physical attributes."

'Still, dragon lineage, that sounds really cool. I bet they have dragons protecting their nation then.'

"On the contrary, Draconians are hated by the Dragon race, especially the True Dragons."

'How so?'

"Because Dragons viewed that race as an affront to their noble lineage. True Dragons have already considered lesser dragons as a disgrace, much less the Draconian race."

'Oh... Then I pity them.'

"What is there to pity? It's not like dragons considered other races any better. Apart from the Gods and Demigods, True Dragon only respects another True Dragon. All others they considered as beneath them."

'Phew, this world is much more complex than it seemed. Now I'm slightly afraid to go out there and see the whole world.'

"Your mouth said afraid, but why do I feel excitement instead out of you. Cut the crap, will you?"

'Hehe, now tell me about the Ethereals.'

"Ethereals can be considered as the reverse of Draconians. Their race has higher Stamina/MP and better mental attributes if compared to the other races. Oh, and another thing, they can't speak."

'Can't speak? You mean they don't have a language?'

"No. I mean they can't speak, because they have no mouth."

'Uh, I don't know how to respond to that... Wait! If they can't speak, how can they rule a nation? Don't tell me they built their civilization using sign languages?'

"Although they can't speak, doesn't mean they can't communicate. They communicate with others telepathically."

'They have telepathy?'

"Yes. It is one of their special traits. But not the kind of mind-reading ones, at least for the weak ones. Their telepathy is a basic projection of thoughts to another being. Similar to what we are doing right now."

'What an interesting race. I will need to visit their nation sometime.'

"Unfortunately, their nation is one of which you will have a problem going into."

'Why is that? Is it very far?'

"That is one of it, but the most deciding factor is because you are a member of the kingdom faction of Themisphere. Do you remember when I explained that some Kingdom factions are hostile to each other? There are two such factions that are hostile to Themisphere kingdom. One is Verremor of the Orc, the other is Liguritutum of the Ethereal race."

'Bugger,' Jack cursed. 'How did these kingdoms end up being enemies to each other anyway?'

"Do you really want me to narrate the history of this world's nations? It will take a very long time. That prince is already watching you as if you are a retard."

Jack turned to the Prince after Peniel's notice. Prince Alonzo did stare at him with a smiling face.

"I'm sorry, I don't mean to stare," the Prince said apologetically. "It's just that you are very expressive when you are thinking. It is as if you are talking to yourself intensely."

Jack felt embarrassed hearing the Prince's words. He did become too absorbed with his conversation with Peniel.

Duke Alfredo and Commander Quintus stood up. It appeared their discussions had ended. They gave Guss a military salute and said, "thank you for everything. We will be in your care for these two days."

Guss returned their salutes. The others also stood up and gave their salutes. Including Jack, who followed their leads.

Guss called for an officer outside the room and instructed him to lead the Duke and the others to their resting quarters. When they were about to leave, Jack said, "I still have something to speak with Commander Guss."

The Duke turned back at him, as Guss who had just sat back down and about to review the documents on his table looked up at him.

"Um, I have a quest that involves the commander," Jack explained.

The Duke didn't question him. He nodded as he said, "you are free to do as you please. You can stay here with us or at the inn with your friends. Just remember to gather again with the army two days from now, and stay out of trouble."

Jack thanked the Duke and gave him a slight bow.

"You have some business with me?" Guss asked when the others had left.

"Yes, I have been given a quest from Gruff. He asked me—"

Jack's words were interrupted by Guss as he suddenly stood up and said, "Gruff? Don't tell me, he sent you to represent him?"

Jack answered, "as a matter of fact, he did. I am to listen to your request and—"

Jack's words were again interrupted, in a more violent way this time as Guss slammed his hand on his table. "That lazy no-good brother!"

Brother...? Ah, no wonder they looked similar.

"Let me guess, you are a member of his League of Champions faction?"

Jack nodded.

"Did he tell you what the task is about?"

Jack shook his head, "but he did say it was an easy task and won't take long to complete."

"If it is easy, do you think I bother to call for his faction's aid?"

Uh-oh, Jack said in his mind. But he remembered the quest difficulty was only B.

Chapter 332: Unreasonable Request And Odd Request

"Never mind, he must be too lazy to come. Since you have come, let's hope that you are up to it," Guss said with a sigh. He then seemed to notice something and said, "I see you have an Investigator talent, maybe that's why my brother chose you, despite your low level."

More like because I'm gullible enough, Jack thought dejectedly. "So what is this task about?"

"There has been a range of cases where people get a disease. The disease cannot be cured by our healers and causes the victims' health to deteriorate. But as long as they were tended, it is not fatal and the ones afflicted will be cured by themselves after a few days. However, the occurrence of these diseases kept on escalating. It will be difficult to manage if the affliction kept on increasing. My healers can't seem to find out the cause."

"What kind of disease?"

"They lost control of their senses, and will just lay down unresponsive. Their health will continually decrease as if when one is suffering from poison, but in a very small amount. My healers use healing spells and restorative potions regularly to keep them safe. The ones that were already cured said that they suffered from hallucinations. My healers can't cure it so they just let the disease run its course

until the sick ones healed naturally. The kingdom does not have resources to spare on this case so I decided to send a request to my brother's League of Champions. I had a token that binds that idiot brother of mine to help in my request, but there is a loophole that he can be represented as long as one is also a member of the faction."

Was this why that brute helped me to become a member of the League of Champions? Jack couldn't help but think this way.

"I will need you to investigate the source of this disease and prevented it from affecting my people again," Guss announced.

Jack heard a notification then, "you have been offered a quest, Investigate the strange disease in Theseval, do you accept? Please note that rejecting the quest and failing it will incur a penalty."

Motherf**ker! Jack cursed in his mind. What was this about a penalty? That Gruff had clearly lied to him!

"He must refer to the no penalty part as the quest for you to come to this town, so he was not technically lying," Peniel said. "Since you were offered another quest. That B-level quest from Gruff is considered separate from the task that Guss is about to give you. The lying that we sensed when we talked to him must be referring to when he said he did not know about what task Guss is asking."

'Well, thank you for explaining that!' Jack said sarcastically. 'Doesn't really help our situation now, does it?'

"What happened if I decline your request?" Jack asked Guss.

"I will file a complaint to League of Champions. The agent that they sent, in this case, you, will have your challenge points deducted."

"But I don't have any challenge points yet," Jack said.

"In that case, you will be kicked out of the faction and get banned from ever applying again," Guss explained.

Well, ain't that shocking, Jack mocked himself.

"If I fail to complete the task, do I get the same penalty?" He asked again.

"Yes," Guss affirmed.

"Fine, fine! Let's get this done with," Jack said as he accepted the quest. Since rejecting now would be the same as failing later, might as well bet on trying to solve the task. He opened up his quest list afterward.

Investigate the disease that is inflicting the soldiers of Theseval and eliminate the source

Difficulty: A

Rewards: 10 gold coins, 75,000 Experience points, a random rare medium armor

Time limit: 2 days

Motherf**ker! Jack cursed again in his mind after seeing the difficulty level. Peniel had mentioned before that A-level difficulty was where the quest was usually meant for Elite class adventurers of level 30 and above.

"Oh, and you can't get the help from the military," Guss added.

"F*ck! Why?" This time he can't help but cursed out loud.

"You are a representative of the League of Champions. It doesn't matter for me as long as you solve the case, but if the faction found out their agent resolved the requested task with outside's influence, you will be given the same penalty as if you failed the quest."

"Great!" Jack swore to have a proper word with Gruff when he got back to the capital, for entrapping him with this unreasonable request.

"Let's get this over with, where is the place you put the soldiers that are inflicted with the disease?" Jack asked.

"I will ask someone to bring you there," Guss said.

"I will also need to talk with some of the ones that had been cured. The most recent ones if possible."

"I will round them up."

Guss then made another call to the outside. A guard came in and gave a salute. Guss told him to take Jack to the infirmary. Afterward, he told Jack that he would bring the ones who were cured recently to the infirmary later.

Jack followed the guard out of the Town Hall.

On his way, a soldier came to him. He recognized the soldier as amongst the ones that followed the Duke's entourage into this town. This soldier had gone away with the others to perform other tasks when he and the Duke went into the town hall.

