

Chapter 381: The Contents Of Gold Treasure Chest

As expected, it truly took him tons of attempts. Even after breaking a hundred lockpicks, he was still met with failures. However, through all the tries, his Lockpicking grade had increased to Advanced Apprentice. Each attempt on this Gold Treasure Chest netted him a large amount of proficiency.

Yet, when his one-hundredth lockpick broke, he was starting to worry. He only got around three hundred lockpicks in his bag. He had burnt out one-third of them already. He slapped his cheeks with both hands to force himself to concentrate. "Positive thinking! Positive thinking!" He motivated himself. Peniel simply sat on top of the treasure chest and looked at him silently.

When he reached two hundred attempts, he started to have cold sweat. This caused him to make mistakes several times, wasting a number of precious attempts. He broke away and have a walk around the room, taking deep breaths to calm himself. Peniel was still just looking at him without any words.

Jack came back again to the treasure chest. He gave a short glance to Peniel, but both of them didn't say a word. He then returned to his lockpicking effort.

When he only had fifty lockpicks left, he started to pray before every attempt. He even took a proper praying posture and spent a minute reciting a full prayer before every attempt when his lockpicks were down to twenty. Peniel simply looked at him, amused.

When he had only eight lockpicks left, he finally heard the notification telling him that he had successfully unlocked the chest. He was blank for a second, unsure if he had heard right. Peniel's voice roused him from his stupor. "Runestone of Luck!" She yelled.

Thanks to Peniel's reminder, he immediately summoned it, just as the treasure chest gave a click sound and started opening. When the lid was fully opened, it released an extremely bright golden light.

Did it have to be this exaggerated? Jack complained as he closed his eyes due to the brightness.

The brightness soon subsided, Jack peeked out one eye to make sure the bright light was gone. He then looked into the content of the chest.

There were only six items inside, but each radiated aura that gave his heart a loud thump.

"Hot damn!" He exclaimed

The six items were two pouches, a pair of boots, one large-sized diamond, a red smoldering pebble, and a strange-looking device.

He knew one of the pouches should be a coin pouch, he took both of them up and inspected them. One was indeed a coin pouch, containing 100 gold coins! He was slightly dizzy thinking about the coins, he could buy another plot of land with this. But more than that, combined with the coins he had saved, he could finally do another upgrade to either Ellie's restaurant or Amy's bakery. His first choice was of course the restaurant, it generated more income after all.

He looked at the second pouch, it was a mana core pouch. There were 42 mana cores inside. He put these mana cores, which he still knew not what their use was for, into his bag. He picked up the pair of boots next.

Speed Fury Chausses, level: 28/58 (super rare medium armor)

Physical defense: 72

Magical defense: 56

Durability: 50

Reflex +8

Defense +30% when moving

Movement speed +80% for 3 seconds after executing a skill

Another super rare! He compared this one with the Silver Wing Leggings he wore. Even though the level of these super rare boots was lower, its defense was still higher than his rare boots. The ability it provided was also handy. His fighting style had him moving most of the time, he was not like those players who like to stay in one place as they fought or cast spells. He liked to move around. Meaning this Defense +30% when moving suited him perfectly.

Its other ability was also perfect for him. His Power Strike had a 3 seconds cooldown. Meaning as long as he had enough stamina to continuously spam that skill, his movement speed would always be at 80% faster. Now he could again be faster than those high-dexterity Rogues.

Without hesitation, he exchanged his equipped boots with this new one. For a test run, he executed a Power Strike, then ran around.

"Let me say it again, you are weird," Peniel repeated her previous comment.

"Lady, I'm trying to get myself familiarize with the speed burst. Won't be funny if I end up missing my target in a fight because the sudden speed burst surprises myself."

After a round of running around the room, he went back to the treasure chest. The diamond gemstone was easily recognizable, but this large size was the first he had seen. When he used Inspect on it, the skill showed the gemstone to be a Unique grade.

He sucked in a deep breath. He then summoned his Runestone of Luck. "Time for you to level up," Jack said as he injected the elemental energy of the Unique Diamond into the runestone. He was amazed as he saw the numbers of elemental energy getting filled. Even after the runestone was upgraded to Super Rare grade, the elemental energy still continued to go up rapidly. It only slowed down after reaching the 2000 mark.

Runestone of Luck (super rare runestone)

Increase luck by approx. 10 points for 10 seconds.

Elemental energy required for upgrade: 2,350/10,000

The luck increased had doubled. He calculated the amount of elemental energy contained within that Unique grade Diamond, there was 2,500 elemental energy within a single gemstone. He could directly upgrade an uncommon runestone to a super rare grade if he found another one. But then again, It's not like Unique grade gemstone was lying around to be picked up. But considering his luck, which was further boosted by this super rare Runestone of Luck, sooner or later he should get himself one such gemstone again.

He unsummoned the Runestone of Luck and took a look at the next item in the treasure chest, the red smoldering pebble. Although he had never seen such an item before, he had an inkling of what it was. He took a random cloth from his bag. He had prepared several such mundane items in his bag just in case. He covered his hand with it before he picked up the pebble. He could feel the heat burning through the cloth. He quickly transferred it inside his storage bag while he could still endure the heat.

As expected, he thought as he inspected the item in his bag. It was another Evolve Seed. It was Fire Seed, a rare consumable.

Heh, he thought jovially. The last time was ice, this time was fire, two opposite elements. He thought for a brief moment before deciding. The last time he had used the Ice seed on the Mage skill, it's only fair if he used this one for his Warrior skill. He opened the evolve interface and used the Fire Seed on his favorite, most used melee skill, Power Strike.

Flame Strike, level 20/20 (Active skill, melee, require melee weapon), star: 2

Deal 400% fire damage, cause pushing force proportional to Strength stat.

25% chance to inflict Burn on target for 10 seconds.

Stamina consumed: 30

Cooldown: 5 seconds

The damage had been increased and as expected, the damage type was changed to fire damage, with additional property to cause Burn status. Stamina usage had been increased. The cooldown had also been increased by 2 seconds, Jack felt down due to it. And here he just thought about spamming Power Strike to utilize the speed boost of his new boots every 3 seconds. But then again, the ability was triggered by any skill, so he could just use other skills when Flame Strike was on cooldown.

Now, the only thing left inside the treasure chest was the strange-looking device. He left the most unknown one for the last. Peniel, however, knew exactly what it is. "I see you save the best for last," she said.

'Best?' Jack thought. The fairy had mistaken his reason, but he didn't bother to correct her. He picked up the device and made an Inspect.

Upgrade Cell (Unique Consumable)

Upgrade an item to the next grade

Another unique? It seemed that his luck added by the Runestone of Luck had truly worked wonder. Peniel once told him Gold treasure chest's highest grade content was a unique item, but the percentage

was small. For him to acquire two was already considered the best of luck. The only thing he felt pity about was that none of these unique were equipment.

"It said upgrade an item. What item? Any item will do?" Jack asked the fairy.

"Yes," the fairy confirmed.

Jack thought for a bit and then took off his new boots. It seemed that he could get unique equipment after all.

"Don't tell me you are going to use it on those boots now, are you?" Peniel asked.

"Why not?" Jack asked back.

"Why not? Because it will be a big waste, is why. Put those boots back on!" Peniel commanded.

Chapter 382: Upgrading A Unique Item

"So what do you proposed I use it on?" Jack asked, he still wore back the boots as the fairy asked. Nowadays he had gotten used to her bossy attitude already.

"Did you not realize when I said any item, the ones you should be looking at are items of the highest grade currently in your possession?"

Hearing her words, Jack looked into his bag for a bit and came to a realization. "Ah, I see where you are going with this." He then took out three items from his bag and laid them out on the ground. They were the Transformation Box, Container of Souls, and Orb of Disguise.

"Are you telling me that I can upgrade one of these into a Legendary item?" Jack asked.

Peniel nodded.

Jack looked at the three, then asked her again, "are you sure?"

"If you ask me one more time, I will stab my hand into your eye."

Jack took a deep breath. A Legendary item. He had not seen any legendary item since the Second Soul Remnant. Then again, he did just get a Divine Treasure which was even higher than the Legendary grade. But it did not diminish his awe of knowing he will get another legendary item. Now, the only question was, which one should he used the upgrade on?

After giving the matter some thought, he decided to eliminate the Orb of Disguise. The first reason was because the artifact already had its own feature for upgrading, he only needed to find the materials to do it. Secondly, he didn't really need another disguise. At least not at the moment.

So he stored the Orb of Disguise and leaving only Transformation Box and Container of Souls. After thinking some more, he decided on Container of Souls. This artifact had been monumental in improving his battle prowess by strengthening his skills and spells. He was expectant on what further benefit he could get by upgrading it.

He stored the Transformation Box and was just about to use the Upgrade Cell on the Containers of Souls when Peniel stopped him rudely by slapping on his hand. "Use it on the Transformation Box!" She ordered.

"Why?"

"Just use it first. I will explain once you see the upgrades."

