

## World 411

### Chapter 411: Guild's Power Crystal

"By the way, why have them gather food? Why not the other resources?" Jack asked.

"Once we started training Footsoldiers, we will need lots of food to support them," John replied. "Our priority is to recruit as many footsoldiers as we can afford in the remaining week of our protection status."

"What about coins?"

"We only spent coins when we recruit. They don't need one for upkeep, only food."

Peniel added, "that's for footsoldiers, once you get to advanced units, some will also need coins for upkeep."

"Talking about footsoldiers, here," Jack took out the Squire Insignia and Bandit Archer insignia.

"Where did you get these?" John asked with a surprise after reading their descriptions.

"Hehe, your grandfather here has his ways," Jack replied with a proud tone.

"Uh-huh," John gave a non-committal response, dousing Jack's prideful expression.

"You have returned," They heard Jeanny's voice as she approached.

"Good, now that the three of us are here. We need to talk about the next step," John said.

"What next step?" Jack asked.

"Remember our tenet?"

"Of course, we are to build a guild that focused on fun!" Jack declared.

"Did you only remember your part?" John said annoyingly.

"Hehe, so it is possible to annoy you as well," Jack said with a satisfied expression.

Jeanny chuckled, she then said, "A fun guild with close-knit friends aiming for the top, what about it?"

"Well, I didn't mention it before but aiming for the top is impossible with limited members of only close-knit friends. We will need sufficient manpower for that. So we need to recruit as many members as possible. This should not be a problem, considering the countless applications we have received since this afternoon."

Jack had also received the ping notification from his Guild status window. They could only invite someone from his Friend list to be a member of the guild, but others who wished to join a guild could also go to the Guilds Association and sent an application to a guild of their choosing. These applications would then be received by the leaders or the Councilors, if their applications were approved, then they would become a member.

Jack had been ignoring these applications because he thought they would only accept people they trusted.

"I was wondering about that, why do we get so many applications all of a sudden? Last few days no one applied at all," Jack asked.

"It was because we have occupied the first rank in the guild chart," Jeanny answered.

"Guild chart?"

"Yes, it is some kind of a ranking system that is available to the public inside the Guilds Association."

"So that's why..." Jack uttered. Jack had also been contacted by Silverwing and William of Wellington, congratulating him for his guild sudden rise to the top. He had no idea what they mean at the time. Both extended a desire to work together and form an alliance, considering the three of them were the enemies of the coalition.

Jack replied with a courtesy that it was a great idea. Having a friend was always good. However, he also understood that being friends amongst the guild had more to do with political power rather than true friendship. He had a good feeling about Silverwing, he was not so sure though about William of Wellington. He didn't know the guy too well, after all.

"How do you know about it? Did some of our members go to the Guilds Association and saw the chart?" Jack asked.

"No, Selena had messaged me asking about how we managed that, since she saw my name as the leader," Jeanny replied.

"Ask her if Queen Magenta is aware as well? I bet that crone must be hitting the roof when she learned about this," Jack said mischievously.

Jeanny ignored him. She continued, "our guild had managed to shoot to the top because our guild has become level 2 directly after gaining this headquarter, overtaking the other older guilds. So our guild can be said to have become famous overnight. If we want to increase our numbers, it should be now when interest on our guild is high."

"I agree. We should capitalize on this and accept as many members as we can," John said.

"But if we just accept anyone, won't that have the potential to ruin the harmony of our current members?" Jack asked. He didn't want to be in a guild that just ended up striving to be the best no matter the cost. That was the opposite of fun. It was not the reason he played games for. "Also, there will be high possibilities of many spies amongst those new members, considering we have become the number one guild on the chart. Everyone will want to know how we do it."

"I have no doubt about that," John said. "Don't worry, I didn't forget about our tenet. That's why I have thought of this membership structure."

John spread out a paper with a sketch on it. In that sketch, he saw three circles, each within the others. The biggest circle was marked with outer members, the second biggest in the middle was Inner members, the smallest circle inside in the center was core members.

"It was just a common member structure of a guild, what's so special about it?" Jack asked.

"Common doesn't mean it's bad. It simply means it is a trusted method that has been used very often. How we interpret this structure is the important part. As you mentioned, the close-knit friends will be these core members. It will be the 54 starting members we have now. We won't add any more to these core members unless all three of us agree to it. These core members will be the ones privy to all our arrangements and guild plans. The guild rank of Councilor and Officer will only be picked from this core members."

He then added, "For the four available Councilors, I suggest we picked Bowler, Flame, The Man, and Trinity Down. What do you two think?"

"I can understand three of your picks, but I am surprised you also pick Bowler. Aren't you always poking fun at him? I thought you are looking down at him," Jack asked.

"The guy did have his shortcomings, but one could not deny his ability to make friends. That guy was possibly the one with the most friends among us. We can see him as our guild ambassador."

"I have no problem with this selection," Jeanny said.

"Seconded," Jack agreed as well.

"Okay. For the ten Officers, I and Jeanny will talk later. Let me return to this membership structure again. The Outer members will be the ones that we mass recruited. These people will be our main labor force. Yes, there might be spies inside. Yes, there might be rotten apples inside. But that doesn't matter. They will just be here to work and in return, they can spend their guild contribution points to earn benefits from the guild. This group will be applied strict rules. They will have minimum contribution points required and minimum coin donations for each week, failure to do so will have them get kicked out of the guild. No tolerance here."

"As for the inner members are the ones who had racked up sufficient contribution points compared to others and has stayed long enough with us. These members will be given a discount for the contribution required to use guild services, and also more leniency for the minimum contribution required per week. But they will still not be given access to our guild secrets and plans, they will still mainly serve as our labor force like the outer members."

Jack lifted his hand to ask a question. "I thought we still don't have a service to provide at this time? Our blacksmith and other facilities are still not up and running. Our warehouse is also still empty. Giving them such a harsh requirement, won't that just cause them to quit?"

"Did you not check the description of our guild's Power Crystal yet?" John asked.

"Oh, um, I was busy, so... what's that structure do?" Jack asked sheepishly.

Jeanny was the one who answered him, "It gives a boost of 10% extra exp to all our guild members who were grinding within this region. Since the areas around the capital are also included as our region, so most of the current players' favorite grinding areas are within our regions. Once players find out about this buff, I believe many more will come running to join us."

"That's right," John said. "Moreover, that is only the passive effect, the power crystal also has an active effect. By paying 10 contribution points, a guild member can enjoy a 10% attribute boost, 5% damage and defense boost for 3 hours. This passive effect can be stacked up to a maximum of 12 hours. So if you pay 40 contribution points. You can go out there to grind for 12 hours before you need to return to recharge that boost."

"Wow, so good? Even I am tempted," Jack exclaimed.

## **Chapter 412: Generous Donation**

"That's why we will have no worry even if we place strict requirements for those outer members," John said. "Many will want to take their places if they quit. Also, there is another thing that had caused many independent players to flock to us."

"Oh? What other thing?" Jack asked.

"Because one of the leaders of our guild is the Demon of Crestfall Plain. Since that time when your rumor started going around and when you beat all the challengers. You have gotten rather famous. Many have wanted to become your friends, but they are afraid. Now that they could be in the same guild as you, they can be a part of your group without having to face you directly."

"Wait a minute... Why are they afraid of me?" Jack asked in confusion.

"Because there has been a nasty rumor about you killing most of your friends for even a small offense, like looking at you in the wrong way, talking too loud at you, and such."

"What bullshit is that? Which a\*shole spread that kind of rumor?"

"Yours truly," John said.

"What the...! Why did you do that?!"

"Do you prefer to getting swarm by all those players every step of the way when you are in town? I did this for your sake!"

"Uh, if you put it that way, then I guess I have to thank you," Jack said. But after a while, he added. "I find it difficult to believe you do it for my sake. Tell me the truth, why do you spread that nasty rumor."

John shrugged, "call it a fit of irritation. Everyone kept on saying that the coalition was beaten back solely because of you. Did no one remember that it was my brilliant strategy that was the one that had defeated the coalition?"

"Peh! Such a narrow-minded strategist," Jack spat.

"I'm still smarter than you!" John retorted.

"I'm still stronger than you!" Jack shot back.

"Well, if you guys are done quibbling. Can we please get back to the serious matter?" Jeanny said. "With the situation where we are the only one with guild headquarter, we have no competitor. We have to capitalize on it as best as we can. And from what Peniel told us, there will be more benefits with later

structures. As long as we can keep this headquarter for ourselves, we don't need to worry about our guild's future. That's why we need to do all we can to defend it. With additional members, we will also have sufficient player army in addition to our Squire troops."

"That' right," John agreed. "Even if some of those players can't be trusted, we can always put them in the front line as cannon fodder."

"Why do you always have to make everything sound so bad?" Jeanny complained.

"Great... Hey, by the way, where is the fun part of our tenet?" Jack asked.

