

## World 501

### Chapter 501: Symbolic Party Forming

'Did the prince know about this? Was this why he sent me?' Jack wondered.

Haestus continued, "As you know, we use the mountain's inner fire to help us in our craft. If we lose access to our fire mana source, we will lose this place."

"This monster threatened that?" Jack asked.

"It does. It is a type of monster that eats fire elements. It somehow found its way into the place where we built the machine to harness a fire mana site within this mountain. It had been making that place its lair now. If he kept on sucking the fire element there, the fire mana site might get destroyed."

Jack heard a notification after Haestus' words, "You have been offered a quest, Freeing the Fire Mana Site. Do you accept?"

"What is the level of this rare elite monster that needed vanquishing?" He asked Haestus.

"We don't know for sure, but it should not be lower than level 45. When we are forced to leave the place with the machine, the workers there said it was at that level. We don't know if it had grown."

'Level 45 rare elite? The prince certainly doesn't know about this... But then again,' Jack looked to the side at Samuel. 'No, he was level 55 but one grade lower. The best he could do was keep the monster occupied.'

"Why aren't you sending your soldiers down? High-level guards were protecting this place, right?" Jack asked. 'Hell, you yourself can probably fight the monster,' Jack thought about Haestus.

"The soldiers were mercenaries. They had no obligations unless the monster attacked our facility. The place with the fire mana site was not considered part of our facility. We will have to pay more if we ask them to take care of the monster."

"..."

"Our members here as you see are mostly blacksmiths, we are not fighters. I can fight, but it will be a risk. Since the third prince is expressing goodwill, we are kind enough to comply. Please rest assured that we will officially support Prince Alonzo once this crisis is solved."

"..."

Jack stood up. "Where is the way to this monster?"

Haestus clapped and stood, "Hah! I know the third prince won't send a wimp. Come!"

Haestus took them to a room with a large round hole on its floor. There were winding stairs going down far below. Jack could not see the end of the descent. It was dark at the bottom.

"More monsters appeared down there after that rare elite appeared. Many of the lighting apparatuses were destroyed, so visibility should be low down there," Haestus said.

"You got a torch?" Samuel asked.

"No need," Jack said and cast the Illumination spell. "Let's go," he said and started descending.

Jack heard two footsteps behind him. He looked back and saw that aside from Samuel, Kirsi had also followed. The blacksmith woman was holding a large crossbow. Jack gave a questioning look at Haestus who was standing by the edge of the hole looking down at them.

"Kirsi used to be a skilled ranger before she learned blacksmithing. She should be of help to you down there," Haestus explained.

Jack had the urge to say, 'How about you be the one coming down with us instead of her? That will be a better help.' But he kept his mouth shut. He turned back and continued following the stairs down into the abyss.

"Good luck!" Grenmir shouted.

Jack simply lifted his arm as a reply.

They descended rather far. Jack looked up and the top was a tiny ball of light up there. It was very dark where they were, but the stairs continued to descend. Some of the stairs were damaged. Fortunately, Jack's illumination spell allowed them to see the steps clearly, so they didn't tumble down.

Kirsi wore a round helmet. She tap on the front part of it and a bright light shone. Jack was reminded of the caving helmet in real life which had a headlamp. He observed Kirsi's helmet closer and found the light source to be a gem that emitted bright light.

"I crafted this helmet myself," Kirsi explained.

"Awesome," Jack commented.

"I could have used one," Samuel said.

"Sorry, I only made one," Kirsi said.

When they arrived at the bottom, they saw there were three separate paths to take. "It's that way," Kirsi said and pointed to the rightmost path.

"Stay behind me," Samuel took point and readied his two tomahawk axes.

Jack also had his sword and magic staff at the ready.

The temperature when they were climbing down the stairs was rather high. However, down here, it was rather cold. Considering they were inside a mountain under a facility that utilized the mountain's heat to the fullest, it was strange. There were also flecks of ice on the wall. Why was there ice? And why didn't it melt? Jack touched the flecks and found them were cold.

"How far is the place with the fire mana site?" Jack asked Kirsi.

"If no interruption, we should arrive in less than an hour," Kirsi answered.

'Definitely will be longer,' Jack thought. Haestus mentioned other monsters had infested this place as well.

As if agreeing to Jack's thought, two large figures appeared on their path. They were humanoid with muscular bodies and bull's heads. Two large bent horns jutted out from both sides of their heads. Their skin was blue and smooth. Each of them carried a large hammer.

Jack used his Inspect. The two monsters were Snow Minotaur, level 35 elite humanoid monsters.

Since their levels were not too high, Jack said to Samuel, "You two stay back! Let me deal with them."

Samuel looked at Jack with a weird expression. 'Shouldn't that be my line?' He thought.

Jack, in the meantime, was already rushing forward and met the two minotaurs. Jack preferred to do the fighting if the monsters were still manageable. Samuel had proven to not be under his command, so Jack would not get any exp if Samuel did the killing. Kirsi also joined following Haestus' command. She never asked for Jack's order so it was clear that she was acting on her own. Jack would get no benefit from her joining the fight as well.

As if the two wanted to prove that they were not under Jack's command, the two still attack even after Jack asked them to stay back. Kirsi's bolts flew with fast speed and stabbed at the minotaurs' bodies. Samuel cleaved at one of the minotaurs and it was smashed to the ground. Their levels were too far apart, after all.

Jack focused his offense on the other minotaur. He hurried up by using all his strongest skills except Lightning God Barrage. He used the burst attack of his Formless Flowing Sword style. He shouted to the two, "Hands off from this one! This one is mine!"

Samuel and Kirsi looked at each other. "Outworlder," Samuel said with a shrug.

As Jack fought the minotaur, he could feel the cold aura from the monster. It was weird for a cold-type monster to appear in this fire-based location. Did it have something to do with the rare elite monster that was occupying the fire mana site?

Jack finally killed the minotaur while the two watched. He received exp points, some coins and mana cores.

"We are going to waste time if you insist to fight by yourself, you know?" Samuel said.

Jack thought about it. That's true. He then asked, "Well, I have no problem for you two to fight as well, but I have a condition."

"What?" Samuel asked.

"You two have to listen to my orders."

"Boy, even if you are a Viscount, I'm still more senior."

"I know. I never ask for your obedience the entire time. Just agree to listen to me for this current mission."

Samuel seemed to be considering. Kirsi said, "all right, I'll follow your order. However, if I think your order is putting us in danger, I won't follow."

Jack nodded. He was not actually going to give them specific commands. It was just a symbolic attempt to have this world system granting him exp points.

Samuel said, "Fine. I have the same thought as her. If your command is absurd, don't expect me to follow."

"Excellent. Follow me!" Jack said. He was eager to test if the system recognized this kind of party forming.

They encountered another two Snow Minotaurs. Jack gave his orders, "Samuel, deal with them! Kirsi, support him with your crossbow!"

The two were confused, what's different from before? Jack was not even moving this time. The two proceeded to engage the monsters. Samuel alone was enough already, he was too powerful for the Snow Minotaurs. When the two monsters fell, Jack saw his exp bar going up. Some coins and mana cores also fell from those fallen minotaurs.