'lady, if you were already set on which item I should use the upgrade on, why didn't you tell me from the start? Waste my time trying to make the decision.' Jack grumbled in his mind but of course, he did not voice it out or projected his thought to her. Peniel still sensed his dissatisfaction thought. "Do you have something you want to say?" She asked.

"No. I'm perfectly fine," Jack uttered. He stored the Container of Souls and brought the Transformation Box back out again.

Jack set the device on top of the Transformation Box, an interface appeared asking him if he wanted to use the Upgrade Cell on the Transformation Box, Jack clicked accept. The device broke into uncountable tiny atoms as they swirled around the Transformation Box and completely covered it. The process went on for some time as he heard buzzing sounds accompanied by some clicks and clunks. He also saw some movements underneath all the swirling atoms, as if the item inside was getting broken and reassembled.

Finally, the swirling receded and the atoms fell onto the ground, forming heaps of dust. The Transformation Box revealed was completely different than before. In fact, it was no longer in a cube shape, its shape had changed to a hexagonal prism.

Transformation Prism (Legendary Artifact)

Consumes 4 Common equipment/materials of same type to create 1 random Uncommon equipment/material of same type.

Consumes 8 Uncommon equipment/materials of same type to create 1 random Rare equipment/material of same type.

Consumes 16 Rare equipment/materials of same type to create 1 random Super Rare equipment/material of same type.

Consumes 32 Super Rare equipment/materials of same type to create 1 random Unique equipment/material of same type.

"Ho! It could now fuse Super Rare equipment to make Unique equipment," Jack uttered, but then added, "but I think getting 32 pieces of Super Rare equipment of the same types is a bit farfetched, don't you think?"

"It is, but that is not why I asked you to choose this Transformation Box to be upgraded," Peniel replied.

"No? What could be more impressive than the means to make a unique equipment?"

"It is of course impressive, but as you said, very doubtful if you can amass that many numbers of same type Super Rare equipment in near future. But one thing about this upgrade can allow you to profit from it in near future."

Jack took a look at the Transformation Prism's description again. The only other change to its function was that it wasn't limited to only equipment now, it could also fuse materials to a better grade."

"Material fusing?" He asked Peniel.

"Remember when you expressed your worry about future leveling-up of your equipment? The problem is not just the increased failure rate when you do the level-up. Their material demands will also increase. And to make things worse, only common materials are available for purchase at normal shops."

"Iron ores and Steel ores?"

"Yep, higher grade ores will be a problem to source."

"Like this copper ore?" Jack took out one from his bag, he had collected 21 of these copper ores during various occasions. As Peniel had mentioned, he had not seen any shop selling this copper ore when he made purchases.

"Yeah. You will only be able to get them from mining, and even higher-grade materials can only be acquired if you have sufficiently high mining skills. I understand you will not be spending most of your time training your mining skill to the maximum, won't you? You can also try to purchase the materials from others who had good mining skills and are willing to spend a large portion of their time doing mining works, but I don't think they will sell them cheap. Some factions also gave them out as exchangeable items using points, but that will mean you can't use those points for other better goods."

"What level of equipment will require me to use this copper ore?" Jack asked.

"Equipment level 35 and above," Peniel answered. "And it will pick up as more rare materials are needed for higher-level equipment. Level 55 equipment will start to require rare materials, such as gold ore, for leveling. Level 70 needs super rare ones, level 80 needs unique, while level 90 will require legendary materials. So, if you don't have the means to procure these materials, you will be stuck with whatever level you first get the equipment, unable to level them up."

"I see... By having this Transformation Prism, I at least will have the means to get the required materials to upgrade until level 89."

"Exactly. All you need to do is simply mass up on all those iron ores and steel ores and used this Transformation Prism to convert them into higher-grade materials. You don't need to worry about leveling up your mining skills or spending large amounts of coins or points to get the materials."

Jack nodded. "I see you have thought about the future, thank you. This is a great help!"

"Hmph, you don't say," Peniel folded her arms and gave a prideful pose.

Jack stored the Transformation Prism. He would start to amass the iron ores and steel ores once he was back in the capital. He stood up and looked at the exit of the room. "I guess it's time to leave," he said.

When he stepped over the exit of the room, he fully expected to appear in the main hall where they entered, with Duke Alfredo and the others waiting there. He had not seen any green dots on his radar after coming out of the space where he fought Eldingar, so he assumed his friends had been sent out of the dungeon after he defeated the boss.

Instead, he was greeted with the view of unfamiliar ruins. It was not the interior of the main hall of the Temple of Divine Squall. He was instead outdoor and the place looked very much like one of those ruins scattered around at the outskirts of the temple. He was still wondering when blue chains suddenly appeared and coiled around his body, restricting him.

This looked familiar, Jack thought when he saw the blue chains.

"You made us wait really long," he heard a familiar voice from his back. He turned around and saw the trio of Gridhacker, GraphicZ, and Sunset.

"Yo, such a coincidence to meet you three again," Jack said to them cordially. In his mind, he was rather confused, why did those three not show up inside his radar?

"That's a rare-grade area-wide jamming device," Peniel said. She had gone back into her hidden dimension when Jack decided to exit the dungeon. Jack's eyes went to the thing she indicated. It was a strange cylinder with a satellite-dish cover at its top, there was light blinking on the satellite-dish.

Chapter 383: Old Enemy

'That is one modern-looking gadget,' Jack commented in his mind. Was that the one jamming his radar? Considering their familiarity with God-eye monocle, that could be the case.

"Still have the mood to joke?" GraphicZ sneered. "Or do you think you will get a reinforcement?"

"Is that what that gadget prevents?" Jack asked, indicating the jamming device.

"It stopped us, players, from sending messages," GraphicZ answered. "Apart from jamming the radar detection of our God-eye monocle."

"I didn't expect you to manage to complete the dungeon," Gridhacker said. "You will only appear here if you did. I also had Sunset and GraphicZ go back into the dungeon some hours ago. If you died during the fight with the boss, the Memory of Elding will be masterless and stayed where it was. But when they arrived back there, it was no longer around, and your friends as well. Unlikely that they took it and left after going so far, more likely they took turns to go into the Boss' space after your demise, unaware of the danger, and perished as well. Another possibility is that you have cleared the dungeon and they were all teleported out since you all entered the dungeon together as a party. Seeing you appeared here, I can say it was the latter."

"Well... I didn't ask for it but thank you for your lengthy explanation. You must really like to explain things, don't you?" Jack responded. "Since you are at it, how about you explain to me the nature of your organization and why you people seemed to know a lot about this world and also why do you chase after the divine treasure?"

Gridhacker frowned, "so you really have gotten it. Now hand it over and we can each go our own..."

"It has fused with me, I don't know how to give it out even if I want to," Jack said before Gridhacker could complete his sentence.

Gridhacker's frown became deeper. "You managed to survive the fusion...? That's unfortunate... In that case, you have to come with us."

"What if I refuse?" Jack asked.

"You have no say in this!" GraphicZ announced. He took out a long rope with golden inscriptions on its surface.

That looked similar to the ones that bound Bowler and the others during the Crestfall Plain battle, Jack thought. His liberty of Movement could free him from movement binding caused by status effects and magic spells, but he doubted it would be effective against a physical binding.

As GraphicZ came nearer, Jack used another Liberty of Movement and broke free from the blue chains. He unsheathed his sword and made a quick swing at GraphicZ, who quickly jumped back as if he had expected it.

"You truly have the tool to escape from my spell," Gridhacker said after seeing the exchange. The last time it was all so sudden and his line of sight was partially blocked by his two comrades, so he didn't get a good look.

Jack took out his magic staff as well, ready for combat. He watched the three's expressions. They should be clear already that they were no match against him after their last contest, but they seemed perfectly calm.

After a brief thought, Jack decided to be prudent. He took out the Alert Beacon that was given by Duke Alfredo and activated it. It shot into the sky before exploding into colorful fireworks. The jamming device might be able to block the players' messaging system, but it would be helpless if the message was a large visual sign in the sky.

Gridhacker looked at the fireworks with a frown. "Aren't you being a bit too vigilant?" He asked.

"Heh, I always trust my guts. I know you have something up your sleeves," Jack replied.

Gridhacker's expression turned grim, "in that case, no need to delay things. Get him!"

As Gridhacker gave the command, oddly GraphicZ and Sunset stayed on their feet, relaxed. Jack soon found out why. The command was not for those two. Instead, several shadows burst out from around and converged at his position.

So apart from preventing him from contacting his friends, the jamming device also shrouded the existence of these people hiding around. Probably to ambush him when he least expected, but his act of using the Alert Beacon had forced Gridhacker to reveal them as he could not afford to waste any more time.

Jack didn't wait until these ambushers ganged up upon him. He picked one and ran forward to confront the person. All the people wore long brown robes with hoods.

"Do not kill him. Immobilize him so we can tie him up!" Gridhacker shouted his command.

'As if I will let them,' Jack thought.