John gave him a glance before saying, "The core members have no obligation. Even if they don't contribute, they won't get kicked out of the guild. So they can have as much fun as they like. Satisfy?"

"That's more like it. Games should have more freedom," Jack grinned.

"Freedom is overrated. Do you know what total freedom is? Chaos! I don't like you? Then I am free to kill you as long as I am powerful enough. Do you want to live in a free society like that? Civilization was born out of rules and regulations. It is the tool we create to combat the freedom that bred chaos."

"But too many rules will make you a dictator. Who would want to leave in a society like that?" Jack countered.

"That's why we have to maintain a balance. Are we going to debate about philosophy here?" Jeanny mediated. "Let's get back to the matter at hand. If we give such leniency to the core members, won't that create jealousy with the outer and inner members?"

"Don't worry. If they complain, we just send Storm their way to straighten them up," John said. "He is the one that insisted on fun, so he will be the one that takes care of the consequences."

"No problem. Anyone dare to complain, I will whoop their asses!" Jack declared.

Jeanny shook her head helplessly.

Jack then told them about Silverwing and William of Wellington's proposal for an alliance. John said he would think about this further. If they went into an alliance, a ground rule would have to be decided. Jack was never good with political relationships, so he said he would let the two of them decide on it. He however vouched for Silverwing and told them that he could be trusted.

Jeanny also mentioned that he might try to make peace with Wicked Witches. She was after all an ex-member of that guild. It would not be good if their two guilds are enemies.

Jack told her that with Queen Magenta's personality, it would be a hard sell. Not to mention that guild was in a coalition that had been in conflict with most members of their guild in the past. Jack said not to expect too much friendliness from that guild.

He, however, also told her that if possible, tried to poach Selena or other competent Wicked Witches members to their guild. Jeanny replied by rolling her eyes at him.

Jack left Peniel with John and Jeanny as he went outside to grind monsters around the Heavenly Citadel. The headquarter was still located in the wilderness, so there were monsters wandering around in the vicinity.

Yet, the monsters' levels were not as high level as the Bandit Outpost's outlaws, those outlaws had been boosted due to the outpost upgrade from small to normal-sized. The natural level of the monsters around this part was around level 25-30, mostly populated by the Earth Salamanders which Jack had fought before he discovered the Bandit Outpost in the past.

He met with The Man's team. Some were playing bodyguards to the workers who were constructing the barrack, some were escorting the two workers who were harvesting food from the grassland and forest nearby. With their level and number, dealing with the normal monsters around this part was not a problem. It was a good exp gathering activity as well.

He also saw Fierce Flame with them. Her Savage Wind Wolf was dashing around the slow Earth Salamanders as it dodged their acid breath. Once in a while the wolf body turned into a blur as it blitz around the salamander, damage number appeared as it performed its blitz attacks. The salamanders were so distracted by the Savage Wind Wolf that Flame just stood in her place and kept shooting arrows at the salamanders like nobody's business.

This was the first time he had seen the Savage Wind Wolf in action. All the time before when they were together in the expedition and during the raid on the Bandit Outpost, they had always fought against a much higher level of monsters, so Flame never summoned her pet out to fight. Now that Jack saw their coordination, he admitted that a strong pet could indeed enhance an Archer's prowess by a large deal.

Jack said a brief hi to all of them before rushing away. He ran around slaying any monsters he encountered. He made sure not to wander too far otherwise Peniel would get teleported to him.

The next morning, the four met again in the Guild Hall before Jack took off.

"So, what did you talk about last night?" Jack asked the three.

"Guild business, something a bogus leader like you had no need to know of," John replied.

Jeanny giggled. "Apart from discussing more features of this guild headquarters, we were also preparing a guide for the members."

"A guide?"

"Yes, a general guide on this world, the advanced classes, the elite classes, and the standard skills of these classes. Some more detailed explanations for special kinds of skills like an Archer's Pet Taming skill. Also where to go to change class, what to prepare. About factions. Somethings like that."

John then added, "of course, we don't give this guide to just everyone. Outer members will not get any guide. Only inner members can see this guide, but even then it will only be general guides. Something that I believe other guilds are also already privy to. The more detailed guide will only be available to our core members. These core members will be our main strength, so we need them to help them improve as fast as possible."

"Great, then I will leave the guild in your two capable hands," Jack announced.

The two didn't respond, they just gave him a cold look.

"Come on, I'm not bailing. I really have to go because I have something important to do," Jack said.

"Here, I will donate these coins to the guild. Take it as compensation for my absence, okay?"

Jack opened his guild status window and did the donation. John and Jeanny opened their guild window as well. When they saw the number of coins entered, both of their eyes bulged out.

"That was generous of you," Peniel commented as she sat on Jack's head.

Jack had donated 100 gold coins, earning 1000 contribution points in exchange. He didn't have much use of the contribution points at this time, but he figured the guild would require the coins for fast development. Although the squire would not need coins for upkeep, they still required coins when recruiting, so this donation should give John and Jeanny an easier time to plan ahead.

"Well, in this case, you are forgiven," John said. "Now scram. We will call you again if we need something."

"Thank you, Storm. You take care of yourself. Don't be too reckless," Jeanny said.

"I will. You take good care of yourself as well," Jack said to Jeanny, purposefully ignoring John.

"Asking him to not be reckless is the same as talking to a brick wall," Peniel commented.

"No one asked you," Jack said to the fairy.

### **Chapter 413: Going On A Personal Expedition**

After bidding them another farewell, he went out of the Guild Hall and came into the main foyer. There were many new faces outside. These were the new players who just joined their guild. The Man and Bowler were busy organizing them.

The Guild Hall was not a place where everyone could go into, as it housed the guild core. The platform for controlling the headquarter's interface was also in this hall, thus the entrance to the Guild Hall could be set to only allow specific members to enter.

Jack walked quickly avoiding contact with the new recruits. He went to the room that housed the guild's Power Crystal first. He had so many contribution points so he decided to get the active buff. He paid 40 contribution points for a 12 hours buff. He then went to the teleportation chamber. Pointy Tip was waiting for him there.

Jack had asked Tip and Bowler to concoct several alchemical products for him. He had messaged them to come to the teleportation chamber to give him the ones they had produced. Since Bowler was busy with the new recruits, he had passed his potions to Tip.

Tip handed Jack 50 Regeneration Potion, 50 Rejuvenation Potion, and 20 Poison Salve. Jack had provided them with the coins to buy the ingredients, hence they could produce these numbers. They were happy about it since they could increase their Alchemist's proficiency.

For the Poison Salve, 20 was the maximum number Tip could produce since there was no more poison gland available. Jack had asked Dylan to procure some and gave them to Ellie. If Ellie got the ingredient, she would contact Tip. Jack had introduced the two.

Jack looked at the detail of the Poison Salve.

Poison Salve (Rare Consumable)

Applied on a physical weapon.

The applied weapon has a 50% chance to inflict Poison and Weakness status.

Add 20% earth damage.

Duration: 2 hours

The duration was less than the Whetstone, but the buff was better, even than an enhanced Whetstone. His Storm Breaker already had the ability of 15% chance to inflict poison status. If he applied this Poison Salve to it, it would most likely inflict poison two out of three slashes.

The 20% damage boost was the same as the enhanced whetstone, but this one caused Earth damage, so for one who had no earth resistance, they would receive more damage even if they had a high defense. Someone might complain about a poison salve causing earth damage, but Jack didn't bother about it.

Probably because the creator of this world wanted to keep it simple to seven types of elemental damage. Well, then again, there was also that chaos damage. Peniel also mentioned that there was one other type that was similar to chaos damage as it also had no registered resistance against it. Peniel didn't tell him though what that last damage type was.

After storing the potions and poison salves, he activated the teleportation device.

He teleported to Thereath first before paying another fee to teleport to Thesewal. Once he arrived there, he registered the guild portal with this Portal Zone in Thesewal. Now, one could use the guild's portal to teleport to Thesewal, though of course if one was not a member of the Kingdom Faction, they would immediately get expelled by the guards guarding the portal. Jack had informed Jeanny to set a restriction in the Teleportation Chamber so that not everyone could select the option to teleport to Thesewal.

He went to complete his faction quest which was delivering a parcel to this town. In the quest description, it said it was to be delivered to the infirmary. He had gone there the last time he was here, so he had no problem finding the place quickly.

When he went in, the place was much different than the last time he was here. Last time the place had been turned into an emergency hospital with bunk beds all over the place. Now those bunk beds were gone already, leaving just a few of them, separated by walls made of curtains. The place looked more spacious and neat now.

He immediately saw someone he recognized. He called out to the person, "Yo, Albert! You never seem to leave this place, do you?"

Albert turned around with an annoyed face, who the hell called him in such a disrespectful way?



"It's you! That impolite outworlder! I see you are still as rude as ever," Albert replied. "Oh, I see you even got a pet," he added when he saw Peniel who was hanging around on Jack's shoulder.

"Hey, you are very rude yourself!" Peniel complained.

