

World 481

Chapter 481: Returning The Favor

Corporate United members were all stunned by the spectacle. They expected an intense fight, but it had ended in an instant.

Was that truly their leader, manager Straightpole? How come he got defeated so easily? Why was he just standing still when his opponent attacked?

None of them know about Pandora's psychic attack on Straightpole before Jack made his move.

"What did you do?" Director Forcelabor asked. He also didn't believe Straightpole would have performed so poorly. "What trick have you used?"

"You know, you are the embodiment of hypocrisy," Jack said to him. "You claimed your guild is not a bully, and yet the practice of your members has repeatedly confirmed so. This guy just now wants to fight one-on-one, and you let him. Now when he lost, you accused me of cheating. How about we just drop this pretense and have all of you come at me?"

Director Forcelabor's eyes twitched hearing the insult.

While Jack did use a trick, none of them knew about it. Only when Straightpole revived in safe zone half an hour from now could they ask him about it. Forcelabor gritted his teeth when he thought about Straightpole returning to level 1 after working so hard to become an elite class. He sent a message in the party chat for everyone to wear their Amulet of Rebirth, and do so himself.

He was done playing with this man. Director Forcelabor called out, "Everyone... Atta—"

"Wait!" Jack's shout cut Forcelabor's command.

Forcelabor looked at him with eyes that said, 'What now? Aren't you the one who wants to fight?'

"I am ready to give you an answer now," Jack said.

"What answer?" Forcelabor asked, he had a problem following Jack's train of thought.

"Steelhand asked before what I am doing here, I'm going to give you my answer."

"And what is that answer?"

Jack took out a tiny item and held it for everyone to see. No one knew what it was. They just stared at it in confusion.

"I'm here to return the favor."

The tiny thing in Jack's hand started to glow with ominous green light. Jack dropped it onto the ground, where it continued to glow.

The others watched in bewilderment. 'What can that tiny thing do?' Everyone asked.

Manager Steelhand suddenly came to a realization. "No... Can it be..."

The grin on Jack's face seemed to confirm his suspicion. But Steelhand was confused, if it was as he suspected, then why did Jack still stand there? Shouldn't he start running away?

"What is it?" Forcelabor asked Steelhand who seemed to realize something.

BLAM!

Before Steelhand could answer though, a large eruption happened at where the green glowing thing was. A very large green stem broke out from the ground, followed by another, and another. These stems were flexible as they lashed around. Some possessed small branches and leaves. Jack's body was soon buried by this cacophony of plants.

Several smaller stems which looked more like roots erupted further away from the green glow which was increasing in intensity.

"It's a Disaster Item!" Manager Steelhand screamed. "Everyone! Defend the headquarters...!"

Those that were slow enough to realize the danger, were caught off guard when roots came out in front of them. These roots lashed at them. Those that were hit lose HP, while some even got entangled by the roots and immobilized. The other roots slashed at their helpless bodies.

Those that were more reactive immediately attacked these roots, with weapons or magic. They found that these roots could be damaged. Someone used Inspect and found the roots to be level 32 basic monsters.

"Don't be afraid! They are just level 32 basic monsters!" Someone called out, trying to motivate the others.

Manager Steelhand though did not feel relief upon hearing that. "This is just the start..." He mumbled.

Once Jack used the Demon Weed Seedling, he had changed position with one of his copies. Thus, when the Demon Weed revealed itself, he was already safe and far away from ground zero. From his hiding place, he watched the Corporate United members who were in much chaos as they tried to maintain their formation to deal with the threat.

He then turned to the entrance of their Guild Headquarters. He had his copies get as close as possible to the entrance. With the others' attentions focusing on the Demon Weeds, he should have no problem sneaking in.

However, there were still people coming out from the headquarters after the Disaster Item was used. It seemed they still placed some people inside to guard just in case. Before, Jack was only one person. They were afraid he was simply a distraction, so they still left behind some sentries. Now that a real threat had shown itself, they couldn't afford to hold back anymore.

Jack decided to wait for a while. The fewer people inside the headquarters, the easier it was for him. As he watched the might of the Demon Weed, he took out a scroll from his bag. It was the Invisibility scroll he got from killing Uruk's adjutant.

"Hehe, let's use Red Death's tactic when she infiltrated Heavenly Citadel."

"So, this is why he dares to come alone charging into Corporate United's territory," Wilted Tree commented as she watched what transpired in the distance.

"How did he get his hands on a unique steed and a Disaster item?" Handsome Joe asked. "Ain't those things supposed to be very difficult to get?"

"They are...," Wilted Tree replied. "I have a feeling he still has other things that might surprise us. This man might be one that can truly help us in our cause."

"Huh, I don't like him, too arrogant," Handsome Joe said.

"Don't let your feeling get in the way. We have much at stake here. You have to look at the big picture," Wilted Tree said. She then turned to Anotherday, "What do you think of him?"

"He is a good fighter," Anotherday replied. "But a bit too reckless. Might cause himself harm. It is better for him to not tangle with World Maker until he matures."

"I agree. Let's just leave him alone first then. I hope he doesn't disappoint."

As time passed, larger roots appeared from the central stem. They were classified as level 37 special elites. These roots crawled from underneath the ground. Players could see the ground bulging as these roots traveled forward. They had to attack the ground before the roots showed themselves.

These special elite roots had thorns on their surfaces. Their lashes caused a Bleed effect when hit.

Director Forcelabor use a similar tactic as Everlasting Heavenly Legends when they were defending the Heavenly Citadel against the undead horde. They used the trained Footsoldiers as meatshield as the players rained damage at the roots.

However, one critical point differentiated the situation from when Everlasting Heavenly Legends was defending. During the Heavenly citadel defense, Jack had forced the Disaster Item to be activated a fair distance away from the headquarters. Thus, the undead horde that came at Heavenly Citadel was actually just a small portion, with the other undead spread out into the surroundings.

While here, the Demon Weed Seedling also spread out in the same manner. But since the Guild Headquarter was near ground zero, the portion of Demon Weed the Corporate United had to deal with was also much larger. Even with their larger number, Corporate United faced much more difficulty compared to Everlasting Heavenly Legends.

Not to mention, the trained Footsoldiers were a grade lower than Squires. Their coordination was also lacking since they were left to defend on their own. Whoever was in control of these soldiers only told them where to defend, unlike John who had actively issued commands to each of the Squires and Bandit Archers depending on the situation.

As time passed, a large trunk came out. On top of it was a large flower. Manager Steelhand used Inspect on it and found it to be level 42 Special Elite. The flower spat a cloud of green gas. Those who were hit by this gas were inflicted with Poison and Confuse.

"We have to use it!" Manager Steelhand shouted at Director Forcelabor.

Director Forcelabor showed an unwilling expression. But as he watched more and more of their members fell, he knew he could not afford to hold back. Otherwise, there would be no more Guild Headquarters for them. He sent a message.

Not long after, the air above the Guild Headquarters suddenly crackled. The air shivered as tongues of flames appeared and swiveled around. They soon coalesced into a large burning ball. This large burning ball fell to the ground in front of the headquarters. The flame dissipated and revealed the figure of a revealing woman with bat wings covered by flame.

The fiery woman then beat her wings. Her feet left the ground and she flew forward. Once she arrived at the front line, she blew. Flame breath poured out from her mouth. Every root touched by the flame received massive damage and suffered from the Burn effect.

It was evident that this Demon Weed had a weakness against fire.

Wilted Tree who witnessed from afar blurted out, "A Flame Succubus? They have a summoning crystal?"

Chapter 482: Avenger s Counter-Strike

"Flame Succubus? Is it strong?" Handsome Joe asked.

"Its flame is effective against plant monsters. But from its size and look, I say this one to be around level 40 rare elite, not more than level 50," Wilted Tree replied. "Despite its elemental advantage, it will only slow down the final phase of that Demon Weed disaster."

"Not bad. I expected some show when we follow that Storm Wind guy here, but it turns out more than I hope for. But where is the guy? Don't tell me he sacrificed himself just to wreck his enemy's Guild Headquarters, right?"

"I don't think so. Remember he created two copies of himself before he engaged them? That was a Body Double spell. He must have changed position with one of those copies. He is probably somewhere else safe watching the show like us."

Jack was indeed watching the show, for the first hour. His Body Double at level 10 lasted 14 minutes, with a cooldown of one hour. After the cooldown of the spell expired, he re-cast the spell. Only then did he use the Invisibility scroll. His body turned invisible and he headed for the Guild Headquarters' entrance.

He left his copies outside and watched the proceeding battle from their eyes. He suspected none of the guild members had become a Viscount yet, so the method he had used to defend Heavenly Citadel should not be available to them yet, but he was surprised when the Flame Succubus appeared. It reminded him again to not underestimate these top guilds.

The interior was empty. Everyone had run out to deal with the Demon Weed, which gave him a smooth journey to the Guild Hall. The layout of this headquarters was similar to Heavenly Citadel, so Jack didn't waste much time finding his way.

When he entered the Guild Hall, it was as expected, someone was in front of the round platform reviewing the battlefield and controlling the native Footsoldiers. It was an old man in heavy armor. The Guild Core which was Jack's target was some distance behind the old man.

Although being invisible, Jack still took care to walk slowly and silently. He did not have the Silent Step skill, so he had to consciously make sure that he made no sound. When he passed by near the old man, out of curiosity he used his Inspect on him.