The one in front of him was using a mace for a weapon. He swung at the approaching Jack, who parried it with his sword, and then utilizing the momentum, Jack jumped onto his opponent's body and used it as a stepping stone to push himself up. Jack somersaulted above the opponent and landed behind him.

"Ugh, what a monkey," GraphicZ commented. The memory of him being climbed by Jack was still fresh.

With his opponent's back in clear sight, Jack unleashed his newly evolved skill, Flame Strike. A streak of fire accompanied his swing as it created a fiery arc and caused an explosive fiery burst when his sword connected with his opponent's back.

Damage number of 1293 was floating above his opponent's head as he was sent flying away. He fell nearby the other ambushers, but to Jack's surprise, he got back up again. The HP bar on him indicated that he only lost around one-tenth of his HP.

"Don't tell me they are...," Jack used Inspect on them. There were six on them, and all were NPCs. Jack had expected the ones collaborating with Gridhacker and the others to be also players, but it turned out that was not the case.

But giving the matter a second thought, for them to reach this place was unlikely that they relied on their own power. So they were like his group, they had NPC escorts as well. Another thing gave that Jack a surprise was that he was not a stranger to these NPCs' names. They were all level 26 Acolyte of Phobos.

While he was still contemplating, he suddenly heard Peniel shouted, "behind!"

Without even questioning the fairy's warning, he quickly made a roll on the ground, moving away from his initial position. He heard a boom as he stopped his roll and looked at the place where he was a moment ago.

Another three figures wearing black cloaks had appeared there. The center one was holding a large two-handed mace which was currently implanted deep in the ground where Jack was standing a moment ago. Jack would have been squashed by that large mace if he didn't roll out of the way as he did, thanks to Peniel's warning.

I have to stop relying on the radar, Jack thought. Over-dependence on that tool had dulled his instinct. He wouldn't have been caught by that kind of sneak attack if it were his past games.

When he got up, another thing caught his attention. The lead of the three who had ambushed him just now, was wearing a deer skull hat which he had seen before. He used Inspect on them to make sure.

"It really is you!" He exclaimed.

The three were Priest of Phobos, two were level 29, while the lead one with the deer skull hat was level 30. The lead one was five levels higher than when Jack last saw him, but he had a feeling that it was the same priest that he had fought when he was doing Amy's quest.

The priest with the deer skull hat, seeing that his attack had missed, immediately lunged at Jack. Jack did not back away this time, he met the priest head-on, clashing strikes with strikes. Jack felt strangely elated despite his disadvantageous situation of being surrounded. An opponent of which he was totally helpless before, he could now go toe to toe with. He was even at an advantage on this one-on-one exchange.

But as the other two priests approached and the six acolytes came, Jack could not afford to revel in this feeling and play around with his old enemy. He quickly disengaged and cast Ice Ring, Sadly none was frozen, but it slowed all the priests and acolytes that surrounded him.

Going against these many NPCs, he could not afford to be careless. He activated Adrenaline Rush and Heightened State. Unfortunately, his Life Burning Art was still on cooldown after he used it to fight Eldingar, so it was not available at this time.

He also started casting Barrier as he clashed with the surrounding opponents. Luckily they were slowed so he could still cope with that many opponents at the same time. With the help of his Barrier, and the fact that each of his landed attacks, whether by sword or magic, had a chance to paralyze the opponents, this gave him an easier time contending with these multiple assaults.

"Strange, why did he stay at one place? Letting himself get surrounded?" Sunset asked.

"He was simply helpless. It's not an easy thing going against so many enemies at the same time," GraphicZ said.

Chapter 384: Descent Of A Divine Being

"That's not his style. I said before he had gone against opponents even much more than this. He always moved around when he fought against numbers."

As if answering Sunset's question, Jack punched through the encirclement with a Charge while he cast Arcane Turbulence at the huddled opponents. These NPCs were not like the players who formed an interlocking human wall to block his path, so there were still gaps. Jack targeted one of these gaps.

Once he broke through, he used Shooting Dash to move away. He had endured the encirclement so that all his opponents were clustered at one place. Apart from putting a distance, he was also targeting the damage increase from the Shooting Dash skill. Added with Adrenalin Rush, he had stacked up quite a significant damage boost. He then unleashed the strongest skill he had just gotten not long ago, Lightning God Barrage!

Large balls of lightning materialized one after another rapidly around Jack. When all twenty balls were formed, Jack sent them all at the clustered Acolytes and Priests without pause. Those NPCs were still affected by Arcane Turbulence so their movements were slowed. The lightning balls struck consecutively, each ball exploded into a web of lightning. Since all of them were clustered together, every each of the Priests and Acolytes received the full brunt of the damage from all twenty balls.

Each ball dealt more than 1,000 damages. All twenty balls combined resulted in over 21,000 damages! All the Priests of Phobos were already killed halfway through the barrage. While the three Priests of Phobos were below 20% HP after the barrage. One even was at a critical because he had also endured Jack's other skills and spells before. Jack sent a sword of Light, claiming that one Priests.

Out of the twelve NPCs, only two remaining with very low HP. Gridhacker, GraphicZ, and Sunset's eyes and mouths were all wide open, couldn't believe what they had just witnessed. This was the first time that any of them had seen a player took down so many NPCs simultaneously.

Jack himself was rather amazed by the result. The skill bestowed by the divine treasure was truly heaven-defying. Still, he didn't pause. He ran forward, planning to finish off the remaining two NPCs before facing Gridhacker and the rest to force some answers out of them.

But his body suddenly became heavy. Several bone tusks suddenly erupted out of the ground underneath him. These bone tusks formed a crisscrossing fence around him, inhibiting his movement. Jack hit at these bone tusks using his sword. Damage number appeared, but his hit was not even 2% of the tusk's full HP.

'So sturdy? It will take a long time to break out from this,' he lamented.

Before he could do anything more, ten other figures jumped out and landed around him. They were all Priests of Phobos, but they were all around level 40 to 50. Three out of the ten were special elite while the rests were elite.

Shit! There were still more of them? Jack was dismayed. He could see no way to break away from this line-up even if he managed to destroy his current bone prison.

"We meet again," he suddenly heard a voice from above. Jack looked up and saw a man floating above. He was wearing an elaborate crimson vestment. Jack used his God-eye monocle to inspect the floating man.

Arlstraxx, Cardinal of Phobos (Rare Elite Human), level: 70

HP: 720,000

Cardinal of Phobos? The thought of possessed Winston came back to him. Now that he observed clearly, the man floating above did resemble the shadow apparition above Winston when he was possessed.

"You have ruined my plan before in the Duke's mansion, now that you fall into my hand, I will take my time with you," Arlstraxx uttered with a wicked grin.

"Sir Arlstraxx, do not kill him! Our master needed him alive," Gridhacker called out.

"Are you ordering me?" Arlstraxx glanced at the trio with dissatisfaction.

"I wouldn't dare, great Sir Arlstraxx," Gridhacker quickly changed his tone. "However, it was truly important that he is not killed. He had something that our master needed. As the agreement between our master and your God..."

"Do not speak of our God!" Arlstraxx's voice boomed, silencing Gridhacker. "You are not worthy enough for that!"

Gridhacker did not dare to talk back.

Seeing that Gridhacker obediently kept his mouth shut, Arlstraxx said, "hmp, I will honor the agreement. What our God sees in you weak outworlders, it is not my place to question it."

The cardinal then opened up his palm, a small purple item in the shape of an octahedron appeared in his hand.

"Oh no. Do not let him use that on you!" Peniel uttered.

'Lady, do you think there is anything I can do in this condition?' Jack complained. He had not stopped hacking at the bone tusks in front of him all this while, but he did not even manage to take away one-third of its life.

Jack watched helplessly as Cardinal of Phobos approached.

Suddenly the cardinal looked to the side and quickly extended his left arm out. It created a round shield in front of him just as an illusory giant hammer materialized and struck at him. The impact forced the cardinal to fly some distance away.

Numerous arrows appeared with stinging sounds as they flew towards the ten priests surrounding Jack. The priests had no choice but to block the attack. A shadow then dropped down in their center, next to Jack, and made a full circular swing. The light of the swing sent all the Priests back, while the bone prison that was immobilizing Jack, was cut cleanly in half.

Jack, however, was unharmed. He stared at the figure that had suddenly appeared. Relieved washed over him. "Commander!" He yelled.

It was commander Quintus that had come. Not only him, Duke Alfredo also flew above, putting himself amongst Jack and Arlstraxx. Laurent, Captain Salem, Lucia, Nicholas, and Samuel also appeared as they took up a defensive position around Jack.

"Everyone!" Jack was filled with gratitude as they saw these NPCs arrived. Luckily, he had used the Alert Beacon early.

"Are you that Cardinal of Phobos who had invaded my home the last time?" Duke Alfredo said to Arlstraxx.

The cardinal snickered at the mention, "heh, such a pity. I almost succeeded. If not for that meddlesome outworlder, the mission would have been a success."