"Oh, come on. I thought we have bonded since the last time? You even asked Gus to give me a recipe for the Basic Regeneration Potion. Doesn't that say that you like me already?"

"I like your sister! I am just giving that as a small reward for you helping solve that disease problem from turning into an epidemic. I don't like to owe people anything."

"Ah, look at you, why can't you just be honest with yourself? Anyway, here is a package for this infirmary. I'm not sure who to give it to. There is no description on it."

"A package?" Albert received the parcel. He checked on it for a while before saying to Jack, "wait here a moment." Then he went away in swift steps.

"Hey! Why should I wait?" Jack called. Albert was already gone into another room with the parcel.

"Should I just leave?" Jack asked Peniel.

"Yeah, just leave that rude person," Peniel replied, she was still grumpy after being called a pet.

Though Peniel agreed to it, Jack still decided to stay. The guy's tone sounded serious. Also, Jack had known him to be not the type that joked around.

Albert soon returned and gave an even smaller parcel to Jack.

"What's this?" Jack asked in bewilderment.

"I need you to send this to the grand healer at the infirmary in Themetus," Albert replied.

"What the hell! Do you think I am a postman?" Jack complained. At the same time, he received a notification, "update to current kingdom faction quest, Delivering parcel to Theseval, you need to deliver another parcel to the city of Themetus in order to complete the quest."

'What the... It can do that? This is entrapment! How can a quest tell you to do one thing and then change to a completely different thing?' Jack complained in his mind.

'Well, sometimes that can happen,' Peniel answered him through her mind also. 'so, are you going to reject? You will consider failing the entire quest if you reject. Anyway, the place we are going to is coincidentally close to that city. We can go there once you are done accumulating the exp points for the Lightning God Barrage.'

'And use the Portal Zone there to go back to Thereath or Heavenly Citadel. Yes, that sounds like a good plan.'

"Okay, I accept," Jack said as he received the small parcel from Albert.

"One thing. Do not open it!" Albert warned.

"What do you take me for? I pride myself as a reliable postman!" Jack replied.

"Who just now complained about being treated as a postman?" Peniel mocked.

Luckily this small parcel was not the kind of package that couldn't be stored inside a player's storage bag. Otherwise, Jack would have to tie it to his belt, but that would also mean a risk of losing it.

He didn't spend more time chit-chatting with the Chief Healer, nor did Albert show any interest in it. They said their farewell and Jack headed directly to the town exit. Jack thought at first to say hi to Guss, but decided against it. What if that commander ended up throwing him another request as well? He would never get to his destination if so.

Once he was out of town, he asked Peniel. "Which way?"

"Head West," Peniel answered.

Jack summoned his uncommon stallion and proceed to ride it to the West.

Jack vanquished the monsters on his way. Peniel chose a route where they only passed through an area with monsters at the average of level 30, so Jack had no problem dealing with them.

But he still prioritized traveling speed over monster grinding. It would be at his destination that he would focus on accumulating the exp. In his travel, he only fought if he had no other choice or if the monsters were on his hunting lists.

The journey was largely uneventful. On the morning of the second day after he departed from Theseval, he received another notification again about the race age thing. He was now two months old and the race skill: Limitless Potential, had changed from rank 1 to rank 2. It now provided him with HP +300, Stamina/MP +50, and all attributes except luck +2.

The HP increased was rather steep compared to the other for this race skill. He was glad of it of course. Player's HP was the one most lacking if compared to monsters and NPCs. He hoped that this stat could increase more in the future.

On the third day, an eventful matter occurred.

#### **Chapter 414: You Are A Player?**

He was riding through a barren wasteland, not quite a desert. The ground was hard, there were some trees and vegetation, but scant. The monsters populating this place were mostly ox-like creatures that attacked by charging their enemy using their horned heads. The monsters were around level 30 and were called Hulking Oxbeast.

This monster was not on his hunting list but he made time to kill at least one simply to collect its data into his Monster Book.

As he continued on this wasteland, he suddenly noticed a blue dot on his radar. A player?

"Peniel, you mentioned there is a large city nearby where we are going, right? Are we close already?"

"No, we are still around three days from our destination. That city is another two days away after that. Why?"

He was very surprised, that's why. Another player other than him so far away from main cities? Apart from his higher level and dual-class advantage, the reason he could roam like this in the wilderness was that he got Peniel who guide him through lower-level areas. Did this lone player had such an advantage in the knowledge of this world's geography as well?

"Can it be that World Maker group?" Peniel asked when she also noticed the blue dot.

"Probably, let's go check it out. That dot is alone. If it is one of that World Maker people, it's a perfect chance to capture him or her for interrogation."

"You bring a rope?"

"Of course!" Jack said as he revealed a rope with power runes etched on its surface. It was similar to the one Scarface had used on Bowler and the others when they were kidnapped. Jack did not know where Scarface got those ropes. The one he held was bought from the Magic Association shop the last time he was there. Peniel was flying around browsing other things when Jack saw this rope and bought it.

"I see you are prepared, let's go!" Peniel exclaimed.

"And I see you are awfully excited. Do you have a thing about tying people up?" Jack asked. Peniel ignored his joke question as she flew higher to get a better view.

Jack also went toward that lone blue dot. He unsummoned his steed when he got closer and crouched as he moved, trying to be stealthy going from one cover to the next.

The blue dot itself was not exactly lonely, there was actually a cluster of red dots not far away. Jack was rather puzzled by why those red dots were not attacking the blue one. They were rather close to each other to be within those monsters' area of perception. Was the player in hiding?

That should be the case, but then, how should he go about capturing the person without alerting that group of red dots?

Jack didn't stop moving as he had his thoughts. The place where the blue dot was hiding was in sight already. It was behind a pile of logs. There was also a shack not far away. That should be the place where the red dots were gathering if according to his radar.

There were also other scattered red dots moving around in the area. Jack hid when two such red dots passed through near him. After they passed through, he peeked out and saw two humans were walking away.

Outlaws?

"That is a hideout," Jack heard Peniel's voice. She had flown back down to his side again after making her survey.

"Hideout? The one you said like a miniature Bandit Outpost?" Jack asked.

"Yes."

"So there is a hideout core and a hideout boss inside?"

"Yes."

"If I destroy the hideout core without killing the boss. It will get sent to the jail in our guild headquarter?"

Peniel eyed him intensely. "Do you know that it is more difficult to destroy the core without killing the boss? You can do that last time because you have the manpower. Now you are alone. How do you suggest you can do that while the boss is attacking you?"

"Hm. Anyway, these outlaws' level is around what I can tolerate. Their numbers are also not so big. I should be able to take this hideout on. We will see later once I see how strong the boss is."

"Did you forget already about the player? What are you going to do about it?" Peniel asked.

"Did you manage to get a glimpse on that player while you are up there?" Jack inquired back.

"No, there were shrubs there. The person must be hiding inside that shrubs."

Jack thought for a bit before saying, "let's deal with the player first. This hideout won't go anywhere. The player, on the other hand, can run away if he or she saw me fighting the outlaws. Not to mention he might ambush me while I'm dealing with the outlaws."

After making sure that no red dot patrols coming in the vicinity, Jack crossed over to where the pile of logs was. By the layout, he bet that lone player was observing the shack where the hideout boss was at. So he approached from the opposite direction to avoid detection.

He slowed down his pace as he got closer to the shrubbery. He was not a Ranger who got the Silent Step skill. So he needed to manually ensure that he made no sound as he sneaked on his target.

When he could touch the shrubbery already, he waited until the patrolling red dots were further away. The blue dot was still not in motion inside the shrubs, which meant that it still did not register Jack's approach.

When he saw that the area was clear, he dashed into the shrubbery and parted the leaves away. He readied his Storm Breaker as the back of a crouching figure appeared in front of him. This figure turned around, and Jack saw the ugliest face he had ever seen.

The face was of a man, but his skin was green, rough. His mouth and nose were especially large, with two tusks coming up from his bottom jaw. Jack was so taken aback he yelped and fell backward. The ugly dude in front of him was even more panicky, he shrieked at the top of his lungs as he fell on his butt as well.

"Wa—wait...! You... you... you are an orc!" Jack exclaimed. He then looked again at his radar, making sure the blue dot was indeed the person right in front of him.

"Are you a player?" Jack finally asked.

The orc's frightened eyes suddenly changed upon Jack's last question. "Yo... you are a player as well? A human player...?"

At this time, the door to the shack opened. "Who is there?!" The outlaw inside called out. The orc's shriek was too loud that it alerted the outlaws inside the shack.

"Run!" Jack said to the orc.

"Run...? Aren't they human players as well?" The orc asked.

"Player? What the hell are you babbling about? They are outlaws."

"Outlaws?" The orc asked in bewilderment as he looked back at the shack. There were already four outlaws coming out from the shack, they were looking over to the shrubbery where the two were at.