General Manager Ironfist (Avenger, level: 32)

HP: 1990

The old man seemed to notice something. He abruptly used charge as a very large claymore appeared in his hands. Jack was alarmed when he saw the old man headed straight at him and swung his oversized claymore right at where Jack was standing.

The swing was parried by Jack's Storm Breaker and Whirlwind Falchion. His invisibility spell was broken by that one contact.

"You can sense mana?" Jack asked as he came to a realization.

Ironfist didn't reply. Instead, he responded by making another swing. But before the blade arrived, it seemed to break into three images.

Jack could tell the images were not just illusions, he could sense that he would receive damage from each of them. It was similar to Warpath's Shadowless slash. Jack's two swords danced as they clashed with the claymore's images. Ironfist's assault didn't stop, he continued swinging skillfully, each swing delivering multiple images.

'It's a martial art move!' Jack exclaimed within. He continued to clash with Ironfist's assault while retreating backward. Apparently, this old man was those old school martial art practitioners who can sense mana.

Jack backstepped a few times to put some distance.

After the two stopped, then only did Ironfist talk, "You are that kid that had caused the problem outside. What is your plan for coming in here?"

"Do you even need to ask? I'm going to crush that Guild Core behind you," Jack replied.

Ironfist glanced back at the core, he then said, "Although you won't be able to, I have to ask, what's the point? If you managed to capture this headquarters, we will simply let go of the defense and let the disaster outside destroy this base. Then both of us will not get it."

"Hehe, so you people are still unaware."

"Unaware of what?" Ironfist frowned.

"That one guild can only possess one Guild Headquarters," Jack answered.

Ironfist pondered a while about the statement before he gave another question, "If that is true, then the question remained, what's the point of you destroying the guild core. Are you not confident the disaster outside can destroy us? You come yourself to finish the job?"

Jack smiled, "You will know when I destroy it."

"Unfortunately, that will not be possible."

"Why? Because you have called in reinforcements as we speak?"

"No, because I alone am enough. The others have their hands full. It is not necessary to bother them."

"I'm glad you think that way," Jack's grin became wider. "However, even though you are good. You are not the level of my grandfather, so you won't be able to stop me."

Jack used Blitz Slash, attempting to zip past Ironfist, and headed directly to the Guild Core. He didn't expect his skill to connect. If this old man was as skillful as he appeared to be, he would be able to evade his attack. However, Ironfist stood his ground.

Although Jack's attack hit and five slashes landed on Ironfist's body, Jack didn't pass through him like usual. His Blitz Slash was stopped in front of Ironfist.

'You forget about Knight's Enhanced Block?' Peniel said to him telepathically.

Enhanced Block was a standard Knight Skill acquired at level 25. It increased a Knight's defense and stopped all skills or spells from punching through a target. It was a defensive skill to protect the allies behind. Anyone who stood behind the Knight would be protected from such assaults. This skill was an active skill though, so perfect timing in using it was required. And it had a cooldown time, so those hiding behind a Knight couldn't expect to have constant protection.

Jack truly had forgotten this skill. Peniel had informed him before but since he never saw this skill in action, he didn't put it into mind. He never saw this skill because not many Knights had the expertise to catch an opponent's attack timing accurately.

Aside from his own carelessness of forgetting the Knight's skill, one other thing surprised Jack. The damage from each slash was only slightly more than 300 damage. Jack had eaten sweet dumplings and applied Enhanced Whetstone before invading this headquarters. Combined with all other buffs, his normal slash could deal almost 600 damage. The enhanced from level 10 Blitz Slash skill could deal over 800 damage. Ironfist should have died from this one skill if he didn't dodge.

Yet, each of his five slashes on Ironfist only dealt around 300 damage. Even if an Avenger's defense were high and the Enhanced Block increased his defense further, such an extreme damage reduction didn't make sense.

"Be careful!" Peniel warned the same time when Ironfist's Claymore glowed with red light. There were also five small red orbs circling around his body.

Surprised by having his Blitz Slash blocked had caused Jack a second of halted reaction, which was capitalized by Ironfist. He kicked at Jack's knee. Despite Jack's strength and endurance, a knee was a weak joint, he couldn't resist getting imbalanced.

Ironfist slashed at this moment. Jack used his sword to attempt a block, but Ironfist suddenly twisted his claymore and used its hilt to knock Jack's sword aside. His claymore then twisted again and struck Jack with its glowing sharp blade.

Jack felt a strong pushing force. That slash must have been reinforced with Power Strike skill. His body flew back as his HP dropped drastically. So much that it scared him for a beat. His 2420 HP was down to only 260 when he landed. He lost more than 2000 HP in that one hit!

He heard rapid footsteps and knew that Ironfist was rushing at him to finish the job. A healing light landed on Jack and his HP was pulled back up to 1470. Peniel had hurriedly used her Fast Heal skill to help Jack. Ironfist glanced at the fairy when he saw what she did, but he didn't stop his advance.

Ironfist used his martial art move which sent multiple slashing images with each swing again. Jack didn't shy away, he responded in kind using his Formless Flowing Sword style.

As his swords were clashing with Ironfist's, he yelled in his mind, 'What the hell was that just now? How come the damage is so high even against my defense?'

'That's because it was mostly your own power,' Peniel replied. 'It is an avenger standard skill, Counter-Strike. At level 1 this skill absorbs 50% damage from an opponent's attack to be added into his next melee attack.'

'No wonder my damage on him was so low,' Jack thought as he continued to cross swords with Ironfist.

Jack did not have the time to ask about an Avenger's skill set before because, by the time Jack found out Ironfist was an Avenger, the old man had already lunged at him. Jack felt lucky this old martial expert was truly not at the level of his grandfather. The proof was when Ironfist kicked Jack's knee, Jack did not receive damage. In other words, Ironfist was not at the level of mana manipulation yet.

Chapter 483: Capturing a Guild Hostage Token

'What about that tiny orbs that appeared before he struck me?' Jack continued to ask Peniel.

'That was Avenging Orbs. Every time an Avenger received a hit, they will get this orb that lasts for two minutes. A maximum of ten orbs can be generated. Each orb increases the Avenger's damage and defense by 1%. When the Avenger performed a skill, they can choose to sacrifice these orbs. Each sacrificed orbs enhanced the executed skill by 10%.'

'And the skill an Avenger got for passing the trial on the first try?'

'It's called Thorn Vest. It reflects 30% melee damage back to the attacker. This skill lasts for twenty seconds at its first level.'

'Any visual cue when this skill is used?'

As if answering Jack's question, Ironfist armor emitted a soft red glow with thorny surfaces. Jack's assaults had picked up in speed at this time. His Dexterity far outpaced his opponent's. Adding to him using two swords with high attack speed, while his opponent was using a single two-handed sword which was heavy and slow. Hence, Jack could slip through Ironfist's skillful moves and hit him. It was at this time the thorny red glow appeared.

Ironfist received damage but so did Jack. Under normal circumstances, Jack would have continued going for the offense. But at this time, his HP was not ideal. Ironfist was the same. He had drunk some restorative potions after hitting Jack with Counter-Strike and Power Strike, yet he was not out of danger yet.

As if having a mutual agreement, the two disengaged and backstepped away. The two stared at each other with apprehension.

"I thought you are just someone who depends on superior attributes to overpower your opponents. It appears that I have misjudged you," Ironfist said.

"A lot of others did as well, don't beat yourself for that," Jack replied.

"What is that sword style you used? Where did you learn it?"

"Interested? I can teach you if you want. It is called the ultimate sword style for killing Corporate United people. But of course, if you wish to learn, you will then have to quit your guild first. Otherwise, you don't have the chance to use it."

"Your mouth is as aggravating as reported."

"Thank you for the compliment."

The two were chatting but were also using restorative items at the same time. Jack used healing potion, basic healing potion, basic rejuvenation, and basic regeneration potion successively. Ironfist had drunk the basic potions before so they were still on cooldown. He instead used Heal scroll, Regeneration scroll, and another potion that Jack had no idea what it was.

"You are not bad for a youngster. I haven't had a good fight these days. Let's get serious then," Ironfist uttered as he held his two-handed sword in a ready pose.

"You are not bad as well for a geezer. Unfortunately, I'm not interested to accompany you play," Jack said and replaced his Whirlwind Falchion with Rapid Dazing Staff.

He activated Life Burning Art and his speed increased further. He used Charge towards the Guild Core. Ironfist did the same. While charging, Jack cast a spell. Three runes formed at the same time.

Ironfist's Charge brought him to the position that blocked Jack's path. Jack's spell formation was completed at the time. It was Magic Bind. A ring of light was formed and targeted one of Ironfist's legs, but when it tightened, it clamped at empty air. Ironfist was one foot away.

'It missed?' Jack was surprised.

Ironfist swung at him, Jack met the claymore with his Storm Breaker. His strength of using a one-handed sword could still rival Ironfist who used two-handed, but he was pushed back a little.

Jack cast Mana Bullet and Energy Bolts as his right hand continued to fence with Ironfist. Whenever his range attacks almost hit, it seemed that Ironfist had shifted to a different position.

'It was a martial art!' Jack came to a realization. He thought at first Ironfist had used a skill to evade his spell, but if it is so, it won't be able to be used consecutively. There should be a cooldown, but Ironfist had continued using it against his range attacks.