The soldier called to him.

Jack looked around to make sure that he was the one that was being called. He asked his guide guard to stop as he waited for the soldier to approach. Jack inspected the soldier to be a level 35 Elite Human of Sergeant rank called Ronnie.

"Hi, mister Storm Wind. I'm Ronnie," the soldier introduced himself.

"Anything I can help you with, Sergeant Ronnie?" Jack asked.

He made an awkward smile as he glanced at the guard beside Jack. Jack made no attempt to dismiss the guard away. The soldier in front of him was level 35, which meant he was much stronger than Jack.

Seeing that Jack intended to keep the guard, he finally said, "I'm sorry. This might come out as odd and forward of me, but if you don't mind, can you help to introduce me to the prince?"

Jack frowned, and said, "you are right. It was odd and very forward of you."

The soldier laughed apologetically, "truly sorry. It's just that I heard that you are very close with the prince."

"What business do you have with the prince?" Jack asked.

"This might come as cheesy to you, but I have always been a fan of the prince. I have worked hard to increase my rank, but I really hope that I can be a part of the prince's personal guard. If you can introduce me to him, he might see my sincerity and allow me to be his guard. I want nothing but to ensure his highness' safety."

Jack stared at him for a long time that he started to feel uncomfortable. He finally said, "I see that you are unwilling. Never mind, I bear no grudge, thank you for your time."

The soldier went away quietly. Jack was still watching him.

"He was lying," Peniel said. Jack's Investigator talent which allowed him to detect lies had made a second tingling a while ago.

'Yeah, but which part? That he was a fan of the prince? Or the part where he wants to ensure the Prince's safety?'

"Don't know," Peniel replied.

Such an unreliable ability, Jack complained.

He asked the guard to resume taking him to the infirmary.

The infirmary was a large but simple-looking boxy building, as with most other buildings in this town. Aesthetic was not really the essential aspect when most of the occupants were soldiers.

When he went inside the infirmary, he could see rows of beds all around the expansive hall. It was like an emergency barrack where everything was laid in haste. There was no foyer, every available space had beds on them, allowing only some pathways in between them for people to move around. Almost all the beds were occupied, and there were maybe a hundred of them. This disease problem seemed more serious than it sounded.

However, even though there were many patients, the place was eerily quiet. There were a couple of healers checking on the patient, but otherwise, everything was tranquil. The patients appeared as if they were simply having a sleep.

Jack walked around observing them. Now that he saw them up close, he could see that there were small numbers of damage points appearing above them from time to time. The damage was only in a small tens point damage. For NPCs who had a high amount of HP, such an amount was negligible.

The healers walked around the patients applying healing on the ones who had their healths lowered too much.

Chapter 333: Investigating The Disease

Jack watched the patient in front of him, the patient's facial expression kept on changing, as if he was having a vivid dream. Jack observed the others and found them to be the same. They must be experiencing the hallucinations that Guss had informed him about.

Jack pressed his forefinger and middle finger to the side of one of the sleeping man's neck, trying to feel his pulse. Jack was not a nurse, but he knew what a normal pulse rate was. The man's heart rate was not slow enough for a sleeping person, but normal enough for an awake one.

"Who are you?" He heard someone asked.

Jack turned and saw one of the healers he had seen attending to the patients.

"He is an outworlder adventurer that is helping us to find out about the cause of this disease," the guard who took him here explained to the healer.

The healer gave a condescending look at Jack and said, "you are not even a healer, what can you do?"

"I was asked to find the cause, not heal these people. Why do I need to be a healer for that?" Jack spoke back.

The healer was clearly displeased by Jack's reply. "Hmph, don't you touch anything if you don't understand. If any of them got into complications, I will hold you responsible!"

"Are you saying there have been such cases?" Jack asked.

"Of course not! With me in charge here, I will not allow such a thing to happen."

"Hm, I see. Are they always this peaceful? Apart from when their health had decreased too much, is there any instance when they need special attention?"

"There is not... Wait! Are you interrogating me? Who do you think you are?"

"I am the adventurer that is helping you to find out the cause of this disease. Didn't you hear what he said before? You certainly have a problem with your memory."

"You...! I am not talking to you!" The healer barged away irritably.

"Hey, I still need to ask something!" Jack called out. He scratched his head. Well, maybe what Red Death said was not wrong. He indeed was easy to piss people off, sometimes even unintentionally.

He then saw another healer coming at him. It was a young woman, a beautiful one at that. "I'm sorry for that," the woman said. "he had been a little stressed over this disease. A healer who can't cure the sick is nothing sort of useless, and we have all been rather helpless at that."

"But with you all keeping their healths on a safe threshold, none of the patients here were in a danger to their lives, correct?" Jack asked. Since another healer had conveniently shown up to offer herself to be interrogated, he was not going to pass this up.

"That's correct," the healer woman said. "They will eventually wake up by themselves. They might have a problem moving their bodies at first because they have been immobile for quite some time. But otherwise, they are not in any danger as long as we kept their health up."

"How long does that usually take?"

"You mean until they wake up? It is usually three to four days."

"When has this started?"

The healer woman tried to recall her memory, "I think it started around twenty days ago. It was just a couple of cases at first, but it soon escalated."

"Even now? Do the number of the victims continue to increase?"

"Yes. That's why we need to find the cause soon. The disease might not appear fatal, but if it keeps increasing, we will end up with a major problem. We won't have enough healers and potions to keep everyone's health up. Another issue, this is a border town. We might not know if an enemy decided to attack when most of our soldiers are afflicted with this disease."

"That will certainly be bad. Have you checked if any of them had a wound on their bodies?"

"They are soldiers, they regularly have wounds even from training."

"I mean a peculiar, unusual wound. For examples like needle hole, or something like that."

"Nothing unusual for me. Their wounds were what I usually see on a soldier."

"Do you know if the disease is contagious?"

"We know it was spreading because the victims kept increasing, but not by touch, nor through the air. None of us healers or others who came in contact with them here got the disease. We still don't know how these soldiers were infected. I guess that is what you are here to find out."

"Hm, you are right," Jack mumbled as he was deep in thought.

"I hope you can find out the cause. If you need to know anything, just ask away. I will do my best to assist."

"That is very kind of you," Jack said. "Do you keep any files on these patients? Like which unit they are from and what they do before they are contracted by the disease?"

"Yes, since this is a military town, most everything is recorded. I will bring the files to you."

"That will be awesome," Jack said.

The healer woman went away. Jack continued to observe the patients. As he was waiting, he heard some footsteps entering the building. Jack turned and saw several soldiers there.

"These are the soldiers who were most recently cured of the disease," the guard informed Jack.

Jack nodded and said. "Have them wait for a while, I will talk to them soon."

The healer woman returned not long after, with a box filled with paper.

"That is a lot of paperwork. Do you mind if I take them away for the day?" Jack asked. Not proper for him to study through all these papers in this infirmary. He would take his time later at the inn.

"As long as you return them later," the healer woman replied.

"Noted," Jack said as he stored the entire box into his storage space.

"That is convenient, so what I heard about outworlder is true. Well, if you can so easily take them, might as well follow me to take the rest."

"The rest?"

"Yes, there are still six boxes of them."

"... Lead the way."

Jack followed her to a small warehouse. She indicated which were the boxes and Jack stored them all inside. Each box was full of papers, he had a headache already thinking about reading them.

He thanked the healer woman and asked if there was any room he could use for a talk with those former patients. She apologized and told him all the spaces in this building had been used to allow beds for patients or for keeping medical tools, supplies, and records. There was no empty room available.

Since it was so, Jack asked the guard guide who brought him here if there was any tavern nearby. The guard took him and the soldiers to the place. Jack went in and decided that it was not the place for a serious talk, it was too noisy. He asked the waiter if there was any private room for rent. The waiter ridiculed him instead, "Do you think you are in a big city? Private room, hah!"

Jack asked the guard guide again if maybe he could use a room inside the town hall, or if that did not work, maybe he would go to the inn and rent a vacant room just for the interrogation. But then he glanced at those soldiers who had been following him. They were disciplined enough to not show dissatisfaction, but Jack could sense their irritation. The glint on their eyes as if saying, 'what does this guy want? Making us accompany him walking all over town?'