"Monsters! They are monsters in human shapes. Now run!" Jack couldn't fight the outlaws while being curious about this orc player, so he decided to get him away first.

The orc finally reacted. Jack took the lead as the orc followed. The outlaws finally noticed them once they started running. Two of them took out a crossbow and shot at them. They continued to run as the bolts wheezing through.

"They are chasing!" The orcs informed.

"No shit!" Jack replied. "Just keep on running! They will turn back once we are far enough from that shack."

Jack turned to Peniel who flew beside him and asked, "Am I right?"

"Yes, the rule between monster settlement, bandit outpost, and hideout is similar," she answered.

True to their roles, the outlaws stopped chasing after a while and returned to where they came from. Jack and the orc stopped running then.

The orc was still panting while Jack observed him. He used Inspect on the orc.

Life Runner (Rogue, level: 24)

HP: 780/780

'Really a player,' Jack thought.

"Why can't I read your data? Are you really a player?" Life Runner asked. He must have just used his Inspect on Jack as well.

"I have an equipment that blocked other players' Inspect. My name is Storm Wind. Are you really an orc? Or are you using some kind of disguise?" Jack asked as his hand went to Life Runner's cheek and tried to pinch the face off.

"Hey! That hurts!" Life Runner exclaimed as he smacked Jack's hand away.

"Sorry. I just never saw an orc player before," Jack said.

"Same here. You are the first human player I met," Life Runner replied.

"The first? What do you mean? There are plenty of human players around. Where are you from?"

"I am from a city called Larabar."

"Larabar?" Jack had no idea where that was.

"It is one of the cities in Verremor Nation," Peniel informed.

## **Chapter 415: Comparing Stories**

"Verremor? How the heck do you even get to this place?" Jack was shocked. Even he had not made it to another country yet. How did this level 24 guy manage to cross countries all by himself?

"Well, in the library of Larabar, I've learned there is a country ruled by Human race named Themisphere," Life Runner said. "I've pointed out that there might be players out in that country who are using a human body instead of orcs. All my friends mocked me for it. So I researched the direction of this Themisphere country and set out to prove my theory. Turn out I am right. Hah! I want to see those as\*holes' faces when I told them about this."

"Before that, can you tell me where you are from? I mean, before you go into this game world. Which city are you from in the real life?"

"Sandrock City."

'Sandrock City? That's in a different country,' Jack thought. Was it because he was in a different country in real life so he was transported to a different country in this game world as well?

"What about you? Where are you from, bro?" Life Runner asked.

"I'm from Bay City," Jack answered.

"Bay City? Hey, I got some of my friends in Larabar that said they were from Bay City as well," Life Runner said.

'Oh, there goes my theory about different countries,' Jack thought.

He then asked, "So all the players in Larabar are Orcs? No humans?"

"Bro, don't even mention a human player. I haven't even seen any human NPC till not long before. The ones you called outlaws."

"Oh, so that's why you have been observing them."

"Yes, I thought they could be players at first. But I don't dare to get too close to use Inspect on them."

"Okay, let's get to the real important question here. How do you even travel so far until here? Verremor is another country from here..."

"So I am already in Themisphere?" Life Runner cut his sentence.

"Yes, you are in Themisphere already. Don't you know where you are going?"

"I only know the general direction. I cannot get a map to aid in my travel."

"Okay, back to my question. How do you make it so far here? I mean, you are still freakin' level 24. I can't believe you can travel so far surviving the monsters. How do you fight them with your level?"

"I don't fight them. I hide," Life Runner replied.

"Wow, you must be a master thief in real life to be able to sneak your way through the monster-infested wilderness," Jack commented.

"I think he means he uses Hide skill," Peniel said, then to Life Runner she asked, "Do you have Hide skill?"

"Yes, I have," Life Runner replied, then to Jack he said, "That's a pretty cool pet you got, bro. It can even talk. How did you get one?"

Peniel flew to beside Life Runner and then pulled his ear, "I am not a pet...!"

"Ouw! Ouw! That hurts...!"

"Hehe, you better apologize," Jack said to him, while in his mind he talked to Peniel with a playful tone, 'probably it's better if you go back to hiding in your hidden dimension if you don't want people to keep on calling you as my pet.'

"So, what does this Hide skill do?" Jack asked Peniel.

"It is as its name implied, It hides your presence. Sort of like an invisibility spell. But there is one major flaw in this skill. If any other presence, either players, natives, or monsters comes close enough, the skill will be canceled. Then his existence will be revealed."

"What distance is close enough?"

"Five meters radius from the skill user if the skill is level 1."

"Ah, I see. Five meters radius is a large area. This skill won't be useful for infiltration or ambushing, but to travel undetected through the wilderness is still possible. All he has to do is pay attention to not let any monster approach."

"Yes, this skill has no duration or cooldown, but it can't be used during combat. If you perform an attack or a skill, or are hit by a stray ranged attack, the skill will be canceled as well. You have to break out of combat to be able to activate the skill again."

"So it is mainly for traveling skill. No wonder you can survive the trip," Jack said to Life Runner.

Peniel added, "This Hide skill is very rare though, you are very lucky to have gotten it."

"But still, even with this skill. Venturing out all on your own into the unknown in a foreign world. Dude, that takes a lot of balls! You have my admiration," Jack commented.

"You give me too much compliment, I have always enjoyed traveling," Life Runner said. "I'm an avid adventurer as well in real life. I always like to visit new places, seeing new things. I play games once in a while though, so I am not that flustered when we suddenly get thrown into this world."

'Hey, why does this sound like someone he knows?' Jack thought. And then remembered, Sunset Walking, no, it was Sunrise Gazing now, who also had this kind of hobby or so he claimed.

"So, now that you found a human player. What are you going to do next? Are you going to return to Larabar?"

Life Runner shrugged. "Honestly, I don't know. I was just trying to find out if there are truly human players out here. It is really frustrating, you know? Getting thrown into a strange world and finding out you have been transformed into this... this grotesque form! I thought that perhaps finding a human player might give me a clue on how to turn back into a human."

"Uh..." Jack scratched his head. It was indeed very unfortunate if one was given an Orc race. When all this started, there was an option to choose class, but not for race. They were sort of getting thrown into a predetermined race. If he had not met Life Runner here, he wouldn't be aware that there were players of other races. Now he felt very fortunate to have been able to keep his human appearance. 'Wait!' He suddenly thought of something. If there was an Orc player, then the other countries...

He talked to Peniel using his mind, 'Peniel, does this mean that other races, the dwarves, the elves, and the others also have their own outworlders?'

'Yes, it should be so. The prophecy told that outworlders come to this world through all seven main races,' Peniel answered.

He then asked Life Runner, "Do you gained a skill when you gained one month of age?"

Life Runner nodded.

"What's the skill description?" Jack asked.

"The skill is called Toughness, currently at rank 1. It added 100 to HP, 30 to my Stamina, 3 to Strength, 2 to Reflex."

"Rank 1, not rank 2? You are not yet two months of age?"

"I am six days left before I turn two months."

Why was it different timing? But as for the age skill. It was as he suspected. The age skill was different for each race. The Human one gave a uniform 1 point to every attribute at Rank 1. Orc's one heavily promoted strength stat.

"Do you know a way for me to change into the human race?" Life Runner asked Jack.

Instead of answering, Jack turned to Peniel, who answered, "A race is not something you can change. Even if you choose to die and be reborn, you will still be of the same race."

"Sorry," Jack expressed his condolences.

Life Runner's shoulders drooped as his face showed disappointment. After a while, he asked weakly, "how do you come into this world anyway?"

Jack gave a short version of his story. The two of them compared their stories and found out they were largely the same. They have to go through Tutorial Period first where a certain number of players reached level 10 before an announcement was made to gather them together. Life Runner's tutorial period lasted longer than Jack's. That's when Jack realize why Life Runner's age was shorter. Because his tutorial period was longer, he entered this world at a later time. That's why Jack had turned two months old yesterday while Life Runner needed another six days.



"Well, then. Since there is nothing that can be done for this race thing..." Life Runner said dejectedly as he took out a Town Return scroll.

"Wait, wait!" Jack stopped him before he used the scroll. Life Runner looked at him puzzlingly.

"Before you go, how about doing me a favor?" Jack said with a grin.

#### **Chapter 416: Recruiting A Foreign Member**

"What favor?" Life Runner asked.

Before answering, Jack sent him a Friend request, which he accepted.

"How about helping me raid that hideout just now?" Jack said.

"What hideout?"

"The one that you are observing before. The shack with the outlaws inside."

"How to raid it? Those outlaws seemed quite strong."

"I will take care of those outlaws. You used that Hide skill of yours to sneak into the shack. You only need to destroy the hideout core inside."

"What's a hideout core?"

"When you go into the shack, you should be able to identify it. If not, Peniel here will tell you which one is the core."

"You want me to follow him?" Peniel asked.

"Isn't that risky?" Life Runner asked.