'Hehe, success,' Jack thought with a grin. Now he had extra motivation to slay this level 45 rare elite.. An exp of such a high-level monster would surely elevate his level to catch up with the levels of other player experts such as Anotherday, who was already level 35 the last time Jack met him.

## **Chapter 502: Fire Eater**

As they proceed further, they encountered icicles jutting out of the ground and ceiling. It was not weird seeing icicles from the ceiling, but how did it form one jutting out of the ground? Jack touched the icicle and felt its cold. The surrounding was hot, but these icicles didn't melt at all. They were also very sturdy. Jack hacked at them but there was no scratch.

They continued to encounter more Snow Minotaurs. Samuel made short work on them. Their level seemed to increase the deeper they went. The minotaurs that came out now were mostly level 36 and 37.

At one point, their path was blocked by icicles that were lined up so tightly that they formed a wall.

"Is there another way?" Jack asked Kirsi.

"Yes," Kirsi took them into another tunnel.

They soon came out into an extremely huge cavern hall. Jack looked up and saw the ceiling was so high that the little light from his illumination spell couldn't reach it.

"Careful to not get lost," Kirsi warned. "This cavern hall is the size of a village. Without any lightings, it will be difficult to determine direction. The fire mana site is at the center."

They continued onwards but were soon stopped by another wall of upward icicles. They had to walk along the icicle wall until they found an opening. They went past this opening and saw more icicle walls stretching out into multiple paths.

"We should be going in that direction," Kirsi said.

They took the path pointing in that direction but were soon blocked again by icicle walls. They had to move sideways until they found an opening before continuing. But after a while, even Kirsy seemed to have lost direction. Everything was dark far away, there was no reference point they could use. They were not sure if they were still facing the right direction.

"Damn, this place is an icicle maze," Jack said after looking at the icicle walls set up. There were just too many turnings.

Snow Minotaurs continued to come at them while they navigate through the maze.

"Minotaur and maze, how very mythological," Jack commented. At this time, he noticed a large dark red dot at the edge of his radar. That should be the level 45 rare elite monster they were targeting.

"This way!" Jack said as he pointed to a path. Since Kirsi had lost direction, she didn't protest Jack's decision to head that way. Jack used the large red dot as a reference point while they continued to navigate through the maze.

Jack also saw several common red dots around. Those should be the Snow Minotaurs. If he was in the vicinity, he would try his best to approach these minotaurs and took them out. He preferred to deal with the boss alone. It would complicate matters if it could call these minotaurs for assist.

As they got closer to the large dark red dot, the number of icicle walls decreased. They soon reached an exit that opened up to a large empty space. No icicle walls there. A mound that looked like a miniature volcano was at the space's center.

Jack and the others didn't immediately rush out. They hid behind the last icicle wall and studied the situation. There was a large creature covered by ice crouching over the top of the mound. Its four limbs were on the ground as its extremely large mouth was opened and a stream of fire was sucked into it. They could see rather clearly at this place because a lot of lightings surrounding a strange metal contraption high above the mound were still functioning.

'It is a fire eater,' Peniel sounded inside Jack's mind.

'That monster's name is Fire Eater?' Jack asked, at the same time he used Inspect.

Ice Demon Spawn (Rare elite monster, Demon), level 47

HP: 490,000

Demon. This was the first time he met a monster categorized as a demon. But level 47? It was higher than what Haestus informed. Jack guessed this monster should be similar to the Ice Troll Sentinel from the past. That monster also grew in level as it absorbed the ice mana site's energy.

'No, that's just its nickname,' Peniel answered. 'It is an Ice Demon Spawn. It was called a fire eater because of its habit to eat flames. It particularly enjoyed hanging around places with thick fire elements, like this place. Once it finished sucking up the fire element of this place, it will become an icy wasteland.'

'No wonder all this icicle, this is its doing?'

'Yes. It was some sort of protection to hinder others from disturbing it during its feeding process.'

'Does it possess any weaknesses? I assume it will be highly resistant to both ice and fire attacks.'

'Resistant to ice, but not fire. It ate fire but that doesn't mean it is immune to it. Unless you send your fire attack into its mouth. Its other body parts were weak against fire.'

"How should we deal with it," Jack heard Samuel ask. Jack asked him to stay back first, he was still thinking.

'Does it have any special attacks?' Jack went back to discuss with Peniel.

'Oh? Aren't you usually like to just rush in and find out by yourself?' Peniel teased.

'This is the first time I will be deliberately engaging a rare elite with a level way higher level than me. The other times were mostly due to circumstances, I got no time to prepare.'

'I remembered you deliberately engage the Grim Sand Drake.'

'I deliberately lured the Grandmother Spider to engage the Grim Sand Drake. I never planned to fight the drake in the first place. Cut the crap now, do you know if this Ice Demon Spawn possessed any special skills?'

'Can't say for sure. Every monster above elite grade is similar to adventurers, they can possess skills unique to their own. Just like how you as a Warrior possessed skills to which The Man doesn't have, despite both of you being Warriors. This monster was also the same. I can tell you its standard skills, but I can't say for sure that it doesn't have other skills in its arsenal.'

'Tell me what you can.'

'Ice Demon Spawn had great strength and defense, especially its defense. Its icy scale is very hard to crack. Its speed, on the other hand, was not so outstanding, but it can activate a cold aura that reduces its opponents' speed. Unless you have high resistance to ice, your speed will most likely be reduced.'

'What else?'

'If it ever got cornered and is near a source of fire. It can eat the fire, like what it is doing at the moment, and heal itself.'

'Weaknesses?'

'Magical damage and any elemental attack except for ice. As I have said before, Its other body parts other than the mouth are weak to fire. In fact, its ice scale which served as its excellent defense will lose its effectiveness if hit by fire. It will then be more susceptible to physical damage.'

Jack considered what Peniel had told him. He then gestured for Samuel and Kirsi to follow him. He took them back into the maze, away from the Ice Demon Spawn.

"What's wrong? I thought we are supposed to fight that monster? Or are you having cold feet?" Kirsi asked with a disapproving tone.

"I admire your bravery, lady. Don't worry, we are not retreating. I just want to make sure we don't engage that monster without a plan. It is too strong," Jack said.

He then relayed the information that Peniel had given to the two.

"How do you know all this?" Kirsi asked. "I haven't even heard of an Ice Demon Spawn before, are you a high-ranking member of that famous scholar faction, Custodian of Knowledge?"

"You did display high knowledge of wilderness monsters during the expedition as well," Samuel added.

"Never mind all that. There is something I want to know. Haestus mentioned a machine that harness the fire mana site. Is it the one above that monster just now?"

When they were watching the Ice Demon Spawn. There was a metallic contraption hanging high up on the ceiling, directly above the fire mana site. It had the shape of a ring, with rune diagrams all over its surfaces.

"Yes, it is," Kirsi answered. "When activated, it siphoned a large amount of fire element up. There was a vertical tunnel on the ceiling directly above that machine. The fire element is delivered into this tunnel which then is distributed into the forges in the facility above."