"Do you know the misery you caused to my butler? And also the life of my maid! I will claim these debts you owed me!" Duke Alfredo exclaimed as the air around him exploded with a myriad of colorful lights.

"Petty display!" Arlstraxx shot back as a long snake-headed staff appeared in his hand. His aura grew heavy as dark fogs started to form around him.

The Cardinal of Phobos was five levels stronger than the Duke, but Laurent from behind backed the duke up with his supportive spells. Commander Quintus and the others also readied themselves for a clash.

"My army is coming, you will all be surrounded soon," Commander Quintus yelled.

Everyone indeed could hear incoming rumblings, indicating a large amount of force was enclosing. Jack saw the expressions on Gridhacker turned solemn. He probably understood that they had lost. If they still did not flee before the army arrived, maybe Jack could ask the army to apprehend them without killing, so Jack could interrogate them.

While everyone was about to clash, a soft voice stopped them. "All of you, do not move."

The air suddenly turned heavy. Even Duke Alfredo and Laurent who were floating in the air fell to the ground. Arlstraxx didn't seem to be affected, but when he looked up at the source of the voice, he

immediately landed back on the ground and knelt. The other Priests of Phobos did the same. Strangely, Gridhacker and the two behind him mimicked the cult's action.

Jack turned up to where Arlstraxx had looked a moment ago, and saw a man in a simple black robe floating there, slowly coming down.

"T—that... Oh, no..." Jack heard Peniel said.

"Who is that?" Jack asked, but Peniel made no further sound.

Jack felt the air grew heavier as the figure in the sky approached. Despite his Dragon's Eye, Jack felt as if there was a veil covering the man's features. Only when he was slightly closer, that Jack could make out his features. The man's face was that of an elder, yet there was no wrinkle. His skin was pale and he had no eyebrows. He had very defined cheekbones that made his face look thin yet attractive. His eyes were as cold and dark as the night sky. For some reason, Jack felt a tinge of irrational fear surfacing in his heart as he stared at the man.

"I see you have the Lightning God Blessing within you. You have fused with that divine treasure, a pity," the man spoke. His voice was soft yet clear. Jack's body experienced involuntary shiver when the voice reached his ears.

Chapter 385: Gods And Goddesses

Jack looked at the others. Everyone seemed to be unable to move or talk, did they experience a much heavier pressure than what he felt? He returned his attention to the figure above.

"Just comply with whatever he wants," Jack heard Peniel's voice again.

"A high fairy?" The man uttered, then he lifted his hand.

Peniel who was invisible turned tangible beside Jack. Jack looked at her in surprise. From her expression, she was clearly forced out of her hidden dimension against her will. The man moved his finger and Peniel floated towards him.

"S—Stop...!" Jack uttered. Aren't Peniel supposed to be unaffected by anything? She was perfectly fine even on the occasions when she was flying around the area of AOE spells during his combat. Jack tried to move but realized now that his body was heavier than he thought.

The man lifted one of his eyelids and said, "did you just give me an order, outworlder?" He floated down and was now floating directly in front of Jack. A wave of fear gripped Jack's mind and caused him to tremble.

This made no sense, Jack thought. It was unlike him to fear someone this much. Not when he knew nothing about said person.

"How about you tell this outworlder who I am?" The man said to Peniel who seemed to be held by an invisible force beside him.

"He... he is Fear," Peniel said. "The God of Fear, who was worshipped by the Cult of Phobos."

"Yes, my cult. Useless as they are, they are still mine. And I heard that you have given them troubles more than once," Fear said as he returned his attention to Jack. Jack felt those dark eyes were pulling him into a bottomless abyss, he tried his best to avert his gaze from those eyes.

"More than I am comfortable with," Fear added. "Dealing with you outworlders and these mortals were normally beneath me, you are but an infinitesimal existence to me. But some disturbing knowledge had come to my attention and irresistible bargains were made. One of those bargains required me to help in gaining these divine treasures. Hence, here we are."

"You can't do this, Gods and Goddesses are prohibited to meddle in the matter of mortals," Peniel said.

"Did I give you the permission to speak, fairy?" Fear uttered without sparing her a glance. He then gripped his hand into a knuckle.

"Aaahhhh....!!!" Peniel screamed as black smoke coalesced around her.

"Penieellll....!!!" Jack yelled out.

Peniel's scream soon stopped. The black smoke dispersed and she fell to the ground. Not moving.

"Pe... Peniel...?" Jack called, but the fairy's body stayed still.

"Now she won't be able to disturb our conversation any longer," Fear said coldly.

"Y... you bastard...!!!" Jack gritted his teeth as he commanded his body to move. His body was shaking heavily from the effort.

"Hehe, are you trying to break away from my influence?" Fear snickered. His dark eyes then gave a short glint.

Jack felt that his vision went black. He could see nothing but infinite darkness. The darkness however was not vast, it was cramped, and it was enclosing. He had a difficulty in breathing in this enclosed nothingness. In this space, all he felt was fear. Irrational fear. All the fears he had ever experienced in his life, pain, loneliness, being not good enough. All the fears he might experience in the future, death, losing the people he cared about, failures. All the fears he thought never existed, the fear of the unknown. All commingled into a single simple thought, terror.

This thought made him lose any other thoughts. He could not think of anything as he sank deeper into the sea of helplessness. Unable to swim back out to the surface. He was losing his breathing and he was drowning. His only thought was to accept this fear and sank further into the dark and bottomless abyss.

In his fractured mind, Peniel's face suddenly fled by. Jack then remembered her voice. The voice that had accompanied him all this time through this game world. The knowledge of never hearing her voices ever again, it brought about a feeling other than fear. It brought about anger, which turned to fury, then grew into a rage. A rage that swept aside all the fears that were currently gripping his heart.

Jack's eyes snapped open and saw the object of his rage in front of him. His Storm Breaker came out as he executed Flame Strike. The trail of blaze went towards Fear who was directly in front of him.

When the flaming sword was only a few inches left from Fear's head, it abruptly stopped. The flaming explosion which followed the skill's impact was nowhere to be seen. Instead, the flame died down with a whimper. Fear's two fingers were gripping Storm Breaker's blade.

Fear furrowed his forehead. "You broke my fear domain?" He asked. His face was still indifferent despite the furrow, but there was a tint of astonishment in his tone. This tone, however, soon turned into annoyance, "you lowly creature dares to defy me...?"

He tightened the grip on his fingers. There was a loud snapping sound as Jack watched with disbelief as his Storm Breaker, which was supposed to be unbreakable, broke into pieces right in front of his very eyes.

The broken shards of the black blade fell onto the ground. Fear watched his handiwork with a smile, he then looked back at Jack, fully expecting to see the outworlder's eyes filled with surprise and fear. Yet, what came into his vision was the tip of a magic staff.

Jack fired a Mana Bullet point-blank. Though Jack was indeed surprised by his Storm Breaker's fate, it only lasted for an instant. His rage over this God was still prevalent. All he cared about right now was to give this supposed supreme being a slap on his face.

The Mana Bullet hit Fear's face and popped like a burst balloon. Damage number of 1 appeared on Fear's head.

Despite the overwhelmingly insignificant damage, Jack was grinning savagely while Fear was scowling.

"What God of Fear? Even an infinitesimal existence like me can touch you. You are nothing!" Jack said loudly.

"You ant!" Fear was clearly angered by the provocation. His hand shaped into a claw and dark clouds materialized and gripped at Jack, restraining him.

"Your Almighty, please do not kill him!" Gridhacker called out.

"Silence!" Fear proclaimed and Gridhacker was seemingly slapped by a tremendous force, he was thrown away due to the force and had his HP hanging by only a thread.

"No one talks to me as you did, so I will grant you a proper reward of death," Fear said as his hand gripped into a knuckle.

Everyone expected Jack to lose his life then and there, but a green light enveloped him, eroding all the black smoke on his body. Before anyone could make sense of what had happened, an otherworldly beautiful woman with long golden hair and blue eyes came out of thin air behind Jack. Her appearance was that of a young woman but yet also gave people the impression that she was centuries old. She made a pull and Jack was dragged to her back.

"G—Goddess Serenity...?" Jack uttered when he recognized the woman that had come between him and Fear.

Fear was frowning as he glared at Serenity, "what is the meaning of this?"

"That is what I should ask you, Fear. You know the rule set by the Creator was that none of us Gods and Goddesses are to interfere in the affair of mortals. Yet, here you are, interfering."

Serenity's voice brought about calm into the hearts of all who presented. The fear that was holding them immobile was dispelled. Finally able to move, Duke Alfredo and the rest quickly gathered behind Goddess Serenity with Jack. They remained silent as they knew that the affair between these two beings was not something they had the power to involve themselves with.

"Creator? Rule? Hmph, if only you knew the truth. Such a joke," Fear uttered.

"Do not make excuses. You know if you continue to involve yourself, I will also not stay impartial," Serenity said.

"Heh, so what? Do you think you can do much against me?" Fear asked.

