

## World 441

### Chapter 441: Going Back To The Valley

"Yeah? What is it called?" Jack asked.

"Builder," Domon answered.

"... kind of straightforward. What is the effect of that talent?"

"It gives me a 10% increase in Intelligence, 5% increase in success chance for all Artisan Jobs, and any structure that is built by me personally will be more sturdy... I only understand the last part, the rests are gibberish to me."

Jack tried his best to explain, Domon only made a nod once in a while. Jack was not sure if his grandfather understood them all. What he knew for sure, was that these talents were wasted on his grandfather. He was sure that his grandfather would not give it a conscious choice to utilize these talents.

"It has been a fascinating day. Let's take a rest.. Tomorrow you want to take me to this Valley of Temple, is it?" Domon said as he saw Jack had finished upgrading the armors and was handing them back to him.

"Valley of Tempus," Jack corrected.

"That's what I said. All right, let's head in. The hut is a little cramped, never expect any visitor, but it is clean. Just make yourself at home."

"Before that, one last thing. What weapon do you prefer to use?"

Domon looked at his grandson as if he had just asked the stupidest question. "You do remember I am good with any weapon, don't you? Except, of course, for firearms. Those are cowards' weapons."

"I've met a kung-fu fighting cowboy who would have said otherwise. Anyway, if you can only pick one. What weapon will you choose?"

Domon gave the question some pondering. He then said, "if I have to choose, a quarterstaff then."

Jack cringed, he had quite many unpleasant memories with that weapon. He said, "I don't have a quarterstaff, but I have a long weapon that is similar." He then took out a long glaive from his inventory.

Black Iron Glaive, level 20/40 (Rare two-handed polearm)

Physical damage: 99

Attack speed: 1

Durability: 50

Strength +6

20% chance to cause Bleed with every attack

He handed the glaive to his grandfather who twirled and played with it for a while.

"How is it?" Jack asked.

"It's a good weapon. Very balanced. I can get accustomed to it in a jiff. Are you giving it to me?" Domon replied.

"Yes, it should help you level up faster. Now give it back, I will increase its level to the maximum that you can use."

Jack proceed to use the Basic Master Blacksmith hammer and anvil to level up the glaive to level 29. Its physical damage rose to 144. He then gave the glaive back to his grandfather.

Domon played with it again. "Doesn't feel like anything has changed," he said.

"Its damage value has increased... Never mind that, just use that glaive whenever you are fighting a monster. You will see that you can kill monsters easier with that weapon."

Domon nodded and stored it into what he called his magic pocket. Jack told him to go rest first, as he still had his own equipment to level up using these newly-gained rare blacksmith tools. He was glad that he did not need to look for a blacksmith workshop anymore every time he needed to level up his equipment. Domon told him not to stay up too late.

Jack looked at his grandfather as he entered the hut. He was secretly glad that his grandfather ended up a human as well. Still, if his grandpa had become an orc or a dwarf, it would be hilarious. Especially a dwarf, he couldn't imagine how his grandfather would still be able to fight with those short hands and legs.

"You really like to grin for no particular reason, do you?" Peniel said.

"I'm just thinking about something funny, never mind me. Okay, back to work!"

Jack spent almost two hours upgrading his equipment. His equipment was all very high-level already, so there were more failures and thus consumed a longer time. He also almost burnt out his ore reserves for all the upgrades. But in the end, he managed to upgrade all his equipment to level 40, except for Blood Guard Scale Armor and Shadow Bear Tasset which had reached their maximum level at 35. He really hoped he could get super rare armor pieces to replace those two. Otherwise, he had to replace them with other rare grade pieces which could be upgraded to higher levels.

He also upgraded his Rapid Dazing Staff to level 40. Its magical damage increased to 277 points. For his Storm Breaker, he upgraded a random rare longsword to level 40 and then sacrificed it to Storm Breaker, bringing it up to level 40 as well. Its physical damage was now 285 points.

He must say the Transformation Prism had really helped him a lot. He would not have gotten so many copper ores to attempt the equipment upgrading otherwise. Still, he had burnt out his reserves and now needed to stock up again. He could only imagine it became harder to level up equipment in the future.

But if even he who had the Transformation Prism was struggling to have just enough materials for upgrading, the other players would have an even harder time. Even for a guild, unless they piled up their resources for a select few only.

During the night, there had indeed been an occasion where monsters approached. Since he was sleeping inside the hut, Jack didn't use his Camouflage Tent. Peniel woke him up when the monsters arrived

outside the hut, but Domon had woken up by himself and rushed outside. Jack went back to sleep again once he saw his grandfather going out. Peniel was helpless with his attitude and puzzled, normally he would rise immediately when she informed him of a monster ambush even if he was very sound asleep.

She then flew out to take a look, only to see the monsters were already in the process of disintegrating when she arrived. When Domon passed by her, he said to her, "this glaive is indeed good!"

In the morning the next day, the three stood outside the tent as they prepared to depart. Jack took out his red whistle and blew. The impressive display of Pandora appearing was performed in front of them. Jack glanced at his grandfather expecting to see his fascinated face, only to be disappointed when Domon maintained his indifferent expression.

Pandora looked at the three and gave a snorting huff before turning her face away.

'Still as aloof as ever, eh?' Jack commented with annoyance in his mind. On the outside, he approached the Nightmare with as friendly a face as he could muster and said with a respectable tone, "Mam, this is my gramps. I will very appreciate it if you allow him to be carried on your back as well."

Pandora turned her head to look at him and Domon, before turning away again after giving another huff.

"She said just tell me where to go," Peniel said.

"We would like to go back to the Valley of Tempus again," Jack informed.

This time Pandora didn't just give him a glance, she turned and stared at him with what Jack imagined would be a serious expression for a horse.

"She asked why go back there? She didn't want to be captured and locked again in that place."

"Don't worry, mam. We won't go near the place where we found you. We are just going to practice inside the valley. The valley is a great environment for us to train."

After some seconds of staring, Pandora turned back again. Since Peniel was silent, Jack asked her, "what did she say?"

"She didn't say anything," Peniel answered. "I guess she didn't like you asking her to go back to that valley, but since she was bound as your steed, she has to still follow your command."

"Okay, let's move then," Jack said. He tried to be cordial with the Nightmare by asking her permission, but it seemed that befriending her would still take a lot of effort.

Jack climbed onto the Nightmare and gave a signal for his grandfather to sit behind him. After Domon did, Jack said, "did you find it weird for me to talk to my steed?"

"It is hard to find anything as weird after coming to this world," Domon replied. "But I must say I feel uncomfortable to ride pillion with my grandson. How about I ride at the front and you at the back?"

"Sorry, don't work that way. She is my steed, you won't be able to command her if you ride at the front. You just have to be content being a passenger. We will move soon, hold tight!"

"You can't expect me to hug you tightly as if we are two lovebirds, can you?" Domon protested.

Peniel who was already holding Jack's shoulder tightly said, "I suggest you do what he said, sir."

Pandora was getting impatient waiting for them to get ready, so she reared up and neighed. Domon was surprised by the sudden move and instinctively grabbed at Jack's waist. Then he felt as if he was getting pulled forward with extreme force. He ended up doing what he said he was reluctant to do, hugging Jack tightly. Pandora was running at her top speed from the get-go.

## **Chapter 442: Extensive Training**

Jack chose a different part of the gorge from where they escaped last time, so he won't be near the cave with the trial. It didn't take long before he landed back at the bottom of Valley of Tempus. He was back again in the dim environment full of fog and eerie atmosphere that he had been trying to escape from several days ago. He never thought he would be willingly coming back here again.

"This place felt strange?" Domon said after feeling the place. "So, what are we doing here?"

"We will be training here. First, accept this," Jack handed over several basic healing potions, healing potions, basic regeneration potions, and basic rejuvenation potions.

"Remember what I taught you about HP and recovery potions yesterday? These are those recovery potions. When your HP is getting low, drink them. But you have to remember you can't drink the same kind of potion right after you drink one, they have a cooldown. That's why I gave you four different kinds. Try to alternate between them.. Or better, try not to get hit."

"Heh, aren't you underestimating your gramps a bit too much? When have you ever see me so easy getting hit?"

"It is still better to be prudent. They will be coming soon. I will do some interference but I will try to not kill them, I will leave the killing to you so you get the exp," Jack said as he took out two common longswords with level 10 and 12. They were the two weakest longswords in his inventory.

"What will be coming soon?" Domon asked.

Jack already saw the group of incoming red dots on his radar. As expected, it was twice the number that he used to deal with when he was alone.

"Those," Jack pointed in the direction. The shadow creatures soon showed themselves. Half of them were level 30, the other half was level 19.

"Please pay attention that they didn't react well to hits, as if they don't feel pain, but they still suffer damage from any hit. Also, try not to get hit as much as possible, you have a chance to become weaken every time they touched you," Jack explained the monster's special feature so that his grandfather didn't have to find out for himself.

The level 30 ones were obviously coming for him, so Jack distanced himself from his grandfather to allow him to deal with the ones of the same level as him first.