"Can you activate it?" Jack asked.

"I can. The machine was under maintenance when that monster attack, but was in the last step already. I should be able to finish calibrating it in a short time. The control panel is beside the mound."

Jack considered his options. After a brief pondering, he took out two bottles of Holy Water and gave them to his two companions. "This water gives you 30% resistance to all status effects for two minutes. Samuel, you should drink it just before we engage the monster. It should protect you from the slow effect of its cold aura. Kirsi, you will engage from afar, you only need to drink it when I give you the signal to activate the fire siphoning machine."

"We are activating the machine? What for?" Kirsi asked.

"Here is what we will do..."

### **Chapter 503: Engaging The Ice Demon Spawn**

They soon returned to the opening where they could peek at the Ice Demon Spawn. Jack had eaten Sweet Dumpling and applied Poison Salve to his Storm Breaker. He cast Barrier and Body Double spells. His two doppelgangers joined him.

He whispered to Kirsi, "follow this one. As we have talked about, do not shoot your arrows. It won't damage the spawn much, you will just draw its attention unnecessarily. Wait until my signal then activates that machine."

Kirsi nodded. Jack controlled his one copy to go around through the maze, Kirsi followed that copy. Jack tried to bring her as close enough to the side with the activation panel.

"Okay, ready?" Jack whispered to Samuel.

"Anytime," Samuel whispered back.

Jack then controlled his other copy and had it walk out into the open. The Ice Demon Spawn immediately noticed this intruder. However, it was rather confusing. This small ant simply walked like nobody's business. The Ice Demon Spawn watched the intruder while continuing to suck the fire element.

Jack had the copy walked to the other side from the panel. Through his copy's eyes, he could get a better look at the Ice Demon Spawn. It was a grotesque creature with weird physiology. Its head was small, Jack didn't even sure if it was its head actually. The main torso was large, the huge mouth full of sharp teeth was at the center of this torso. Perhaps it was a creature with just the head as its main body. Four large limbs and a powerful thick tail protruded out from this torso slash head.

Most of its body was covered by ice scales. Especially its back, long sharp icicle protruded out all over its back. The icy surface of these scales gleamed with unnatural light. Jack was not sure where were its eyes. There were two round black holes at the side of the small head. There were also large oval things that looked like compound eyes at the creature's shoulders. But Jack knew the creature was watching his copy, as it tilted its body following his copy's movement.

It finally stopped sucking the fire. Its mouth shut. The stream of fire stopped coming out of the mound. Its fore limbs were lifted as it stood upright using its two hind legs. It started taking huge steps down the mound towards Jack's copy.

It didn't lunge through. It just walked forward slowly. Continuing to study this preposterous intruder who clearly didn't know his limit.

When it arrived before the intruder, the intruder simply stood there looking up at it. There was no fear in the intruder's eyes, which was odd. It considered observing the intruder for a few more seconds before it lost interest. It lifted one of its legs up and leisurely stomped at the intruder.

Astonishment soon filled it when its feet simply passed through the intruder. At the same time, it felt something from the other side. Something stinging and primal, something dangerous. It looked to the side and found twenty balls crackling with electricity were rushing at it.

It was taken by surprise and did not have the chance to dodge. It soon felt the balls erupted on its body. Each explosion sent a shockwave throughout its body parts, unceasing electrical current coursed through its inside. Its sturdy hard scale was not able to resist this elemental force.

When the assault ended, it found itself had surprisingly robbed of 78,000 damage.

Samuel, who was watching, turned to Jack in disbelief. His one move had taken out almost one-sixth of this fearsome creature's life. One thing that he believed even his strongest attack wouldn't be able to achieve. The craziest thing was, the guy's level was way below him.

Jack didn't share his companion's amazement though. Under normal circumstances, this attack of him should have resulted in way over 100,000 damage. He had activated Life Burning Art, Adrenaline Rush, and also Storm Breaker's Overlimit. He had gone all out right from the start. Yet, the resulting damage was below expectation. Despite the creature's weakness toward elemental attack, its level was still too high for Jack to cause effective damage.



The Ice Demon Spawn looked at the real Jack with rage. It understood now that the one at its leg was simply an illusion. It felt humiliated from being tricked. Its huge mouth uttered a deafening roar. This huge cavern hall seemingly shook from it. It then ran with large steps at Jack.

Samuel immediately went forward to meet the creature. He made a superhuman long jump as his two axes cleaved down. The Ice Demon Spawn lifted one of its large arms and blocked the axe attack. A loud clanging sound was heard from the impact. It was the sound of a hard object meeting a similarly hard object. No damage on the Ice Demon Spawn for receiving the attack using its arm.

When Samuel landed, he found the monster's other arm was swinging down at him. He quickly rolled away before the arm slammed hard onto the ground. This monster was not as powerful as the Grim Sand Drake since its level was lower, Samuel could still face it one on one. Damaging it though, that was a different story. All he could do was keep the Ice Demon Spawn occupied.

Jack took the chance when the Ice Demon Spawn had its attention drawn by Samuel to cast Myriad Ensnaring Chains. Ten thick crimsons sprouted out and held the monster. However, it didn't last long. Cracks started appearing on the chains as the monster exerted its brute force.

Samuel and Jack took the chance to land their attacks while the monster was immobilized.

Six swirling axes appeared around Samuel as he rushed forward. Each of these axes slammed into the Ice Demon Spawn with 1,000 damages. He jumped to the top of the monster's head before his body spun rapidly like a sideways top. His two axes continuously sliced at the monster's body while Samuel continued to spin all the way to the ground.

Still, the damage Samuel inflicted was minuscule compared to Jack. Jack continuously alternated between magic and sword attack from a distance. He cast Mana Bullet, Energy Bolts, Arcane Turbulence, and Mana Beam. The beast was weak against magical attacks so Jack scored more damage than Samuel despite him being much lower in level. However, Jack's largest damage came from his sword attack which was still in the Overlimit state. This state granted his every attack with chaos damage which bypass and lowered the Ice Demon Spawn's defense even further.

Jack's Sword of Light hit the Ice Demon Spawn with over 7,000 damage. He also used Shredding Fangs, which produced five fangs with each fang causing almost 4,000 damage. He also used Shooting Dash to steal a quick stab at the monster's back before using the second dash to return to safety.

Although Jack had explained the monster's superiority against physical attack and its weakness against magic and elemental attacks, Samuel was still morose when he noticed the difference in damages they inflicted. Who was exactly the more high-level one?

Both Samuel and Jack had capitalized on that short moment where the Ice Demon Spawn was bound by the crimson chains, but these chains were soon shattered. The Ice Demon Spawn made an abrupt slap at Samuel who was situated closer. Samuel jumped back evading the slap but there was a tail swing following the slap. Samuel didn't have time to evade this second attack. The best he could do was brace himself with his two axes to receive the attack. His body was sent far away with a loud impact.