"Not bad, old man!" Jack exclaimed as another rune was completed expeditiously.

Ironfist's mana-sensing ability informed him of the danger. He quickly stepped away but realized it was not far enough. He made a jump but still sensed the danger. He stabbed his long claymore onto the floor and stepped on it and jumped high, just as a ring of ice exploded out.

The danger he sensed was from the possibility of getting frozen. If he was unlucky enough to get frozen, then it was over for him. No matter how expert a martial artist was, it was useless if they couldn't move.

Jack was amazed by the old man's fast thinking and reaction. The jump aided with his claymore had sent him high enough to escape Ice Ring. Peniel had informed him before that several elite classes received a boost in their jump, but Avenger was not one of them. So he was rather sure that his Ice Ring would hit.

But despite his spell's failure, he wasn't discouraged. The next move came to him as soon as the initial one failed. Three runes were formed simultaneously while Ironfist was still in the air. The floor below Ironfist lighted up while he was dropping. However, before the Arcane Turbulence came out, Ironfist took out a scroll. An explosion of wind sent him away from the danger zone, towards Jack, another claymore appeared in his hands. He cleaved the large sword at Jack when he came near.

"Got you!" Jack exclaimed.

Jack had expected this hi-ranking guild to have some other common magic scroll aside from the healing ones, at least one movement magic scroll. The Wind Jet scroll was particularly useful. Jack himself had gained benefit multiple times from it. Now that Ironfist had used it, he won't be able to use another one even if he had one, due to the cooldown time. Ironfist had also used Charge not long ago, so Jack surmised he should not have any other movement skill or tool at this moment.

Jack used Shooting Dash. He had kept this move until now. His two-time dash brought him away from Ironfist and close to the Guild Core. Ironfist, who realized he had been tricked, chased over, but his speed was slow. He took out another scroll and used it. It was Haste which increased his movement speed. But Jack was already much in the lead. The Haste scroll only put Ironfist's movement speed at the same level as Jack's.

Five-rune spell formation was completed on Jack's staff just as he arrived beside the guild core. Jack placed the completed spell right on top of the Guild Core. Ten crimson chains burst out. When Ironfist tried to reach the Guild Core to prevent Jack from hitting it, the ten crimson chains snapped at him.

Ironfist could sense that these ten chains were no joke. He used his mystic steps again to evade but there were just too many chains. He had to use his claymore to bash the ones he had no time to evade to prevent them from tangling him, but this just cause him to retreat.

While Ironfist was busy with the crimson chains. Jack had re-equipped his Whirlwind Falchion. He used Cross Slash at the Guild Core, causing a large amount of damage.

At this time, every member of Corporate United received an emergency notification that their Guild Core was under assault. But they were still busy dealing with the Demon Weed outside. They could not

afford to disengage from the defense. Currently, there were large numbers of level 42 special elite Demon Flowers keeping them busy. There were even several level 47 rare elite which shaped like a large stem with long leaves that lashed around. Even the Flame Succubus was having a hard time trying to contend with these many foes.

Director Forcelabor sent a message to General Manager Ironfist, as he was the one guarding the Guild Hall inside, "what happened?"

"This Storm Wind kid had sneaked inside," Ironfist replied.

"What? How? Why didn't you call for help?"

Ironfist didn't answer. He did feel regret now. He had underestimated this kid.

"I will send some people, try to hold on!" Forcelabor said. Their defense would weaken but he didn't see a choice. If the Guild Core was destroyed, then all would be lost. They were still under the impression that a Guild Headquarters would no longer be theirs if the Guild Core was destroyed by Jack.

Jack, in the meantime, continued to hack away at the guild core with abandon. The Myriad Ensnaring Chains lasted twenty seconds. He was free to do as he please during that time frame. His opponent was a melee class, so there was nothing Ironfist could do aside from watching him in frustration.

The Guild Core was already very low on health when the crimson chains vanished. Ironfist shouted in rage as he lunged forward. But Jack had paid attention to his spell remaining time. Once the Myriad Ensnaring Chains was out, he placed the guild core and Ironfist into one line in front of him. Four-rune spell formation was formed as Jack cast Mana Beam spell.

A thick blue laser shot out from Jack's staff, piercing through the guild core and crashing at Ironfist. Ironfist staggered by the blast and lost almost 1000 HP.

Jack then sent a Flame Strike, the guild core finally broke. At the same time, every member heard a notification, "your guild core had been broken by Everlasting Heavenly Legends, 20% of current guild resources had been taken. And from now on, Everlasting Heavenly Legends will possess Corporate United's Guild Hostage Token, gaining the rights to 15% guild resources gained."

Chapter 484: Leaving with a Threat

At the same time as Corporate United members heard the notification, Jack also received one, albeit different. His notification congratulated him for successfully raiding another guild's headquarters. His guild received lots of reputation points, the 20% resources currently in Corporate United's warehouse, and corporate United's Guild Hostage Token. Jack also received a generous amount of Contribution Points.

As for General Manager Ironfist, Jack could see his confused face after hearing the notification.

"I said before that you will know once I destroy this core, right?"

The guild core which was in pieces re-assembled again in front of him. Curious, Jack smacked at it again. Ironfist was having a fright seeing Jack's action and was about to lunge at him, but Jack's sword bounced back without touching the newly-formed core.

"You can't destroy the same core at a single battle. Once the battle outside ends, this headquarters will enter a protection status like Heavenly Citadel. The difference was theirs will have the notification of defeat instead of a successful defense. They will also lose some reputation points," Peniel explained.

Ironfist looked at Peniel. He had been interested in the fairy ever since she healed Jack during the battle.

"Oh, so the fight will still be ongoing even though the guild core has been destroyed?" Jack asked.

"Yes. As long as combat does not end, the defensive battle will still be considered ongoing. Guild structures can still be destroyed."

"Where do you find this fairy?" Ironfist asked.

"She is my familiar, only an archmage can summon one," Jack answered. He did not hide the information, it's not like they could get their hands on a familiar at Peniel's level anyway. He also didn't mention that one must pass the Archmage trial on the first try if they wanted to get the spell.

Ironfist's eyes lingered on Peniel for a bit longer before they returned to Jack. "This Guild Hostage Token So, now we have to surrender our resources to your guild?"

"It will automatically be deducted every time you receive resources, so you don't need to worry about it. Just see it as a tax for your guild's transgression on ours."

"Hmph. We will rather throw this headquarters away and find a new one," Ironfist uttered.

"Wait! Let me tell you something first before you waste your time and effort conquering a new headquarters," Jack said. "Even if you throw away this headquarters, we will still have your Guild Hostage Token. When you build a new Guild Headquarters, your resources will still be deducted and sent to us."

Ironfist frowned hearing it.

Jack added, "You don't have to trust me. You can go ahead and try looking for a new Guild Headquarters if you think your guild has so much free time. Don't come crying to me and say I never warn you though."

Ironfist took a deep breath. Without a word, he lunged at Jack, his large claymore swing violently. This time not only his claymore that split into three images, in Jack's vision, he even saw three Ironfist coming at him.

Jack didn't dare to underestimate. He quickly back-stepped away. "Whoa! Our fight is over, you still want to continue?"

"Shut up! Pay for what you have done with your life!" Ironfist bellowed.

Jack used his two swords and re-engaged him using Formless Flowing Sword style. All the while continued speaking, "As thrilling as it is to fight you, I don't have that much free time. I only have one more thing to say before I leave."

"You think you can leave?" Ironfist increased his pace.

Jack responded in kind. Although Ironfist's swordplay was more skilled, Jack's improved sword style was not lacking as well. Combined with his superior attributes, he was actually in an advantage. Ironfist was embittered, it appeared this kid was toying with him.

"Use your magic spells!" Ironfist shouted.

"I need you to be alive to give the others my messages," Jack replied. "I don't have much time left, so I will just say it. Tell Death Associates, Wicked Witches, or any other in the coalition who already have a Guild Headquarters. I will be coming for them next!"

Jack then stored his swords and stopped moving. Ironfist was bewildered but his assault didn't stop. His slash cut through Jack's body. Yet, Jack was completely fine. Jack even grinned and waved his hand at Ironfist, before he vanished.

Ironfist was standing there alone inside the spacious Guild Hall.

"RAARRGGGHHH.!!!" He screamed in frustration. He couldn't believe a veteran like him could be played around by this youth.

Outside, Jack had changed place with one of his copies just as the Body Double's duration was about to run out.

The battle outside had turned in favor of the Demon Weed. Many of the players had lost their spirit after they heard the notification, reducing their battle power. Many had been killed or pushed back. Even the Flame Succubus had been beset upon by more rare elites. Its HP was only half now.

The roots had reached the outer structures and were now hitting at it. Jack saw HP bars on top of those structures. Even if Corporate United successfully defended this headquarters, many of its structures would get demolished.

Perhaps Ironfist's claim to abandon this headquarters and search for a new one was a better choice. Jack didn't really care anyway. He had done what he came to do. The other guilds in the coalition would receive this news. Even if Ironfist didn't deliver his threat to them, they would still be worried if Jack would come for them next. In this way, they would spend more time preparing their headquarters' defense rather than staging an assault on Heavenly Citadel.