After putting a sufficient distance, Jack engaged the shadow monsters. He didn't use any of his battle skills, since his objective was not to kill them. He didn't want his level to increase before he became an

elite class. Instead, he used only standard attacks with his low-level common swords. The damage inflicted was laughable, but this was also a chance for him to practice the Formless Flowing Sword style.

Still, it was much harder to perform the style against real opponents compared to when he was simply training. Many of his opponents' attacks caused him to break from the fluidness that was the core of the style. He was having trouble maintaining the style in real combat. Forget about having this skill increasing his battle prowess, with his current mastery of the style, it instead became a hindrance.

Jack tried his best to incorporate the style, but he had to keep on retreating to avoid being overwhelmed by the Living Shadows. After a while, there was not a trace of the style that could be seen in his movements. He was only moving in response to avoiding and parrying the shadows' assaults.

"That is one pitiful style," Jack heard Domon's voice. He turned in the voice's direction and saw his grandfather and Peniel was not far away, watching him. "I never teach you any of that disgraceful style," he added.

"You are done at your side?" Jack asked.

"Who do you think you are talking to?" Domon asked back.

"Stop boasting and deal with the ones here. I intentionally don't kill them for you. Be careful though, they are much stronger. They follow after my level, after all."

Domon didn't give more comments. He instead rushed into the group of monsters, brandishing his Black Iron Glaive. He used Swing. The skill combined with the superior reach of the glaive weapon, sliced through many Living Shadows simultaneously. The ones that got attacked immediately turned their attention to the new attacker.

They all lunged at Domon at the same time. Although they were faster due to their higher levels, they were still unable to touch the old man. Domon's expert footwork, allowed him to dodge with only a little shift of his pivoting feet. Every time the shadows seemed to almost hit him, only to miss him by a hair. Domon, in the meantime, delivering counterattack with every dodge.

Jack had never seen his grandfather fight seriously before, since there was never an opponent strong enough to cause his grandfather to fight seriously. Even now, against that many high-level monsters, Jack felt as if his grandfather was simply dealing with his students as he gave them a casual spar.

His fascination caused his own movement to stop and ended up getting hit by the Living Shadows. He suffered from Weakness status ailment. Cursing himself, he disengaged from the monsters and ran around as he baited the monsters to follow him in a circle as his grandfather fought a small portion. All the while continuing to watch his grandfather dealt with the shadow monsters.

After being taught by Jack, Domon could better incorporate his game battle skills into his martial art techniques. The high-level rare armors and weapon from Jack also helped. In the end, although it took some time, Domon managed to clear out all the Living shadows that were supposed to be Jack's portion.

Due to killing monsters much higher level than him, the exp he received was also substantial. Domon's exp bar was already not far from leveling up, so his level increased to level 20 after this one fray.

Once everything calmed down, Jack asked Domon, "so, what do you think? Can you fight the two groups on your own next time?"

"Will be difficult," Domon admitted.

"All right, then we will continue with the same strategy. I will lure a portion away while you deal with them one step at a time. Take a rest, they will come again in another two hours, give or take."

Jack himself also take a seat as he went into meditation, putting himself into the ideal state to training himself in sensing mana. Seeing his grandson's determination, Domon didn't disturb him nor give him any advice. He had explained all he could yesterday, now it all depended on Jack's own effort.

They continued on like this. Domon monster grinding for exp with Jack helping him reducing the pressure. In between the shadow monster's assaults, Jack would practice mana sensing and the Formless Flowing Sword style.

Because they continued to spend their time inside the valley, they could only sleep two hours at most before the Living Shadows came again. Domon had no problem with such brief rest. He had trained himself physically and mentally to be able to rest at once under any situation and to fully recover his fatigue even with such short rest. Jack, on the other hand, was more struggling. But because he had also done it during the last time he was in this valley, he could still cope with it.

He was thinking at first to maybe go back up to the plateau to have a full rest before going back down to the valley, but decided against it. All because that meant he would waste a night's worth of time. While if he rested down here, he could continue to fully utilize the time difference. Based on his time in this valley before, a week here was only a day outside. He was fully intending to use this time difference, considering he had already lost much of the time spent to fill up the exp for Lightning God Blessing.

Four weeks passed by. At this time, Domon was already at level 27. He was currently fighting alone against a hundred Living Shadows which half was level 27 while the other half was level 30. Jack was sitting at one corner with his eyes closed, completely ignoring his grandfather's fight.

After getting to level 26, Domon had tested fighting by himself without Jack's interference. He had some difficulty at first but had now gotten used to it. At level 27, he was already accustomed to the fight that he no longer felt that it was a struggle. His utilization of the battle skills was also getting better, although most of the time he still preferred to depend more on his martial art techniques.

Even though the level 30 Living Shadows were originally coming for Jack, Domon drew them away by hitting each one of them at least once. Thus, Jack could now do his own training without any break.

### **Chapter 443: Emergency**

After finishing this batch of Living Shadows, Domon came to sit near Peniel who was watching Jack's unmoving figure.

"He is starting to get it," Domon said.

Peniel nodded. "Yes. You outworlders are amazing. I never imagine that you have a way to sense mana before becoming an elite class."

"You over-generalized us. Not every of our kind is this talented. Well, in my case, you can say that I have not yet met an equal match in my seventy-one years of living."

"I think he gets that boasting attitude from you," Peniel commented.

Domon chuckled. "In the case of his generation, I can say that I have only found two persons that have the potential to triumph over me. He was one of the two. Sadly though, he never really have the heart to learn martial arts, until now it seemed. All he is interested in is just playing games. Well, the games did give him tons of combat experience that honed his innate battle instincts, but he never brushed up on his techniques. If he can do both, he will be unstoppable."

"There was a time when he was still a small kid where he was rather passionate about learning martial arts. It was because he had a rival who motivated him. Sadly, Her family had to move and live in another country. Once she left, Jack's interest in martial arts pretty much waned."

"She? You mentioned two. Who is the other person? Is it Jack's rival when he was small?" Peniel asked.

Upon the question, a rare sadness appeared on Domon's expression. He was quiet for a while before sighing and said. "No, she is not. The other person was sadly not amongst us anymore. He had passed away long before this. He was my most talented student. He was just about to go claim the highest stage in the world martial arts championship before he lost his life..."

Domon did not say anything more. Peniel, sensing the old man's grief, did not pry any further. It seemed that whoever this other person was, his position in Domon's heart was no less than his grandson.

Weeks continued to pass. Jack's utilization of the Formless Flowing Sword style had also undergone a huge improvement. His implementation of the style was no longer as rigid as when he first practiced it. The style had two versions, the flowing type and the burst type. During the flowing type, his slashes flowed very naturally and their execution interchangeable according to each situation. In burst type, he focused his twenty-four slashes into a sudden explosion of assaults which struck almost at the same time. Such burst attack though, caused him fatigue. He almost never felt tired in this game world, but executing this burst type still brought about that effect. It showed how special this martial art was.

When he had gotten used to the style, he no longer felt that he could improve any more by shadow training, so he used the next wave of Living Shadows' assault to test and sharpen his mastery of the style. He still used the low-level common swords to avoid killing the monsters, he only needed them for practicing.

Training the style without opponents as opposed to training the style with ones was truly different. He was still having trouble fully utilizing the style when fighting the Living shadows, but at least he was not as flustered as when he tried it the first time. He could now at least exhibit half of the style. He tried gaining experience by applying the style in direct combat as much as possible before letting his grandfather finished off the monsters for exp points.

Jack continued with this practical training of the Formless Flowing Swords against the next wave, and the next. Waves after waves, his mastery of the style continued to improve. By the eight weeks inside the valley, he could already use the skill in real combat as naturally as he was doing a simple slash.

His mana sensing had also reached a phase where he could easily sense an attack even during combat. His mastery in this regard was of course still far from the level of his grandfather but he was already getting the hang of it.

He felt that he could still improve further if he kept on training but he thought it was time to end this secluded training period. The eight weeks here meant it was eight days outside. The general players should have reached the level where they could try the elite class already. He could not continue to let his level be stagnant any longer if he didn't want to fall behind the others.

"Your improvements are very fast indeed," Domon complimented. "Especially that chi sensing ability. I spend almost half my life achieving what you can do now, yet you did it in only eight weeks. However, I must say that the condition of this world plays a role as well. The chi in this world is very dense, the one in this valley even so, hence it is easier to develop the chi sensing ability."

"Or maybe my talent is better than yours," Jack said.

Domon lifted his one eyebrow, "boy, don't get cocky for this little achievement. You still have many rooms in need of improvement."

"I know, I know, I'm just messing with you," Jack said with a laugh, before turning serious and said, "that second phase of Formless Flowing Sword is so difficult. The number of slashes is twice the first phase and much more complicated, I won't be able to master it anytime soon."

"If you can master it so easily, then it won't be anything special. Take it one step at a time. Martial arts, like any other thing worth practicing, required patience and diligence. You can't achieve success overnight. This style is one of the best in sword fighting style, you are sure to be a master swordsman once you master this style."

As they were conversing, another wave of Living Shadows arrived.

"Weird, why are they less?" Jack said after seeing the wave. There were roughly only fifty of them.

Domon who saw them also commented, "only level 30? I thought they were supposed to follow after my level?"

Hearing his grandfather's words, Jack inspected him. "You have increased to level 31?"