The Ice Demon Spawn then turned to Jack. It knew him as the one who had continued hurting him. It came at him with a bellow. When the beast approached, Jack's left hand quickly replaced his magic staff with Whirlwind Falchion. Before the monster could send its attack, Jack executed Blitz Slash, his body

blurred past the Ice Demon Spawn and appeared behind it. At the same time, the monster received five rapid slashes.

Not deterred, the monster turned back and lunged at Jack again. Jack was back to using his magic staff and cast Magic Bind. The spell unfortunately didn't even last one second. It was broken apart as soon as it was formed.

Jack didn't expect that spell to be so useless, the Ice Demon Spawn was already slapping down on him. He used Flash Step to move away, but another slap was already coming. He quickly switch places with his copy since there was no time to dodge.

Samuel came back to keep the monster busy at this time. Jack, still protected by Barrier, this time took the risk to come to the monster's back. His long-range sword skills were on cooldown and his Overlimit would end soon, he didn't want to waste the damage boost it provided by standing at the side. Jack used his sword art and synchronized his attacks with Samuel. They attacked the beast from two opposite sides.

The Ice Demon Spawn was greatly irritated by this, its ice scale body erupted with a blue sphere. The aura sent chill down Jack and Samuel. They felt their movements slightly slowed. Luckily they had drunk the Holy Water, keeping their resistances high.

The monster made an abrupt 360-degree tail swipe. Jack managed to re-equipped his magic staff and cast Magic Shield just before it hit. The strike still cause his Barrier to burst, his Magic Shield broke, and he still received damage from the strike. Samuel also received damage. The two were thrown far back.

The Ice Demon Spawn then crouched down with all its limbs on the ground.. It made a low growl as the entire cavern shook.

## **Chapter 504: Phase Two**

"What the hell is it doing?!" Jack asked Peniel.

"I don't know! That must be one of its unknown skills," Peniel answered.

The shuddering did not get any less. Whatever, the beast was preparing, it was nothing simple.

"Move back! Move back!" Jack called out to Samuel. He himself walked away, putting more distance from the Ice Demon Spawn while drinking a healing potion. His sword's Overlimit state had ended already, Storm Breaker reverted to its original shape. He guessed his sword damage should now be less than Samuel's.

Throughout the noise following the shuddering, Jack realized it was not just the sound of the cave quivering. He looked back and saw the row of icicle walls were shivering greatly. The icicles were hitting each other from the shaking and producing clinking sounds.

Suddenly, a few of the icicles shot out from the ground. It flew up high into the air. So high up that it disappeared into the darkness above. Jack could feel the danger with his mana sense though. He hurriedly jumped to the side just as those icicles rained down and pierced the ground where he was standing a moment ago.

With trepidation, he saw more and more icicles getting sucked up into the air. In fact, a whole section of the icicle walls disappeared into the darkness above. They soon came down. It was like watching the rain, only instead of water droplets, it was endless ice spears.

The area of effect was too wide. It was impossible to evade. His Barrier was no more, neither was his Magic Shield. He got no Magic Wall scroll as well. Jack activated Dragon's Eye and re-equipped his Whirlwind Falchion again. With the icicle descent being slowed in his perception. He performed the burst attack of Formless Flowing Sword style.

The icicles were too sturdy to be broken, as Jack had tested before. But he could still knock them so they fell away from him. With this slow-motion effect, his twenty-four rapid slashes managed to hit every icicle that was aiming at him, changing their course slightly.

His twenty-four burst slashes were fast, but they were also slowed down in his perception. He got a strange feeling after executing this sword art during slow-motion. It was like he felt something was off. There were angles and gaps in between slashes that he felt were flawed. It was as if he could analyze his own move at this time.

Fascinated by this, and also due to more icicles still raining down, he executed another twenty-four rapid slashes. He was more certain now. There was room to improve, and due to Dragon Eye's slow-motion effect, he now knew where to improve.

In the twelve seconds duration of Dragon's Eye, he continuously executed Formless Flowing Sword style's burst slashes, again and again. Partly to save himself from getting impaled by the raining icicle, another part was to improve his sword art further.

At the end of the twelve seconds, his two swords became a blur as forty-eight slashes knocked all the nearby icicles away.

'Phase two!' Jack exclaimed with elation in his mind. But as he finished executing the last burst assault, extreme fatigue washed down his body. Most of the icicles had come down, but there were still a few left.

Jack no longer could move his arms when an icicle fell and pierced his shoulder. His HP fell to critical. There was still one more icicle heading for him. He watched with dismay as his body still refused to move.

A healing light fell on him just before the icicle stabbed. It brought his HP up before the icicle cut it down again. However, due to this heal, he survived despite having only a sliver of health left.

Jack turned to Peniel, "you can heal again?!"

"Right on time! Damn, that whole business with Healer Society almost cost you your life," Peniel said. She had been hiding behind Jack, using him as cover, when the icicles rained down. Her healing ability had returned at the last moment.

No time to rest. His body was still heavy, but now he could catch his breath again, he felt he could move again. He quickly took out more recovery potions to drink. He also drank energy potion. The energy potion not only replenish his Stamina and MP, he found that his fatigue was also slightly recovered. Still, he didn't think he could unleash another forty-eight burst slash anytime soon.

The Ice Demon Spawn was still on its four limbs on the ground. It had also lost rather lots of HP due to the fight just now. It was astounded to find the two intruders were still alive after it executed its ultimate skill. These icicles were a part of it which it had set up in advance for use if the faction above decided to come for it. There were still lots more icicles that could be used, but wasting them on two ants seemed too wasteful.

Yet, these two ants had caused it to lose more than one-third of its HP. This was unsettling. It decided to be prudent. The two seemed to still recover from its last attack. It could press on the attacks but the two's movements were rather fast. It decided to heal itself first.

It ran towards the top of the mound and prepared to suck the fire element to heal itself. When it arrived up there and was opening its mouth to suck, it suddenly realized another figure not far away.

When Jack and Samuel were engaging the Ice Demon Spawn, Jack had his copy lead Kirsi to the control panel beside the mound. She had finished the maintenance process which was interrupted when the monster first appeared. She was now waiting for Jack's cue.

When Jack saw the Ice Demon Spawn headed to the mound, he had used his copy to give Kirsi the instruction to get ready. Once the beast was at the top, Jack gave Kirsi the go sign.

However, nothing happened.

"Hey, have you activated the machine?!" Jack yelled.

"I have! It needs around twenty seconds to start up!" He heard Kirsi yell back.

'F\*ck...! Why didn't you give this information before?!' Jack cursed in his mind.

The Ice Demon Spawn was not moving. It was surprised to find a third intruder. But this third one was also just another ant, nothing to worry about. It got into the pose when Jack and the others first saw it, its huge mouth opened and the fire started streaming inside.

Jack could just let it happily eat at the fire element, oblivious that the machine above it was starting. However, when he saw the monster's HP was healing rapidly, he knew he couldn't let it continue. By the time the twenty seconds passed, the monster would be at full HP already, rendering all their struggles just now pointless.

He made a quick thought and fished out another bottle of Holy Water. Without hesitation, he threw the bottle at the monster. The bottle broke and the water splashed all around its body. The part that was touched by the water exuded white smoke and a hissing sound. The Ice Demon Spawn screeched out a painful howl.