The others in the coalition won't dare to move without the three big guilds' support. They had failed even with those three during their first assault, their chances would be slimmer without the three. This should give Everlasting Heavenly Legends enough time to recoup.

Jack walked away from there. On his radar, he saw three dots not far away. They should be Wilted Tree's group. Jack didn't go over to meet them. He took out a scroll, activated it, and disappeared.

Wilted Tree also saw Jack on his radar after Jack walked away from Corporate United's army. It was easy to spot a lone dot going away from the battlefield. The dot soon vanished from her radar.

'So, he did not die,' Wilted Tree thought.

"Where are you looking at?" Handsome Joe asked.

"Is it him?" Anotherday asked.

Wilted Tree nodded. "Yes. He has left." She then stood up. "Let's leave."

"We are leaving? The battle is still ongoing," Handsome Joe said.

"I think we see enough. Let's go, there are other matters to attend to."

Anotherday stood up.

Seeing his two companions no longer interested in seeing the conclusion of the battle ahead, Handsome Joe had no choice but to acquiesce.

In a dark room without any light. A girl was lying on the floor. She was trembling not from the cold, but from the understanding of what was to come. She heard footsteps, her body tensed up. The latch on the door was unlocked and the door opened, allowing a ray of light inside.

The light illuminated the girl, she was half-naked and had wound marks on her. "No! No! No! Not again! Please!!" She pleaded.

A short person came in. He smiled at her. He looked to the side and saw plates of food untouched. He shook his head.

"Didn't I ask you to eat the food? It will recover your HP. You know you will only revive here with full health when you die, right? It makes no difference if you eat the food or not. You will only postpone my enjoyment."

"Please Please just let me go" The girl continued to plead. Tears rolled down her cheeks.

The short man squatted down and looked at her as if a boy looking at his plaything.

"You know, this world, it's a paradise. In the old one, I can only play with one girl at a time. When I'm done playing Well, let's say they are not fit to be played on anymore. I have to find another one, which comes with a risk. I have to scout my prey, plan the capture, plan my escape. All those have the chance of getting found out by the authority. Here, however, not only there is no authority as long as we are out of town, but I can also play with the same victim over and over again."

"You are a monster" The girl cursed. Her red eyes were full of fear and hate.

"I am. But better be the monster than the prey," the short man smirked as he took out a curved dagger.

"No, no, no Please" The girl started crying again.

"I see you still haven't quit your sick desire," a voice was heard from the back. A man was standing behind the door.

When the girl saw this new man, she hurriedly shouted out. "Help! Help! Please help me! This man keeps on torturing me until I die. But then I get back to life again here, and he does it again! Please! You have to help me get out from C"

"Shut up!" The short man scolded as he slapped the girl hard. She fell to the side of the room.

The short man then turned to the man who just appeared. "Gridhacker, what are you doing hereHe asked

Chapter 485: Returning To Heavenly Citadel

"We need to talk," Gridhacker said.

"Wait outside until I finish," the short man replied curtly.

Gridhacker gave the man a sharp stare, he said, "Do know your place. If it wasn't for us. You will just be a nobody here. Do you want us to take away the enchantment in this room which can prevent the dead player from reviving in the safe zone?"

The short person looked back at Gridhacker with anger, but he didn't retort.

"Come out," Gridhacker said again.

The short person gave one more glance at the cowering girl before he stepped out. He locked the door to the room.

"What do you want?" He asked Gridhacker.

"We need you to track down an individual in Themisphere. We know the place where he used to hang out, but he likes to move around. It is difficult to determine his position, but I believe it should be no problem for you. We also need you to make sure to bring him alive to us. You should have much experience in this considering your... hobby."

"Why do I have to be the one who gets busy because of your incompetence? Send your people for that!"

"We don't have many people active in Themisphere and we can't spare what we have to chase him down. That's why we need you to do it."

The short person showed a defying expression.

Gridhacker continued, "Master sees a value in your tracking ability and also the ability to capture a prey alive, as long as you prove yourself useful. We will leave you to your sick hobby. But if we find your value no longer necessary, it is very easy for us to take away this facility. Not to mention sending you back to level 1. At that time, you will be at the same power as your victim, we will see if you can still easily overpower your victim and enjoy your pastime."

"Don't make threats at me," The short person growled.

"Don't take that tone at me," Gridhacker shot back. "Don't forget our relationship is based on mutual benefit. If you don't prove your worth, then there is no need to support you anymore. Let's see how you fend for yourself in this world once we spread to other players what kind of a person you are."

The short person was silent for a long while. Gridhacker stood there and let him brood. Finally, the short person said, "give me his data."

Gridhacker took out a device. A hologram with the picture of Jack appeared. Some texts describing his class and abilities were accompanying the picture.

"Two classes?"

Gridhacker nodded. "Don't underestimate him."

"Fine. I will head out three days from now," the short person said.

"You will head out tomorrow!" Gridhacker said.

The short person gave Gridhacker a hard stare but didn't say anything.

"Another thing," Gridhacker said. "Take this thing."

Gridhacker gave him something that looked like a small metal plate with a rectangle shape.

"What is this?" The short person asked.

"A safety charm," Gridhacker answered.

"To hell with it! I don't believe in that mumbo jumbo thing. Keep your charm to yourself."

"It's Master's order. You only need to keep it in your inventory bag. Or do you want Master to come here and tell you himself?"

The short person grunted before he snatched the plate from Gridhacker's hand rudely. He turned around and kicked the wall. He went into the room with the girl again and locked the door. Gridhacker soon heard the girl's scream.

"Degenerate lowlife," Gridhacker mumbled. He dared not object to the Master's order for working with this psycho, but the Master had also promised that the midget would be disposed of once he outlived his usefulness.

Inside the teleportation chamber of Heavenly Citadel, Jack appeared. He had used the Guild Return scroll.

He went to the Guild Hall. There were five people inside, Jeanny, John, Bowler, Domon, and The Man. They were not that surprised to see Jack enter.

"Having a meeting?" Jack asked.

"I can't believe you truly pull it off," John said.

"Oh? You know already?"

"Those with the rank of officers and above heard the notification," Jeanny said. "How did you pull it off? I thought you only use that Disaster Item to destroy or at least cripple their headquarters."

"Hehe, I copy the trick they used to infiltrate our headquarters last time."

"But you are still unbelievably fast, that coordinates Silverwing gave are more than a week travel from here," John said.

"Aren't you underestimating my steed too much?"

"Is it that black horse you rode during our guild defense battle?" Bowler asked.

"I suggest you don't call her a horse when she was out. Do you remember there was one guy who suddenly knelt and screamed his lungs out during the battle?"

"Of course, he was beside me that time. I asked him and he still doesn't understand why he became so scared that time."

"He called my steed a horse, that's why."

Bowler gave a face as if saying Jack was joking. When Jack maintained his serious face, he contemplated and told himself to watch his mouth if he was ever nearby Jack when he summoned his steed.

Jack went over to where the Guild Core was. There was a new small pedestal beside the core. When Jack touched it, a text description floated out and said that it was Corporate United's Guild Hostage Token. He could even see some basic information on the Guild. How many members they currently had and what structures were built in their headquarter.

The name of their Guild Headquarters was Corporate Tower. They had given it the same name as their real office building in real life. They currently have 946 members. Sadly, no detailed info on these members. At the moment when Jack was reading, one of the structures listed there suddenly blacked out.

"It has gotten destroyed," Peniel explained.

Jack then remembered that the battle at Corporate Tower was still ongoing.

"That was a cool gift you sent us," John commented.

Jeanny agreed, "We also received a large number of resources. Corporate United's gold reserve was truly eye-opening. We have already allocated it to help train more Squires and Bandit Archers for our next defense."

"I doubt they will attack anytime soon," Jack said as he threw something to John, who caught it and found that it was a recording stone. John immediately played it for everyone to see.

The 3D image appeared above, starting from when Jack had a duel with Manager Straightpole. Or more accurately speaking, executing Manager Straightpole.

"See? That's what happened when you call my steed a horse," Jack told Bowler.

Bowler took a gulp. He again reminded himself to watch his mouth if that Nightmare was present.

The scene proceeded to when Jack summoned the Demon Weed disaster and wreaked havoc on the Corporate United's defensive formation. After a while, the scene jumped directly to when Jack was in the Guild Hall with General Manager Ironfist. Jack had paused the recording and resumed it again after reaching the hall.

"That is Ironfist!" Jeanny exclaimed. "You crossed swords with him?"

"He can detect you while you are invisible," John said.

"Yes, he can sense mana," then to Jeanny, Jack asked, "I do think I have heard of him before, but still, is he that famous?"

"He is one of the top brass of Corporate United guild," Jeanny explained. "He used to be a top player of the last generation. He was amongst those that had helped bring the guild to its current height. He is a martial art top expert. He was once a runner-up of the national championship around forty years ago."

Hearing that, Jack turned to his grandfather. "Well, in that case, shouldn't you recognize him?"

"Why so?" Jeanny asked, hearing Jack's question to Domon.

"Because my grandfather here was the winner of the national championship ten years straight around that time."

"You are?!" Everyone asked with surprise.

"The fact that you all are so surprised is kind of insulting, I guess I'm still too soft on you during the training," Domon said, and to Jack, he said, "and aren't you leaving out the details too much. It was not only ten years straight winner of the national championship. It was also ten years straight winner of the world championship. I never lose once ever since I participate in those championships."