"Dude, you dare to cross country into unknown territories. Don't tell me you are afraid of this? I guarantee I won't let any of the outlaws go into the shack once you are inside."

"What's the benefit of raiding that hideout?"

"Because the rewards are very good," Jack said, and then turned to Peniel and asked, "right?"

"It was less than the rewards of Tiny-sized Bandit Outpost or Monster Settlement, but since it was occupied by higher-level monsters, the rewards should be better than the Lizardman Encampment you destroyed in the past."

"Hear that?" Jack asked Life Runner.

"I have no idea about what she has just said."

"It means the rewards are very good. We will divide fifty-fifty. Come on! Where is your sense of adventure?"

"My sense of surviving is better than my sense of adventure," Life Runner responded. "But fine, I will help you. All I have to do is just hack on a core you said to be inside the shack, right? It won't attack me back, right?"

"No, it won't," Jack said and sent him a party request. Jack then asked Peniel, "If one member in the party was in a guild while the other was not, if the core is destroyed without killing the boss, will the boss still go to the jail of the one with a guild?"

"Yes," Peniel answered.

"Oh, good. Save me the hassle. I thought I will have to persuade him to join the guild temporarily first. By the way, what happened if in the party there are members from two different guilds?"

"The boss will go to the one who did the more total damage to the hideout core."

"So, what should I do now?" Life Runner asked after accepting the Party invite.

"I have to prepare first," Jack said as he took out a Sweet Dumpling and a Poison Salve. He ate the first and applied the second to his Storm Breaker.

"What are those?" Life Runner asked.

"They're stuff to increase my damage," Jack replied, then described the detailed function of each to him.

"Cool, can I have some as well? Should take me less time to damage the core then."

"Sure, here." Jack gave him a Whetstone and Sweet Dumpling. "This whetstone also increased damage to a melee weapon. For this Poison Salve, sorry, I can't give it to you. The material required to produce this thing is rare. I only have limited stock."

"No problem, but what rare material that thing requires?"

"Small Poison gland," Jack answered.

Life Runner who was eating the sweet dumpling paused after hearing it. He then took out something from his bag. "Do you mean small poison glands such as these?"

Jack inspected the things in his hand. They were indeed small poison glands. "Where did you get this? I will buy them if you don't need them. Name your price."

"Take it," Life Runner said with a shrug. "They are easy to buy in the shop in Larabat, and are rather cheap. There is also occasionally normal-sized Poison Gland on sale, but they are more expensive."

"Really?" Jack said with a surprise.

"Each city offers different wares. Different countries offer even more varied products. Materials and ingredients that are difficult to find in this country might be easy to find in Verremor, and vice versa," Peniel explained.

Jack was contemplating for some while. Life Runner had already finished eating the Sweet Dumpling and applying the Whetstone to his uncommon curved dagger. He was now waiting for Jack with a questioning gaze, wasn't him the one so eager to raid that hideout? Why suddenly spaced out?

Jack then looked at him intensely, the stare scared Life Runner for a bit.

"Say, Runner, how do you like hanging out with more Human players?"

"Oh? Of course, I would like that. It's weird to keep on talking with orcs, it kinds of makes you forget you are a human yourself."

"Beautiful! Then join my guild. You can then go to our guild headquarter to hang out with the other human players."

"Your guild? You are a leader of a guild? And what is a Guild Headquarter?"

Jack then explained to him about the guild headquarter feature, and about his guild and his friends.

"Wow, your guild has that kind of thing? The guilds I know in Larabar only have guild bases."

"It's a unique thing we got after great struggle," Jack didn't inform him what the requirement is to get a Guild Headquarter.

"Even if I join your guild, how do I go there?" Life Runner asked.

"Once you are a part of our guild, you can go back to Larabar. Then you register our guild in the Zone Portal there. With that, you can go back and forth between your city and our guild headquarter."

"That's great! Does that mean I can visit the human city nearby as well?"

"Uh, I suggest you don't do that. In case you haven't noticed, the political situation between Verremor and Themisphere is not very good. If the city guards see an orc coming, they might turn hostile. You are lucky you didn't stumble into any human town on your way here, or else you might find out about this in the worst way."

"Oh... Such a pity. So why do you want to establish a teleportation link to Larabar? You or your guild members will not be able to travel into that city anyway."

"It's not the teleportation link that I after. It's you!" Jack said.

"Me?" Life Runner asked in bewilderment.

"You or any other of your friends that can roam around in Larabar. We can exchange resources that are difficult to find in each of our countries. That Poison Gland for example. You can buy a load of it and then take it to our guild headquarter to exchange. Our human members can get you things from Human country that you can't find in Larabar as well. We can benefit each other. Also, our Guild Headquarter's surrounding is a good leveling territory for your level, with some higher-level areas not far away. Although you can't go to human towns, you can still explore the wilderness. You can level up with our other guild members around there."

Life Runner seemed to ponder about the offer seriously. Jack let him took his time. After a while, he said, "I'm not really a guild material person. I don't like getting tied down. As I said, I like to go around traveling. I can't afford to stay and do guild tasks."

"What a coincidence, I'm like that as well," Jack laughed. "Don't worry, I will make sure you get the leniency. You don't have to do all the required guild tasks to stay in the guild. As long as you can be the

bridge with the other orc players and get for us the ingredients and materials that we can't find in our city, it will be good enough."

"Okay then, let's give it a try. But let me say this first, if I find that I don't like being in your guild, I will leave."

"I will expect no less," Jack said and sent him a guild invite. At the same time, he sent a message to Jeanny and John, "I got us a new member. He will open up a teleportation link to a new city called Larabat for us. But let me warn you first, none of our members can go to this city, you better set a restriction to this city as well so that only this new member can travel there."

He received a swift reply message from John, "Is his name Life Runner, I just see his name pop up as our newest guild member. Why is that city not accessible for us? Is it a place where only Kingdom Faction members can go to like Thesewal?"

"You will know when you see him. Make sure that you meet him personally when he teleports over. He will bring you a list of things and explain everything. Oh, one more thing. Do not panic when you see him."

"You are being weird. Why would I panic when I meet new people?"

Jack didn't reply anymore, he was just smiling.

"You are really playful," Peniel commented. "Can't you just tell him the truth? What if he really panics and cast a spell?"

"Who will panic?" Life Runner who was not aware of Jack's messaging, asked.

"Where is the fun if I just let him know like that. I just regret I can't see his face when they meet," Jack said to Peniel. To Life Runner, he said, "You have absolutely nothing to worry about. I have sent a message to the other guild leader to welcome you when you teleported there."

Peniel shook her head.

## **Chapter 417: Raiding The Hideout**

"So, how should we do this?" Life Runner asked. They had gone back to near the hideout. They were back into hiding inside the shrubbery next to the shack.

"You stay here with that Hide skill of yours. Wait until I lure all the outlaws out and give you a signal, then you go inside and destroy that hideout core."

"What if you die?" Life Runner asked.

"I won't die," Jack replied.

"What if?" Life Runner insisted.

"You really have no confidence in me. I will forgive you since you don't know me yet. If I die, you can just go home then."

"All right."

Jack felt like grumbling for that off-hand remark, but he decided that action spoke louder than words. He stood up and said, "Prepare to be amazed!"

He then ran out into the open. There were two outlaws not far away who were walking over in their patrol. They soon noticed Jack and rushed over to attack. At the same time, one of those patrolling outlaws took out a whistle and blew it. It caused a shrill sound that could be heard far away. Jack then heard movements from within the shack. Just like with Monster Settlements and Bandit Outposts, attacked one of the patrols, all its occupants came rushing out.

The two incoming outlaws were melee type using tomahawk for a weapon. Jack brandished his sword and magic staff then used Charge, engaging them directly in close combat.

'Why is that guy using magic staff on his left hand?' Life Runner who was observing the fight thought. He was then shocked when he saw Jack's magic staff formed Magic Shield. 'He can use warrior and Mage's skills? Damn! I really am amazed.'

Then he saw more patrols came joining, some using bows, most used tomahawks. The shack door opened and more came up upon Jack. Life Runner was ready to bolt by then, but then he saw Jack was still weaving in between the crowd of outlaws. Although he had seen other players with more impressive martial capability, Jack's was pretty good himself, but the way he utilized his skills and spells was more impressive. There were no missed executions, every skill was used with precision at the most appropriate situations and targets.

The outlaws were getting more and more crowded at that place. Although Jack seemed to still hold on, Life Runner was not sure how long he could hold on. There were too many outlaws there. Suddenly Jack disappeared. No, not disappear, he simply moved away with a very fast speed. Life Runner saw him some distance away, leaving the crowd of Outlaws in his original place. All of a sudden, multiple large balls of lightning appeared around him before they shot towards the group of outlaws.

Each ball detonated into an impressive blast of electricity. Life Runner could feel the wind of the blast even from so far away and his skin pricked as he felt the electrical residue from the explosion. After the explosion subsided, he saw only scatter remains of coins and items at the center of the explosion. The archers which were slightly far away did not receive the combined blast from all the lightning balls, but they were still wounded from a few balls. Jack rushed at them and started dispatching them one by one.