Since the Ice Demon Spawn was classified as Demon, the holy water not only cause damage, it also nulled its recovery ability. Its HP was no longer going up despite it continuing to suck the fire element.

The Ice Demon Spawn realized this, it hollered in anger. It was about to head over to teach Jack a lesson when it found that Jack had already come by himself.

Jack had used Charge and rushed over. He intended to keep the Ice Demon Spawn busy on top of that mound until the machine activated. He could already hear the metal ring above humming up.

The Ice Demon Spawn swat down. Jack decided to forgo offense and fully concentrate on evasion. He used the not yet fully learned Eight Diagram Illusory Steps as he dodge one slap after another. The Ice Demon Spawn was also weakened by the Holy Water for two minutes, which affected its speed, so Jack had an easier time dodging compared to before.

Samuel also arrived, he had also suffered many wounds from the icicle, but his high HP allowed him to survive. Kirsi did what she could by shooting her crossbow.

Peniel used her Group Fast Heal skill. Jack's HP was still low, this heal brought his HP back up again. But the one who benefitted the most was Samuel. Unlike Healer's spells which heal a fixed amount of HP, Peniel's skill heal by percentage. His current skill healed 50% of maximum HP. Due to a native's high pool of HP, this 50% healed a great deal amount of HP, which immediately allowed Samuel to engage the beast more recklessly.

"Keep it above that hole!" Jack shouted, indicating the opening on top of the mound.

Twenty seconds were not long, but Jack felt like it might as well be an hour. Yet, their perseverance finally bore fruit. The situation could large be associated with the Ice Demon Spawn being oblivious of their intention. The monster simply thought that the three were trying to prevent it from healing itself using the fire element. When the metal ring above gave out a loud sound and the fire mana site inside the mound stirred. It then knew that something was wrong.

But it was too late, a large pillar of fire shot out. It was not the small stream where the Ice Demon Spawn could eat using its large mouth, it was a thick column that engulf its entire body.

Jack and Samuel reeled back from the force exerted by the flame pillar. Jack felt as if he was burnt due to the vicinity. He rolled down the mound as he tried to put as much distance as possible.. All the while, he heard the shrilling screech of the Ice Demon Spawn, which was thrashing inside the flame pillar.

## **Chapter 505: Legacy Item**

With great difficulty, the Ice Demon Spawn tore itself away from the flame pillar. Jack saw that its appearance had undergone a great change. All the ice scales covering its body were no more. The demon's naked skin which was badly burnt was visible for everyone to see. It looked even more grotesque now.

The Ice Demon Spawn walked limply down the mound, trying to get further away from the pillar of fire that was still raging. Its HP bar had also depleted by a large deal. It had only a quarter of life left.

"Shoot it!" Jack shouted to Kirsi, who jerked from her daze and promptly aimed her crossbow at the limping monster.

The bolt hit the monster's exposed flesh, producing over 200 damage. Previously when Kirsi shot her crossbow, it only resulted in damage in two digits.

"Its physical damage resistance had gone. Samuel, do your worst!" Jack commanded.

Samuel immediately lunged. His axe bit deep into the Ice Demon Spawn's flesh. The creature screamed in agony. It was only a normal attack but it produced damage close to 1000 damage, similar to the previous result when he was using a skill.

The pain snapped the Ice Demon Scale back to attention. It forced itself to engage Samuel. Although its physical defense had been nullified, its strength was still fearsome. It also used its icy aura again. The holy water's effect was no more as it lasted only two minutes. Samuel felt his movement getting slower. He struggled under the monster's frantic assault.

"Stay in the blue area!" Peniel shouted. She cast Healing Field which continuously healed all allies within an area of fifteen-meter radius and bestowed immunity to all status effects.

Seeing the Healing Field, Jack did not hesitate to dive in as well. Combined with his HP recovery, he should be able to survive as long as he didn't receive consecutive fatal hits.

Jack again took position opposite of Samuel. The Knight Lieutenant used an aggressive approach to force the monster to face him, while Jack struck stealthily from the back whenever there was a chance. Kirsi also shot her crossbow from time to time.

The Ice Demon Spawn's HP continued to fall. When its HP reached a critical state, it decided to make a last gamble. It again took the pose when it last used the icicle rain move. This time, though, the tremor was greater and the clinking sound was louder.

Jack looked at the surrounding icicle walls. Previously only one section of the icicle wall was used. This time, all the walls were shaking. The monster had decided to use all the icicle walls within this huge cavern!

Jack didn't see any way to escape once all these icicles were unleashed. There was only one option left. "Finish it!" Jack issued his command.

All three of them redoubled their efforts. Now that the Ice Demon Spawn stayed still, they could focus on offense. It was a race against time now.

Samuel seemed to activate a skill as his body grew larger. There was also a thin translucent light covering both his tomahawk axes. Each of his axe strikes now produced more damage as he relentlessly hacked at the monster.

Out of the corner of his eyes, Jack saw the icicle walls get sucked up. The whole bunch of them. The cavern floor was now devoid of any maze wall. They could see the whole place now. They could even see some Snow Minotaurs roaming some distance away.

'Shit! Is it too late?' Jack thought.

"If you kill the demon, its skill will disappear as well!" Peniel yelled out.

Jack grabbed both his sword tightly. "It's now or never!" He shouted just as uncountable icicle spears dropped from the darkness above.

His two swords danced, creating forty-eight sword lights that hit all the critical parts of the Ice Demon Spawn's body. The damage produced by the later slashes was slightly more than the previous. When it hit the thirtieth slash, the combo multiplier increased even more.

Jack summoned his Runestone of Luck as he saw the Ice Demon Spawn's HP fell rapidly. Its HP fell to zero just as the icicles were about to impale them. Jack saw with dread as the densely packed icicles fell on them.

Was it too late? Was there a lapse between when the monster died and this world system canceling its skill?

Suddenly the world became white. Jack thought for a second that the white screen was because he had died. But then he remembered that he had died before at Valley of Tempus, it was supposed to be black, not white. After he had a better look, what he saw were ice flakes. So dense that it was white all over

He shook his head and the ice flakes disintegrated. The icicles were created by the Ice Demon Spawn and were part of itself. So when it died, these icicles did as well.

Jack saw Samuel and Kirsi, their expressions still displayed their tense feelings. They were like Jack, still trying to make sure that everything was over. Jack looked down at the ground where the Ice Demon Spawn was before. There were loots. He also heard a notification informing him that both his Blade Dancer and Archmage's class had increased a level. He knew then that it was truly over.

He exhaled a relief and tried to move towards the loots, but his legs buckled and he fell down.

He put a hand on his leg, both his hand and leg were trembling. He then decided to sit on the ground for a while. It seemed the second phase of Formless Flowing Sword style's burst attack was giving his body too much pressure. He would need to become stronger to be able to use this sword art as he wished.

Samuel came and sat next to him. "That was close," he said.

"It was," Jack replied with a laugh.

"You can still laugh? You are crazy," Samuel said.