"Yeah, just happened in the last wave," Domon answered.

"Why did you level up to 31? Peniel! Didn't you suppose to warn him not to go past level 30 before becoming an elite class?"

Peniel, who heard Jack's words which sounded with a scolding tone, scolded back, "I already did! He said don't sweat the small stuff, it's only one level. Remember another person who likes to take things easy? You two are practically the same! The differences are you two put your interests on different things."

"Kids, I will deal with them and leave you to your bickerings," Domon said as he rushed at the group of Living Shadows.



Jack didn't want to waste another opportunity on training, he rushed forward as well still armed with low-level common swords. He used a portion of them to sharpen his Formless Flowing Sword style further while Domon decimated the rests.

After the wave was annihilated, Jack said, "I think whatever that send this shadow monsters, they only send it for one with level 30 and below. Once one goes past level 30, the shadow monsters no longer appear. I think this wave just now only comes for me."

"Is that so? Then didn't that mean my increase in level will become slower?" Domon said.

"Not only that, once I get past level 31 as well, there will be no more monster wave," Jack said. "Ah, too bad, I thought I can abuse this place for future leveling up. Guess this place also has its limit. No point in hanging around here if no exp to gain. Not to mention this Living shadows also give no souls nor loots. The prolonged time here also did not affect my Race Age. It stayed at two months age despite so many weeks had passed down here."

He took out a red whistle and blew it. Pandora appeared majestically. "Let's go, it's time to leave."

Not long after, a streak of fire shot through into the sky from inside the valley. Painting a curved arc of fire and landed beside the gorge.

Domon was clutching at Jack's waist tightly as his face was pale. Jack was arguing inside his mind if he should use the one recording stone that was still residing in his bag to record this rare scene, but decided against it. Using that stone just for a joke seemed like a huge waste. It was truly tempting though, as he glanced at his grandfather with a grin.

"I... I forbid you to tell anyone about this," Domon demanded.

"Don't feel too bad," Peniel said to Domon. "Your grandson here is even paler the first time Pandora took him out of the valley."

As Jack was about to say something, he heard ping-ping sounds. He then remembered he could not send messages when he was inside the valley, meaning others couldn't send messages to him as well.

He looked and saw that they were messages from Jeanny and Bowler. First ones from three days ago, the messages increased in intensity by days. The newest one from an hour ago was demanding where he was and why he couldn't be contacted. They asked him to go back to the guild headquarter immediately.

Did something happen? Although he had been inside the valley for eight weeks, it should only be eight days out here. The day before he went back into the valley, John had told him that everything was fine. Only around one week had passed.

When he sent a message to Bowler and Jeanny asking what had happened. He received a reply from Bowler first, "Bro, where the hell have you been? Emergency! Emergency! We are under attack!"

#### **Chapter 444: Going Into Themetus**

"Attack? By who?" Jack asked.

"Who do you think? The coalition! We need you here as soon as possible," Bowler replied.

He also received Jeanny's message at this time which turned into a chat room. "Hi, Storm, I'm with Bowler here. Glad that we finally can contact you again. As Bowler mentioned, the coalition is targeting us. They have learned about our Guild Headquarter and its function. They also know that they can take it over as long as they destroy our headquarters ' core."

"When have they started the attacks? What is the exact situation at the moment? Are you still holding out?" Jack asked.

Jeanny replied, "They started making their moves once our protection period is over. Each guild sent its best troops to attack.. Only one guild will take over the headquarters so they were not planning to cooperate. It's a good thing we have a few native soldiers trained already at the time, so we managed to repel their attacks."

"Yeah, you should see their faces when they were attacked by these native soldiers. It was priceless!" Bowler sent his messages. Jack could imagine the guy laughing at the other end.

"So, you managed to kill many of their members?"

"We did. But after that fight with you in Crestfall Plain, they have wised up. All of them wore Amulet of Rebirth before a big operation," Jeanny replied. "After that, they stopped. We thought the native soldiers have deterred them and they have given up. But then many of our guild members who are outside our territory got attacked by the coalition members. They then resumed trying to get into our headquarters. Small scale harassments, they changed tactics to test our defenses, and they had started to work together again by then."

"Now our members can only do their activity inside our guild territory. One-third of the new members had quit already because of this," Bowler added.

"They had started already since the protection period is over? I thought John said everything is fine and nothing that I need to worry about."

"That guy is too stubborn to admit that he needs help. Also, at that time, the situation is looking to be still manageable. Now, the coalition is already in an open war with us. We have had several more serious skirmishes with them these few days. John had managed to repel them with his strategies using the native soldiers, but it seemed that they are done testing the water. They are currently in the process of gathering all their members for one full force assault."

"When will they attack?"

"From the information we have managed to gather, they should be making their attack tomorrow morning."

'Tomorrow morning... Should still be enough time,' Jack thought.

"I will be there tomorrow morning," Jack sent the messages to the two.

"Bro, you are not coming over now?" Bowler asked.

"There is still another thing I need to do, it will better ensure our winning chance," Jack replied.

"You do what you must, we will try to hold on until then," Jeanny said.

"Thanks, I won't make you wait long."

After finished with the messages, he turned in the direction of Themetus city. "Let's go, we are short on time."

Pandora dashed forward with superb speed, leaving a long streak of fire in her wake. It took her only roughly two hours before the view of a large settlement was seen from afar. Jack saw that the size of the city they were approaching was not less big than the capital. It was just missing the impressive palace, but in the palace's absence, there was a tall narrow tower at the center of the city. At the top of this tower was a very bright light that continued to shine. It was as if a second sun to the city's surroundings.

This was the second main city in this world that Jack had witnessed. Its splendor was not any less than the capital Thereath. Domon had told them that this was also the city where he had appeared after he went through the gate from the Tutorial phase. Many other outworlders had also come to this city with him.

Jack saw on his radar many blue dots around as they got into the vicinity of the city. Many players who were traveling or grinding monsters also stopped and turned to look at the extremely fast streak of fire that was rushing towards the city. Some even turned and ran back to the city, expecting this was some kind of an event where a monster attack a city.

Jack stopped right in front of the city gate entrance. There were some soldiers standing guard there, similar to Thereath. They were blocking the entrance when they saw a high-moving steed coming at them.

The players near that city gate looked on in awe as they witnessed Pandora's remarkable appearance, but they didn't dare to approach. They experienced some kind of unsettling and intimidating jitters every time they gazed at the Nightmare.

Jack and Domon climbed down from Pandora before Jack unsummoned her. Seeing that they were just some outworlders, the soldiers parted and allowed passage for the two. Jack took this chance to ask the soldiers for the place he was looking for. The players continued to watch on the two as Jack and Domon went inside the city.

Themetus was a bustling city, not less crowded than Thereath. There were as many players and natives as there were in the capital. Also many shops around. Jack, however, didn't have the time to look around. He had an emergency at hand. He needed to be fast. The two went directly in the direction provided by the soldiers, with Peniel flying close to them. Jack was looking for a carriage as they went, but find none, so he just settle with walking.

While he was passing through, Jack did not forget to use Inspect on most of the players. He was rather down to find that the mainstream players were already at level 29 and 30. There were even a few that were level 31. The level advantage he had gained from the expedition had been nullified. He was even behind some of the top players now. One solace was, he did not yet see any elite class on these players yet, even the one with level 31.

He opened the guild interface and looked at the members. It seemed most of the core members that had followed him in the expedition were still ahead of the mainstream players. They were around level 32 and 33. Their advantages had also shortened, probably because they focused more on developing the guild rather than leveling up these past few weeks. There was also the matter of the coalition harassing them, so their development was more constricted.

One member surprised him though, Fierce Flame, she was at level 34 and was an Elite Marksman, one of the elite classes branched out from Archer class. So, the girl had been the first one in the guild to have become an elite class. Come to think of it, she was always a lone combatant, went off and doing things as she liked, just like him. So probably she focused more on developing herself rather than joining the group activity in developing the guild.

Seeing that, Jack was more determined to succeed in his elite class trial. As the top combatant of the guild, it would be an embarrassment if he was behind the others.

After a long walk, they arrived outside of a huge structural complex that was extremely similar to the League of Champion's building in Thereath. Jack looked closer and found that this building was indeed also owned by the League of Champions. Four buildings were situated outside the central structure connected by a long enclosed passageway. Each of the four buildings had its own entrances.

Each of these buildings was the academy where one could request a trial to become the elite class. The four buildings corresponded to the four elite classes branched out from the Warrior class. Jack went first to the one that was meant for the Weapon Master class trial. The building had sculptures of multiple kinds of melee weapons surrounding it.

"Okay, this is where you go in," Jack said to Domon. They had discussed beforehand what was the most suitable elite class for Domon. The three of them agreed the Weapon Master class was practically made for the old man, considering that he was proficient in all types of melee weapons.

"Just follow the instruction when you go in," Jack said.

"Instructions? Hm..." Domon mumbled.

"Don't worry, I will follow him," Peniel said. "Your trial location is closed by, so I will be able to aid him while you go over there."

"Okay, that's a good arrangement as well," Jack said, then added, "ah, before that, let me add you to the guild first."