Life Runner was so enthralled by the fight that he forgot that he was supposed to sneak into the shack.

"Amazed?" Peniel's voice snapped him back. She was still there by his side.

"I will be damned. It will be a lie if I'm not. Perhaps joining his guild is not so bad after all. Why did he need me anyway? He could simply kill them all and then destroy the hideout core by himself."

"He can, but the target is to destroy the hideout core without killing the boss."

"Why doesn't he want to kill the boss? I thought at first he needs my help because he was not confident in winning the fight against these outlaws."

"Guild stuff," Peniel simply replied. "The boss should come out any second now."

Just as Peniel's words ended, a figure came out from the shack. It was a man wearing a long coat covering most of his body and a large round hat. Just like the Lizardman Chief in Lizardman Encampment, the boss didn't come out with the cronies. They stayed inside with the core, only until all their underlings were wiped out that they came out. At this time, the last archer had fallen under Jack's feet.

Jack stayed at his place as he drank a healing potion to recover his lost HP. He waited for the boss to come to him, in order to allow Life Runner the chance to sneak in. The boss did not disappoint. It walked slowly and with poise towards Jack.

'Damn! This boss got style,' Jack thought. As a show of respect, he also assumed a pose that he thought was stylish. He stood sideways with folded arms and a sideways glance waiting for the boss.

"He could also be an idiot sometimes," Peniel said to Life Runner after seeing Jack's last theatrics.

With the boss out, the shack was now empty. His radar also confirmed it, Jack sent a go message to Life Runner. With that cue, Peniel put some distance from Life Runner so he could activate his Hide skill. He then ran to the shack while being invisible. Peniel gave him some time before she flew over to the shack as well.

Jack inspected the boss as he walked over.

Fast Hand Triggerman (Special Elite Boss, Human), level 31

HP: 58,000

Triggerman? Jack was still wondering about the boss' name when it used its two arms to swipe its coat wide open, revealing two revolvers inside holsters strapped to both sides of its waist.

Jack was still stunned by the weapons revelation when the revolvers disappeared from both holsters. By the time he realized it, the revolvers were already in the boss' hands, pointing at him.

Jack instinctively raised Magic Shield when the two revolvers flared to life. Almost at the same instant, he felt a strong impact on his shield.

He snapped out of his daze and immediately dashed to the side. The boss' revolvers never stopped firing. Jack ran sideways as he continued to put his Magic Shield facing the boss. Despite his fast movement speed, he still got hit one out of three shots.

Peniel did mention that there was a gunner class in this world, so the existence of guns was not strange. But still, he didn't expect to see one so early.

Shot fired from a gun was completely different from bows or crossbows. With his speed and reflex, he could still see the arrow or bolt and make the dodge. Bullets from a gun could be said to have arrived once it was fired. Unless he had already moved before the shot was fired, he won't be able to dodge the shot, all he could do was block it. That's why Jack never stopped moving.

Jack circled around the boss until his back was facing the shack, before he lunged straight towards the boss. His magic shield was put at his front, he planned to tank his way to a melee fight with this Triggerman.

Unfortunately, the boss didn't simply let him carry out his plan. It made an abrupt six rapid shots from both guns, totaling twelve shots that were so fast it was as if they were shot simultaneously. The twelve bullets slammed onto Jack's magic shield.

The first four bullets caused Jack's advance to stop. The second four forced his body back. The last four shattered his magic shield and caused him to tumbled back. He looked at his magic staff in consternation, he tried to cast the Magic Shield again but nothing appeared.

'If the Magic Shield is destroyed, it will take some time before the skill can be used again,' he heard Peniel's voice in his mind. 'try to endure, we have found the core.'

Life Runner must have started hitting the hideout core inside the shack. Because at this time, the boss seemed to realize something and looked in the direction of the shack.

It ran towards the shack at the same time as Jack rose and blocked his path. Jack had Superior Body Recovery that allowed his body to have some small healing even during combat, but he still drank a basic healing potion and a basic regeneration potion. This boss' gun attack was too difficult to dodge, with his magic shield gone, he would most likely be hit more often.

He didn't dare to slack, he activated Life Burning Art to increase his speed even more. He threw out a skill or a spell every three seconds to make full use of his Speed Fury Chaussees' passive ability. He constantly moved as he used Flash Step from time to time to make it hard for the boss to hit him. He also cast Barrier for protection now that his Magic Shield was no more.

The boss being a ranged class, didn't dare to let Jack approach. It kept on shooting at Jack as it tried to find an opportunity to went past Jack so it could run to the shack, but Jack's maneuvering forced it to continue to retreat away from the shack. Unless it was willing to risk a melee confrontation with Jack, it would be hard for it to reach the shack.

## **Chapter 418: Triggerman Captured**

The boss's face was always indifferent since the start of the fight, but Jack could now see anxiety behind its cool expression. It suddenly jumped up straight in the air.

'Another skill?' Jack thought after seeing its weird maneuver.

The boss' body suddenly spun rapidly. Jack heard continuous gunshot sounds as multiple muzzle flashes were seen. Although Jack never stopped running, the bullets were now dropping as if rain. Wherever he went, there were bullets raining at him.

His Barrier was soon shattered by the continuous hit. Luckily the boss' skill didn't last long. However, the force from those hits had caused Jack's movement to stop. The boss immediately followed up with another skill. He put his revolvers on top of each other and then fired. The two shots seemed to combine and create one powerful shot. The shot created a sonic boom effect that was visually stunning and equally intimidating.

Jack's arm moved automatically once he saw the boss' aiming pose of putting both its revolvers together. Jack knew a powerful skill was incoming. He was still reeling and out of balance from the last boss' move, preventing him to use Shooting Dash and his Flash Step, with no magic shield to block the

incoming attack. He was left with either Parry or counter using an attack. He chose the latter, he slashed his Flame Strike in front of him right where the boss was aiming at. The bullet with the sonic boom effect arrived as soon as the boss fired, it's a good thing Jack had anticipated and executed Flame Strike beforehand.

Sword and Bullet collided. If it was a normal shot, Jack would most likely miss slashing at the tiny bullet. But the current shot was as powerful as it was large. The energy that followed the bullet which created the sonic boom was as large as a soccer ball. Hence Jack's premeditated slash collided with it.

An explosion occurred. Jack still received slight damage, which meant that the total damage caused by that powerful shot was still higher than Jack's Flame Strike. The explosion also caused Jack to be thrown off. The boss took this chance to run to the shack.

Jack made a back somersault to negate the force of the push. Once his feet landed on the ground and had a solid footing, he executed Shooting Dash. His Shooting Dash could make two dashes at its current level, the first dash did not manage to catch the boss, but Jack sent a Sword of Light before resuming his second dash.

The sword energy traveled faster than his dash and Jack aimed it at the path the boss was running to. He was hoping the boss would stop its advance to dodge his Sword of Light, but instead, the boss ignored it and let the sword energy hit it. With its high HP, some damage was acceptable. It was more important for it to protect the hideout core.

But Jack's second dash still managed to allow him to arrive in front of the boss despite it not being slowed down at all. Jack used Swing. With the boss being a ranged type, Jack was not afraid to clash directly with it.

When he expected his Swing to hit, the boss made an abrupt duck, avoiding the swing while at the same time it did a roundhouse kick in a fluid motion. Jack was hit at the side of his face by the boss' unexpected kick. He was dazed by it. The boss used the chance to step on Jack's unbalance body and jumped over him.

'What the... this cowboy knows kung-fu!' Jack exclaimed with surprise in his mind. The boss had been avoiding melee contact with him all this time so he thought it would be powerless in close combat.

His daze only lasted an instant as he regained his focus. He got a bad feeling after the boss jumped over him. If it was him, he wouldn't have wasted this opportunity when his opponent was unbalanced. So instead of pushing himself up, he dropped down to the ground instead. At the same time, he heard gunshot sounds.

He looked and as expected the boss had made a somersault after jumping over him and was currently upside down in the air with both guns aiming at where he was a moment ago. If he did not drop flat to the ground, the two shots would have hit him.

He countered by shooting a Mana Bullet at where the boss would be landing. The boss' arm moved and made another shot. The Mana Bullet was destroyed by the shot. The boss had landed safely.

'That was one crazy gunslinging move,' Jack commented in his mind. His attack never stopped though. He had already cast Energy Bolts after the Mana Bullet. A spell formation quickly formed after.



The eight bolts chased after the boss, who shot continuously at the bolts as it tried to make its way to the shack. A few that it failed to shoot, it ignored. Those missed bolts hit its body as it continued to run to the shack. Jack chased after it with his spell formation continued to form.

Jack threw the completed spell right in front of the door of the shack. The boss which was about to reach the shack saw three crimson chains shot out from the ground in front of the shack. It could feel these chains were not something it should ignore. It stopped its advance and retreated as the chains were about to grab it. It made rapid accurate shots that hit the chains, stopping them from catching it.