Although they knew Domon was not any normal martial art expert, Jeanny and the others saw him in a different light now. Their eyes showed more respect.

"Esteemed Sir, pray tell then who had finally dethroned you from the top place on your eleventh year?" The Man asked.

"Dethroned? You are being ridiculous. I only win ten times in a row because I stopped competing in the eleventh year. I found it boring to keep on winning, so I just stop participating altogether."

The others except Jack were speechless by his answer.

"So, do you recognize him? Considering you beat his ass and deny him the championship," Jack asked again.

"You are also being ridiculous. I beat so many runner-ups in my lifetime, how can I afford to remember everyone?"

It was Jack who was speechless this time.

Chapter 486: Eight Diagram Illusory Steps

"Gramps, do you recognize the movement trick that Ironfist fellow use in this fight?" Jack was indicating the scene which at this time showed Ironfist evading his spells.

"Yes, that is One-foot Stride," Domon answered. "It is an extremely fast feint that makes you think he is at one place when he is actually one foot away."

"Can you teach me that move?" Jack asked.

"Why do you want to learn that middling-level martial art?"

Mi-middling...?

"If you want to learn, I will teach you a proper one, the Eight Diagram Illusory Steps," Domon said.

"Well... That indeed sounds much cooler," Jack commented.

"Old man, why does the name sound a lot like that palm move you used on Red Death?" John asked.

"My name is Domon, not old man!" Domon chided. "Their names are similar because the one who created these two martial arts was the same person."

"That's not important. Gramps, teach me!" Jack exclaimed.

"You think it's easy? Well, I can show you the basics. How much you can learn, that's up to you," Domon said.

Domon walked to the center of the hall which had more space. Jack followed him. Jeanny and The Man followed as well, they are interested to learn too. Only Bowler and John who were not so keen on physical exercises stayed behind. The morning training from Domon was already hell to them.

"Hey, am I free to do whatever I want with this?" John called to Jack.

"Yeah, I gave it to you, didn't I? What do you plan with it?"

"Hehe, to humiliate the Corporate United, of course. Everyone will see how they and their champion got beaten."

"Then this will be the second time you use the recording stone on them. They are going to truly hate you."

"Nah, all they know is you are the one that recorded this. So they will be coming at you, not me."

Jack just shrugged, he was pretty sure that guild would already be gunning at him after what he did to their Guild Headquarters.

Jack, Jeanny, and The Man stood near Domon who was currently assuming a pose. "Watch carefully."

The old man then stepped around in a very incoherent pattern. He even seemed like dancing. Jeanny and The Man made weird faces, only Jack continued watching with a serious expression. After Domon stopped, he stared at the three.

Jeanny and The Man turned to Jack who was still silent, as if contemplating. The Man said to him, "As expected of Boss, it seemed that only you alone manage to grasp master Domon's profound demonstration just now."

Jack turned to him with a blank face, "Not at all, I don't get a single thing."

The Man struggled to keep himself standing straight.

Jack said to Domon, "Gramps! What the hell was that just now? I only saw you dancing around."

Domon sighed. He said, "Take your swords out. Try to hit me."

"Are you sure?" Jack asked.

"Have you forgotten how I still beat you last time when I was only level 19? Do you think now that I am faster I will have more difficulty?" Domon replied. He was at level 32 already after the end of the

undead horde disaster. During these few days apart from training the core members in the morning, he also went out monster grinding together with The Man's crews. At the moment, he was level 33, higher than Jack's Blade Dancer level.

Hearing his grandfather's confident tone, two swords materialized on both his hands. They were low-level uncommon swords, though. "Be careful, I will be using the Formless Flowing Sword style," Jack said.

"I won't expect it any other way," Domon said. The back of his palm faced Jack as he made a come-here sign.

With that affirmation, Jack sent a flurry of slashes using his sword art. Yet, his swords only sliced through Domon's after-image. Jack didn't expect to hit his grandfather so easily. Following the principle of his sword style, his slashes didn't stop, they utilized the force of their previous momentum to make new slashes, which Jack directed towards his grandfather's new position.

However, these slashes still failed to hit Domon. Jack again re-directed and continued chasing after his grandfather. His slashes never stopped, they expertly danced around and slashed at Domon's new positions, but Domon continued to elude them. Frustrated, Jack's increased his speed to the maximum. Yet, all he could hit was his grandfather's afterimage.

Jeanny and The Man were fascinated by what they were witnessing. Even John and Bowler had come over to watch. Jack and Domon were like two dancing partners, gracefully moving around in a weird dancing style. What fascinated them was the two never moved far away from their original clash point. In fact, they seemed to continuously move around in a small circle.

After a while, Jack finally stopped. After giving all his best, he was not stubborn enough to deny the result. He knew he won't be able to touch Domon without using any skill or spell, but that would just be acknowledging that he could not hit Domon using normal means.

"Is that the eight... the eight..." Jack stammered mid-sentence.

"Eight Diagram Illusory Steps," Jeanny reminded.

"Yeah, that!" Jack said.

"It is," Domon replied.

"It looked completely different from the weird dance you did before!" Jack protested.

"That's because the first time, I slowed it down so you all can see," Domon said, he then added, "Anyone has a chalk?"

"Why would anyone have a chalk?" Jack said, but he heard someone say, "here." Jack turned and saw John. White chalk was in his hand which he gave to Domon.

"Where do you find that?" Jack asked.

"I brought it from the Tutorial Period," John answered.

Remembering the binoculars from before, Jack asked, "Exactly how many things did you bring over from the Tutorial Period?"

"Many," John just shrugged.

Domon used the chalk to draw a large circle on the floor. He then drew eight smaller circles along the edge of the large circle. Inside the large circle, he added a few more small circles. After done drawing, he stored the chalk in his inventory. John was about to ask why he didn't give the chalk back but Domon had already started speaking.

"Now, watch me do it again in the slow version, watch my footings."

He repeated the weird dance he had made the first time. Now that there was the drawing on the floor, everyone had a better reference point. It turned out that Domon's feet had always stepped on the small circles. He never went out of the circumference of the large circle.

While he was performing the move, Domon explained, "there were eight base positions in this movement art. But each position had another eight variations depending on which side the opponent's attacks are coming from, resulting in sixty-four evasion possibilities. If you can master this art, even within this small area, you can evade all kinds of attacks sent your way."

"Except for an AOE attack," John countered.

Everyone ignored him.

Domon stopped. He moved away from the circle and said to Jack, "Give it a try."

Jack nodded and came to the circle. He placed his two feet on two of the smaller circles. Trying to remember his grandfather's move, he started to try to imitate.

After a while, Bowler commented, "I have to say, the first time I watch master's Domon using the move. It looked like a weird dance, but at least it was graceful. Jack's one now looks just awkward."

"You won't find me saying this often, but I agree with you," John said to Bowler.

"It is indeed embarrassing to watch," The Man added.

Jack stopped, took out his magic staff. A rune formed rapidly and a ring of ice exploded out. Everyone hastily moved away.

"The hell...!" John shouted.

"If you people still give more bullshits, I'll target the one speaking personally!" Jack threatened.

Jack then resumed trying to perform the movements on the circle drawing. No one made a comment anymore.

As Jack continued to practice, Domon drew more drawings at different places, allowing Jeanny and the others to give it a try as well. John tried once, but after realizing how awful he looked, he quit.

Other core members who could enter the Guild Hall found these leaders doing weird dancings when they entered. After receiving an explanation from Bowler, they expressed interest to learn. So Domon

gave them a demonstration and drew additional circles. Soon the Guild Hall turned into a dance floor where lots of people were dancing over the circle drawings.

John found it difficult to stay there seeing so much of the awkward dancing so he left.

Jack and the others spent the entire day practicing the move. Jack and Jeanny lasted the longest. They continued practicing until late at night, without a rest. Jeanny finally called it quit and said to Jack, "you are nuts, I can't keep up with you. I will call it a day first." Apparently, she only lasted this long because she didn't want to lose to Jack, but she had reached her limit.

Jack continued for another two hours before he finally stopped. Only Domon was left in the hall with him.

Domon gave Jack his opinion, "You still can't use it in a fight, but your improvement is incredible. As long as you continued to practice, you will be able to."

Jack replied, "I will, but during my spare time. I can't just spend the day simply practicing. I still have other things to do."

Domon nodded. He knew of his grandson's talent and character.. If Jack truly put his heart into it, he would be able to learn this move in a short time.

Chapter 487: Improvements

In the morning, he met John again in the Guild Hall.

"You are not doing the morning martial art training?" Jack asked.

"It's the melee class session at the moment," John answered. "Your grandfather separated the training into two sessions. One for melee players, the second for range players, which is later."

"I see. Where is Bowler? He should be joining the second session then?"

"He is excused for today's training, he is on his way to take his elite class trial."

"He just did? I thought you mentioned you all will be taking the trials when I left. Speaking of which, have you taken yours?"

"Have you not checked our guild's member rosters?" John asked back.

"Uh, no," Jack was not used to checking the guild page often.

"Open and check it then."

Jack opened it. In the guild's member list, he could see each of the member's classes. He was surprised, quite a number had become elite classes already.

Amongst those who had become elite classes, Jeanny was a Dragoon, as he had advised her in the past. John was a Summoner, The Man a Berserker, Trinity Dawn an Elementalist, Giant Steve a Sentinel, and Viral Cora had become a Bard.