Feeling bad about it, he called the waiter and asked if he could borrow some of the empty chairs outside. The waiter rejected at first, before Jack added that he would pay 1 silver coin for 1 chair. The waiter asked, "where do you want me to put these chairs?"

So the group ended up sitting outside the tavern beside the street. Giving them an outdoor setting like those of the European outdoor restaurants, except without the elegance, nor the scenery.

The street was quiet so it was better than the inside. Jack had wanted to have an interview with the former patients one by one, but circumstances made this into a group discussion instead. It was fine also, save his time, he thought.

He called the waiter and ordered some beverages for the soldiers. The waiter said since it was outside, there would be an extra charge for special outdoor service. Jack was sure there was no such thing, but he did not want to argue with the waiter so he just agreed with it. He was not short on coins.

Jack started by asking each of their names. Although he could simply inspect them for it, it helped to add a sense of familiarity with them. He then introduced himself and let them know that he was tasked to find out the source of the disease which had afflicted them.

Chapter 334: Zone Portal

He asked about their experiences when they were stricken by the disease. All of them expressed similar ordeals. They were awake but were as if trapped in their own bodies. They experienced hallucinations of every kind, sometimes as blurry as a dream, another time as vivid as reality. While not all the hallucinations were pleasant, there were some moments where it was like having a good dream as well.

All in all, the period by which they had the disease was not a really torturing moment. There was no aftereffect as well, the constant HP decrease stopped once they woke up. They even felt refreshed as their bodies had rested for a few days.

Somehow the disease did not sound as bad as it is, Jack thought. Was it truly an emergency? Why did the quest give him a time limit of two days? Maybe it was because this world system knew he had to leave already with the Duke's army after two days?

He then asked each of them what they had done prior to being sick and how they felt when they first find out that they were sick.

The soldiers gave their stories one by one. Most of them served in different units and did different things. They found out that they were sick when they felt this extreme drowsiness. Their visions became blurry and they started to have difficulty moving. Soon their HP started to ebb away.

It's a good thing that soldiers seldom did things alone. They always had a comrade beside them. It was their comrades that brought them to the infirmary. As the healer woman had informed, the illness was not contagious through touch or air, so the comrades that brought them were perfectly fine. These former patients themselves had no idea how they had contracted the illness.

Jack talked with them some more and bought them a second bottle of ale, but he did not get any important information out of it. Their discussion instead turned into pointless ramblings about the mundane life of a soldier, and how they envied Jack's adventurer life. Jack figured he might have bought them a bottle of ale too much.

Jack did not want to waste his time with idle talk. He bid them farewell, with difficulty, as they had become a little bit too friendly. He had to buy them another round again before they let him go. The guide guard also left him as his task was done.

Jack planned to go back to the inn which the Commander had mentioned before, but Peniel told him to go to another place.

'What portal?' Jack asked as he not quite caught Peniel's word.

"Zone Portal," Peniel repeated. "Go ask a local for a direction."

'Zone Portal. Is that place what I think it is?'

"What do you think it is? Speak up. I can't hear your thought if you do not project it."

'Is it a place where you can use to instantly teleport to another city?'

"Yes. Once you register at the Zone Portal in this town, you will be able to teleport between this town and the capital of Thereath, with a fee of course."

'Awesome! Then I should ask the others to join me there.'

"No use for them," Peniel said.

'Huh? Why? I thought as long as we have managed to reach another city, we will be able to use this teleport feature.'

"This is true only for major cities, like that Theneward city which they mentioned during the guilds meeting. But for a small town like this, the teleportation function is not open to the public. Only members of the ruling Kingdom faction are allowed to use the Zone Portal."

'Oh, luckily I am one such member.'

"Correct. Now you know how special being a member of Kingdom Faction is, don't you? There will be more benefits, so you better work hard to climb the ranks."

No wonder Dylan was very interested to join the kingdom faction as well. The towns he had visited using the caravan must be small towns as well. If he could become a kingdom faction member, he would be able to use the zone portal back to the towns he had visited instead of continuing to rely on the caravan. Even though trade items could not be stored in players' bags, he could still carry as much as he could into this zone portal, which should boost his earnings as long as it didn't offset the teleportation fee.

Jack went and asked for the location of this zone portal to one of the locals, which happened to be another soldier. Almost everyone he met in this town was a soldier. This soldier pointed the way to him.

Since it was a small town, it was not as difficult as when he was looking for a place in the capital. He soon found the place, which was an open square with a strange tall structure at its center. The structure was similar to the one in Thereath where he was teleported to when he used the Town Return scroll.

Although the square was an open space, it did not mean the place was open to the public. Fences surrounded the square, and several guards were guarding its four entrances.

Jack approached one of these entrances and was stopped by the guards. Since Peniel had informed him beforehand, he showed his Themisphere Nobility Faction Badge. The guards checked the badge and let him through.

With the aid of Peniel's instruction, he did not need to ask the guards. He went to the side of the tall structure at the square center and activated the console there. The console scanned his body, before long, he heard notification that he had been registered to the Zone Portal of Theseval. He could now use the portal anytime he wanted, with a fee depending on his destination.

'How much is the cost to teleport back to the capital?' Jack asked Peniel.

"I can't tell for certain, price is a changing matter from time to time, but I reckon should be around 3 or 5 gold coins."

'Wow, expensive,' Jack commented.

"Transportation is an expensive affair. This portal can save traveling time and save you the trouble of going through dangerous areas. A couple of gold coins could be considered cheap already for all those savings."

'You are correct,' Jack agreed. 'So I can travel back to the capital now?'

"Do you want to?"

'I would very much like to experiment on it.'

"Well, throw away your coins if you want to."

After being reminded about the coins, Jack said, "maybe next time then."

He was still in front of the console and noticed another option on it. The option had the name rebirth stamped on it. Jack asked Peniel about it. She explained that he had the option to register his rebirth place here as well. This option was only for Outworlders. So if they died, they could resurrect here instead of the capital.

"Do you want to register your rebirth place to this town?" Peniel asked.

Jack thought about it for a second, and replied, 'no. Even though it will be a shorter distance to the expedition army, I will still not be able to rejoin them, considering the high-level monsters in the wilderness. Unless the army decided to come back to pick me up, or if they are not yet too far away. If I need to come to this town again, I will just use the Zone Portal from Thereath to come here.'

After finishing the affair at the Zone Portal, Jack rushed back to the inn. It was a small town, there was only one inn nearby the town gate, so he should find it as easily as when he was looking for the Zone Portal. He wondered if the others were inside the inn already. Should be highly unlikely, the sun was still high in the sky.

But as he approached the town gate, he noticed on his radar many green dots clustered together nearby. He was still in a party with the others, so those green dots were his friends. He saw the place they clustered in was the inn.

They were at the inn already? He was surprised. He went in and saw all his friends lounging in the lobby, chatting with each other. Some even sat on the floor due to insufficient chairs and sofas.

"Yo, boss! Finish with your important noble business?" The Man called out.

"Yeah, bro, don't mind us, small people. You go be aristocrat," Bowler added.

Ignoring their sarcasm, Jack asked, "What are you people lazying here for? It was still daytime."

"Dude, this is such a small town. Many areas are even restricted, we only spent an hour to see everything," Bowler said. "There are not many shops nor facilities, and the army is resting. We can't go out to the wilderness by ourselves because the monsters are too strong. What do you propose us do instead of lazying around here?"

Well, that's true, Jack thought as he scratched his head, and then he thought of an idea. He grinned widely and said to them, "well then, since you people have got nothing to do. How about giving me a hand?"

Chapter 335: Clue On The Quest 1

"What is it?" Bowler asked.

"You only need to ask, boss!" The Man said enthusiastically.

Jack took out the box filled up with papers that he had gotten from the infirmary and put it on the floor. The others came forward and looked at it.

"I am on a quest. I need to check out the data recorded on these papers. If you people can help me check them, it will shorten the time needed," Jack informed them.

"No fighting?" The Man enthusiasm died down immediately. He was never good with this kind of administrative stuff.

"Those are a lot of papers," Bowler commented with a similar lack of interest.