Jack sent his grandfather a guild invite, he then guided him through the process of accepting the invitation. Afterward, Jack told them to wait for him after they finished. But just in case if Jack had to leave first, he informed Domon that he should ask around for a place called a Zone portal and used that place to teleport to a place called Heavenly Citadel.

After giving out his instructions, he watched the two went inside the Weapon Master Academy building. Only after the two disappeared inside the building, did he open his message. He had heard a message notification while he was still talking to his grandfather. It was from Jeanny. 'Had the emergency escalated?' Jack wondered as he read the message.

"Who is this Domon you just recruited," Jeanny asked. "He had two talents!"

'Oh? It's not about the emergency,' Jack thought. "He is someone close to me. How do you know he had two talents?"

## **Chapter 445: Old Acquaintance**

Jeanny sent a reply, "Did you not check the details inside Guild page's interface? When we got members with certain talents, it provides some benefits to the guild as well."

"It did?" Jack was surprised.

"Yeah, go check it yourself. By the way, good job in recruiting him. Don't let him quit! His talents are pretty useful for our guild."

Jack quickly opened his Guild page window. He looked around amongst the various information that flooded the page. He still remembered how empty it was when they first started forming the guild. Now, with more members joining and more structures built in the Guild Headquarters, there was more information than what he was willing to spare the time to read.

He finally found it. It was under a new section that was described as extra effects due to members' talents..

Strategist (Saint John) = Increase the stats of recruited soldiers by 10%

Motivator (Jeanny) = Increase the speed of training soldiers by 20%

Instructor (Domon Fei) = Increase proficiency gained in training ground by 1 point and exp gained in training cave by 10%

Builder (Domon Fei) = Increase speed of structure building by 25%

Steel Concentration (Trinity Dawn) = Increase casting speed of magic soldiers

So there was this extra benefit for a talent. Even Trinity Dawn had a talent. Jack asked Peniel what that talent do for the owner. Peniel informed him apart from granting a boost to Intelligence stat, it also made it less likely for the caster's spell formation to disperse, even when getting hit by skill or spell that can disrupt spell, like Flame's Disrupting Shot.

But he soon felt downcast. Why was it that everyone's talents here except for his? He also got two talents but none of it gave any extra benefit to the guild. Probably he was truly not a guild material person.

Never mind. He closed the interface. He would contribute to the guild in his own way. Now, what he needed to do was becoming an elite class first. Jack headed over to the building that was at the opposite part of the whole complex. That was where the building for the Blade Dancer class trial was located.

On his way, he saw a commotion not far away. One man was arguing with a whole bunch of people. The argument turned heated, the group with numbers started to use their hands to shove the single man around. The lone man defied back, which got a response in the form of a kick. The single man fell over backward, it was apparent the man's strength was lacking compared to the one who did the kicking.

A classic situation of bullying. Jack was about to head over when he remembered that he was in a hurry. Sun had already set and the night was taking over, so he stymied his heroic compulsion for the sake of more important matters. His friends were waiting for him.

He glanced again at the guy on the ground as he continued walking. The guy stood back up and was shouting at the group. Man, he admitted the guy got balls! The group approached with menacing glares. Where were the patrolling soldiers? Wasn't this place suppose to be a high-end district?

He was about to forget about the whole matter and hoped one of the patrols came to resolve the matter when he took a good look at the guy being bullied.

'Hm?' Jack stopped. 'Another coincidence?'

He decided to head over. He had just found his grandfather not long ago. Could he stumble upon another person he knew again? As he got near and saw the guy's side profile, he was sure then. It really was someone he knew.

The guy in question was still in a quarrel with the group, there were six of them. They started shoving the guy again. The guy shoved back. Clearly not learning his lesson after the last kick.

The leader of the pack who had done the kicking before gave a sign for the others to stand back, he then said, "You should have known your place. So weak and still act so big. Our leader gave you a face by inviting you into our guild due to your past fame, yet you dare to reject. Seeing how weak you are now, I say it is good that you reject. Still, we can't let you off for turning our leader's offer down. It is humiliating. You should at least accept first and then let us kick you out."

The others laughed.

The leader gave the guy one last deriding look before making a lunge as he sent his fist toward the guy. The guy knew he was not his opponent's match, but he stood his ground. He closed his eyes, expecting to feel the pain on his face, but the impact never arrived. He opened his eyes and saw a fist was hanging right in front of him. His opponent who had thrown the fist looked to the side. His arm had been stopped by a stranger. He said with anger, "who are you? How dare you meddle into the matter of Six Rings of Prosperity?"

The stranger who he had scolded, however, was not even looking at him. The stranger was staring at the guy they had been bullying with a joyful face.

"George? It really is you! I can't believe I find you here," The stranger, who was Jack, called out.

The guy who had been called George turned to Jack. He was lost for a moment before saying, "Jack? What the hell? How many times have I told you to address me by my alias when in a game?"

"Your alias?" Jack gave the guy an Inspect. His alias was Paytowin. He was a level 31 Rogue. "Man, you are still using that ugly alias. I feel so uncool every time I call you by that name. Also, didn't you just now also called me by my real name?"

"Fine, then. Lone Wind, where are you doing here?"

"Just passing by. But my name is not Lone Wind anymore. My alias is Storm Wind now."

"Really? Why can't I inspect you, by the way?"

The man who claimed to be from the Six Rings of Prosperity was still having his fist in the air as his arm was held by Jack. He was incensed. This intruder was ignoring him. He had been trying to pull his arm away, but he could not budge at all. It was as if his arm was being clutched by a steel grip.

Angered by the constant disregard by this stranger, which embarrassed him in front of his people, he pulled out his mace and swung it at Jack.

Just as it was about to connect, Jack pulled his arm up and had the mace struck the man's own arm. A damage number appeared on the man's head.

"Wow! I never expected one could damage oneself by hitting his own body. This is a good experiment," Jack commented. He Inspected the man at the same time.

Suicide Prayer (Warrior, level: 31)

HP: 960

Guild: Six Rings of Prosperity

"Holy cow! You really know how to choose an alias. Even your name supports your act of hitting yourself!" Jack commented.

"You...!" Suicide was getting even angrier. He made another swing using his mace.

Jack easily pulled his arm again into the mace's path and had him damaged himself gain.

"Dude, you didn't learn, did you?" Jack said.

"Everyone! What are you waiting for? Attack!" Suicide yelled.

Just as his underlings were about to come forward, a loud voice halted them, "stop!" Everyone turned and saw a group of soldiers coming over. The lead of the soldiers, a Sergeant, spoke, "how dare you create commotion within this city? Do you take our rules as a joke? Take them back for interrogation!"

Jack let go of Suicide's arm. As the soldiers spread out to round everyone up, Suicide yelled, "Hold!"

The Sergeant stared at him with a furrowed brow, "are you trying to resist?"

"Hmph! I'm just warning you so you don't make a mistake," Suicide said. He then took out a badge and showed it off. "I'm a part of Themisphere faction nobility, a Baron! I forbid you from laying a hand on my people."

Jack was impressed. That's why the guy acted so imperiously. Because he thought he will be let off due to being a nobility. He wondered how many people had joined the kingdom faction. After so long, he guessed there should be a good number already.

The sergeant's expression turned complicated. He said, "even a noble had to adhere to regulations."

"I know," Suicide said. "But we never attack anyone. Yes, we probably had pushed them a little, but none of them receive any damage. This is not enough offense for you to arrest a noble."

"These other people are not nobles thought," the sergeant said, indicating the group behind Suicide.

"They are my people. They come with me, they will leave with me. They also have not done a heavy enough offense for you to arrest them."

The sergeant could not say anything back, he commanded his troops to return.

"If you want to catch. Catch these people instead, they had dared to offend a noble of this kingdom," Suicide said, pointing at Jack and Paytown.

The sergeant turned to look at Jack.

Jack asked the sergeant, "Good sir, may I know what is the punishment for one who attempted an assault on a noble?"

#### **Chapter 446: Reversed Fate**

Hearing Jack's words, Suicide snickered, "Don't you expect to be let off lightly just because you are acting polite. You have to pay a large fine and being imprisoned an ample amount of time!"

Suicide then turned to the sergeant, "You! I command you to imprison him not less than one week!"

The sergeant furrowed his brows further and replied with an irksome tone. "We might not be able to touch or arrest a noble without a strong enough violation, but that doesn't mean we are yours to command! You should do well to remember that."

The sergeant then turned to Jack and said, "as for the answer to your question. A verbal or light offense against a noble will only be given a warning. If one is caught doing the same offense again despite the warning, one-day imprisonment will be given. The next repeats will each be given three days imprisonment. A serious offense, as in an assault, will depend on the damages afflicted. The lightest, as in an attempted assault with no damage inflicted, will have the perpetrator getting a fine of 10 gold coins and ten days imprisonment. If the damage is serious, the fine can go up to 50 gold coins and four weeks imprisonment. Killing a noble, well, the death penalty will be the punishment."

"I see. Hm... 10 gold coins and three days imprisonment. Rather light punishment," Jack said.

"Yes, I agree. I am amazed that you can receive the punishment with such calmness," Suicide said to Jack with ridicule.

"Oh? Wait. Do you think I will be the one that gets punished?" Jack asked.