"Had the others not yet taken their trials? Or did they fail?" Jack asked.

"Some had taken and failed, like Swellgoing, Wondrouslife, and a few others. Some others, like Bowler, preferred a prudent approach since succeeding on the first try gets a bonus skill. They wait for others to do the trial and ask them about the process or increase more levels to increase the odds. I have to say, Domon's training also increases the odds. Not that any of us has the ability to sense mana already, but it gives us a fundamental understanding of its existence, which still helped a little."

From the guild page, he also noticed that their headquarters had built all the resource gathering structures, albeit all of them were still at level 1. All workshops were also built, with barrack, archery, training cave, training ground, and the wall.

The Power Crystal, lodging quarters, and worker quarters had been upgraded to level 2. Lodging Quarter now had 700 beds for members to use. Level 2 Worker Quarters allowed the hiring of 20 workers. Level 2 Power Crystal gave a 15% exp boost for guild members within the region, active boost by spending contribution points provided 15% attribute boost and 10% damage/defense boost for three hours.

Current structures in construction were Wall Gate and Armory. Once the Armory was built, it would allow them to train Knight units, which possessed higher defensive traits than the Squires.

For the trained units, they had managed to refill their unit roster back to 100 Squires, while the Bandit Archers were up to 70 units. Today was the last day of protection status. By tomorrow, if the coalition still insisted on attacking, Heavenly Citadel's strength would not be less than the battle a week ago.

Furthermore, with the additional resources received from raiding Corporate United's headquarters, they could continue training even more units within these few days.

Apart from that, a stream of new applicants had been flooding them with requests for joining. After the news of Everlasting Heavenly Legends successfully repel the coalition's attack, their prestige had increased. They were no longer seen as a guild who was just lucky to place first in the guild chart. Their members as of this moment had reached more than seven hundred members, with more still in the process of being reviewed by Jeanny and John.

The number of Orc players that applied was also increasing. After hearing about this guild battle event from their friends, many orcs had gone to the Guild Associations in Larabar to put in their application. At this moment, there were not yet any guilds in Verremor that possessed Guild Headquarters. In fact, Jack did not doubt that some of the orcs applying were spies sent by Verremor guilds, to find out about the means of getting a Guild Headquarters.

Jeanny and John were more selective on these Orc applicants because they couldn't enter Themisphere's cities, so they were more limited in helping with guild quests. There were also guild quests available in Larabar after Life Runner registered their guild in that city, but the same problem. The ones that operated there were only Orc players, so they couldn't coordinate with their human guildmates, thus limiting the guild quests they undertook to those of small quests.

Some applicants used to be the members who left them when the coalition attacked, John promptly rejected all those players. He had marked them in his blacklist note. They did not need members who abandon them during their time of need.

"I've received reports that Death Associates and Wicked Witches' presence in capital Thereath had reduced," John said. "It seemed that your threat is effective. Most likely they have been scared by you and were reinforcing their headquarters at this moment."

"So, Wicked Witches had successfully acquired their headquarters?" Jack asked.

"They have," John said.

"What about White Scarfs? Any news on their progress?"

"No news yet on them. Anyway, even though an attack tomorrow is unlikely, I hope you don't go anywhere far first. Just in case if some guilds still try to attack."

"Okay. I'm planning to stay in Thereath for at least a few days anyway," Jack said.

"A few days? So you did plan to go away again, eh?" John said.

"This game world is so vast. A lot of lands are yet to be uncovered. A lot of countries are to be explored. It will be a shame if I stay coop up here."

"Well, as long as you remember yourself is still a part of this guild and come back when needed."

"Don't worry, with the Guild Return scroll. I'm just one message away."

Before Jack left, he checked on Corporate United's Guild Hostage Token again. Surprisingly, the headquarters was still standing. There were only a few structures left, though.

"Amazing, so they also managed to defend their headquarters. I guess this meant they had a Demon Weed summoning crystal now," Jack said. Referencing to the time when they were bestowed the High Lich summoning crystal after successfully defending Heavenly Citadel from the undead horde.

"Not necessarily," Peniel said. "There were three ways to survive a disaster item. First, of course, is to flee from it. But in the case where you cannot flee, for example, if your Guild Headquarters is within the AOE of the disaster item, you can either eliminate all the monsters produced by the disaster item, like what your guild achieved before. Or, you wait it out."

"Wait it out?"

"Yep. I don't remember ever saying the disaster item is permanent. The disaster item lasted five hours where the strongest boss would appear at the end of the fifth hour. But if the Guild Headquarters was still standing two hours after the appearance of this strongest boss. All the monsters would stop attacking and return to where they came from. At that time, the defending guild will be considered to have successfully defended against the disaster item. The difference is, the reputation point they receive will be much less compared to if they eliminate all the monsters. Also, they will not receive any summoning crystal."

"So you think they have survived using this waiting it out method?"

"Most likely. I think if they had a way to destroy the Demon Weed, they wouldn't have waited until so many of their structures getting demolished."

"I think you are right. Still, to be able to last two hours against a level 57 rare elite, that alone is already impressive."

Leaving the Heavenly Citadel via the Teleportation Chamber, Jack appeared at Thereath's Zone Portal. He went directly to the League of Champions. At the moment, he had accumulated 342 challenge points on his League of Champions Badge, while his Order of Magi Badge had 269 challenge points.

Even though defeating elite monsters and above gave him challenge points for both factions, he was more active in using his Blade Dancer skills, thus the challenge points he accumulated in League of Champions Badge were more.

Throughout his adventure, many of his skill proficiencies had also increased.

From his melee class side, his Flame Strike and Parry had upgraded to four stars, Natural Body Recovery and Charge to three stars, Adrenaline Rush and Flash Step to two stars. Superior Body Recovery and Shooting Dash acquired their first star.

Superior Body Recovery during its starting state had 50% efficiency during combat. With the first star upgrade, it had increased to 55% efficiency. From this increase, Jack surmised that Superior Body Recovery at full ten stars to have 100% efficiency during combat, making it no different on the recovery between off-combat and during combat.

Shooting Dash at first star increased movement speed by an additional 50% and the damage boost by another 10%.

From his magic class side, his Mana Bullet and Energy Bolts upgraded to the four stars, Heightened State to three stars, Ice Ring to two, Magic Bind acquired its first star, which increased its bind duration for another three seconds.

Chapter 488: Challenges

Inside the League of Champions building, Jack saw that the receptionist this time was a different person. So, he approached, introduced himself as a member of the League of Champions, and asked for Gruff.

"What's your name, sir?" The receptionist asked with a smile.

"Unparalleled Warrior," Jack replied.

The receptionist stared at Jack for a while, his smile never disappeared. He then took out the badge scanning device and said, "Please put your badge here for us to check your identity, sir."

'Damn!' Jack cursed inwardly.

"Never mind," Jack said and strutted off.

From this public front hall, Jack headed to one of the openings that brought him to the inner area. He had to show his League of Champions Badge here before being allowed entrance. He went directly to the colosseum hall.

Jack saw some players there, as opposed to before when there were only natives. He went to the wall with the roman numeral XII. He paid the twelve challenge points and was soon brought into the arena dimension.

Inside, he tried to summon his Rapid Dazing Staff but failed. 'So, it is truly so, I can only use physical weapons here.'

It didn't matter, his physical prowess should be enough for current challenges. He unsheathed Storm Breaker and Whirlwind Falchion. Ten level 19 Lizardmen appeared, six of them elite, four were basic monsters. Jack didn't waste time, he danced around them and decimated them within a short time.

Once he was out, he headed directly to the next wall. He proceeded rapidly. So rapid that he attracted the attention of the players inside there.

"Who was he? How come he has so many challenge points?" A pair of male Knight and female Warrior was discussing. They only had enough challenge points to challenge until stage seventeen, even that was because they had spent a lot of time intentionally performing the tasks that earned them challenge points.

"I think he looked familiar..." The female Warrior said.

"Come on, babe. Are you trying to make me jealous," the male Knight said.

"No, seriously. I think I saw him before," the female Warrior insisted. "Let's take a closer look."

They head over to the wall marked with XXV which Jack had disappeared to and waited there. Not long after, Jack came out again. As they were about to greet Jack, they froze.

"De... Demon...!" The female warrior uttered. Realizing what she had just said. She hurriedly covered her mouth. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" She said before hurriedly running away with her partner.

Jack was speechless. What the hell was that about? It seemed like John's nasty rumor was still in effect. Jack didn't think too much about it. He went to the next wall again.

The couple who had run away, watched him disappear into stage 26 arena, and heaved a sigh of release. "Damn, that was scary! I thought he was going to chase us."

"You should watch to not blurt out like that. Luckily he was busy, otherwise, we are a goner already," the male Knight said.

"But I don't think he was that crazy, right? This is the League of Champions' base. There are guards here. He won't do anything that will get him apprehended."

"What do you know. I heard he once killed a guy in the noble district, despite there being many guards around. He was so fast that the guards couldn't catch him."

"Serious? What did that poor guy do to get killed?"

"The guy didn't reply to the demon's greeting."

"What? That is so unreasonable. Can't he consider that the guy might be distracted and simply didn't hear his greeting?"

"Exactly!"