"There are still another six boxes....," Jack said.

Everyone was silent as they looked at each other.

"Do we get an issue of system quest like when you handed us the expedition one?" John spoke out.

"I'm not sure," Jack replied.

"How about you give it a try?" John said.

Jack did so. He explained to them the nature of his quest. About the disease and what he had learned. He then spoke to them formally with the intention of inviting them to his quest.

Nothing happened.

"Well, good luck on your quest then," John said as he walked back and sat back on the lounge chair.

Unfaithful a**hole! Jack cursed in his mind.

In the end, the ones that were willing to help him were Bowler, Flame, The Man and his entire retinues albeit unwillingly, Jeanny, Viral Cora, and surprisingly Trinity Dawn. Trinity Dawn said she used to be a secretary who was also a file clerk in her real life, so she was used to dealing with such paperwork. The others continued to lounge around in the lobby.

Although Guss had said no outside help, Jack thought that should only be referring to NPCs. Also, the help he requested was only for sorting out information, he did not think the system would be so strict as to have him do everything by himself?

Jack took the willing ones to one of their rented rooms. There were sixteen of them, so one room was too cramped for all of them. They separated into three teams and took three rooms. Jack placed two boxes on the other two rooms, while his room handled three boxes.

Jack told them what to look for and to write down. The patients' unit within the army, their gender, age, the time and location when they were confirmed to have suffered the disease, what exact job they were doing before then, what food they ate, prior illness. Basically, he was trying to find a common similarity between the incidents.

Jack gave them a ton of white paper to write down on, he had asked them from the friendly healer woman before he left the infirmary. Each paper to note down on the same subject, for example, their age. This way it would be easier for them to spot a similarity between each patient.

There was too much information in the patient's data, lots of technical stuff as well. Jack told them to just skim the parts. They could not afford to check everything. The ones that had the most difficulty were Men of Solidarity. They were more fitted for grunt's works. Though The Man was also having a problem, he had to help his boss, so his underlings were not permitted to opt-out as well.

They spent the entire afternoon and well into the night sifting through the papers for information. The Man and his underlings were exceptionally suffering. The Man had thought several times of asking for a time out or outright asking to just continue the next day, but every time he saw how serious Jack and the others were, he was dissuaded. Since he could not stop, he scolded his underlings who had frequently asked for a time out.

John had come and given them a visit. He had this gloating face when he looked at the others who were hard at work. Jack took out his magic staff and shot a mana bullet at him. He seemed to have expected that as he had dashed away before the spell hit.

Before midnight, everyone finally finished reviewing the papers and submitted the reports to Jack. Jack thanked them all for their hard work and promised to make it up with them. All of them said they should be the ones thanking him for had bringing them into this expedition, granting them a massive increase in levels and wealth.

The others went back to their rooms for a rest. Jack was sharing his room with Bowler. Bowler wanted to sleep already but he realized that the light was still on, then he saw Jack who was still sitting on the desk reading through the reports.

"Bro, are you seriously going to read through that tonight?" He asked.

"Not sleepy yet," Jack said. "You don't have a problem sleeping with the light on, do you?"

"With how tired my eyes are after reading through that? I can even sleep under a glaring noon sun."

"Outstanding. Good night, then."

Bowler stared at Jack's back for a while more. He felt bad going to bed while the guy was still hard at work. He wanted to stand up and asked him if there was anything he could help with. Halfway through raising his body, he gave up and fell back down to his bed. Too tired, he thought.

The next morning when Bowler woke up, he saw that Jack was still behind the desk. He jolted up and exclaimed, "bro! Don't tell me you stay up all night?"

Jack turned to him and said, "You think I am superman? I have gone to sleep around one or two hours after you slept. Before that, I've found some similar aspects about the patients from the data we

separated last night, but couldn't make a sense of it. I woke up just an hour before and thought of something, so I got up and checked the data again. I think I find a clue."

"Really?" Bowler's interest was piqued. He pulled himself up and walked towards Jack.

"What did you find?" He asked.

"I have looked through the data. They roughly had varied data on the subjects we have checked, except for the food, which actually made sense since they were in the military. Everyone ate the same meal provided by the mess hall. I don't know why I asked that subject to be noted down, wasted time on that. But apart from that, there was another thing where the patients had seventy to eighty percentage of similar data."

Jack took several sheets of paper that were noted with time and location when the patient found out they had been contracted by the disease. "The locations were varied, but the time periods were similar."

Bowler took a look at those papers. "Bro, I saw many different time periods," he said.

"Look closer. See I gave them some marks. I marked them with numbers one, two, and three. Basically, the periods by which they found out they were afflicted with the disease can largely be categorized into three time periods, around 8-9 AM, 2-3 PM, and 7-8 PM."

Bowler studied the sheets in which they had jotted down the information yesterday. A few patients were outside the time periods Jack had mentioned, but for the rest, mostly they did fall into those three schedules.

"So what about it?" He asked. I don't see anything special about these time periods.

"They are not, but what about if it was one or two hours before? And what does everyone do that are normally three times in a day?"

Bowler gave the matter some thoughts. He took his sweet time thinking that Jack started to feel annoyed and just said out the answer, "having meals."

"Oh, now that you mentioned it. Yes, I see. So, it was because of their meals?" Bowler asked.

"If it is so, there will be more people that were infected. There must be another factor, but this meal clue is a good place to start. From what I talked with the soldiers yesterday, there were five mess halls in this town that catered to the soldiers' meals. There was no information about which hall the soldiers were having their meals in the infirmary papers. We will have to go ask the soldiers ourselves."

"We?" Bowler asked.

Jack turned to him. "You have other plans to do for today?" He asked.

"Uh, no..."

"Why did I sense reluctance?"

"You must have imagined it. I will be happy to aid you, bro!" Bowler said enthusiastically.

"Let's go ask for The Man to join as well," Jack said.

The two of them went to the room next door, which The Man was staying at. But Jack just realized from the radar that there was no one inside The Man's room. He was just about to tell Bowler but the guy had already barged into the room without bothering to knock. "Rise and shine—" His hearty call stopped mid-sentence, as he saw the room was empty.

Chapter 336: Clue On The Quest 2

Bowler opened his Map system to check The Man's position. The guy was not in the inn. In fact, he was far away on the other side of the town. Bowler immediately sent him a message, "bro, where the f**k are you?"

He received The Man's prompt reply, "sorry, bro. We are out to do other things. Did boss Storm Wind ask for another help with his quest? Tell him we are sorry we cannot provide him assistance for today."

'You unreliable bast*rd! Why did you not call me as well before you go?' Bowler wanted to scream out.

Jack did not seem to be bothered by The Man's absence. He said, "well, since he was not here. Let's just go ourselves."

"How about we invite Fierce Flame?" Bowler suggested.

"No need," Jack said. "I think my hunch should be correct. I believe those afflicted dine at the same mess hall. We should only need to check several past patients to confirm. No need for a large group to check all the past patients."

"Well, since you don't need a large group, maybe I... let's go! We are burning daylight!" Bowler changed his words mid-sentence when Jack glared at him.

The two of them went out of the inn without calling for others. When they passed the lobby, it was empty. Everyone could still be sleeping or they were out to do some other things.

"Where will we find those past patients?" Bowler asked.

"We go to the infirmary first. There should be some patients that have just been cured by themselves last night or this morning. They should still be in the infirmary for checkings before they were released. If there is none, we go to the town hall. I will ask the officer there to assemble again the soldiers who I interviewed yesterday."

On the way, he noticed Bowler making several intense stares at the NPCs they passed by.

"What the hell are you doing? Trying to practice eye jutsu?" Jack asked.

"I am practicing my Inspect skill," Bowler answered.

"Oh? What is the grade of your inspect skill now?"

"I just got to Basic Expert. What's yours?"

"Uh, Intermediate Apprentice," Jack answered sheepishly.

"Are you kidding me? Most others are at least Advanced Apprentice already. This auxiliary skill was the easiest to be trained. I saw you were very diligent in practicing your battle skills. Did you never practice your Inspect skill?"

"Uh, I only used it when I think I need to..."