"What if I also demand you to stay your hands as well?" Another voice was heard. This one boomed as if a loud thunderclap. Everyone looked up to the source of the voice and saw two figures floating down. One was a middle-aged man with a clean and handsome face, his hair was blue. His body was geared in full golden armor that constantly shone and gave a feeling of hope in all that laid eyes on it. The other one was an old man with a long white beard that Jack also recognized. He was Honuren, the Demigod that presided over their passing from the Tutorial world into this one.

The two landed beside Serenity, it was clear from their stance that they were in opposition from Fear.

"Do you think you can take me on?" The man in the golden armor asked. Jack surmised he had to also be a God to dare to talk that way to Fear.

Chapter 386: Restoration Of The Lost

Fear snorted. "Hmph, you and your codes. I won't be surprised if you are also into that farce that is called our Creator's rules. You six had always been sticklers of rules."

"You still dare to call us six? Two of us have gone missing, I don't suppose the three of you have anything to do with it?"

"Probably," Fear gave him a sneer.

"Do you try to test my patience?" The God in golden armor asked.

"Although I might not be able to beat you, do not take it that I fear you, Hope. There is nothing that I, Fear, have to be afraid of. Do you think you can unleash your full might with all these mortals around?"

The God that was called Hope did not answer.

"I think not," Fear said after Hope's silence. "Well, I can't do anything with you two around. Guess I will leave it at this. Try to stop me if you like."

Fear extended his hand, a portal made of darkness appeared where he pointed. "Go," he said. Arlstraxx and his minions followed the command and went directly into the portal.

Gridhacker was hesitant. "Your Almighty, about that outworlder..."

"You can stay if you want," Fear simply replied.

Considering the situation, Gridhacker decided retreat was the better option. He and his two other companions went into the portal as well. Once they passed through, the portal vanished.

Fear was about to leave when Serenity called out, "Fear, we don't care about your cults, but know that if you or any of your Demigods tried anything to this outworlder, we will come again."

Fear glanced back, his eyes darted between Hope and Serenity before lingering for a while on Jack. He then snorted and turned around without saying anything. His figure slowly dissolved into nothingness.

Duke Alfredo and the others heaved a sigh of relief when the God of Fear had finally left. Even though they themselves were powerful individuals, they were still nothing to these Gods and Goddesses. All of them came forward and thanked the God of Hope and Goddess of Serenity for their help. Not every day one could have the chance to interact with these divine beings.

Jack, on the other hand, went straight to where Peniel was lying. He scooped her up gently with two hands and put his ear onto her chest, trying to hear a pulse. There was none.

He hurriedly brought her to Serenity, "Goddess, can you help heal her?"

Serenity stared at the motionless fairy in Jack's hands. She was silent for a while. Jack was dreading that she would say that there was nothing that could be done for Peniel, not even with the power of the Goddess. Her silence only lasted for a breath, but Jack felt like he waited too long for her response.

She said, "since this is done due to the interference of a God, then we are allowed to undo his deed."

She made a gesture with her hands, rune was formed one after another until it formed a complete spell formation.

Eight runes! Jack watched in amazement.

A pillar of light split the clouds on the sky and came down directly where Jack was standing. Jack felt warmth and comfort when the light touched his body. The light consolidated into a dense white fog that covered Peniel's body, it was as if he was holding a dense ball of light now. Jack felt a tingling feeling on his palm that was warm at first but soon intensified into blistering heat. Yet, he did not move his hand. He remained still and endured the heat.

Because of the heat, Jack did not feel that there were movements on his palm. After the dense white fog dispersed, he saw Peniel's figure was sitting upon his palm and looking around in confusion. She blinked a few times as if trying to remember what had happened. She then realized the presence in front of her and quickly get up to her feet as she made a curtsy.

"All hail the Exalted One! Your servant, Peniel, greets you," she said. She then also realized the presence of Hope and quickly sent him a greeting as well, "This lowly servant salute the Great and Mighty God of Hope."

"You have done well in the service I tasked you in accompanying this outworlder," Serenity said to her.

"He was rather at a panic when he thought he has lost you."

Peniel turned to Jack, who was looking elsewhere, trying to act indifferent. "Of course he is afraid of losing me, he can't do anything without me," Peniel declared.

Jack gave her a gentle flick for a response. "Hey!" Peniel protested.

Serenity gave a soft laugh seeing the two.

Jack suddenly thought of something and took out his broken Storm Breaker. It was just a hilt with half a blade on it. "Goddess, you mentioned that you are allowed to do something since it was interference from a God. This sword of mine was broken by that God of Fear. Can you also restore it back?"

Serenity gave the broken weapon a look and asked, "is this the weapon from the Seed of Thousand Forms which I gave to you?"

"Uh, yes. Can it not be restored because it was from that item?" Jack asked worriedly. This growth weapon was another of the reasons that had put him much ahead of other outworlders, losing it would be a significant decrease in his prowess.

"Of course it is not a problem, I was just curious," Serenity replied to Jack's relief. But as she was about to touch the broken sword, Hope came and said, "allow me."

Knowing the guy was an all-powerful God, Jack did nothing as Hope took the broken sword from his hand. He did try to Inspect this God, but same as Serenity and Fear, all he got was a bunch of question marks.

As Hope gripped the hilt of the sword, tiny golden lights appeared and danced around the broken sword. Shards of the broken swords fluttered on the ground before flying up and coming to the broken sword on Jack's hand as if attracted by a strong magnet. They then reattached themselves to the broken part of the blade while the golden lights continued to dance and mend them together.

It was not long before the sword was whole again. No, not whole. It looked slightly different, Jack thought of the reformed blade.

"Here," Hope opened his palm and the black sword floated slowly back to Jack. Jack extended his arm to receive the sword. Once he gripped it, he noticed that the sword was slightly longer than the previous, but lighter. There were also more golden lines running along its body. He quickly checked its statistics.

Storm Breaker, level 35 (rare one-handed sword, bound weapon)

Physical damage 210

Attack speed 4

Cannot be destroyed

Bound to Storm Wind

Dexterity +6

15% chance to cause Poison status effect on each attack

Overlimit: Release the weapon's hidden power that adds an additional 200% damage as chaos damage, increase weapon range by 3 feet, and decrease target's defense by 90%. Duration: 3 minutes. Cooldown: 6 hours

Its damage power had increased despite being on the same level. So had its attack speed, no wonder the sword felt lighter. He only ever saw an attack speed of 4 on Roque's weapon like a dagger. Combined with his high Dexterity, his attack speed would be even more deadly now. But the most significant improvement was its Overlimit ability. All of the aspects of its ability except for the additional damage had been increased.

He was already happy that his Storm Breaker was getting fixed. But not only was it fixed, it was also even getting strengthened. He was at a loss for words of this benefit that Peniel had to remind him, "you are being awfully rude."

Jack quickly gave a deep bow to Hope after Peniel's reminder, "I can't thank you enough for granting me this boon."

Hope gave him a simple nod. "It was by right we should straighten the wrongs that our misguided kind had wrought," he said.

"I never expect that an outworlder had already managed to obtain a Divine Treasure at your level, but maybe that's why they came for you," Serenity said to Jack. "I have put a mark on you after you saved me, that's why I can sense a divine being appear near you and come immediately. If any God or Demigod comes at you again, we will know, and we will come to your aid. However, we will not give you any assistance if it was below divine level interference. And now that Fear had targeted you, you should be careful, his cult was not to be underestimated."

"Thank you for your warning, Goddess Serenity," Jack replied and took this chance to pry. "What about the outworlders that were with Fear? Do you know anything about them?"

"Unfortunately we don't," Serenity said. "Since we are not allowed to interfere, we also do not keep tabs of outworlders' activity. But there are indeed some outworlders' activities that are affecting this world in a concerning way. They should be part of these outworlders that are associated with Fear. We will perform more review on our part and have our mortal forces check them out."

"We can't stay any longer," Hope declared.

Chapter 387: Rewards Of Chain Quest

"Yes," Serenity agreed. "We only came as a counterbalance to Fear's appearance. Now that he was gone, it was time for us to leave as well."

There was still much Jack wanted to ask, but he did not dare to stall these divine beings. He bid them farewell, "thank you again for your help, we can rest well knowing such benevolent divine beings such as yourselves are watching over us."

"Fawner," Peniel chided him with a whisper.

Jack also waved at Honuren who nodded back at him. The three then left as mysteriously as they appeared. Serenity simply faded into nothingness, but in a more graceful way than Fear. Hope and Honuren turned into two pillars of light that shot up into the cloud.

"Were you really that upset when you thought I was lost?" Peniel asked after those divine beings were gone.

"Nah, I was fine," Jack replied, but then added. "Well, maybe a little. You know, a little-tiny-tinsy-bit worried, perhaps."

Peniel was quiet for a while before saying, "thank you."

Jack turned to her in surprise, "what are you being so formal for. It doesn't suit you."

"Hmph, do not expect it so often," Peniel said as she flew away.