Kirsi came over to them. She said, "We still need to clean out those Snow Minotaurs. Now that the Ice Demon Spawn which provided the cold environment was gone, they should leave by themselves, but we should still make sure."

"Lady, can you give us two a minute to rest first? We almost die, for goodness sake," Jack said.

"I am good," Samuel said as he stood up. "The earlier we finished this, the earlier we can return."

Since those two were so eager, Jack had no choice but to follow. He stood up. "I am... not good," he said as his knees buckled again and he fell back down.

"I am afraid you two have to do the cleaning without me," Jack said.

"No problem," Samuel said and to Kirsi, he said, "on me!" The two then headed over to the closest group of Snow Minotaurs.

While they went and did their business, Jack crawled over to the loots dropped by the Ice Demon Spawn. There were the occasional gold coins and mana cores, aside from that, there were only two

other items. However, these two items were marked with Silver and Orange colors, representing Unique and Super Rare items respectively.

He stored the coins and mana cores before taking a better look at the two items. The Super Rare was a longsword. Jack was ecstatic from the find. Despite using guild warehouse's excess stocks, he still lacked another five rare longswords to fuse into a super rare one. Now he could directly feed this longsword to his Storm Breaker.

Fire Eating Estoc, level 32/62 (super rare, one-handed sword)

Physical damage 190

Attack speed 2

Durability: 80

Strength +12

Fire resistance +30

When user receives fire damage, attributes are increased by 25% for 30 seconds (cannot stack)

He stored this sword in his inventory. He needed to increase its level to the limit where he could still use it before feeding it to his Storm Breaker.

As for the unique item. It was not equipment. 'Is it another consumable again?' He thought.

Ice Throne Legacy (Unique Legacy, for guild purpose)

Activate Ice Throne legacy dungeon

"A legacy item? Your luck is very good!" Peniel exclaimed.

"There is no need to state the obvious," Jack said. "What is this legacy item do, anyway? I see from its description that it is only for guild use?"

"You know about the Training Cave, right?" Peniel asked back.

"Yes, Our Guild Headquarters already has that structure built. Why?"

"The training cave is for level increasing, but it only grants exp, no loots. If you have that legacy item. You can build a legacy cave. Entering this cave will provide you with a dungeon-like adventure, complete with rewards for clearing it. The monsters inside the dungeon also drop loots and coins aside from providing exp. Imagine having a personalized dungeon entrance inside your Guild Headquarters. Any members can delve into this dungeon as long as they pay sufficient contribution points.. With this legacy cave, members don't even have to venture out into the wilderness to grind anymore."

## **Chapter 506: Blacksmithing Request**

"Cool!" Jack exclaimed. "Can the difficulty be adjusted as well?"



"Not like the training cave where you can adjust for every ten levels. For Legacy cave, normally there are only three types of difficulty, easy, normal, and difficult. Each legacy item is unique, so you might find more set of difficulty once you activate the cave."

"Great, we should go back immediately and build this legacy cave."

"Unfortunately, aside from needing a legacy item, the minimum requirement for building a legacy cave is Guild level 3."

"Oh..."

"Furthermore, do not treat legacy cave the same as training cave. You don't lose anything when you die in the training cave. But you will lose one level if you die inside a legacy cave. The rule that governed it was the same as normal dungeons."

"Hm... All right, let's just give it to Jeanny and John, I will let them deal with it," Jack said as he stored the Ice Throne Legacy. He also took out another Energy potion to drink, the cooldown for the potion had passed, so he could drink another bottle.

He watched Samuel and Kirsi dispatched the Snow Minotaurs one by one while he rested. He still received exp when they killed the monsters, so he happily cheered them on. His Blade Dancer class although just increased in level, was already very close to level 34. The Ice Demon Spawn provided lots of exp, he surmised it should not be long before his level increased again.

Jack watched some of the furthest Snow Minotaurs run away into some small caves at the far end. Just as Kirsi said, they were leaving once the temperature rose again. They probably ventured down through those caves from the higher part of Mount Thenias. He did see a snow-covered top far high on the mountain.

When he felt he could move freely again, Jack stood up. By then, the Snow Minotaurs were pretty much routed. Jack didn't see any visible one around the cavern hall. When the fire pillar was sucked by the ring machine, it had lighted up the various lighting apparatuses around the cavern, so everyone could see pretty clear around the cavern.

Samuel and Kirsi went back to Jack's place once they were done. Jack was still admiring the flame pillar which surged high into the huge hole on the ceiling. Jack was certain this fire mana site was a couple of leagues above the ice mana site he encountered during the kingdom faction initiation test.

They heard some clappings. They turned and saw Haestus and Grenmir with several other people approaching.

"Bravo! Third prince's champion. You are indeed dependable," Haestus exclaimed. "When the fire energy returned to power up our forges, we knew then that you have succeeded."

'Well, actually we are still fighting the beast when the machine was activated,' Jack said in his mind, but he didn't relay the information. What's important was the result.

"So, we have held our end of the bargain," Jack said.

"Obviously! Here is our official letter to cooperate with the third prince. You can bring it back to His Highness. Please send him my regards as well. I will come to visit once I have some spare time," Haestus said as he gave Jack an envelope.

Jack received and stored the envelope in his inventory, at the same time he heard a notification voice informing him his chain faction quest had been updated. He also received another notification telling him that his quest, Freeing the Fire Mana Site, had been completed. He received a bunch of exp and coins.

As expected, his Blade Dancer reached level 34 after gaining the exp from this quest completion. His Archmage class remained at level 32, but it was also close to leveling up.

"As thanks to freeing this Fire Mana Site, I have to offer you a reward," Haestus said. "We can craft an equipment of your choice."

Jack's ear perked up when he heard it. "Really? Then, please craft for me a super rare grade medium armor pants!" Jack said.

Haestus gave him a wry smile. "Champion, can you be more courteous when making a request? Do you think materials to craft super rare grades are easy to acquire? We can at most craft rare equipment for you."

"Uh, in that case, I want two pieces of rare medium armor pants," Jack said. He was only lacking two more pieces to fuse them into a super rare grade.

"Champion, this is a reward, not a request," Haestus said helplessly. "Okay, let us do it this way. If you want two pieces, then I can't give them for free. You need to at least pay the materials cost."

"How much does it cost?" Jack asked.

"30 gold coins," Haestus replied.

"Deal!" Jack fished out 60 gold coins, but before he gave the coins, he asked, "Since I am paying, can I ask for more? I don't mind paying more coins."

Haestus sighed, "sorry. Even this is a special treatment because we want to thank you for aiding us in getting this fire mana site back. If you want to ask for more requests, you have to join our faction and accumulate faction points and use them to make a request."

It was a tempting offer, but Jack declined. He got no time to tackle more factions. He did ask Peniel if she had provided the info about this faction to John, because this faction was definitely a good choice to nurture their guild's blacksmith members.

Peniel told him that John already had the information.

Jack handed the gold coins to Haestus. Haestus received them and asked, "Is there any particular ability you want for the pants?"

'We can make a request? This faction is truly impressive,' Jack thought, but he told Haestus that anything was fine. Once he fused them using the Transformation Prism, the resulting ability would be random, so it made no difference.