With the Myriad Ensnaring Chains guarding the entrance to the shack, the boss had no way of entering. It turned back with an angry expression. Jack had caught up to it when it was retreating from the chains.

Jack made another slash at the boss, who ducked and made another side kick again at his head.

'You think I will fall for the same trick?' Jack thought as he also ducked and spun his body, utilizing his spinning momentum he did a chop kick at the boss who was still in its kicking position. The boss fell heavily with its face facing the ground due to the kick.

"You are not the only one who knows kung-fu!" Jack exclaimed as he rose and prepared to chop down his sword at the boss who was still on the ground. But his vision was covered by two muzzles aiming at him.

He bolted sideways without hesitation as flashes flared from both revolvers. Although its back was facing upward, the boss could still bend its arms to aim at Jack from behind its back. The boss rose after making the shots.

Since the boss failed to force Jack to retreat with the last shots, Jack was still nearby. Jack didn't let go when the boss was vulnerable during its rise. Jack activated Adrenaline Rush and sent three rapid slashes at the boss, causing a sizeable chunk of damage.

The boss tried to pull away but was stopped midway. A ring of light was holding one of its legs. Jack had started casting Magic Bind when he was slashing the boss. He now continually slashed at the boss while it was immobile.

When the Magic Bind was about to shatter, Jack used Flame Strike. The boss crossed both his revolvers in front of it as a shield, but the impact still sent it flying far away from the shack. It was very angry for being continuously hindered from entering the shack.

The boss was just about to lunge forward again with both revolvers aiming at Jack when Jack heard a notification, "Congratulations! You have successfully raided a Gang Hideout, rewarding 150,000 exp points."

'Great, this should shorten the amount of exp I need to amass,' Jack thought after hearing the notification. Too bad hideouts were rare. If he could only find more of these hideouts with feasible levels, his problem with that Lightning God Blessing would have been solved swiftly.

He looked at the boss who was kneeling down without spirit after the notification. A light soon enveloped him as it disappeared. It must have been sent to the Guild Headquarter's jail by now because Jack received a notification that he had received 300 contribution points for capturing a hideout boss.

He would let Jeanny and John decide if they were to hand over this boss to authority or keep it. This boss was less powerful than Uruk, and from the exchange just now, he could defeat this boss single-handedly if the battle continued. So they should be able to recruit this boss early.

He was elated. He had suspected that he could already go toe to toe with a special elite of a similar level, but only now could he really test that theory. The next target was Rare Elite of a similar level!

He heard footsteps from behind and turned to see Life Runner came out from the shack, he was bringing a large sack. He handed the sack to Jack and said, "You are right, the rewards are indeed extremely generous. This is the first time I see so many high-quality loots. I hope you don't mind me taking the liberty to take my share, I divided the coins and mana cores equally. For other items, I only took the things I need. Inside that sack are 18 gold coins, 14 mana cores, three uncommon equipment and one super-rare equipment for Warrior, one rare gemstone, two uncommon materials, and the hideout core.. I supposed the core should go to you since you did most of the work."

## **Chapter 419: Busculla Plateau**

Jack stored the entire sack into his bag and asked, "did you get super-rare equipment as well?"

"Yes, I got these boots that can be used by Rogue and Archer. It helped boost my movement speed greatly. By the way, aren't you going to check the content of that sack?"

"Why? Did you lie to me?" Jack asked back.

"No," Life Runner replied.

"Then why do I need to check?"

"Uh... Don't you want to make sure?"

"To end up with that kind of mindset, you must have been subjected to many deceptions. I'm sorry for you, but don't worry, I believe you."

"I... That's not... Never mind."

Jack chuckled, "I'm in a hurry now, I will look them over at night when I rest."

"So, what shall we do now?"

"I will continue my journey. As for you, what you need to do next is go back to Larabat and establish the teleportation link with our guild headquarter. Then you go make a list of the items that you can buy in Larabat's shops. Take that list and go to our guild headquarter. Give the list to the other leaders, Jeanny or John. Just send them a message before you teleported over, I have told them to spend the time to receive you when you do. They will introduce you to the others after that."

"All right. If I have other friends that are interested to join as well, can I introduce them?"

"Sure, but they will have to do guild tasks like other normal members though."

Life Runner nodded. "It's great to finally talk to a human again," he said.

"It's... odd to talk to a friendly orc, but we will get used to it," Jack said. "Okay, got to go now. See you later, I hope you find it comfortable to be in our guild."

"I hope so too," Life Runner replied.

After parting with Life Runner, Jack continued his journey to the West. Peniel returned to guiding him in passing through areas with monsters below level 35. Unless it was the monster from his hunting list, Jack only stopped to kill one of each new monster he encountered.

One kill was already enough for that monster data to enter his Monster Books, even if he did not have the book for a particular monster type yet. Once he accumulated enough points and exchanged them for the books later, the data would automatically enter the new book.

On the night after he parted with Life Runner, he did look over the items inside the shack. He didn't bother to inspect the uncommon equipment, he just piled them together with the other equipment he had amassed all this time. Once the pile was too large, he would then spare the time to fuse them using his Transformation Prism.

The uncommon materials were Silver Ore and Basilisk Scale. Apart from ore that was needed for upgrading weapon level, he didn't really put much thought into the other materials. He still had other such materials in his bag. He planned to store them in the guild warehouse once they build a blacksmith workshop and recruit some players who were more focused on developing Blacksmith skills. These materials would be needed when the guild found or bought new recipes.

With a guild, he no longer had to worry about developing the artisan skills, such jobs could be shared. This had and always was the strength of a community. No one person had the ability to excel in every single field, no matter how genius that person was. Such a feat was only a daydream. A corporation was formed precisely to gather multiple talents to work together in achieving a single objective. A guild was no different.

What interested him the most from the hideout's rewards were the rare gemstone and the super-rare equipment. The rare gemstone was sapphire. It was of water element which was compatible with his Runestone of Duration.

He summoned the runestone at once and without hesitation feed the rare sapphire to it. It received 200 elemental energy and immediately upgraded to rare grade.

Runestone of Duration (rare runestone)

Increase the duration of products created from artisan jobs which have duration, by approx. 30% more.

Elemental energy required for upgrade: 100/1000

He then looked at the super-rare equipment. It was a shoulder guard medium armor.

Reflective Thorn Pauldrons, level 30/60 (super rare medium armor)

Physcial Defense: 82

Magical Defense: 70

Durability: 50

Endurance +10

If received damage, next attack is increased by 20% (cannot stack)

Has a 15% chance to reduce 30% of the damage received and return it to the attacker

He was hoping for a chest or pants piece since his current Blood Guard Scale Armor and Shadow Bear Tasset had already reached the limit of their levels at 35 and couldn't be leveled up more. But beggars couldn't be choosers. He was glad enough that it was not an armor piece which he already had super-rare grades, such as his shoes and headpiece.

Although this shoulder armor piece had slightly lower defenses due to it being eight levels lower than the current rare spaulders he was wearing, the ability of a chance to reduce and reflect damage was very good, it also gave him a boost when counterattacking. Hence, he replaced his shoulder piece on the spot. He would upgrade its level later once he had access to the blacksmith workshop with the rare tools.

Jack met another Bandit Outpost again in his journey. It was populated by level 30 monsters which were right around his level, but it was of a small-sized outpost. He might give it a try if it was tiny-sized, but a small-sized outpost had too many outlaws inside.

He looked around the landscape and could not find a terrain he could utilize like the last time he raided the Lizardman Encampment. He also no longer had a tool that could summon reinforcement like the Themisphere Beacon Stone. So he gave up on the outpost. He marked its location on his map in case later he wanted to come back.

His journey took another three days after his encounter with Life Runner before he arrived at his destination. It was shrubland named Busculla Plateau. At this time he still had a bit over 1,000,000 exp points required for his Lightning God Blessing inherent skill.

"So, what am I doing here?" Jack asked once they were at the edge of the shrubland.

"You will be grinding for exp, of course," Peniel answered.

"What monster?"

"The last two ones in your hunting list, Mouseant and Swordfin Ferret. In this area, they were around level 35."

"What makes them so special? What's different from grinding in other places?"

"Because these two monsters provide a high amount of exp but have low HP and defense. Moreover, they only have melee attacks, no fancy skill. You should be able to kill them quickly to amass the exp."

"There should be a catch. Not possible I was given free lunch like that," Jack said suspiciously.

"There is. Since they were weak in HP and defense, their damage was impressive. They could kill a normal level 30 outworlder warrior in just three bites. But since you are not normal, you should survive."

"I see. Ok, let's give it a try. I don't see any monsters around though. So, I just walked around till one of them appears?"

"See that mound over there. That should be one of the Mouseant's nests. Approach it and they should come out."

"All right," Jack walked over as he unsheathed both his longsword and magic staff.