At this time, the rest of the army arrived. Commander Quintus ordered them to spread out to search the perimeter. It was doubtful that the cult was still around but it was still prudent to make sure.

"Thank you for coming to my aide, Your Grace," Jack said when Duke Alfredo approached him.

"I'm just glad that everything went well. That was pretty perilous just now. I never expected those Divine Beings to appear here. It seemed that this matter with the cult is more serious than I thought, considering they truly have a mad God backing them. We will need to tread more carefully in the future."

"Hey, we also have divine beings backing us, two of them some more as evident to what had happened just now," Jack consoled.

"Didn't you hear them? You are the one getting marked, we don't have the same backing," Captain Salem reminded.

"Well, but they did say those divine beings were not allowed to interfere. If that Fear guy involves himself personally again, I'm sure those two will come again as they did just now."

"Let's hope that is the case," Duke Alfredo said.

"Oh, by the way, I have something for you, Your Grace," Jack said as he remembered something. He took out a bottle. It was the All-curse Expulsion Potion that he had gotten from the dungeon.

"I believe this should be the thing we had come to look for," Jack said as he handed the bottle to the duke.

Duke Alfredo took it into his hands as he gave it an inspection. He then looked at Jack, gratitude could be seen in his eyes. He gave Jack a slight bow. "Allow me to express my appreciation, Mister Storm Wind. You have been a godsend in my endeavor to recover this cure and you have proved yourself again to be the greatest aid I can hope for in this quest of mine. My wife and I are forever indebted to you."

"Um... No worry. Really, it's not a problem," Jack felt awkward with the duke's formal gratitude, he quickly added. "I hope the Duchess can recover soon with that potion."

"I believe she will," Duke Alfredo said with a smile. It was the most natural smile Jack had ever seen expressed by the duke.

Jack felt happy for the duke, he genuinely hope the duchess would truly recover, it would have been a big waste of efforts otherwise. As if to reassure him, a notification voice was heard, "Congratulations on completing the Chain Quest: Duchess' Cure. Receive rewards of 120 gold coins, 1,500,000 Experience points, and Golden Noble Headband."

Jack was stunned by the announcement. So much! He thought. With this gold reward, he had 362 gold coins in his bag already, enough to upgrade both Ellie's Restaurant and Amy's Bakery for their second upgrade. He was looking forward to doing so once he returned to the capital.

Even from the experience reward alone, it was extremely abundant. As he was wondering why he didn't hear the sweet notification voice that informed him of his level up, he remembered about the Lightning God Blessing. He looked inside his inherent skill and saw that its experience bar was half-full now.

It really ate up all the experience received, Jack thought. Great, thanks to the completion of the duke's quest, the time needed for him to feed this greedy inherent skill had been cut down to half.

He then looked for the new equipment in his storage bag which was the last reward the notification had informed him of. He found a simple-looking gold-colored headband. Upon closer observation, he saw multiple runes covering it. He used Inspect on it.

Golden Noble Headband, level 28/58 (super rare medium armor)

Physical defense: 69

Magical defense: 69

Durability: 50

Wisdom +8

+20% resistance to all mental status ailments.

Purify the Mind and Body (Active ability): Cleanse all status ailments, immune to all the new status ailments for the next 10 seconds. Cooldown: 1 hour.

Another super rare, cool! He exclaimed in his mind. His current gear was slowly getting replaced by better-grade equipment. This should help to keep him ahead of the others.

The defense on this headgear was slightly different than the other medium armor, it had the exact same defense between physical and magical defense, he preferred such balance though. The armor's abilities were also great. His current helmet gave him 40% resistance to Dizzy and Disoriented. Even though it will be a setback for these two status ailments if he changed his headgear, all his other mental status ailments gained a boost.

The active ability served almost the same function as his Purifying Pendant. The difference was his pendant's one was passive ability. It activated automatically once he was inflicted by a mental status ailment, while this new gear's allowed manual activation, which gave more versatility. Additionally,

Purify the Mind and Body not only affected mental status ailments but all status ailments, so physical ailments could also be cleansed.

With all these improvements, he immediately replaced his current headgear. One thing that Jack thought was slightly regretful was his look. The Silver Guard Helmet gave him a rather cool and intimidating appearance, while this Golden Noble Headband only covered a small portion of his head. It made him look like a certain monkey king from the East.

While he was enjoying the rewards, he realized that Duke Alfredo had been waiting patiently with a book in his hand. "Is that for me?" Jack asked.

"This is a spell that had accompanied me during my early adventurer days," duke Alfredo said. "I hope it can help you in yours."

Jack was elated, there was even an extra reward. Jack received the book with glee. Not forgetting to thank the duke politely, of course. He checked on the book immediately.

Technique Book: Myriad Ensnaring Chains (Super rare Consumable)

Grant the skill: Myriad Ensnaring Chains

Restriction: Any Advanced magic class

'Sounds imposing,' Jack thought. He was just about to learn the technique book when he heard Peniel's voice, "what's that ugly thing on your head?"

Peniel had been flying around and had just arrived back.

"What do you know? This is what we human calls the latest cool fashion," Jack replied. Not admitting that he actually agreed with her. Look was not important anyway, this headband served him better, that was enough. Function before form, if he might put it.

Peniel ignored his statement and said, "I sensed that you have just completed the chain quest and gotten the reward?"

"Yes, it was really generous," Jack described to her all the rewards he had received.

"As I have suspected," She said.

"Suspect what? Why do you suspect anything?" Jack asked.

"The whole thing doesn't make sense for an SSS quest. The rewards themselves had proven so. They are too pitiful as rewards for a quest of that grade."

"Pitiful...?" Jack was speechless by Peniel's comment. He had been jubilant over his gains and this fairy was calling them pitiful.

"Yeah. If I may say, the only item that was aligned with that quest grade was the Lightning God Sphere you got after defeating Eldingar. The others were only the rewards of roughly an S rank chain quest."

"Really...?" Jack was skeptical of the fairy's evaluation.

"Are you doubting me?" Peniel asked while giving him a sideways glare.

"No, of course not, mam," Jack hurriedly answered. After thinking a bit, he then said, "if what you said is true. Could it be someone hack the quest to change its grade?"

"Hack? How do you hit something that is not tangible?"

"Uh, I mean tamper! Could someone tamper with this quest, and make a change to it? Give it a higher grade to its description than it should be?"

Chapter 388: Peniel Comes Out In The Open

"Even if someone could, which I don't think so as that was even above what Gods and Goddesses were capable of. Why would someone do it?" Peniel asked

"You said just now that Lightning God Sphere was the only reward that made sense for the quest, right?" Jack replied.

"You don't mean..."

"Yeah, probably someone tampered with the quest just to allow that divine treasure to appear within this quest. You yourself were plenty shocked when you saw that divine treasure."

Peniel was silent as she pondered deeply. "Who would want to do that?"

"Someone who was after the divine treasures?" Jack answered. "Those Gridhacker's group seemed to be a likely candidate, considering their in-depth knowledge on the quest and the temple. Still, something confused me though."

"What?" It was Peniel who asked for an explanation now.

"If they have the ability to tamper with the quest, then why not just directly give themselves the divine treasures? Why go through all these troubles?"

"Perhaps they have their limitations as well."

"Well, anyway. No need to ponder too much about it. We won't get the answer that way anyway. We will just have to beat the answers out of those guys when we see them again. Let's talk about another thing. Take a look at this book. Is it a good spell?" Jack said as he showed Peniel the technique book he had gotten from the duke.

"Your ability to set important matters aside is truly astounding," Peniel quipped with sarcasm, but he still studied the book.

"Myriad Ensnaring Chains?" She read. "Not bad, how did you get it?"

"It's the additional reward directly from the duke. Part of the rewards that you called pitiful. So, is it a good spell?"

"Remember the spell that had those crimson chains coming out and ensnared the Grim Sand Drake?" Peniel asked.

"This is that spell?" Jack asked back. "That was an advanced spell? I thought that was an Elite spell. How could an advanced spell manage to hold that beast? Even though it still managed to break the chains, the spell did hold it down for some time."

"Go ahead and learn the spell. You will know soon," Peniel said.

Again with her mysterious answer, Jack thought. But he still did as she said, he was going to learn it anyway one way or another. He activated the technique book's interface and accepted the learning option.

Myriad Ensnaring Chains (Active Skill, Evolving skill), level 1/20

Mark an area of 5 meters diameter, 3 chains with a length of 15 meters will come out of this area and ensnare anything that comes into range.

Range: 20 meters

Duration: 20 seconds

Mana consumed: 60

Cooldown: 5 minutes

The description did sound similar to what the duke had cast against the drake previously, though the duke's spell produced more than just three chains. Probably more chains would be added as the skill level increased, Jack assumed.

This spell was like the grandfather spell of Magic Bind. Jack thought It was even better than that blue chain spell Gridhacker had used on him. With a chain of length 15 meters coming out from an area of 5 meters diameter, it practically put the area affected by these chains to be 35 meters diameter. That was a very wide area of effect.