"The crafting process will take one day. Please stay another night here. I will give you the armors tomorrow morning."

"In that case, can I have one of the lectures again for today?" Jack said as he looked at Grenmir.

Grenmir shook helplessly, "dude, you really ask for a lot of requests. Don't you feel shame from it?"

Jack shrugged, "If I have a chance to get them by simply asking, why worry about shame?"

"I got no lecture today. But if you want to practice blacksmithing, we can provide you with the materials for crafting, but of course, we will take the end products, and you will only craft common and uncommon equipment this time."

Jack thought the offer was good. Proficiency acquired from crafting equipment was better compared to increasing equipment's level. He almost never did any crafting because he had no recipe and the corresponding materials. In the training provided here, he was provided recipes and materials, so he could craft to his heart content. The recipe was registered to this faction though, so they wouldn't register in his blacksmith recipe list even if he had successfully crafted the equipment.

"Okay, better than nothing I guess," Jack said.

"Why are you saying it as if you lost something? We are already generous to let you use our facility, you know?" Grenmir grumbled.

"Haha, I'm sorry. I do appreciate it," Jack said.

"That's better. Follow me, then," Grenmir said.

Haestus stayed down there to re-worked the perimeter around the fire mana site with the other people he came down with. Kirsi stayed with him. Jack and Samuel followed Grenmir back upstairs.

On the way, Jack asked, "Any possibility for me to buy ores? This place should have plenty, right?" He remembered he needed ores to level up his new super rare sword. He had bought some stock in the capital, but he might need more.

"We can only sell you iron ore and steel ore. Any higher grade and you will need to..."

"Join your faction. I know, I know. It's ok, I only need iron ore and steel ore," Jack interrupted Grenmir.

Grenmir felt like grumbling again. He said, "I will show you to the counter where you can make your purchase."

Once they arrived back up on the factory floor, Grenmir took Jack first to the counter where he could buy ores. Samuel excused himself to go back to the guest room. Jack spent some gold coins to purchase lots of iron ores and copper ores. The stock they had here was more than the city shops. Grenmir was dumbfounded by Jack's purchase.

"Why do you need so many of those basic ores? Are you simply trying to exhaust our stock?" Grenmir said.

"I need these," Jack simply answered. "I believe you still had more stashed away somewhere."

"Of course, we have. We will be in trouble if we run out of those basic ores."

"Any chance I can buy more?"

"You still want more? No way! That's all you will get!"

"Haha. Okay, okay."

Grenmir then took him to a different room from yesterday. Other blacksmiths were using some of the worktables inside as well. Grenmir took him to a vacant one. He fired up the forge on the worktable before gesturing for Jack to approach.

"It is activated now. You can use them. The recipes you can craft are the equipment we are mass-producing. You can craft as much as you want. You can take the materials in the pile over there. Someone will refill them again when they are empty."

"Doesn't this mean I'm working for you? Do I get paid?"

"I will shut down the forge if you aren't interested," Grenmir said.

"I'm joking! I will get on with it!" Jack said.

## **Chapter 507: Another Favor**

Jack went ahead and started crafting equipment using the recipes displayed on the worktable's screen. Although he was only crafting common and uncommon grade equipment. The rate by which his proficiency increased was still better than when he was only leveling up equipment.

Jack was amazed by the resources available in this faction. The materials that he and the other blacksmiths kept on taking, was continuously getting replenished. The pile never appeared empty.

During his chat with Grenmir, the dwarf had told Jack that apart from the existence of the fire mana site, the choosing of this place for the faction's factory was also due to the large ore deposits around the mountain. The Themisphere kingdom faction had occupied half part of the richest mining sites of this mountain, while Blacksmith Circle occupied a small section of the mountain that was equally rich in mineral.

Jack ended up spending the remaining day only on crafting equipment. Despite that, he didn't manage to break through to Basic Expert. His proficiency reached 91% when the night was getting late. Grenmir came over and said Haestus had invited him and Samuel to a feast, celebrating the success of reclaiming the fire mana site and honoring the official cooperation with the third prince.

Jack reluctantly stopped his blacksmithing works. Although it was only 9% more, he still needed a few hours of more blacksmithing work.

Although his blacksmith skill didn't increase in level, there was another auxiliary skill that did. He had also been constantly summoning runestone of enhancement during his work. His runecraft skill had now increased to Basic Expert grade.

During the feast, Jack chat fervently with everyone. The reason? Not because he enjoyed chatting. But simply because he wanted to level up another of his auxiliary skill which, by the end of the feast, happened. His Diplomacy skill had increased to Advanced Apprentice.

During the chat, Haestus was jolly enough to try to recruit Jack into the faction. Grenmir had reported the result of Jack's blacksmithing job of the day. The two were rather impressed by the quality of his products. Of course, the quality was boosted due to Jack's Runestone of Probability. The quantity that Jack had produced was also not few, it was roughly 15% more than what other normal blacksmiths produced with the same time frame.

Jack had always been able to focus on his task if he put his mind to it. When he was doing blacksmithing, he worked on it without any pause. Hence, he produced more.

Jack admitted he was rather interested. He was not that interested in new blacksmith recipes, but this faction's access to materials and services could be beneficial. He asked first what a member needed to do to get the faction points, which were used for exchange for items and services.

Haestus informed him that the points were given based on the blacksmithing products a member produced. Just as Jack had been doing most of today.

Jack asked, did he have to be here when he was doing the producing?

Haestus said, of course. Otherwise, how could they provide the environment and materials?

Jack told him then that he was thankful for the offer but he had other passions to pursue. Hell, wouldn't he be reduced to a factory worker if he joined?

Yet, he still sent a message to Jeanny describing to her what he had seen inside this faction. It should motivate the guild's blacksmith players to join this faction.

Samuel and Jack returned to their guest bedroom afterward. Samuel sat beside the window as he watched outside while Jack took out his mobile blacksmith tools.

Jack didn't use the forge provided by Grenmir earlier today to level up his sword because the forge was only an uncommon grade. His rare-grade mobile blacksmith tools provided a better percentage of success. He took out the Fire Eating Estoc and started working on it.

He kept on working on it until it reached level 44. He used Runestone of Probability all the time to increase his success chance. At level 40 onwards, the material required had increased again to 4 iron ores, 2 steel ores, and 2 copper ores for each attempt.

He had stocked up on materials but he didn't think it was enough to upgrade all his equipment, considering the frequency of failings. So he chose to just upgrade his Rapid Dazing Staff. He needed to save some to be used on the super rare pants he should be getting tomorrow.

His level 44 Rapid Dazing Staff now had magical damage of 337.

For the level 44 Fire Eating Estoc, he fed it to his Storm Breaker. It now transformed into a super rare grade. Not only its damage increase, but each of its abilities had also increased. He could now choose three abilities to activate. Jack made some tweaks and chose the abilities that he thought most useful.