"You are hopeless, bro... Well, apart from fighting I mean. Try to practice it more often. You get more info on your target if your Inspect grade is higher."

"So you just use it on everybody you passed by?"

"Yeah," Bowler nodded.

"Even that limping grandma over there?" Jack asked as he pointed to an NPC.

"Even her," Bowler affirmed.

"Fine, fine! Let's practice together," Jack said.

Hence, the two used their Inspect skill as they walked to the infirmary. The NPCs that passed them by were rather alarmed as they saw these two Outworlders walked by and kept on giving everyone an intense glare.

Before long, they reached the infirmary.

"Boy, that was exhausting!" Jack exclaimed. He was glad they finally reached their destination. All those inspecting had made this short walk felt much longer.

Inside the infirmary, there were indeed several soldiers who had just been cured, saving him the trip to the town hall. The healers were checking these cured patients to make sure that they were truly fine before they let them returned to their stations.

Jack looked for the friendly healer woman before he started asking questions at those soldiers. Instead, his eyes were met with the grumpy male healer.

"What are you doing here again?" The grumpy male healer asked with an unfriendly tone.

Jack was about to retort with an off-hand remark, but due to all those Inspect practicing from before, he spontaneously used his Inspect on this grumpy healer. The skill's result showed the fellow was called Albert and was a level 50 Chief Healer and Special Elite Human. Jack's retort was choked before it went out of his mouth.

The retort was quickly modified. "Esteemed Sir, you are indeed praiseworthy as a healer. These soldiers here are lucky to have you taking care of them. I believe they are all extremely grateful to you. I am but a lowly outworlder, but I hope what little I know can be of aid. I have acquired a clue that might or might not point us to the source of this disease, but I need to talk with those patients who had just been cured. Might your kindness permit me to talk with these soldiers?"

Albert was rather taken aback. He looked at Jack's face again, making sure he did not recognize the wrong person. No, this was indeed that rude Outworlder from yesterday.

"I... Well... Okay... If it can help to solve this disease problem," Albert said, a bit lost for words at the start.

"Thank you, esteemed Sir. You are the true hero to these soldiers. Your healings are what had kept them alive," Jack added a couple more praises as he went to the soldiers.

Albert scratched his head as he watched Jack's back.

"Where is all that bravado you displayed when facing the Crown Prince? Didn't see you cower like this when you found out the prince was a level 55 Rare Elite," Peniel mocked.

"Those princes are different. They are accompanied by people who are clearly my enemies, that already showed our alignments were antagonistic to each other from the start. Even if I suck up to them, they will still be hostile to me, so might as well be honest. This Healer here, I have no enmity with him aside from a few mouth debates. There is no reason to antagonize him further."

Jack came to the cured patients, who had been placed at one section together for a final check-up. There were four of them. He asked for their names as he took out the paper with the time period notes. After acquiring their names, he and Bowler looked for their names on the paper. Two of them were afflicted in the morning around 8-9 AM, one was at 2.14 PM, the last one was at 8.03 PM.

Jack asked about where they had their meals an hour before that time. As expected, although all of them contracted the disease at different times, they were all eating at the same mess hall around an hour before. It was at the mess hall D. The five mess halls were denoted with alphabets, from A to E. Jack asked them the direction to mess hall D.

After gaining the information, Jack thanked them and was about to leave, before he found Albert was behind him.

"You think it was because of the food?" He asked.

"I'm not so sure, that's why I want to go there and check it," Jack answered.

"That's why I said you are useless. If it was the food, we would have found it long ago. Less let you non-healer poking around as if you know something."

Jack was peeved. He had shown the guy respect, did he have to be this difficult?

But before Jack said anything, Albert added, "if you go to that mess hall, look for someone called Sloan. He is the main cook there. Said Albert send you, he should assist you willingly."

Jack's opinion of this healer which had plummeted had now rose back up again. "Thank you! That will be a great help. I know you are always a kind saint who is ready to..."

"Cut the crap, just get out of here, you non-healer useless bum."

Jack's opinion of him went back down a notch again.

"But I am a healer," Bowler protested.

Albert studied Bowler for a moment. "Good choice of profession, but still too green. You two boys better go home and drink milk instead of playing with grown-up issues."

Bowler was about to say something, but Jack pulled him out of the building.

Jack and Bowler went in the direction of mess hall D, all the while practicing their Inspect skill vigorously. Their actions drew the attention of a pair of guards who stopped them and asked why they threw such hostile glares to the locals. The two of them apologized and let the guards check their identities before they were let go. They toned down their Inspect to make it look less conspicuous.

The mess hall had the same simplistic architecture as the rest of the town. The two of them came inside the building and went through a couple of plain boxy rooms before they came out to a very large boxy hall. Several rows of long tables filled up the room. It was the typical layout of a military mess hall.

It was after breakfast time and before noon, so the place was rather empty. There were only a few soldiers doing clean-up duty. One of these soldiers saw the two looking around and came to them.

"Are you lost, boys? School is at the other block," he asked with ridicule.

"You ever saw a boy wearing armor?" Jack asked.

"You ever saw a boy wearing a healer robe and carrying a magic staff," Bowler was not about to be left behind.

"You two have sharp tongues," the soldier commented. "So what are you doing here? Don't bring your parents here complaining if I kick the two of you out."

"We are looking for a cook named Sloan," Jack said.

"He is not in today. What's your business with him?"

Chapter 337: Investigating The Mess Hall

"I am tasked by commander Guss to investigate the recent incidents with the disease. I believe the incident might originate from this place. Since Sloan is not available, how about you help us? I have some things to ask."

The soldier laughed. "Yeah, right. A bunch of boys thinks they are someone important."

The other soldiers left their cleaning when they heard the laughter. The first soldier told them about Jack and Bowler and soon they all laughed mockingly at the two outworlders.

"These soldiers are very rude, let's teach them a lesson!" Bowler exclaimed.

The soldiers who heard it laughed even harder hearing Bowler's threat.

Jack himself was embarrassed by Bowler's words. Did this idiot not use Inspect yet? He was the one that told him to practice Inspect on everyone. If he did, he wouldn't have uttered those words. Although they were all only Basic humans, the lowest level of these soldiers was level 38!

He had been thinking about taking his League of Champions Badge out, but he was not sure if his current quest was linked with this faction badge, since Gruff and Guss both issued different quests. After some thoughts, he took out his Themisphere Nobility Faction Badge.

The soldiers were still laughing when he showed the badge, but one of them realized something and looked closer at the badge. He then knocked on his comrades who were still laughing and gave Jack a bow.

"I am sorry, I don't know you are a Baron, please accept my apology!"

The others were baffled by his action, but after they checked the badge for themselves, they quickly bowed down and apologized to Jack.

Their reactions were more exaggerated than Jack would have hoped. Although these soldiers' ranks were all only Squire, his Baron rank was also the first rank within the Nobility rank, so Jack thought that his rank was roughly equal to them. It was apparent now that Nobility rank gave better respect compared to the Military one. He felt relieved to have chosen the Nobility branch.

Since they respected his rank, this should make things easier. Jack was about to give them some questions regarding the quest, but Bowler took the initiative first.

"You think a simple bow is enough for slighting a noble? You should at least kneel down and kowtow!"

The soldiers did not hesitate to do as Bowler had asked.

Jack sent a silent message to Bowler, "stop messing around. I still need their cooperation."

Bowler replied, "since they are afraid of your nobility status. You should act more imposing to make them fear you more. That way, it will be easier to make them comply with your demands."

Jack thought it make sense, so he demanded the soldiers to kowtow ten times before he let them stand up.

"Now, I need some information. If anyone dares to give me a false account, I will make him pay! Do I make myself clear?"

The soldiers nodded vehemently.

"Good. Good. Now does this mess hall keeps a record on the soldiers who dined here?"

"It has," one of the soldiers answered.

"Good! Take this gentleman and showed the record to him," Jack said as he gave Bowler the notes with patients' names.

"Go and check to make sure if most of the ones here correspond to the record of the soldiers who dined here," Jack said to him.

"I'm doing the checking by myself?" Bowler asked dejectedly.

"Yeah, I will need to check on other things. I can only leave the easy stuff to you," Jack said.