"Let's get out of here. At least until the Demon is not around. Speaking of the Demon, I heard there is another rumor. There was a recording about him beating the shit out of Corporate United people in their Guild Headquarters. He went there by himself and almost destroyed the whole place."

"Are you for real?"

"Yes. Apparently, it is revenge for attacking Everlasting Heavenly Legends a week ago. They are playing the recording now at Raven's Den, my friend just sent me a message about it. How about we go and check it out?"

"Sure, let's go!"

The two hurriedly scurried away. When Jack came out again. He looked around, wondering if the couple was still around. He had planned to go over and greet them, to erase the badass image of him that John had spread around without his consent, but he couldn't find them.

"Sigh, never mind then," he said before continuing the challenge.

He used up almost all his challenge points and completed stage 28. Inside that stage, he faced twenty level 30 kobolds. One amongst them was special elite, nine elites, and the rest were basic monsters.

Now that he was an elite class combined with his Formless Flowing Sword Style, he found even special elite of similar level was no longer a challenge. All twenty monsters were routed in a short time.

Inside his League of Champions Badge was now 346 glory points. Too bad he didn't get to stage 30. Otherwise, his rank would have increased and he could access new things for exchange.

'No rush,' he said to himself. He went to the exchange counter and used 180 glory points to exchange for the remaining nine monster books. Now he had the whole collection already.

Finished with his business here. He exited the building, then he headed to the Order of Magi's hut. He planned to use up all his available challenge points today.

He went into the hut and met the young Janus. Jack didn't forget to change into Unrivaled Arcaner first.

"Good afternoon, Mister Storm Wind!" Janus greeted cheerfully.

"So, any chance I get to meet the leader? The real person amongst all of you. Is his name also Janus?" Jack asked.

"Oh? Why do you want to meet our leader?" Janus asked.

"Just curious," Jack shrugged. "Are you even real?" Jack poked Janus' arm. He felt real enough.

"I am real," Janus swatted Jack's hand away. "Now, what can I help you with today? Don't tell me you come here just to poke at me, do you?"

"I want to take the challenges. Can you please summon that door thingy that brings me to the school of witchcraft and wizardry?"

"What school? Are you on drugs or something? If you are looking for a school, you should try the one in the noble district."

"Just trying to make a joke, sorry. Can you please let me enter that constructed space where I can take the challenges?"

"Just walk over there," Janus pointed to behind him. "The door will reveal itself."

Jack went over and as Janus had said, the rectangular void suddenly appeared. Jack and Peniel went through the opening and came out in front of the large obelisk where he had received his Order of Magi Badge.

"Oh? We are brought directly here?" Jack asked. In the past, Janus had taken him through the street of what looked like a town full of witches and wizards.

A voice answered him from the side, "Members of the order will be brought directly here. We have gotten complaints in the past about how everyone has to take a long walk simply to take the challenges."

Jack looked to the side and half-jumped from finding Janus standing right beside him.

"Let me guess, another copy?" Jack asked.

This Janus didn't reply, he instead continued explaining, "Our purpose is to allow members to view and get accustomed to our community. To let them see that they are a part of something big. But they are always in a rush, so we just set so only newly joined members needed to walk through the town to reach here."

"Can I just go ahead and take the challenge?" Jack asked, ignoring everything Janus had just said.

Janus made a gesture for Jack to go ahead.

"Do you give any complementary challenge points again this time?" Jack asked, trying his luck.

Janus shook his head with a smile.

"Can't hurt to ask," Jack shrugged and proceeded to the small obelisk with number 5 floating above it. He interacted with the obelisk and entered the arena space. He was met with five level 14 basic goblins.

Although the monsters were different, the difficulty setup was the same as with League of Champions' challenges. He continued the challenges until he used up his challenge points. He completed challenge stage 23 and was left with 3 challenge points, accumulating 266 Knowledge points. With his previous unused 10 points, he had a total of 276 Knowledge points.

"Would you like to take a look at the exchange list?" Janus offered.

"Any spells on the monthly products? Or still just recipes?" Jack asked.

"Still recipes. Spells only available once you achieve the rank of Novice," Janus answered.

'Seven more stages for that,' Jack thought. To Janus, he said, "I will keep my Knowledge points for new spells."

"It's your choice. Do you want to leave now?" Janus asked.

"Yes," Jack replied.

"You just have to say the words then."

Ugh...

Chapter 489: Another Assassination Attempt

"Exit point reveals yourself!"

The rectangular void reappeared again. Jack went through and came to the empty beige color space with Janus behind his desk at the center. Before Janus could say anything, Jack said to him, "bye!" And walked directly to the front door. Janus' mouth which was opening, shut again as he smiled and nodded at Jack.

"Are you in a hurry? He seems to want to chat with you," Peniel said once they were outside.

"I'm giving him the treatment his old self gave me," Jack spoke loudly at the door. "He can still hear me," he told Peniel.

Finished with his business with the league factions, Jack headed in the direction of the Noble district. He wanted to check on Duke Alfredo and Prince Alonzo before seeing if any kingdom faction quest was available. He would put neutral factions as the last on his list. He simply didn't have enough time to tackle everything.

When he arrived at the entrance to the noble district. The guards guarding the entrance gave him a stare. Jack was feeling confused by the stares, before one of the guards said, "are you going to use your mount again?"

Jack understood after the question. He smiled wryly. "No, sir. I will just walk today," he said.

He was not in a rush this time. He just walked leisurely as he enjoyed the beautiful landscape within the noble district. It was rather some time already since he could relax in this way.

When he arrived outside Duke Alfredo's estate, he was surprised to find a translucent dome was covering the entire estate.

"What is that?" Jack asked. Peniel flew over to take a closer look at the dome. Jack noticed some glowing runic symbols on the stone fence.

"Is it a rune diagram?" Jack asked when Peniel flew back. It was similar to the previous time when he first came here. But at that time, there was no translucent dome.

"Yes, a more powerful one from the last time. It completely blocks anything going in and out," Peniel explained.

Jack touched at the semi-transparent surface of the dome, he felt like he was touching a solid wall. He guessed this was similar to their headquarters when it was in a protected status, but why erect such

protection? Jack decided to head over to Commander Quintus' residence. The commander should know something.

At Commander Quintus' mansion, Jack was worried the commander was not home as he knocked on the door. The door opened and Jack saw Lindsey behind the door.

"Mister Storm!" She called with a bright smile.

"Hi, Lindsey. Is your old man home?" Jack asked.

"Yes, please come in," she said. On the way, she bombarded Jack with many questions about where he had gone all this time. Jack could only answer a few questions before they arrived at the Training Ground. Commander Quintus was seen inside as he practiced with his oversized sword.

The Commander noticed Jack. He stopped and said, "Training Ground is off-limit today!"

Jack smiled wryly. 'Sigh, I truly need to rebuild my reputation with these natives,' he thought.

"I'm not asking to use the Training Ground," Jack said. "I want to ask if you know anything about Duke Alfredo? His estate is covered by a protective dome. Did something happen after the expedition?"

"You only come to ask after this long?" Commander Quintus replied.

'Uh, it's not like I have much free time, mister,' Jack complained in his mind.

Commander Quintus came out of the Training Ground and asked Jack to follow him. He brought Jack to his home office and gestured for Jack to sit on the couch. He asked the maid to make some tea for them. When he sat down on his office chair, he noticed Lindsey was there.

"Why are you here?" Commander Quintus asked.

"I want to listen," Lindsey replied.

"You are not yet graduated from cadet. Leave, this is an official matter."

Lindsey pouted, but she didn't disobey her father.

Jack kept his mouth shut. This was father and daughter stuff, he had no right to interfere. However, he was curious about the Commander mentioning this was an official matter.

After Lindsey was out, Jack asked the commander, "Did something happen to the duke or the duchess? Is the cure not working?"

"The cure is working, albeit not as immediate as we all hope for. The curse the Duchess suffers is more powerful than we expected. The cure needs time to slowly erase the curse. During this time, she needs to be protected from harm. That's why the duke had opted to erect the powerful protective dome to cut out all contact with the outside. Laurent is with them inside, he is helping by using his art to speed up the healing process."

"How long will the process take?"

"No one knows. Laurent estimated it might take several months, but even he was not sure of it."

"Well, at least everything is still okay," Jack said.

"Not quite," Commander Quintus said.

"Oh? But aren't they safe inside that protective dome? It's just a matter of time until the duchess recovers, right?"

"I'm not talking about them," Commander Quintus said. "It's Prince Alonzo. There has been another assassination attempt."

"Another? Was it when the expedition was returning to the capital?"

"No, that return was fine."

'Oh, great. Otherwise, I will feel really bad for having left the expedition early,' Jack thought inwardly. Another point to note was that the Commander said attempted assassination. In other words, it failed.

"The incident occurred around one week ago. The guards managed to repel the assassins. However, the prince was poisoned."

"Poison? Just give him an Antidote then," Jack uttered.

"Don't treat us as the same as you outworlders. Not every poison can be treated with a simple antidote. This poison didn't put the prince's life in danger, but it still render him weak. Royal Healers said he will need a few more weeks of bed rest before he can attend to any activity. The assassin must have taken the chance when the Duke isolated himself. Most of the Prince's security details had been arranged by the Duke. After what happened, I have taken the liberty to take over."

"Do we know who sent the assassin? Is it the crown prince again?"