"Who else would it be?" Suicide replied. He couldn't believe there was someone that was this slow. He then saw Jack took something out, something that was oddly familiar. It took him a while to recognize that the thing was Themisphere Kingdom Faction Badge.

"Good sergeant, can you please check the rank of my badge?" Jack said.

The Sergeant observed the badge for a moment before he exclaimed, "viscount!"

Suicide almost doubled over hearing it. Viscount? He had become a Baron just yesterday. That was even after getting the support of his guild in completing faction quests. Because even now, there were very



few people that had gotten the invitation to join the kingdom faction. He had managed to join due to a freak accident of encountering a special quest that put him in touch with a noble and gaining his support.

Seeing the nobility badge in Jack's hand, the sergeant seemed to understand Jack's notion. He then looked at Suicide and smiled. He preferred the polite Viscount outworlder compared to this arrogant Baron one. "There is another penalty in regard to the assault offense, I didn't mention before because I thought the question was only about an offense done by the common citizen. If it was an offense between two nobles. The one that perpetrated the offense will have its rank stripped by one rank."

"Oh? That is also such a punishment?" Jack was surprised. In his mind, he warned himself to not offend any noble without an extremely good reason. He remembered when he cut away Walter's arm in the past, a good thing he had everyone's support at the time. He had to refrain from doing things like that next time if he didn't want his noble rank to be downgraded.

Suicide's face turned pale hearing it. He would not be able to explain to his guild if he lost the progression which the guild had helped him achieve.

"Take him!" The Sergeant instructed his men.

"Wa—wait! It is just a misunderstanding, no damage was done. We were only having a verbal quarrel!"

"Oh? I clearly remember you tried to hit me twice with that mace you are still holding. It's only that your aim was so bad that you ended up hitting your own self," Jack said.

Suicide Prayer, realizing he was still holding his weapon, quickly stored it back into his inventory. "No, it is just a warning attempt. It was not an assault!" He said.

"Do you take me as a child? I also saw your swings when I arrived. Or do you want to say that I have a problem with my eyes? Take him!" The sergeant repeated his order.

His men went up to Suicide, he didn't dare to resist. All of these native soldiers were higher level. Also, resisting them would just score him a heavier penalty.

"Wait!" Jack called out.

"Yes?" The sergeant asked.

"Good sir, if I recall correctly. He did say that these others here are his people. They come with him, they will leave with him. Since he is leaving with you, I think it is proper that they should follow as well."

"Yo... you...!" Suicide was brimming with rage. His people's faces were pale as well now. They were in the middle of doing a guild quest that had a time limit. Getting imprisoned now and failed the quest would cause a penalty to the guild's reputation.

The sergeant grinned after hearing Jack's words. "You are right, sir Viscount. Men, take those people as well!"

As the soldiers ushered the group from Six Rings of Prosperity away, Jack waved to them as he said, "give my regards to Luck Holder, will you?" Luck Holder was one of the coalition leaders belonging to the guild Six Rings of Prosperity who died by Jack's sword during the battle of Crestfall Plain.

"You are still as brash as I remembered," Paytowin commented after everything calmed down.

"And you are less overbearing than what I remembered," Jack uttered, but then he regretted it. He didn't think his words through before saying. Paytowin was having a glum expression.

The fact was that Paytowin used to be both his friend and rival in past games. They were both independent experts who distanced themselves from guilds. The two of them were actually enemies at first, mainly because of their two very conflicting ideologies in gaming.

Paytowin didn't simply choose his alias, he literally embodied the name. He was the pinnacle archetype of a pay-to-win player. Whenever he started a game, he would spend a huge amount of money to secure a huge advantage right from the start. When he felt he was lacking, he would continue to pour in money to stay ahead of others. He felt no shame of it. In fact, he was proud of it. Hence, his name.

Jack, on the other hand, was the kind of player who could only pay for his expertise with the other type of currency, time. Other than the time he needed for work, eat, and sleep, all his remaining time was spent in games.

Jack used to despise those players who just spent money to get ahead of others in games. Paytowin used to look down on players who didn't have enough money to win against him. The two often clashed. But through their run-ins, there were also occasions where they worked together, to complete collective quests or fight a difficult boss. Over time, the two learned to respect one another, as they found that they both had a common similarity, which was their love for fun gaming.

They didn't know each other's real identity at first. That happened in a freak coincidence during a gaming convention. Jack somehow recognized the habit Paytowin often committed during gaming when he saw a public game testing in the convention. Jack called out to him afterward and it turned out the guy really was Paytowin in the game.

The two became friends in real life but most of their friendship was still spent in the gaming world. That's because in the real world, the two social circles were vastly different. Paytowin or George in the real world was the only son of the owner of a very successful international shipping company.

George's parents often complained about his gaming habits, they wanted him to be more serious in his career and take over their empire, but George still stole some time to go into games whenever he had the chance to. That was also why he couldn't spend as much time as Jack in games and thus resort to the method of using his money for an advantage. After knowing his reason, Jack didn't find his pay-to-win attitude to be so abhorring any longer.

In this current world, however, Paytowin had lost the leverage that had often provided his edge. There was no option to exchange real-world money for items or coins or anything in this world. All the wealth that was possessed by one in the past world, was gone.

As a matter of fact, as Jack thought about it, their roles could be said to have been flipped over. Paytowin now had no choice but to use time and hard work to become an expert, while Jack had seemingly become more like a pay-to-win player, considering his benefits of getting the second class, Peniel, and all the other advantages he had acquired at the start.

## Chapter 447: Elite Class Trial

"Uh... I heard what they said," Jack tried to speak of something to break the depressing situation. "So the Six Rings of Prosperity is giving you trouble because you rejected them?"

"Yes... Their leader in this city seemed to know my alias from the past," George replied. "When he invited me, I turned him down. It appears that he is not the type to be refused. If only he knew how useless a player I have become."

'Ugh, it is getting more depressing instead,' Jack said in his mind. He couldn't stand seeing his past rival becoming such an insecure person. He slapped Paytowin's back. "Come on! It's not like all your past games solely depend on pay-to-win. All those gamings we did together, you have the experiences and spirit you need to become great in this world. Believe in yourself!"

"Easy for you to say. I can say this world is practically made for you.. As for me, I'm not used to working on it slowly."

"Then just adapt. I know you can. If you are not, you wouldn't have become a level 31 while most others were still level 30 and 29."

Paytowin made a weak laugh, "after the incident with Six Rings of Prosperity? I doubt I will have peaceful days of leveling now."

"Oh... Hey! How about you join my guild then?" Jack asked.

"Your guild? Since when did you join a guild? Aren't you loathe for your free spirit to be tied down by something like a guild?"

"I am still free because I am one of the leaders. I am free to do what I like. Well, I do have to help the guild one time or another. Also, as you can see, this world is not a game where we can log off and changed to different games to play. We are stuck with this one. We need some form of security. Being in a community provided some sense of it. Just like your problem with the Six Rings of Prosperity. If you join my guild, you don't have to go against them alone."

Paytowin seemed to be having some thoughts.

"No need to rush it. Here, let me send you a Friend invite. If you want to join, just give me a holler. Or you can go to the guild associations and apply from there. Our guild is called Everlasting Heavenly Legends."

"What?! That is your guild?" Paytowin uttered with surprise. "That guild was placed number one on the chart. You are one of the leaders of that guild?"

"Hehe, impressed, aren't you? Just apply. I will put in words for you to be amongst the core members. You don't need to worry about being tied down. As long as you didn't do anything that harms the guild, you are free to do as you please."

"I will think about it. By the way, why do you change your alias?" Paytowin asked. He just accepted Jack's Friend invite and noticed again his new alias."

Jack shrugged, "I want a clean slate."

"Why want a clean slate?"

"Why not? I just want to feel fresh in this fresh new world."

"Whatever, man. By the way, have you met Grace? Considering we all got pulled into this world. She should be as well."

"No... By the way, can you do me a favor? If you happened to chance upon her. Please don't tell her that I'm me. She didn't know my real identity like you. So, she didn't know what I look like."

"Why not? We are pretty tight together... Wait a minute... Is it because of what she said during our last get-together? Hold on... Don't tell me, you are changing your alias because of that!?"

"Uh, um... I have no idea what you are talking about."

The Grace that they were talking about was a girl who was also an independent expert like the two of them. After some coincidental encounters, the three started to team up regularly for quests, becoming close. Yet, unlike Paytowin, Jack had no idea of Grace's real identity in the real world, and vice versa.

"Dude, a girl expressed her feeling to you and you ran? Some man you are. No wonder we didn't see you anymore after that. If a beautiful girl told me that she likes me, I will be over the moon, not run and hide."

"Yo, man, enough with the condescending words. How do you even know she was actually beautiful? The past games allowed us to create our own avatar, we could make whatever appearance we wanted. Hell, there is not even a guarantee that she is a girl. For all I know, Grace can be a fat old dude living off a basement somewhere."

"Come on, man. I don't believe that. I think you don't either. Not after we spent so much time together. I think you are just having a panic attack for having a girl expressing her feelings to you. Tell me, it was your first time experiencing that, wasn't it?"