Easy? More like boring, Bowler complained in his mind. Still, he followed the soldier obediently.

After Bowler left, Jack asked the other soldiers, "normally about how many soldiers dined in this hall?"

"This hall can hold a thousand occupants. Usually, we have a full occupancy with four batches. Each batch is allowed fifteen minutes to have their meal."

That was a lot, Jack thought. Considering the number of patients, even if all of them originated from this hall, it was still only a small portion.

"Are the food served from the same counter?" Jack asked.

"Yes," the soldier confirmed.

Jack asked the soldier to bring him to the food counter. It was a large counter at the side of the hall. Behind it was a large open kitchen. There were several containers at the front of the counters, Jack assumed that was where the food was placed.

"So there is only one food counter?" Jack asked again for confirmation.

"It is," the soldier affirmed.

The foods were all mixed up here. So if the disease came from here, there was no sense only so few were afflicted. Just as Albert had said, the food was not the cause.

Jack walked around the hall, checking if there was anything out of ordinary, but nothing came to mind. He soon arrived at the room where Bowler was checking the registry.

"How is it?" Jack came to him.

"There were a lot of records in this registry," Bowler said. "I only checked the day and hour from our notes. Although I haven't checked all the names in our notes, the ones I have were indeed registered in this hall before they found out that they were infected."

Jack turned to the soldiers who were still following him. "If I give you a soldier name, can you go and find them?"

The soldiers said that they can. Jack then gave them some names, they were the names of past patients who he had interviewed the day before.

As the soldiers went out, Jack continued roaming around the mess hall, hoping to pick up some clues, but no luck. He ended up just sitting on one of the tables that the soldiers used to dine on. He hoped those past patients could get here before lunchtime, it would be difficult to conduct an investigation if this place went hectic.

"Hey, if you got nothing to do, how about you give me a hand?" Bowler called out.

"Have you found yet any names in our notes that did not originate from this mess hall?" Jack asked.

"Not yet."

"Then no need to continue checking any longer. We can just assume that every patient came from here. Even if it is not the case, the majority of them do. So we focus on finding out what had caused them the disease in this place."

As Bowler came to sit beside Jack, the soldiers came back with a few other soldiers in tow. Jack recognized them as the ones he talked to yesterday.

That was fast, Jack thought. Finding people in a small town was indeed much easier. Not to mention that they were military, so their stations were always on the record.

The soldiers who were past patients recognized Jack back and greeted him friendly. They were probably still expecting him to buy them some drinks. The soldiers who brought them here were rather alert at how casual these other soldiers were treating the young Baron.

Jack asked them to sit down and went directly to the point. "I checked your files, before you people were sick, you have your meals here. Can you all confirm this?"

All of them confirmed. Some needed time to recall their memories, but eventually they confirmed it too. Jack then asked what food they ate. Although the soldiers were served with the same food, they could pick to not eat some. So it could probably be one type of food that was the cause, like the fruit or the soup for example.

It was more difficult to remember the food one ate, and it had been quite some time, so the information they gave was rather sketchy. But one statement stood out, which drew Jack's attention. This one particular soldier said that he did not eat any food because his stomach was not feeling so well. He just came to the mess hall to accompany his friend.

Could it really not be the food? Was it the place? Jack then asked them where they sat when they had their food here.

Same as the question about the food, the soldiers had trouble remembering where they sat on that particular day. But luckily they had a habit of sitting in the same area, so Jack knew roughly the area where they sat. Which interestingly were in the same area. It was at one corner of the hall.

Jack went to that corner with them and looked around the place. His gaze stopped at an item. It was a large water barrel. There were two such barrels near the corner. At the other corners and also at the mid-wall, there were other such water barrels.

He turned to the one who said he did not eat any food on the day he got sick. "You said you did not eat at that day, but did you drink?"

The soldier nodded.

"Where do you get the water from?" Jack asked again.

The soldier pointed to one of the water barrels at the corner they were at.

Chapter 338: Grandmother Spider

"What about you guys? Do you remember during the meal you had before you turned sick, did you guys drink? Where did you get your drink from?"

One by one they indicated the same water barrel as the first soldier.

Jack borrowed a cup from one of the cleaning soldiers who still followed him around. He poured some water from that barrel into the cup. It was just plain water, nothing special about it. Until suddenly a marker appeared.

"Your monacle is acting up again," Peniel commented.

'Or my investigator talent,' Jack thought.

The marker had marked the water with descriptions linked to his current quest. The drinking water in this barrel was the cause of the disease. He had finally found it.

Yet, it was not the end of his quest. The quest mentioned that he had to also eliminate the source. He doubted the water barrel was the source. He did not believe destroying this water barrel would grant him quest completion.

He was about to ask the soldiers some questions, but before that, he went to the other barrel and pour some water. He had to make sure. He observed the water from that other barrel. No marker was indicated by his God-eye monacle. He then gave his question, "who fills the water in these barrels?"

One of the cleaning soldiers said, "the ones on this side of the wall were filled by me."

The side he mentioned was where the barrel with the clean water. "What about this one?" Jack indicated the barrel with the contaminated water.

"I... I did," another of the cleaning soldiers said. He was anxious. "Did people get sick because of me?"

"I don't think you did it intentionally, but tell me where did you get the water for this barrel?"

"We always get our drink water from the same place, from public drink water outlet from which spring water was brought from the outside of town via a conduit," the first cleaning soldier said.

"We... well...," the anxious cleaning soldier tried to say something.

"You did not get it from the usual place, did you?" Jack asked.

"I... I found a new spring which is closer. It saved me the time to get the water from there."

"Why didn't you report it?" Another soldier asked.

"I... I did not think it matters, the spring looks clean, and I also boiled it first before I brought it here. So I just kept on getting the water from that new spring in secret... It is my fault! I am so sorry!"

"Although it had caused the disease, no one dies, so you should be grateful for that," Jack said. "Still, you did it because you are lazy, and it caused a problem, so you should be punished. But that is between you and your superior. For now, I need you to take me to this new spring you mentioned. I will put in a good word for you if I managed to solve this case."

"I... I will take you there!"

"Great, let's go," Jack said. He dismissed the other soldiers.

He and Bowler followed the soldier as the guy led them to the back of the mess hall. There was a small wild garden there. A small part of nature in this otherwise militaristic town.

They walked through tall grasses to a tiny rocky hill at the center of the garden. The soldier led the two circled around the rocky hill. Jack soon saw a small stream coming out from between the rocks of the hill. The water flowed freely through the ground before entering a gutter by the side of the garden.

"See? It looks like normal clean water," the soldier said of the stream.

"It does, but there are things you can't see with normal eyes," Jack said. His God-eye monocle had already picked up a marking on the water. A thin red line extended from where the stream came out as they stretched into the distance. Jack assumed the line showed where this stream had come from.

"Lucky you have that monocle, eh?" Peniel commented.

'Yeah, otherwise it will be a hassle to trace the source of this stream," Jack agreed.

"Okay, you can go now. I will take it from here," Jack said.

"Great, good luck."

Jack turned to the voice. Jack's words were meant for the soldier, but it was Bowler that answered. The guy was not too interested in helping him with this quest, was he? But then again, Guss said no outside influence. Although he had gained help from his friends which he thought should still be acceptable, maybe he should deal with this last part alone.

"All right, you two can go," Jack said again. This time he meant it for both of his companions. He then walked away following the trace indicated by his God-eye monocle.

The trace continued far away. A couple of times he had to circle buildings because the trace was running through under them. Then he reached the town wall. The trace went outside. He opened his Map and checked the position of the Town gate. It was not far, but he was worried that the trace would disappear if he left it for too long. So he ran as fast as he could to the town gate.

The guards stopped him at the gate. Unlike the capital which only checked people who entered, here they still performed a check even if you were leaving. He impatiently showed his kingdom faction badge. The guards soon let him passed. His Map was still open as he ran to the part of the wall where the trace was on.

He breathed out in relief when he saw the thin red line extending out from the wall of this side. The line went further into the wilderness. Jack was worried. If it went too far, he would start to find monsters. Maybe he could still cope with one, but if there were more, he could only escape.