When he was near enough, the mound started to shake. He saw the sand and rocks on the mound falling down as a large hole was slowly formed on top of the mound. The shaking was rather worrying. The monster's name was Mouseant, they should be small, right?

"Oh, forgot to mention another thing," Peniel said as she flew above. "The other reason that they give an excellent amount of exp, is that they always come in a swarm. So you can kill them in mass."

"Swarm?" Jack wondered, then he saw the entire mound collapsed and heaps of grotesque-looking creatures poured out. Their body and head looked like rats but instead of hairy skin, they were covered with exoskeleton, and they crept on six appendages. They were indeed small, but their numbers caused Jack's hair to raise, there seemed to be no end to the Mouseant that poured out from the hole. He was reminded again of the time when he was raiding the Giant Ant nest in the past.

Alarmed, Jack retreated a few steps as the swarm came over.

Since the swarm was already so closely packed with each other, he didn't let go of the chance. He unleashed his strongest attack from the get-go, Lightning God Barrage!

Explosion after explosion of lightning energy carpeted the entire swarm. By the time the crackle of electricity ended, the entire terrain in front of him was devoid of monsters as his exp bar increased.

"They did give lots of exp!" Jack exclaimed, but his celebration was cut short as he realized the rumblings that followed the swarm never ended. Another pouring of swarm came out from the same hole and headed at Jack without any concern to the fact that their comrades had just been decimated.

"There are still more?!" Jack uttered with apprehension.

"There are lots more," Peniel commented from above.

## **Chapter 420: Crazy Grinding**

The entire week after Jack arrived in the Busculla Plateau was spent with nothing but monster grinding. Apart from sleep and some break time to have a meal, of course.

It was pretty easy to find the Mouseant for grinding, there were plenty of those mounds which were the Mouseant's nests scattered around the shrubland. The good thing about them was that the other nests won't disturb him if he didn't come near them, hence he could control the amount of Mouseants he dealt with.

Apart from their frightening numbers, their other edge was their damage. Other than that, there was nothing special about them. Their attacks were rather deadly. Jack couldn't avoid getting stung by one of them as there were so many assaulting him. He lost more than 200 HP, which was alarming when it

came from a non-boss monster. If eight of these Mouseants stung him at the same time, his 1710 HP would be a goner.

Luckily Jack had a pretty decent number of long-range skills combined with his high movement speed, he could still break away from them if things got dangerous. He also had the Superior Body Recovery that kept a small amount of his HP regenerating during combat, so reducing the number of recovery potions he needed to use.

He also applied Poison Salve from time to time. Now that he had a guaranteed supply of Small Poison Gland from Life Runner, he had no reservation in using this consumable. Life Runner had teleported to Heavenly Citadel some days ago. John had sent Jack a message afterward, cursing him for not telling them that Life Runner was actually an orc. Jack was just laughing after receiving the message.

The Poison Salve helped Jack decimate the Mouseants more easily, not simply because of the added damage value, but also because of the poisoning effect. Jack would slash at a group of Mouseants, then used his speed to head to the other side while continued attacking the others while the poison ate at the monsters' HP. When he was back at the first group of monsters, he would slash them again, applying fresh poison effects. With minimum effort, the monsters' HP were slowly consumed by the poison.

Things got a bit complicated if Swordfin Ferret appeared. This monster was not as slow as the Mouseant, but their attack was even deadlier. But as Peniel mentioned, their defense and HP were low, and their attack pattern had not many variations.

Jack was only a bit clumsy when he encountered this Swordfin Ferret the first time. Firstly because the ferret attacked while he was still dealing with the Mouseant's swarm. Jack had to break away from the swarm and put a large distance first to deal with the ferret. Secondly, because the ferret's so-called sword-fin, which was its main weapon, was hidden until the moment it made its attack.

The Swordfin Ferret's backside would open up, exposing a very sharp and long bone. The resulting appearance made it looked as if the ferret had grown a fin on its back. Accompanying the appearance of this sword-fin, was an expulsion of compressed air from the pocket at which the fin used to be stored. This pushed the ferret forward with an unanticipated speed. The process reminded Jack of the Wind Jet skill he used from Magic Scroll.

Any unwary opponent would get sliced into two by this blitz attack, Jack included. It's a good thing he had a high pool of HP, so he didn't get one-shot by that surprise attack. It still gave him the fright of his life, though. He returned the favor by giving the Swordfin Ferret a fierce beating.

After that one time, he was always paying attention whenever the Swordfin Ferret's back started shuddering. It was the telltale sign when the fin attack was about to commence. He would immediately get ready to jump to the side or use his Flash Step skill. That fin attack only went in a straight direction, so as long as he knew about the attack timing, it was not really that difficult to dodge.

Another precaution he took to control the risk was to go around the area hunting the Swordfin Ferrets first. Once all the ferrets in the area were cleared, then he provoked the Mouseant's nest.

Although the activities were repetitive and might be called boring, Jack didn't slow down his grinding. He had always found some kind of fulfillment from this repetitive task. That's how he could spend so much time in past VR RPG games doing repetitive tasks without ever feeling bored.

There were still one or two events that took his mind off from the repetitive tasks. One such event was during the evening of the third day after he arrived at the plateau, where he got a visit from fellow travelers. Not players like Life Runner, but native adventurers who Peniel had mentioned before in the past.

It was a group of four natives. Three men and one woman. The men's garments showed them as physical warriors with one of them carrying a longbow, while the woman was either a mage or a healer.

Jack was a little alarmed when he first met them. All four were level 35 to 40 Elite humans. But one of the warrior males who seemed to be the leader greeted him with a friendly smile. Though Jack was cautious, he did not antagonize them. After some chat, they ended up spending the night camping together while sharing tales on a bonfire.

Jack was hoping the group would offer him aid in his monster grinding, it would speed things up real quick that way. But unfortunately, the group had their own quest so they had to leave the next morning. In the night, Jack made camp a little further away and asked Peniel to stand guard. The four seemed friendly and kind people, but it never hurt to be cautious.

The four left as they informed. No unexpected incident to Jack's relief, who soon returned to his routine activities.

The second event that mitigated his monotony was when he came to the other side of the plateau. He found himself at the edge of a very deep gorge. There was fog underneath the gorge which obscure view below. He couldn't tell how deep the gorge was. Peniel informed him that this gorge was named the Valley of Tempus. The locals tell a tale that everything that fell below would not make its way back up anymore.

Jack looked at the wall of the gorge, they were very steep and had no visible scalable path. Unless one had wings, it's impossible to climb up if one fell down there. He stared at the eerie fog below for a few moments and felt a shiver running down his body. He retreated away from the edge.

With a brutal regime of grinding, which often took him until almost midnight before he stopped to rest, his amassing of exp points went beautifully. He didn't forget to eat Well-Done Steak from Ellie and had its effect active all the time when he was grinding. By the end of the sixth day, he had finally filled up the exp required for his Lightning God Blessing.

He sat down panting. "Finally!" he said. "Now I can level up again. The other players might have caught up to my current level by now. John and the others should have broken past level 30 as well."

It was almost two weeks since he departed. The guild headquarter's protection period should be ending soon. He wondered if the headquarter would be all right. Well, they would call him if there was an emergency. Peniel mentioned that Themetus was around one day of riding from here. So if there was an emergency, he just needed to ride there for a teleport back to the headquarter.

He decided to not leave even after filling up the quota for Lightning God Barrage since this place was such an exp haven. He decided to continue grinding here until he reached level 30 and then took his Elite class test.

On that night, before he rest, he said excitedly, "Now I just need to find a Divine Gem and ten magic crystals, then the Lightning God Blessing will be upgraded. Are they difficult to find?"

"Magic Crystal is a super rare material. Divine Gem is a unique material, but this particular gem is more difficult to find than other unique materials, probably its rarity almost equal a Legendary material," Peniel answered. "Still, even if you somehow managed to collect these materials, I suggest you not immediately use them on that Lightning God Blessing."

"Oh? Why is that?" Jack asked.

"Why do you think?" Peniel asked back.

Jack was a bit confused by her question. He thought for a bit before coming to a realization. "Are you saying that once the skill is upgraded, there is another stage further? It will consume my exp again?"

Peniel nodded. "So you better make sure you are ready to stay in your current level for some time before you upgrade that skill. And let me tell you, the amount of exp for the next stage will be more. I can't say for sure how more since its current stage is already different than my knowledge, but it will be more for sure. I suggest you not attempt to upgrade it before you reach level 40. Level 50 might be better, you will need to be able to grind at a higher level area to ensure that you can get a sufficient amount of exp."

"Well, without collecting those materials, that inherent skill won't be able to be upgraded anyway. So we will think about this again when we do get those materials."

He continued to hoard exp in that place the next day. He finally leveled up after so long. His Mage class increased to level 28. Both his classes were already not that far from leveling up when he got the Lightning God Blessing.. By the end of the day, his Warrior class should also level up.