Jack was having trouble keeping a straight face. He quickly said, "Don't lump me in like a billionaire playboy such as you. Look at you, suddenly not so glum anymore after finding someone to ridicule. Well, I actually don't have that much time to chat with you. I need to take my elite class trial first then get back to the guild. We have a big fight coming up tomorrow."

"You are trying for the elite trial? Well, if it's you, you probably can pass," Paytowin said.

"Did you try it already?" Jack asked.

"I tried it when I hit level 30, but failed. In fact, I haven't heard anyone that had succeeded yet."

"Well, I know for sure one of my guild's members had already managed to succeed. I will be the next."

"Really? Your guild has such an outstanding member? By the way, what is this big fight your guild will be having?"

"We are going to fight the coalition. I don't know if you are aware of them. They were an alliance of eleven large guilds. That Six Rings of Prosperity that was giving you trouble is one of them."

"The coalition? Of course, I know of it," Paytowin uttered with wide eyes. "Your guild is fighting against them? The hell! And you asked me to join your guild? One Six Rings of Prosperity has already made my life miserable. Do you think I can still use my wealth to bully others?"

"Don't worry about them. I will take care of them, no problem. Well, I will leave the guild-joining to your decision. If you join, that will be great. If not, we will still be friends. I got to go now. Stay safe!"

"No problem, he said," Paytowin grumbled quietly as he watched Jack went away into the building that housed the Blade Dancer academy. He was contemplating his options. What Jack said did make some sense. It will be difficult if he continued to do everything by himself in this new world. He didn't have the edge he used to have anymore. He might need to join a group sooner or later, but did he have to risk losing his freedom?

Jack did say that he would let him be free, but it was not as simple as that. Once you joined a group, there would always be some expectation. He was not thick-faced enough to ignore all the cold looks and silent treatment if he didn't get in with the program. It would have been different if he already knew most of the people in the group, but Jack was the only one he knew there, and he was not exactly that easy to warm up with strangers.

Jack was not aware of all the ponderings Paytowin was having due to his offer. He believed that this old friend of his would come around to love the people in his guild if he joined. But if he decided not to join, Jack won't force him as well.

As Jack entered the entrance to the Blade Dancer academy, instead of a foyer, he found himself in a long hallway. Along both sides of the hallway were innumerable sword replicas. Each sword replica looked different. Jack continued walking along the hallway until he found a double door that was guarded by a man in armor with two swords hanging on his belt.

"What is your purpose here?" The man asked.

"I wish to take the trial to become a Blade Dancer," Jack said respectfully.

"Stay still," the man uttered as he extended an arm out.

Jack didn't move. The man's hand came over and touched his forehead. If it was before, Jack would not have felt anything. He would simply be puzzled by the man's action. But at the moment, he knew exactly what was happening. The man's aura, chi, or mana, was enveloping his own, probing his.

"Warrior level 30. You are qualified to take the trial," the man said. He then stood aside. The double doors behind him started to open by themselves. The stoned doors opened very slowly and revealed only darkness behind them. Jack couldn't see anything past the door opening.

'What's the deal with the darkness?' Jack wondered as he waited if any light would be turned on in the room beyond. However, the man who now stood beside the opened door gestured for Jack to go in. Apparently, there would be no light getting turned on.

"Is there anything I need to pay attention to? Is there any rule? What should I do to pass the trial?"

"To pass, you only need to win," the man replied.

"Any time limit?"

"No time limit. You fight until you passed, or you die and fail."

'All right then,' Jack said in his mind as he walked forward.

## **Chapter 448: Dual Wield**

Once Jack stepped through the door, everything was as he had seen from outside, darkness. Complete darkness. He was unsure of where to go since he could not see anything. He turned around and found that the door he had come in from had disappeared.

'I didn't hear the doors getting closed,' he thought as he extended his hand out to touch the door. There was nothing. He only took one step through the door, no way he couldn't touch the door. He walked back several steps with his two hands stretched out like a blind man walking to prevent himself from bumping into the wall, but there was nothing at all.

Suddenly dim light illuminated his surroundings. He could see things now. Yet, there was also emptiness as far as his eyes could see.

'This is familiar,' Jack thought after seeing the surroundings.. This place was a constructed dimension like the one he had fought Eldingar in.

As he was observing his surroundings, he realized something else as well. His gears. All the armors on his body were not the ones he wore when he came through the door. There were also two common-looking longswords hanging on both sides of his waist.

He tried to access his inventory but was unable to. He could open his status window though to look at his equipment stats. All the armors on his body were common grades, including the two longswords on his waist. So it was as Peniel had said before. His advantage in equipment was nullified in this test.

Since he couldn't equip a magic staff, his Mage skills were useless here, but Peniel also said that he couldn't use any skill at all. He unsheathed one of the swords and tried to execute Flame Strike. No fire appeared. So, standard equipment and no skills. Most of his edges had been nullified in this trial.

As he was still pondering, a figure appeared on his right. It was a figure of a fit man without any feature. His body was fully naked with a smooth surface, even his face was empty. Jack felt he was looking at a mannequin that came to life. That mannequin didn't have any equipment at all except for one long sword on his right hand.

'A fighting test, my favorite,' Jack thought as he prepared to engage the doll creature. But a movement caught his eyes from the opposite direction. He turned and saw another mannequin appearing on his left. The only difference this new one had was it was holding its longsword in its left hand.

The two approached Jack with the exact same pace. Jack took a few steps back to observe the two. Seeing these two was like seeing two creatures mirroring each other. These creatures suddenly lunged.

The two had been moving at the exact same way and speed all this time albeit mirroring each other, but when they attacked, the two performed different slashes. One did a horizontal slash while the other did a vertical. Jack hurriedly unsheathed his two swords. He just barely managed to parry the two's attacks.

Before Jack had the time to recover from these first attacks, the two each sent slashes at an angle which caused Jack to have difficulty blocking one if he blocked the other. The two continued to attack, at one time one increased in speed, the other had its pace slower. This imbalance caused Jack to have trouble following their rhythms and got hit several times.

Without any battle skills to rely on, Jack was having trouble. He tried to disengage to take time to review his two opponents better, but the two didn't give him the luxury. One dogged after him with a string of unceasing assaults while the other circled around to cut off his path of escape.

'Stay calm, stay calm,' Jack told himself as he continued to parry the barrages of the two. From the clashes, he estimated that the two mannequins were roughly the same stats as a standard level 30 Warrior. However, their movements and attack patterns indicated that they were better than the average martial expert standard.

During Jack's training of the Formless Flowing Sword style inside the Valley of Tempus, he was not only shadow training all the time, but he also practiced the style against the group of Living Shadows and on some occasions, had a spar with his grandfather.

Comparing this with when he was sparring against his grandfather, these two mannequins were nothing. What caused him to suffer was because his opponents were two and the two fully utilized their duet. Jack was not alien to fighting against more than one opponent, but these two acted as if they were of one mind. Their coordination was very fluid, when one show a weak point, the other would cover for it. When one forced an opportunity, the other would capitalize on it with deadly precision. Jack had never met two distinct opponents who could cooperate to this level.

It was pointless to analyze and tried to find weaknesses in one of the two when those weaknesses were quickly covered by the other. He calmed and emptied his mind as he focused on reacting to his two opponents' attacks. He matched each slash of his opponents with his own slash. It was sloppy at first, but he got better with each clash.

The fluidity of his Formless Flowing Sword style started to take shape with each parry. Not only that, as he tried to concentrate his mind on two separate opponents, he found that he had no problem. It was similar to when he was forming several runes in a spell formation at the same time. His mind watched both opponents with equal attention.

While his opponents were like two bodies of one mind, he was the opposite. He felt as if two minds were controlling his one body. One mind was controlling his right hand as it dealt with the opponent on the right, while the other mind was controlling his left hand as it dealt with the opponent on the left.

Each hand struck and moved without getting imbalanced or affected by the other. This was what his grandfather had mentioned as the pinnacle of dual-wielding.

Dual-wielding, whether melee weapons or firearms, though was practiced in martial arts, was almost never used in the military. The reason was its impracticality. Using two guns with each hand had a much lower accuracy rate compared to a single gun's handling. Even for melee weapons, it was difficult to utilize two weapons at the same time. Most practiced one long weapon on the dominant hand, with the short weapon on the other hand mainly acted as support.

To be able to utilize the way he handled both weapons in his hands the same as he did now, was something that should be rarely achievable in real life. He never thought that his talent, Hundred Synchronous Thoughts, which was meant to assist him in his simultaneous rune casting, would also become a significant ability that helped him perfect this dual-wielding style.

With two thoughts engaging the two separate opponents, Jack had no problem keeping up with their variative attack patterns. Additionally, as he fought the two, he got accustomed to their mana flow. He could sense their attacks even when they got into his blind spots.

As the fight continued, he was even started to be at an advantage. He slowly changed from defense to offense, his application of the Formless Flowing Sword became more aggressive.

Each parry was followed by a slash, which would then continue on and on. His two opponents ended up being forced into defensive postures more and more. The situation had slowly been reversed.

As Jack was fully absorbed in the style, twenty-four sword light flashes in an abrupt instant. Each slash cut a deep gash at the unprotected parts of the mannequins' bodies.