Then another worry emerged. The quest said to eliminate the source, what did it mean by that? The system won't throw a monster as the source now, would it? If it did, won't it be a harder one to deal with in comparison with the normal monster in this wilderness?

Despite his worry, he continued to follow the line. Luckily, it did not bring him too far. Unluckily, it brought him to a large opening in the ground. There was a slope that brought him into the hole.

Jack was despondent. The setup really did not bode well. Still, he went into the hole. As expected, there was a single red dot not far away, and this cave seemed to bring him to that dot.

Intend to see this quest to the end, Jack crept slowly forward.

He soon came very near to the red dot. In front of him was an opening to a large cavern that opened up further down. He crept carefully to the edge of the opening and peeked down. He immediately knew why the quest was designated with A difficulty.

At the bottom of the cavern was a titanic spider which seemed like the great-great-great-grandmother of the Bewitching Spider that dominated the wilderness around Theseval town.

Jack used Inspect on the monster.

Grim Brood Great Grandmother (Special Elite Boss, Insect), level 43

HP: 215,000

Jack almost fell and made noise. The Creator of this world truly had no creativity in naming.

Despite its comical name, the monster still inspired Dread in Jack's heart. Level 43 Special Elite, how the heck did he suppose to eliminate this thing?

Jack could see the red trace which had brought him here, stopped at the puddle of water below the boss. There was a stream that came out from the cavern wall and filled up the floor, before the water flowed down another small hole that would bring it into town.

There were innumerable eggs around the cavern floor that was flooded with water. The water must have been contaminated by the secretion from these eggs, which then caused the disease in the town. Now that he thought about it, the disease had rather similar symptoms with the poison effect of the Bewitching Spider, which caused a continual decrease of HP and hallucination.

So he could surmise that the objective of his current quest was to destroy those eggs, but he was also certain that oversized Grandmother won't just stand aside and let him do the deed. Another point he thought of was, could the quest target instead be this Boss itself? If he used a trick to destroy the eggs, what preventing the Boss from laying eggs again? So one way or another, he had to deal with the Boss.

He observed the situation. After a few whiles, he backed away slowly.

"Do you have a plan?" Peniel asked.

'Yes, to get as far away from here as possible. Say sorry to Guss, and when I get back to the capital, beat that lying Gruff till I am satisfied.'

"I don't think any of your hits will cause any damage to him."

'Which is why he should let me hit him till I'm satisfied.'

"So, you are really giving up?"

Chapter 339: Combat Poison With Poison

'That is a level 42 Special Elite, do you think I stand a chance?'

"No, but considering your reckless style. I thought you will try something crazy."

'I know my own limit.'

He came out from the cave, the air was refreshing after being in a damp underground cave. It was a pity to fail a quest, but there was nothing he could do.

As he was about to leave, a dot on his radar caught his attention. A wild thought crossed his mind. He stood there pondering.

"You are not thinking what I think you are thinking, right?" Peniel asked.

'What do you think I am thinking?' Jack asked back.

"Your attention was on that thing on your radar! Do you think you can use it for your quest?"

'Haven't you ever heard the saying, combat poison with poison?'

"That is the dumbest thing I ever heard!"

'What about, no risk no gain?'

"What kind of bizarre world did you come from? That place must be filled with lunatics to have those kinds of crazy sayings!"

Jack was already back inside the cave and on his way back to the cavern with that overgrown spider.

"I see that you did not heed any of my words. Fine! Go ahead and die. If you die, I can finally go back to the Fairy Village and live a nice comfortable life."

'Won't you miss me?' Jack said in response to her complaint.

"Nope!"

'Come on, not even a little? But don't you worry, you forgot I have that Immortal Soul thing. Even if I died, we will still link, considering if I don't die again immediately after.'

"Who is worried? Argh... Do what you like. It's pointless to ask you to see sense anyway."

When he arrived back at the overhang where he could see the Grandmother spider, it was still lying motionless at the bottom. Jack wondered if it was sleeping.

Jack made a mental calculation on how fast this titanic spider could move. He imagined if it had the same speed as the bewitching spiders, scaled it up with its large span of feet. It would sport roughly ten times the speed of the small spiders.

'Hopefully, I was not wrong,' Jack said in his mind as he took out a scroll from his bag.

Peniel made a mocking laugh hearing his thought. Jack ignored her.

The magic scroll he took out was a Haste scroll. It was for use on an individual, different from the Group Haste scroll which applied to the entire party. Although the Haste scroll only affected a single individual, the speed increase was higher. It increased the target's movement speed by 70% when the Group Haste increased only 40%.

He also set one of his Storm Breaker's skills to the one that increased his movement speed. All he needed at the first phase of his plan was to run as fast as possible.

Okay, here goes nothing, Jack said in his mind as he applied the Haste Scroll on himself and took his magic staff. He stood up and aimed at the Grandmother Spider below, and cast Mana Bullet. He did not look to see if his spell hit or not, he turned around and ran with all his speed.

The speed boost was rather significant. He swayed a bit to maintain his balance but soon got used to it. 'I am so fast!' He exclaimed with glee in his mind. The boost he got from his weapon and the scroll made his running speed almost twice as fast. Combined with his already high dexterity, he felt as if he was flying.

He heard a high-pitched piercing screech, then a loud boom like something big crashing a rock wall. The cave walls shook heavily. Jack heard the sound of something dragging itself while scraping through the hard surfaces of the wall.

He looked back and saw a screen that gave him the fright of his life. A large spider forcing itself forward through a cave that could barely fit its gargantuan body. Its four front limbs stabbing and pulling frantically as it moved with high speed. The scene made Jack felt as if he had gone into the B-horror movies which he used to watch with his friends in high school, with him being the character who was about to be devoured by the monster.

'F**k! I am too slow!' Jack cursed as he tried to double his effort in running.

He used Charge to increase his movement speed even further for a short time. Luckily, the cave was not too large, it hindered the Grandmother Spider's movements. But once they were outside, it was another matter. Jack understood he needed to put as much distance as possible while they were still inside the cave.

Before long, he came out into the open air. He had memorized the direction of his target so he just dashed in that direction once he came out. He looked on his radar and was relieved to see the red dot was still at its previous place.

He used Charge whenever it came off cooldown to add the distance between him and the cave opening as best as it could. He heard an explosive sound from behind. He could not help but peek backward only to see what he had expected.

The large arachnid burst out from the hole. It stopped for a while as it gazed at its surroundings, trying to find the a**hole that had been so audacious to have disturbed it in its lair. After turning around, it finally found its prey. The person was quite a distance away. It stretched its eight limbs for a bit, before stabbing them to the ground and propelled itself forward with a powerful push.

"Holy crap!" Jack exclaimed when he saw the giant spider chased after him. He had expected the spider to be faster when it was free from the cave's tight space interference, but it was actually faster than he thought.

It's too late to change the plan already, he could only continue running as best as he could. He made some fast calculations as he was running. It would be very close! He thought.

The red dot on his radar which was the target he was running to, was getting closer with each second. However, the sounds of the giant insect scurrying behind him were also getting worryingly closer.

A few distances more, he said in his mind. He almost arrived at the red dot he was targeting. He took out the Wind Jet magic scroll. He would need to time it correctly, he could be killed with just one hit if there was a mistake.

Suddenly, the scurrying sound from behind him disappeared. Disconcerted by this turn of events, he looked back and saw the Grandmother spider speeding at him in the air like a catapult's shot.

F**k! I should have expected this jump move! Every f*cking boss has it!! He shouted in his mind.

It was a good thing he looked back, otherwise, the spider would have landed on top of him. He jumped to the side and rolled out of harm's way as the boss landed.

At this time, he noticed the red dot that he was running to, started moving toward him. It finally noticed! Jack ran towards it again.

The spider was not going to let him go, he lunged at Jack with all four of its front limbs lifted high.

Jack used Flash Step to evade it, but the spider was adamant, it lunged again at him. During such a critical time, Jack activated Dragon's Eye. The monster's movement became sluggish. He anticipated where the four limbs would stab and danced around it.

The red dot that Jack was running to finally reached the place. The ground in front of Jack erupted as an enormous crimson yellowish reptilian creature popped out.