"That... I will bring you to see the prince. We can talk more over there. The prince has informed me to bring you to him once you show yourself. You are a very hard man to find."

"I did a lot of travels," Jack said.

Outside the mansion, Commander Quintus summoned his steed. He didn't ask Jack to ride at his back, because he knew Jack had gotten his own steed during the expedition. Jack felt awkward, he had told the district guards that he would not summon his mount. Now he would do exactly that.

He took out his red whistle and blew. Commander Quintus and his mansion guards were alarmed when a pillar of fire erupted. The flame soon dispersed as the majestic figure of Pandora was revealed.

"A... a Nightmare...?" Commander Quintus stammered.

Jack rode onto Pandora. As long as Pandora only did a light gait, he should not get fined again.

Commander Quintus was still staring at Pandora. Jack asked him, "shall we?"

He snapped back and said, "Ye.. yes... lead the way... Ehm! I mean, follow me!"

Commander Quintus' rank allowed him to have his horse gallop at a fast pace. Jack, on the other hand, asked Pandora to only trot. Even with that pace, Pandora easily followed the Commander's steed.

They were heading towards the largest structure within the capital, the imperial palace.

'Finally!' Jack said in his mind. He had been wondering when he would be able to enter that palace.

The grand castle was getting bigger as they approached. The castle was protected by an outer wall and an inner wall. Each of the walls had a colossal gate. The iron portcullis was hanging on top of the gate, ready to be brought down in the case of invasion. Jack wondered about the wall gate they were constructing at Heavenly Citadel, would it end up a portcullis as well?

There was a platoon of soldiers guarding each of the gates. Each of the soldiers was level 50 elites, led by a level 55 special elite Sergeant. Even Commander Quintus underwent heavy checks. For Jack's part, he had to present his Themisphere Nobility Faction Badge and was subjected to a scanning spell by one of the mage soldiers. That must have been a spell to dispel illusion or something like that, in case someone was impersonating another person who had access into the castle.

After passing through the inner wall, they came upon a large courtyard. Jack saw two battalions of elite soldiers performing drills in the courtyard. The castle's main entrance was two extremely large doors. It was closed at the moment, with two knights in heavy armor flanking the doors.. Both of them were level 60 rare elites.

Chapter 490: Ambusher

Jack was amazed. Just the two guards at the main door were already almost as powerful as Duke Alfredo. The soldiers stationed within this castle must be the cream of the crop in the kingdom.

"The main door only opened during a royal event, or when receiving important dignitaries," Commander Quintus explained. He brought Jack to a smaller door at the side of the building.

When they were about to enter, a voice stopped them, "Halt!"

The two turned and saw a man in heavy armor approach, behind him was a squad of heavy-armored soldiers.

"Quintus, what are you doing here?" The man said.

"Claudius... I am here to visit the third prince. Is that a problem?" Commander Quintus replied.

"You are not, but he is," Claudius pointed at Jack.

Jack was surprised. What's the problem with this prick? He used Inspect on the man.

Claudius (Rare Elite Human, Lord Commander), level 66

HP: 760,000

Jack was surprised, again. This prick was as powerful as Duke Alfredo. He was even one level higher. He was originally going to say something, but now he decided to just be quiet and observe the situation first.

"He is a member of our kingdom faction, he is a viscount and a close friend to the third prince. Please show some respect," Commander Quintus uttered.

"A Viscount?" Claudius was surprised. "Hmph! It's your own fault for allowing him into our faction in the first place. Their kinds should have been chased away the seconds they appeared."

"Are you defying our King's order, Claudius? Do not let others misjudge. Otherwise, they will say you are rebelling."

"Hmph. It's just a matter of time for them. Once the crown prince Therribus assumed the throne. He will do what is right. As for you lackeys of the third prince, I'm rather amazed you can still trust an outworlder after what happened."

"You can't generalize all of them just because of the act of a few."

"Say whatever you want, their days are still numbered," Claudius turned to Jack and gave him a hostile stare. Jack returned it with a smile.

"The hell are you smiling for?" Claudius grunted.

"Our kinds are benevolent people who treat others' bad manners with kindness," Jack replied.

"Are you saying my manners are bad?!" Claudius thundered.

"You must have misunderstood me, o great knight! I simply meant that however others treat us, good or trashy, we will still smile at them with kindness," Jack replied, still smiling.

It was clear that Jack was simply making fun of him, but Claudius couldn't do anything to Jack. Jack was still a Viscount, after all. Even though his Lord Commander's rank was high, it still didn't mean he could do as he like against a noble. Not when Jack didn't openly disrespect him.

"I will see how long you can still smile," Claudius spat at the ground beside Jack's feet. He then gave a command to the squad behind him. "Follow him. Make sure he only goes to the third prince's bed-chamber. If he wanders anywhere else, take him into custody!"

After giving Jack another hostile glance, Claudius then walked away, leaving his squad behind who continued to watch the two.

Commander Quintus gestured for Jack to follow. They entered the castle's side door and came to a wide hallway framed with large classical columns.

'If the side door's hallway is already this grand, I can't imagine the main entrance's hallway,' Jack thought. He looked back and saw Claudius' squad was indeed tailing them.

"I must say the crown prince's camp is rather strong," Jack said.

"That's true. He is not even the strongest," Commander Quintus said.

"I know. I've met another Lord Commander, Garland Thunderhand," Jack informed. "Don't tell me he is also not the strongest."

Commander Quintus didn't reply.

"Damn!" Jack uttered, understanding the commander's silence.

Since the squad was following them with a strict order to not let them wander, Jack could not ask the commander to take him for a sightseeing tour. They came to a large hall with a staircase and went up the staircase several floors above. After a few more turns, they arrived in front of a door that had the Themisphere royal symbol with the Therras Beast's head. Two soldiers were guarding the door.

The two soldiers saluted commander Quintus when he approached.

"I'm here to see prince Alonzo. Is he awake?" Commander Quintus asked.

"Yes, but he has guests at the moment. I have to let them know first," one of the soldiers answered.

"All right. Tell them I am with mister Storm Wind here, requesting an audience with the third prince."

The soldier nodded. He then went inside while his partner stayed outside.

Jack looked back at the squad who followed them. They had lined up at two sides of the hallway, standing guard there while not blocking others who were to pass.

Not long after, the soldier came out and said, "You two can enter." He opened the door wide and ushered them in.

The two of them went through the door and came to a small room. There was another door on the opposite side, Another guard was opening that door and gestured for them to enter.

'The prince's bed-chamber had its own foyer,' Jack thought, impressed.

After they passed through that foyer, they arrived at the bed-chamber. But to Jack, it looked much more like a small-sized banquet hall. There were several couches, a small bar counter at the corner to prepare drinks and light dishes. One side of the room opened up to a wide outdoor terrace that displayed the view of Thereath city. At the center of the room was a large and extravagant bed. Prince Alonzo was laying on this large bed. Several maids were attending the prince.

Three persons that Jack knew were beside the bed, they should be the guests the guard outside mentioned. One of these persons stood up.

"I'm delighted to meet you again, Mister Storm Wind," Royal Advisor Mason said. "I've heard how you saved the prince during the expedition. We are all very grateful."

"It is my duty," Jack replied with a bow.

"Mister Storm Wind, I'm glad you come," Jack heard Prince Alonzo call to him. His voice was strong, Jack hardly thought of it as the voice of someone sick. But when Jack approached, he could see the prince's face was pale.

The maids moved two chairs beside the bed to allow Jack and Commander Quintus to sit. The other two guests were Princess Sindral and Samuel. The princess was sitting with Mason on the other side of the bed, while Samuel was standing on the side.

"What happened?" Jack asked after sitting down.

"Let me be the one to explain. The prince needs rest so it's better if he doesn't talk too much," Mason offered. "This incident happened when the prince went into the training caves with the other cadets.

When they were inside, the monsters that appeared were more numerous and stronger than they should have been. But because it was a training cave, the maximum level and number were still something the cadets could handle. However, when everyone was busy dealing with the monsters, someone ambushed the prince from the back using a poisoned dagger.

"The other cadets, realizing the prince was in danger, hurriedly came to his defense. The assailant with the poisoned dagger retreated before the other cadets could catch the person. After they broke away from the monsters, they carried the prince and exited the training cave. They found that the guard who was supposed to monitor them from outside the cave had been murdered. The murderer had tampered with the cave setting before going in for the ambush.

"Prince Alonzo had activated his alert beacon the moment he was ambushed. So guards arrived soon after, but they failed to find the perpetrator. That person had run away immediately after backstabbing the prince, he or she most probably knew about the prince's alert beacon. The poison had been a special kind. Our healers were unable to alleviate the poison effect directly but fortunately, it was not something uncurable, the prince just needs more rest for some time."

Jack pondered about Mason's tale. He asked, "Does the area with the training cave have a record of who is allowed entry? We can check who is in the record to narrow down the suspect," Jack remembered when he went there with Lindsey and Alonzo, the area was not a public space, so entry to this place should be controlled.

"There is, but there are two problems. Firstly, the record on that day had been destroyed, we are still investigating this incident. Secondly, even if the record is intact, the one who ambushed the prince wouldn't be in it, because that person should not have entered the training cave area."

"Why is that?" Jack asked.

It was Prince Alonzo who answered, "because the one who ambushed me was an outworlder."