Damage numbers appeared in rapid succession. One thing that he noticed, however, the damage that appeared at the later parts was much higher compared to the first. The twenty-four slashes should have all been counted as normal attacks, so their damages should not be that far off from each other.

'Is it some kind of combo multiplier?' Jack thought. There had been instances where he inflicted rapid damages on enemies, but that was due to skill. Was it that if it was done using normal attacks in rapid succession, the damages were increased.

As this thought came to him, he tested his theory by unleashing the instant twenty-four slashes of his Formless Flowing Sword. The same result was seen, the damage by the end of the combos produced a higher number.

He focused himself and executed two twenty-four instant slashes back to back. However, the start of his second batch of attacks had reverted to normal. It appeared that the window required to produce this effect of combo multiplier was very short. Normal combo hits were nowhere fast enough to produce such a result. That was why he never realized this feature until now. The speed required to activate this combo multiplier was inhuman, but it was exactly what the burst type of his Formless Flowing Sword could achieve.

In other words, if his Formless Flowing Sword reached phase two where he could execute forty-eight instant slashes, the combo multiplicator would become even more insane.

With this revelation, he continued to unleash his sword style. Perfecting it with each move. Another thing he realized, in this constructed space, he didn't get fatigued as much as he did when he performed the Formless Flowing Sword's burst attack in the outside world.

This trial had instead become a perfect practice place for him to improve his Formless Flowing Sword style. He couldn't wait to achieve the higher phase of this martial art.

## **Chapter 449: Becoming An Elite Class**



He saw the HP bars on the two mannequins had lost around one quarter. Peniel was right, with the help from mana sensing and his newly learned martial art, this trial didn't seem that difficult. If he had taken the trial like he originally planned before meeting his grandfather, he probably would have failed.

Jack felt an epiphany in the fight. He relished in it. He felt that it was a pity if he ended the fight early. Fighting with these two was much more beneficial than either his shadow training or his spar with his grandfather. He decided to change tactics and went for a prolonged fight. He only clashed with their swords without hitting their bodies. He was using them to practice his sword style.

When their swords clashed, none of them suffered any damage. At basic class, when an attack met another attack, the stronger attack would be reduced by the weaker attack, but the weaker one still suffered excess damage. But at advanced class, such an occurrence was less..

Peniel had explained that at higher grade class, body durability increased. When advanced class players clashed attack against attack, the stronger party needed to have 200% more damage than the weaker ones to receive spillover damage. For example, if the stronger player deliver an attack with 250 damage value, the weaker party clashed with his own attack of 100 damage value. The weaker party would only receive 50 damage instead of 150.

While for the Elite class, Peniel explained the stronger party would need to exert 300% more damage before the weaker one received spillover damage. Jack thought this made sense. In this way, players did not just rely on their attributes. As long as the damage value was not too far off, it was not impossible for weaker players with better martial techniques to survive a clash with stronger foes.

As Jack continued clashing swords with the mannequins, he lost track of time. The space here had no sunlight nor cycle of the day, hence there was no telling how long he had fought these two mannequins warriors. His Formless Flowing Sword style underwent huge improvement. He could perform it very naturally now, he might still need a little more time to break through to the next phase.

Despite not using the burst attack of his sword art, he still felt fatigue gradually building up due to using the flowing style non-stop. He didn't know how long he had been inside this space, but he thought maybe he should leave. He needed to rest before the battle with the coalition. Also, if he pushed himself too far and allowed himself to get too tired, he might end up failing this trial instead.

With the resolution to complete the trial, Jack no longer held back. Each of his slashes now hit the mark accurately. The two mannequins were helpless as Jack used mana sense to locate weaknesses in their moves and then followed up with slashes from his sword art.

Damages after damages piled up on the two mannequin warriors. Jack thought at first the two mannequins would be using some kinds of death struggle skill before their death, but they don't. They continued to rely on standard attacks until they fell to the floor.

'I see, this trial is mainly targeted to test one's dual-wielding skill,' Jack thought. Without access to battle skills, the most likely way to pass was having sufficient dual-wielding technique in dealing with attacks from two sides.

The two mannequins on the floor vanished. A bright light illuminated the entire space as a booming voice of notification informed Jack that he had passed the Blade Dancer trial and was now officially an Elite class.

"Yes, finally!" Jack uttered with elation.

When becoming a Warrior class, Jack only got one inherent skill, but the notification just now notified him that he had received several inherent skills due to becoming a Blade Dancer. He quickly opened his status window to check out those inherent skills.

All damages inflicted by sword-type weapons +10%

Critical chance of all sword-type weapons +10%

Dual-wield expertise: Off-hand weapons no longer suffer a penalty

Every successful hit grants 1 blade orb. Each blade orb increased damage by 1%, to a maximum of 20%. Not attacking any target with a sword within 10 seconds will reset the orbs. Missing a target, getting parried or blocked will reset the orbs.

Additionally, he received two skills. One was a standard skill when one became a Blade Dancer, Cross Slash. While the other was an exclusive skill for passing the trial on his first try.

Cross Slash, level 1/20 (Active skill, melee, requires dual-wield swords)

Slash at the area in front with two swords, dealing 250% physical damage to all within the area.

Cooldown: 1 minute

Stamina: 50

Blitz Slash, level 1/20 (Active skill, melee, requires dual-wield swords)

Travels in a linear path with 800% movement speed, enemies caught within the path will suffer 3 slashes that inflict 100% damage. 20% chance to cause Bleed.

Range: 10 meters

Cooldown: 2 minutes

Stamina: 60

The cross slash was a heavy upgrade to the Fighter class' Swing skill. It hit a wide area while inflicting damage even higher than level 1 Sword of Light.

Now that the trial had ended, a door of light appeared inside this space. The notification had informed him to leave through the door to go back outside. All his equipment on his body had also returned. He took out his Storm Breaker and another rare sword in his left hand. He had prepared this spare rare longsword to be used with his Storm Breaker once he became the Blade Dancer class. He had also upgraded this sword to level 40 as well.

Whirlwind Falchion, level 40/50 (rare one-handed sword)

Physical damage 230

Attack speed 2

Durability: 70

Dexterity +6

Attack speed increased by 30% for 3 seconds upon successful hit (cannot be stacked)

Jack had several rare swords already by now. Courtesy of all the grinding and using the Transformation Prism to fuse them. Sadly it was still far for him to fuse the rare swords into a super rare grade. He needed sixteen such swords for that.

He had picked this Whirlwind Falchion for his off-hand sword because of its ability. The attack speed increase was especially fitting with his Formless Flowing Sword style.

With the two longswords in his hands, he tried executing Cross Slash. Two wide energy waves followed his sword swings as they crossed each other, creating an X-shape.

The area inflicted was even larger than Swing. Considering the damage it inflicted in such a wide area, even a standard skill was already such a killer move. This elite class was truly something else.

He then used Blitz Slash. He crossed a ten-meter distance with high speed. It was even faster than his Shooting Dash skill. Sadly, there was no dummy for him to try the slashing effect though. He could only check it later in a real fight.

Now that he had become an elite class, there was no need for him to keep saving his skill points. He still had 6 skill points he could use for the melee class. He spent them equally on the two elite skills which now rose to level 4. Cross Slash now dealt 310% damage. Blitz Slash delivered three slashes that inflicted 115% damage.

He also used up all his saved up 14 free attribute points, all into Dexterity, bringing it to 149, not yet including buff from equipment. He would need to be in his best shape for the coming fight.

Finished with his preparation, he walked to the door of light. He came back out into the hallway with the sword replicas. The man in armor who had given him entry to the trial was there at the side. The man looked at him, knowing that Jack had passed the trial, he nodded in respect, "Congratulations, sir Blade Dancer."

Jack responded with a polite nod as well. "Thank you for your help." He then headed to the exit. When he opened the door, sunlight poured onto his skin. He was stunned for a moment. Sunlight? He remembered it was getting dark when he entered.

"You finally come out! You know how long we have been waiting?" Jack turned to the familiar voice and saw Peniel and his grandfather coming over.

Domon Fei (Weapon Master, level: 31)

HP: 960

Guild: Everlasting Heavenly Legends

"You succeed?" Jack asked his grandfather. A rhetorical question since he had Inspected Domon.

"He succeeded in less than an hour. How useless are you? You spent an entire night on the trial. It's a good thing that you passed, if you still fail after spending so long a time, I don't know what to say anymore," Peniel chirped.

"Entire night?" Jack was flabbergasted. He did spend much time inside practicing, but he didn't expect an entire night to have passed.

Domon sighed, "Afei, you really need more training. To think you have difficulty in such an easy trial."

Easy? Did his grandfather think every class trial was the same? It was not that he had difficulty in his trial, he simply got too absorbed in training his sword style. He could have finished the test early if he wished.

From his grandfather's comment, he knew his grandfather didn't receive a hard time in the trial as well. "Anyway, what was your trial?"

"I was asked to fight nine opponents, one by one. Using a specific weapon type that was the same as my opponent. They were pretty skillful, but not enough. Perhaps if the nine of them attacked at the same time, then it will be a challenge," Domon answered.