Jack then noticed a new type of description on the spell. "Evolving spell?" He asked.

"Yes." Peniel explained, "it meant that even though you can learn this spell as an advanced spell, once you change class to an elite one, this spell will automatically transform into an elite version of the same spell."

"You mean this spell will get even stronger?" Jack reconfirmed.

"It will."

Jack sucked in a breath. He had gotten offensive, defensive, and movement skills. Now adding this spell that could effectively control the enemy's movement in a large area, his arsenal of skills and spells could be said to be almost complete.

One regrettable thing about this spell was it took four runes to form its spell formation. He had to practice in order to be able to cast it efficiently during battle. However, he suspected that once the spell evolved into its Elite form, the spell formation would also change to needing five runes, because he remembered that was how many runes on the spell formation when Duke Alfredo cast it.

The duke was having a chat with Commander Quintus when Jack was conversing with Peniel and admiring his new spell. Their chat had ended so Jack asked the duke, "so, what now?"

"Now that the target of our expedition has been achieved, we will return as soon as possible to the capital. I will let you coordinate with your friends for the journey back arrangement. We will leave first thing tomorrow."

"Got it," Jack said. Peniel who was sitting on his shoulder suddenly uttered, "time to hide."

She then vanished into her hidden dimension just before John and the others came to sight. As they approached, John asked, "what's that ugly thing on your head?"

Jack ignored the guy, but John's next question took him by surprise, "what's the deal with that fairy? Why does she disappear when we come?"

Jack was mum, he gave the guy a clueless expression.

"I know the fairy got something to do with you. Just call her out already," John insisted.

"Hm?" Jack continued to act.

"Do you forget already that I have binoculars?" John said as he took out the item.

"You have been watching?" Jack asked.

"Friend, I have been watching ever since that scary dude appeared."

"You did? Then why didn't you come rushing to help?"

"Are you kidding me? That guy can even immobilize Duke Alfredo there, you think ants like us coming here can contribute anything other than giving our lives away? The second he exhibited his power, I have everyone stopped, then we stayed and watched from a distance."

Jack was speechless.

"What? Do you expect us to be like you, rushing in blindly when a friend is in grave danger?" John asked when he saw Jack's expression.

"The notion would have been nice," Jack said.

"I don't do nice in case you haven't noticed," John replied. "But please know that we are resolved to avenge you if you died back there."

"Oh, wow. I'm touched," Jack said sarcastically.

"I know. I'm a good friend," John responded, intentionally or honestly didn't catch the sarcasm. "Now, how about you introduce us to that fairy friend of yours?"

Jack thought for a bit before calling Peniel out. She emerged and waved to John and the others. "This is Peniel," Jack introduced. "She is a high fairy."

"Hi, my name is John," John said.

"I am Jeanny."

As the others were about to say their names, Peniel said to them, "Don't bother. I know all your names. I've been with you throughout this expedition."

"Yes, she was with me all the time. You guys just cannot see her," Jack said.

"You devious secretive man, how many secrets are you still keeping from us? John said to Jack.

"Hey, every man is entitled to his own secret," Jack defended himself.

John didn't give him any attention anymore as he chatted with Peniel, Jeanny and the others joined in as well. It turned out Peniel was rather excited to converse with them as well. She was quite chatty after all, to have her only conversed with him all this time, he did feel some guilt after thinking about it. Perhaps he should stop asking her to hide from now on.

Out of their conversation with the fairy, the others found out that the fairy was the source of all the information that Jack had been claiming to have gotten from the library all this time. John gave him a deriding glance before returning his attention to the fairy. He seemed to be the most passionate in talking to the fairy, most probably trying to dig as much information as he could from her.

Seeing that Peniel did not mind, Jack just let them be. It was good to see her making friends as well. He couldn't just continue to treat him as his property.

The army rested on the outskirt of the temple, some soldiers were setting up camp within the temple. Everyone had made their preparation, after the night passed, they would start to journey back once the sun was up. The mood was light now that they knew they had succeeded in the expedition, all they had to do now was deliver the potion back to the Duchess.

Jack and the others camped outside the temple, they preferred the outdoor setup. They were gathering together around a bonfire as they chatted under the night sky. Peniel joined in the group chatting now that she was exposed. She especially liked to chat with Bowler as the guy never seemed to stop talking. John continued to try for more information from the fairy but she was not that feeble-minded. She only let out a little bit of information without giving too much.

Life in this world was not too bad, Jack thought. Well, that was considering if he did not think about the group who was intent on catching him while being assisted by an all-powerful God.

Chapter 389: Are You Thinking What I'm Thinking?

Jack left the group as he took a little walk around the ruins under the night sky. He didn't go too far and stayed within the perimeter the army had set up. The army had combed the surroundings and they found no sign of Gridhacker or the cult's presence but it was still better to stay vigilant.

As he decided to sit on a small slab of a broken-down structure to rest and enjoyed the quiet night sky, he heard a woman's voice, "how are you doing?"

Jack turned and saw Jeanny came by and sat next to him. "It's not every day someone goes up against a God and survived. How are you holding?"

"I'm fine. Thank you for the concern," Jack replied. "It was pretty dangerous though."

"Yes, John described what he saw through his binoculars."

"It was rather unsettling, knowing there is such a powerful creature targeting you."

"But you are protected by the other Gods and Goddess, so you shouldn't worry too much about it."

"There is still the matter of that mysterious organization, they called their guild World Maker. That name was not any of the previous famous game guilds, but I think they know the reason why we are sent to this world."

"Really? Why do you say that? Aren't they simply a group of players who stumbled upon a rare quest that involved themselves with the cult?" It was John who asked, suddenly appeared as well. He came and took the liberty to sit on Jack's other side.

When John saw the two staring at him, he said, "what? I am not disturbing anything, right? You people aren't dating or anything like that, are you?"

Jack ignored the tease, he related the full story about what had happened to him since the world first turned. Including how he got his second class and how he stumbled upon Goddess Serenity. How he later encountered the fragments of maps that later brought all of them to this place. And about who Sunset originally is, how he had infiltrated this expedition with full knowledge of what awaited here. Then came this mysterious group who was after the Divine Treasure he had acquired from the dungeon boss, till their confrontation earlier today.

Jeanny and John were quiet as they digested Jack's story.

"That was quite a lot to digest on," Jeanny commented. "But from your story, that group indeed seemed to have more knowledge about this world than the average players."

"So that thing on your left eyes is the one that allowed you to detect others' positions?" John asked.

"Yes, it is called God-eye monocle. Some from that mysterious group also possessed it. This was also originally Sunset's, uh, I mean Sunrise's."

"From your story, I reckon all alien entity items have a 100% chance to drop when the owner was killed. The next time you encounter that group again, target the one that wears the monocle. Once you get an extra one, please remember I reserve one first."

Jack gave him a side-eye. This was the issue he prioritized on?

"That mysterious group said they wanted to bring you somewhere alive, does that mean they have a way to take away that Divine Treasure you have merged with? Are they really capable of something like that? Aren't your second class also gained after fusing with a legendary item? Can they take that away as well?" Jeanny asked.

Now this woman was more serious and reasonable to talk with, Jack thought. He said, "Honestly, I have no idea what this group can and cannot do. I don't even know how many people they have."

"It was indeed unsettling dealing with people whose existence is still concealed."

"It is," Jack lamented.

"You are vulnerable being alone like this. You better go and join a guild. At least with more people, you should have more protection. They can also provide aid and backup when that group comes at you again."

"Nah, I hate being in a guild. No freedom. Too many restrictions."

"Then make your own guild," John suggested. "As a leader, you will be free to do what you want."

"Hahaha, very funny. What kind of members do you think want a guild where the leader goes off on his own doing whatever he likes? I am only good at fighting, I'm not really a leader material or a people person. I have no problem leading a small team, but asking me to organize a guild with hundreds of members is a long shot."

"I get you, friend. I'm good at planning, but it will be a miracle to find people willing to follow all my plans. Mostly it was by manipulation that they do what I ask. And I am also not the type that likes to be ordered around, that's why I'm not in any guild all this time."

"Well, if it is me, I had been in a guild before, as Storm here is aware. It's difficult to be in a guild if their ideology is too different than yours," Jeanny told them. "I have no problem leading, people naturally follow me and I kinda enjoy that actually. But in a fighting game, I am only of average skill, so not many I can inspire. I am also not much of a thinker, and I think a leader who can't think ahead of the future is not a complete leader."

She then sighed, but after a few seconds, she thought of something. She turned and saw the two were also looking at her. They then looked at each other silently before Jack asked, "are you two thinking what I am thinking?"

"I think I'm thinking what you are thinking," Jeanny said.

John said, "if you are thinking about the sexy waitress from the Raven's Den, then I guess we are thinking the same thing."

Jack and Jeanny gave him a weird look.

"I'm kidding!" John chuckled. "It was obvious what the three of us are thinking. We want to pool our expertise together and formed a guild, don't we? A guild with us three as the leaders."