Jack's Dragon's Eye skill was still active. Hence, he saw all the splendor of the monster's emergence in great detail. The reptilian creature locked eyes with Jack. It was the Grim Sand Drake that had been following the army all this time. Jack saw its maws opened up as it came at him in slow motion.

'This is it!' He exclaimed in his mind as he activated the Wind Jet scroll in his hand and aimed at between the drake's two massive legs.

His body shot out at high speed and passed the bottom of the drake and came out from between its legs to its rear. He crashed onto the ground and rolled a long while away.

As Jack was shooting through the drake's crotch, the drake's maw clamped shut at where Jack was at. It was baffled as it bit on empty air. At the same time, the Grandmother Spider that was lunging at Jack, could not stop its advance. It crashed onto the Grim Sand Drake. Instinctively, it bit down at the new adversary that had suddenly emerged.

The Grim Sand Drake was still confused by Jack's disappearance. It created an opportunity for the Grandmother spider to land the first strike. Its chelicerae pierced through the drake's thick scale and delivered its venom into the drake's body.

Chapter 340: The Weakened Drake

The Grim Sand Drake roared furiously as it shook away the Grandmother spider's bite. It used its powerful front paw to push the spider aside as its maw shot at it. The drake's return the spider's bite with a bite of its own. Its maw clamped at one of the Grandmother spider's front limbs and forcefully tore the limb from the spider's body.

The Grim Brood Great Grandmother screeched painfully as it scurried away from the Grim Sand Drake. It finally realized that this new opponent was not a pushover. The Grandmother spider had been the lord of this region that it did not realize there could be a more powerful creature in this area. It just simply attacked something that had abruptly gotten in its way while it was chasing its prey.

Jack moved away to put more distance as the two gigantic beasts tussled with each other. He didn't want to be caught in one of their accidental attacks and ended up dying after putting in all these efforts.

"It's working!" He exclaimed. "What do you say? My plan of combatting poison with poison is awesome, ain't it? Although one of them indeed had poison. Wait! They both had the words Grim in front of their names, maybe I should call this tactic combat grim with grim instead."

"The Grim in their names indicates that they are tougher version from the standard monsters," Peniel responded to Jack's ramblings and then asked, "do you intend to stay here until they are finished?"

"You are right," Jack said. His plan was to lure the Grandmother spider to be killed by the Grim Sand Drake. During the two monsters' brawl, he would return to the spider's lair and destroyed the eggs. With both the Grandmother spider and the eggs gone, his quest should be completed. For that, he would need to get away from this place fast. Otherwise if the Grandmother spider was dead, the drake would come for him. He would have trouble escaping its speed if he was still in the vicinity.

However, as he was about to split. He realized a peculiar issue. The Grim Sand Drake and the Grandmother spider were fighting almost equally. The drake was in advantage but oddly it was not as large an advantage as Jack had thought. The drake also did not use its yellow dust breath, which could have easily ensure their battle outcome. More weird was the health bar above the drake, it was already half empty to start with.

Overcome with curiosity, Jack used Inspect on the drake.

Grim Sand Drake (Special Elite monster, Draconic), level 45

HP: 127,300/260,000

Status: Weakened, Poisoned

Weakened? Its grade was down to Special Elite and its level was down by ten levels! No wonder it only held a slight advantage over the Grandmother spider. Their stats were almost the same, the drake was just bolstered by its physical superiority due to its dragon lineage.

"How did it end up weakened?" Jack asked. "Was it because of the lingering effect of the duke's spell?"

"Probably," Peniel answered. "But although that Prism Prison spell weakened an enemy greatly, it is when the spell is in effect. It does not lower them till this extent after the spell is over and certainly cannot last for these many days. I reckon it was also because of the drake's own last resort move."

"The one that broke it out from the duke's Prism Prison spell?"

"Yes, that was probably a last-ditch move it used when its life was in danger, but it carries great repercussions to its body. That combined with the duke's spell might have been the ones that caused its current condition. It probably affected its healing ability as well. Monsters of Special Elite grade and above had regenerative ability after they left combat. If it only healed half his HP after so many days had

passed, its condition must be really bad. And it seemed like this weakened condition also robbed it of all its skills. It could only rely on its physical body in this fight."

"Special Elite and above could heal their HP out of combat? Troublesome, so I can't use hit and run tactic against them," Jack said as he remembered his experience with the Lizardman Blood Guard. He thought he could chip away its HP slowly, but the monster had healed back to full HP when he went back to engage it.

"Troublesome? Wait till you meet the Mythical grade. They had regenerative ability even during combat," Peniel informed.

"Ugh, I don't plan on meeting one."

"With your reckless nature, I say it is only a matter of time. By the way, why are you still not leaving?"

"They fought pretty evenly. Even if the drake is still stronger, it started with half health while the spider has full HP. In the case that I am lucky and they end up killing each other, wouldn't I have hit a jackpot?"

"I rest my case."

The Grandmother spider kept on getting pushed back and suffering from the drake's aggressive assaults. Each of their hits caused thousand in damage, with the damage inflicted by the drake almost twice compared to the spider.

The Grandmother spider jumped back and put some distance from the drake before it shot a torrent of sticky webs at the drake. The drake was wrapped with webs and had a problem moving.

"Holy...! If it used that move when it was chasing me, wasn't it game over for me already?" Jack shouted.

"Yes, you are one very lucky guy," Peniel said.

"So it was my luck stat at work, or probably it just saw me as a weak pebble and did not want to waste this move on me."

While they were chatting, the Grandmother spider squatted down. Jack was confused about what it was doing. This was the perfect time to pounce at the drake why it was incapacitated. However, the webs did not keep the drake immobile for long. The drake used raw strength to tear the webs apart. The webs ripped like a piece of thin paper under the drake's immense strength.

Still, the webs bought the Grandmother spider some time. When it stood up again from its squatting position, hundreds of small crawling spiders rushed out.

"Ugh, it was giving birth? That was nasty," Jack commented as he felt goosebumps seeing the huge numbers of the crawling insects.

The small spiders swarmed at the Grim Sand Drake. They surrounded it and started climbing on its body. The drake used its four massive legs to stomp at the creepy insects, turning lots of them into paste. But there were just too many of them. The ones that had climbed onto its body started to bite on it, but the drake's scale was too hard for the small critters.

The drake shook its body hard to throw off the ones that were on its body. Many were thrown off. Jack had retreated to put more distance between him and the two behemoths, yet he did not expect those clinging small spiders would get tossed to his place. Four of such spiders fell nearby him.

Although Jack described the spider as small, it was only in comparison to their great-grandmother. In comparison with the common bewitching spiders that roamed the wilderness around here, these spiders were only slightly smaller. Which made them still considered as giant if compared to his real world's counterpart.

Jack took out his weapons in haste as he used Inspect on these critters.

Brood Spiderling (Basic monster, Insect), level 27

HP: 9,000

Jack breathed a relieved sigh. They were only basic monsters. Although their levels were higher, it was not something he couldn't deal with. He was just about to run when these four spiders fell near him, now he boldly engaged them in a fight.

As Jack was dealing with the four spiders, the drake kept on shaking the ones that were on his body and stomping on the ones that fell. These critters did nothing other than irritating it. The Grandmother spider took the chance while the drake was distracted to circle around it.

When the exposed back of the drake was in view, the Grandmother spider jumped on it. Its remaining seven limbs stabbed at the drake's body and clung tightly onto it, as it bit another time into the drake's neck, injecting more venom.

The drake was already poisoned from the first bite. It lost around tens of HP per second. After this second bite, the loss of HP increased to almost one hundred in one second.

The drake roared painfully and furiously. It used its powerful hind legs to bring its body standing upward, before bringing it down to its back. It meant to use its entire weight to squash this vile spider on its back. The Grandmother spider cunningly jumped away before that. The drake's back crashed onto the ground and created a tremor.

The Grandmother spider shot another wave of webs again. Encasing the drake which was flat on the ground. It continued to spew out the webs until the drake was encased in a cocoon. It seemed that the Grandmother spider was intent on finishing this battle.

"Crap! Is it losing?" Jack thought with worry as he fought the spiderlings. If the drake lost, then he would not be able to complete his quest.

'What dragon lineage? This lizard is too disappointing,' he complained in his mind.