"It was the nine types of melee weapons," Peniel informed. "Sword, axe, polearm, Spear, Mace, Club, Hammer, Dagger, and Fist weapon."

"What about two-handed and one-handed type?" Jack asked.

"They count as the same. Weapon Master is free to use whichever style they want, either one hand, two-handed, or dual-wield."

"Rather than talking about that. I have been getting a lot of messages from someone called Jeanny and John," Domon said. "Are they your friends?"

"Yes, they are," Jack replied. He also received ping notifications on messages, but he had not yet checked them. He decided to just send them a message. John replied first.

"Where the hell are you? Didn't you say you will help us with the fight?" John said.

"Fight? Have it started?" Jack asked.

"It's already started one hour ago! They assaulted once the sun was up," John replied.

"What?! How is everyone holding?"

"Just get here ASAP!"

## **Chapter 450: Returning To Heavenly Citadel**

Since he was not familiar with this city, Jack immediately asked a local for the location of the zone portal. After getting the direction, the three of them headed over in haste.

'Blasted backwater city. Why doesn't it have carriages?' Jack cursed as he tried to move as fast as possible without bumping the other pedestrians.

There was no more time for him to take care of the delivery quest given by Albert. He would have to return to this city later to complete that faction quest. Hell, there was not even time for him to rest. He really did not expect himself to spend an entire night inside the trial. He truly lost his sense of time in there. Luckily, he still came out before it was too late. Weird thing though, he didn't feel tired despite not sleeping the whole night. It was probably due to something special inside the trial space.

After some time, Jack saw the field which housed the portal structure. As he was about to go into the field, a group of five men came into his path. From their postures, they intended to block Jack's path. Jack inspected them without slowing down his pace and found them to be from the guild Six Rings of Prosperity.

This bunch had received a message from Suicide Prayer who reported what Jack looked like and what he had done. They had gone near the League of Champion building searching for him but failed to find him. They then tried to widen their search. Little did they know that Jack had spent the entire night inside the Blade Dancer academy.

After a fruitless search, they decided to place their people at the city's chokepoints, which were the exit gates and the zone portal. They didn't have many members left in the city because most of the ones who reached level 30 had been sent to a city called Thereath several days ago, something about a mission to claim a guild headquarter. Luckily, they only need four teams to monitor the chokepoints.

After a long wait, the team near the zone portal finally saw Jack who was approaching. None of them could use inspect on Jack but Jack's armors were rather unique, so it was easy for others to recognize.

The lead of the group came forward. "Hey, you! Are you the one who has caused trouble for... waahhh...!!" The lead failed to finish his speech because Jack, without stopping his advance, had grabbed him while swiping his legs, causing the guy to be flipped in the air before landing hard on his back.

Without stopping, Jack ran past the other four who were still dazzled.

"Fei! Your grab-and-throw technique is too rough. You relied too much on your strength," Domon said while following him.

One of the Six Rings of Prosperity's people snapped out of his daze and gave chase. Domon was near to him and since the old man appeared to be in cahoot with Jack, the guy extended his hand to catch the old man. The other three also started chasing by then.

The first one who gave chase, suddenly felt his arm getting grabbed and twisted as he felt a light tap on his leg. Before he knew it, he was upside down in the air and crashed onto his other three comrades.

"That's how you should have done it," Domon said.

Jack had forgotten how this grandfather of his enjoyed giving lessons when it came to martial arts. He, however, was not in the mood for learning. He went directly to the zone portal. There were a few guards who were guarding the zone portal and had seen the commotion. They came forward to halt Jack.

Jack fished out his Viscount badge at them and said, "I'm sorry, sir. I'm in a hurry."

Seeing the badge, the two didn't stop him. No damage was done in the exchange just now anyway. They then turned to Domon. "He is with me!" Jack quickly said, preventing the guards from stopping the old man as well. It would be a huge problem if Domon misunderstood and used his martial arts to throw the guards away.

The five people from Six Rings of Prosperity who had stood back up watched in confusion as the guards just stood there as Jack and Domon activated the zone portal. Did they not see those two tossed them around like balls? In the end, they could only watch helplessly as Jack and Domon disappeared into the portal.

Jack and Domon materialized inside the Teleportation Chamber inside Heavenly Citadel. Jack didn't waste time and ran directly to the Guild Hall with the platform that showed the surrounding landscape.

When he entered the hall, he remembered he need to set permission to allow Domon to enter. But when he looked back, Domon had already stepped through the door into the hall.

Before Jack could ask, Peniel gave him an explanation, "during wartime, the permission is lifted off. Enemies or non-permitted members can go in to defend or destroy the Guild Core."

Inside the hall, he saw the place was empty except for John who was standing before the platform as he tweaked the hologram above the platform.

"What are you doing here?" Jack asked as he came over.

"What am I doing here? I am fighting the coalition, unlike you!" John replied curtly.

"Fight? How do you fight from here?" Jack asked, but then the image he saw in the hologram gave him the answer.

The hologram had been zoomed in to show the front section of the headquarter. He saw the real projection of the fighting that was going outside. The coalition was not kidding, they had amassed a lot of players. There were probably six to seven thousand of them. All those players were marked with red, while his guildmates were marked with blue, who were outnumbered around ten to one. But amongst this blue, some were marked with solid blue. John was using his hands as he tapped on these solid blue figures.

"Are they the native soldiers produced by the barracks?" Jack asked. "You can control them?"

"Before that, let me say something first. WHAT THE HELL, MAN...!!" John yelled.

Jack was taken aback, what's the deal with this guy?

John continued, "When you said you want to go out to gather experience, we agreed because your job is to fight. You will be our main combatant. But after all this time, you are still at bloody level 30?! What the hell have you been doing all this time?"

John could see Jack's level without inspecting because as one of the leaders of the guild, he could see the level of every member. The lower rank members, on the other hand, could only see the name of the higher rank members. Level and class were hidden from them.

"I managed to become an elite class, though," Jack tried to defend himself.

"Don't change the subject. Do you know the mainstream players are mostly level 30 already now? Most of the experts were already level 31! How do you end up becoming lower level than the other experts when you have been concentrating on gaining exp?"

"Uh, if you allow me to explain..."

"No need for excuses! Do you think elite class is great? Flame had also become one. Our enemies also have people with elite classes, three of them some more!"

"Three? Who are they?"

"Red Death, Selena, and Killmonger."

"What elite class are they?"

"Assassin, Elementalist, and Berserker respectively. All of them got their elite class at level 30 and they are level 31 now. You better not underestimate them. Especially Red Death, she was the first one to get the elite class in Thereath."

"She did? I thought Flame was the first?"

"Flame took the trial first, but she failed. She had to wait several days before she was allowed to take the trial again. While she wait, Red Death reached level 30 and managed to succeed on her first try. Our Trinity Dawn should have a decent chance of succeeding on the first try as well, but she has not yet got the time to take the trial. She has been helping us repelling the coalition all this time... By the way, why the hell are you still here chatting with me instead of going out there to fight?"

"I'm analyzing their positions," Jack said, indicating the hologram above the platform. "I'm figuring about where I should hit. You haven't answered my question, are those solid blue figures you are controlling are the native soldiers produced from the Barrack?"

"Yes. I can give them instructions directly from here using this platform. It allowed me better maneuverability compared to giving instructions to players. These native soldiers were also more durable due to their higher HP, so they provide a very good meat shield for the players. Especially since all the trained footsoldiers have been upgraded to Squire instead, they had a better defense. We have managed to train around one hundred Squires, they are all level 35 elites."

John switched to another group of solid blue figures. "These Bandit Archers are also very useful. Their range is especially far. They can cover lots of ground with their arrows. They are also level 35 elites, but we only managed to train around fifty of them with the time we had."

So the guild had also built the Archery Range needed for training Archers. His guildmates worked very efficiently, Jack must admit.

"I have to say that training so many native soldiers with the time we have is already very good. I must thank you for sending that Triggerman to us, we have handed him to kingdom authority and received a hefty bounty of guild gold coins and resources in return," John added.

"We have no allies?" Jack asked.

"Only White Scarfs. But technically only Silverwing's personal retinue, numbering around one hundred that are out there fighting with our guild members. Words are, they have made contact with the true leader of White Scarfs and this leader has given the order to not oppose the coalition. The ones that come here are only Silverwing and his closest aides."

Jack didn't put too much hope on allies actually. For Silverwing to still come was already proof that he was a true friend.

"Uh, I am fascinated by the change of this headquarter," Jack said. John had zoomed in on the hologram, so part of the headquarter building was outside of view. But from this small portion, Jack could see the headquarter had grown. Many structures must have been built. It even had a defensive wall now, but the wall gate had no door yet, probably not enough time to build them. Now was not the time to admire these changes. If they failed to defend this headquarter, then all these growths were pointless.

"Say, do you have a way to make the enemies cluster together?" Jack asked.

"Why? I have been trying to spread them out," John replied. "I've been using the terrain to confuse them and have the native soldiers blocked them at chokepoints while the players strike their weak parts, but there are too many of them. I don't think we can last long this way. Why do you want to make them cluster?"

"Remember my unreasonable lightning balls skill?"

John's face showed a realization. He then grinned. "Go to the wall's main gate. I will send them your way."