"Yeah, with the three of us covering each other's strength and weakness, we should be able to provide decent leadership to the guild," Jeanny said.

"As long as we don't disagree on the general direction the guild is heading," John said. "Problem with multiple leaders arrangement is that there might be a chance where we disagree, and that usually takes time to smooth over and will cause inefficiency during decision-making."

"I think we work pretty well together, so that shouldn't be a problem," Jeanny said.

"I don't care how you organize the guild as long as I'm given free rein," Jack commented.

John and Jeanny looked at Jack. John then said to Jeanny, "if we are going with this, I have a feeling it will just be the two of us doing most of the leadership works."

"I think that should not be a problem," Jeanny said. "If we have a difficult dungeon to conquer, or need some other guilds whacked, we can send him."

John nodded, "that sounds like a good arrangement."

"Hey, why did it sound like I am more of a lackey than a leader?" Jack protested.

"In that way, you will be more free, ain't that what you like?" John asked.

"Well, yes, but..."

"Then it's settled. You will be our executioner!" John proclaimed. "Any monster or player we need vanquishing, we will call for you."

Jeanny giggled, "sound like we are really doing this."

"Of course, first thing first. We need to agree on a general direction for this planned guild first," John said. "As I said, it will be a problem later if we have a disagreement. We need to set a common understanding of what we are trying to achieve by building this guild, a framework we can all adhere to."

"Like a tenet," Jeanny said.

"A tenet, a creed, a dogma, or whatever you call it. We will then revolved the guild's principles around this groundwork. I have seen many guilds failed halfway or veered too far away from what the founders had envisioned when the guild was started. If we are doing this, I don't want us to fall into the same blunder. If we do this, we do this right!"

"All right. Then, what is our vision? What are we building this guild for? What do we wish to achieve?"

"That's easy," Jack stood up, he took out his new Storm Breaker and pointed it to the sky. "Our guild's tenet will be what we all gamers strife for. It's for FUN...!!!"

John and Jeanny gazed at him with that silly pose of his for a bit before turning away and said to each other.

"Forget about him. What do you propose?"

"I think we should take some time to think about this. It will be the most important thing for our guild after all."

"Hey, hey, you two, I'm being serious," Jack interrupted their discussion. "What's wrong with having fun as a purpose?"

"Your head is the wrong one," Jeanny chided. "How can fun be a purpose?"

Chapter 390: Returning To Thereath

"Well, the entire idea of a game is to have fun. We have ended in a game world. What's wrong with having fun? If you compare our..."

"I just can't agree with such a shallow purpose," Jeanny objected.

"No, no, no, let him finish. I think he is onto something here," John said.

"Why, thank you! As I said, if you compare our life with the one before this world. How do you see these two separate lives? Can't you remember how boring it is before? We are getting confined by all those rules and routines, and that's all we know about how to live. We need to do a lot of stuff that most of the time we don't like to, just to get by. We might be doing one work at a time and thinking that things might get better, but we are still doing the same things five years later. Or different job but basically the same thing. In that old world, the rules were pretty much decided, and the force in power was pretty much established. Those forces will pretty much remain in power while those powerless toiled endlessly just to manage. In this world, however, we are all new slates. Everyone is still learning the ropes here. Everyone has the same chance to make something of themselves. Even commoners like us have the chance to write our own rule in this new world. There are adventures everywhere. A lot of unknowns to be explored, and we are given the means, the power, to do these adventures and write these new rules. What else if it is not fun?"

"Okay, we can ignore him now," John told Jeanny.

Jack rolled his eyes at him, the fellow was still as annoying as ever. He said, "come on, you two. There is no need to think too much about a purpose. The most simple thing is usually the best because it comes from our hearts. If we try to think up a complicated purpose, it will just end up making it difficult for everybody."

"It is very like you, giving advice to not think about something too much," John criticized.

"I like that saying that it comes from our hearts, though," Jeanny commented. "Cheesy, but nice!"

"Come on, too much thinking is not always good," Jack insisted. "Now, let's try this. The two of you say the first thing that comes to your mind for our guild purpose. No need for something grand, no need to be afraid that it sounds stupid as well. Just a simple thought, at this moment, now! Start with you first, John. You have three seconds, go!"

John touched his chin with a thought, while Jack made a gesture as if he was counting.

"Well, if you insist. Okay, well, then the first thing that comes to me is to make the guild the best ever in this world!"

"Heh, always peg you for an ambitious one," Jeanny commented.

"Most thinkers are, my lady," John responded.

"Now, you, Jeanny. You have three seconds as well. Go!" Jack said.

"Uh... you are becoming rather pushy with this now, aren't you?" Jeanny said. Jack did not respond to her words, he continued to give her his hand-sign of counting to three.

"Er, um... Friendship then! I want our guild to become the most harmonious and loyal community ever," Jeanny said quickly as Jack's fingers counted to three.

"Okay, then that's our guild's tenet!" Jack proclaimed.

"Huh?" John and Jeanny were muddled by his words.

"A fun guild composed of a collection of close-knit friends that was aiming for the top!" Jack declared.

"What the hell, you just go and combine all our thoughts together?" John commented.

"Hehe, why not? We will be the three leaders, right? Then the guild's purpose should come equally from the three of us."

"I actually kind of like that," Jeanny said with a giggle.

"See, two against one. It's settled then!" Jack exclaimed.

"What two against one. I never say I object it," John said.

"Great! Then we have reached a unanimous decision in our first guild's meeting. I would say that's not bad for a start," Jack uttered.

"Leave it to Storm to speed things along," Jeanny said.

"Yeah, he is the embodiment of that sportswear commercial, just do it," John added. "Now we just need to find enough members to register. The rule said we will need at least thirty members to form a guild."

They heard some footsteps. They turned and saw Peniel leading the others coming to them. "So, the three of you are here," Bowler said as he approached them with the others. "I was worried if something had happened. We are not in a safe zone, shouldn't wander around too much."

Jack, John, and Jeanny looked at each other and laughed. "Ask and you shall receive," Jeanny commented.

"What are you laughing about," Bowler asked.

"Yeah, don't keep us out, man? Did something good happen?" The Man added.

Jack then informed them about their plan to build a guild. He asked them if they were interested to join. All of them did. The Man was in doubt for a bit, Jack told him he could still lead his own Men of Solidarities gang within the guild. They would just be a bigger family, that's all. He agreed then.

There were only nine of them there. Another two had not survived the dungeon, Weird Trap and the last of The Man's underlings. They had been killed by a trap when they failed to solve the puzzle in their private room during the last part of the dungeon. There were twenty-four of them at the start, if not counting Sunrise. So they only need six more to reach the required number to form a guild.

Easily solved, The Man had said. He had more members that would follow his lead to join. It was only because they had not passed their advanced class test that they had not joined this expedition. But from his messaging with the rest of his members, all of them had managed to pass at this moment. Not that it mattered, Jack would accept them even if they were still basic class as long as The Man trusted them.

There were also more of Jeanny's friends. Some Jack had met, some were unfamiliar to him. She was currently in the process of recruiting them via messages.

The most worthless was John. The people who agreed to join on his behalf were only Weird Trap and Pointy Tip. The guy had no other friends, or at least no other friends that were willing to follow him. Talk about asocial.

"So, let us go back and register the guild right away," Jeanny said.

"Now?" Jack asked.

"Yeah, we all have the Town Return scrolls, right? Why wait?" She asked.

"Now who is being hasty? You are getting influenced by him too much," John said to her while pointing at Jack. "Let's spend the night here first. We will say goodbye to the duke and the rest before we leave. Otherwise, it will be rude if we just disappear without a word."

"You are right. Okay, let's have a pre-celebration of the forming of our guild!" Jeanny said.

"Good idea! Bowler, go to the army supply station and buy some wine to celebrate," John said.

"Why me?!" Bowler protested.

Jack followed them back to the bonfire to do a second round of partying. He was actually not so into the idea of leaving immediately, because he was still expecting to exploit the massive experience gains from using the vanguard troops of the army. He still had one and a half million exp points to feed his greedy new inherent skill, Lightning God Blessing, after all.

But he understood the expression of striking while it's hot. Everyone was so fired up to establish this guild. He was not going to kill the mood, so he followed along. Peniel did say he knew a way to level up fast, he would just depend on her method later after the guild's business was done.

The next morning, they did just as they planned. They came to Duke Alfredo and Commander Quintus to let them know of their leavings. Since the expedition was completed, the duke had no problem letting them leave as well.

Jack went and said his goodbye to Prince Alonzo as well. The prince asked Jack to come to visit him again when he was back in the capital. Jack promised that he would. Regarding the quest of Escorting Prince Alonzo, he surmised that the quest's objective should have been achieved now that Prince Therribus' lackey, Ronnie, had been taken care of. The prince should be safe with the duke on their way home.

Once everyone was ready, they took out the Town Return scroll at the same time and activated it.

They appeared one by one on the teleport portal of Thereath.

"Ah, we are finally back!" Bowler announced.