Storm Breaker, level 44 (super rare one-handed sword, bound weapon)

Physical damage 355

Attack speed 4

Cannot be destroyed, Bound to Storm Wind

Dexterity +12

20% chance to cause Poison status effect on each attack

When user receives damage, the next attack on the player dealing the damage will be increased to 250%

Overlimit: Release the weapon's hidden power that adds an additional 200% damage as chaos damage, increases weapon range by 3 feet and decreases target's defense by 90%. Duration: 4 minutes.

Cooldown: 6 hours

He didn't choose Fire Eating Estoc's two fire-related abilities because it was only effective when he fought against an opponent with a fire element. He could change his Storm Breaker's ability setting to those two skills if he did encounter such an opponent.

Aside from that, his Overlimit duration had increased again, to four minutes now.

Done with upgrading his weapons, it was time for him to distribute his free points. He had leveled up three times today. Two for his Blade Dancer and one for his Archmage. He had 9 free attribute points to distribute. He spent them all on Dexterity and brought it to 207 points, including buff from equipment and race skill.

For his battle skills, he had 6 free points for Blade Dancer and 3 points for Archmage. He spent the 6 free Blade Dancer points on Cross Slash, bringing it to level 10. It could now dish out 430% damage.

The 3 Archmage points he gave to Call Familiar spell again. Peniel had been very helpful in the fight with the Ice Demon Spawn today. He had decided to just level up this spell to the max before other spells.

He also received an abundance of souls from the Ice Demon Spawn. Peniel had mentioned that the soul quality of Demon-type monsters was only second to Draconian. He received 120,000 souls from that rare elite demon. Combined with the stock of 83,000 soul points originally in his container of souls, he could upgrade an elite skill two times. He decided to use them on Call Familiar Spell as well.

Call Familiar increased five levels to level 18. Peniel now had 92.5% of Jack's HP, she also received another skill when the spell went past level 15. The skill was called invulnerability. It granted both Peniel and Jack immunity from all damage and effects for 3 seconds. The skill's cooldown was 2 hours.

Two of Jack's battle skills received an upgrade after this morning's fight. Both Arcane Turbulence and Dragon's Eye received their second stars. The Arcane Turbulence AOE increased yet again with this upgrade, while Dragon's Eye now lasted 14 seconds.

Jack finished the night with his routine of meditation training before going to bed.

The next morning, Haestus presented him with two rare medium armor pants. When Haestus expected Jack to study their stats, Jack simply chuckled them into his inventory. The grandmaster blacksmith was rather disappointed seeing that.

"I guess we will take our leave now," Jack said.

"You won't consider becoming a full-fledged blacksmith?" Haestus asked again. "You have the gift in this field."

"I have more gift in whacking monsters, don't you say? After all, I've taken care of that rare elite monster."

Haestus nodded with a smile, "I can't deny that. If you can indulge me, I have another favor to ask."

"Sir, we are about to leave already. Don't tell me another monster has come up again and made its lair in the cavern with the fire mana site?"

"No, no, luckily no such thing had happened. We have applied a stronger rune diagram to ward off monsters down there. The favor I am asking is, can you take Kirsi?"

"What?" Jack was bewildered. Grenmir and Kirsi were there. Jack thought at first they were only present to say goodbye to him. "Take her? To where?"

"I learned that you are part of an outworlder's guild and possess Guild Headquarters, yes?"

"Yes," Jack nodded. In his mind, he added, 'I am even the leader, dude.'

Haestus continued, "Our faction, Blacksmith Circle, had the traditions of sending our brightest trainees into an apprenticeship with other organizations. Our normal choice is usually the kingdom factions, where they worked with the blacksmiths there and established connections. With the rise of outworlders, however, our leader had considered sending our blacksmiths into these outworlder forces. But we knew very little about you outworlders. Now after we get to know you during your brief stay here, my opinion is that you are trustworthy. Grenmir has the same thought."

Jack turned to the grumpy dwarf.

"After she fought together with you yesterday, Kirsi also approved of you.. The guild that you are a part of should be a sensible one."

## **Chapter 508: Request For A Companion Contract**

"So, what will she be doing in our guild?" Jack asked.

"Blacksmithing job, of course," Haestus replied.

"She will listen to our request? We can ask her to craft or work on equipment?" Jack was amazed. Was this some kind of secret reward? Wouldn't it be a boon for them to acquire an Advanced Expert blacksmith? The best blacksmiths in the guild were still Basic Expert, same as him.

Haestus nodded, "as long as the request is sensible. Of course, you still have to provide her with materials and tools. She will not be bringing anything with her. But since she was part of our faction, you

can make purchases on materials or ores via her. We can make a delivery to your Guild Headquarters once the order reaches a reasonable amount."

So, this apprenticeship was also a business transaction, but this still benefitted his guild. They got a skilled professional and a convenient source to purchase materials. There was no reason to reject.

"Sure, I will take her," Jack said.

"Another thing. Although I said it was a favor to us, it is still an apprenticeship. She is working for you, so it is fair for your guild to pay her wages, agree?"

"Oh, how much?"

"5 gold coins for a week," Haestus answered.

Jack was astonished. Her wage was much higher than five-star workers which he hired for Ellie's Restaurant. But considering she was a specialist, such a high price was to be expected.

"That is already a discount," Haestus said when he detected Jack's surprise. "If other factions wish to hire our blacksmiths, they have to pay a higher price and also need to establish a better connection with us. Not to mention, Kirsu was one of our brightest trainees. Her improvement is speedy. She is close to becoming a Basic Master, she just needs more experience."

"No problem, we will pay her wage," Jack said after hearing Haestus' explanation. He would pay her using his personal coins if needed.

After reaching an agreement, they said farewell to each other before departing.

Jack decided to take Kirsu to Heavenly Citadel first. The Guild Return scroll only teleported the user, so he couldn't use that.

On the way, he continued to chat with the two natives as they vanquished the monsters along their way. The two, however, were not exactly the chatty type. During the feast last night, it was Haestus who had chatted more. Grenmir, although grumpy, was also more chatty. These two, on the other hand, only gave a short response to his chat.

"You know, we two make quite a team," Jack said to Samuel.

Samuel gave him an eye saying, 'where are you going with this?'

"Say, do you mind being my companion?" Jack asked. Peniel had explained more in length about the companion system after the Guild Headquarters fight. Jack had seen Princess Purple's companion and was rather impressed. Imagine having his own native protector.

However, Peniel informed him that it was not easy to make a native willingly sign a contract to become an outworlder's companion. From the native's point of view, there were gains and drawbacks from being an outworlder's companion. The gain was a boost in their leveling speed. All the things that could help an outworlder increase in level were now also applicable to the native, which meant the native could level up at the same pace as the outworlders.



The drawbacks, however, were the risk and loss of freedom. The outworlder that the native signed a contract with, would be able to call on him or her anytime they wished. The native was duty-bound to protect and carry out the outworlder's order upon being called. What if they were called to be a sacrifice when the outworlder was trying to flee from a fearsome monster? No native would want that. So, unless they were sure the outworlder won't treat them as a sacrificial pawn, then only a native considered signing a contract. They were literally placing their lives in the outworlder's hands.

Apart from that, in the case of the outworlder died. Not the death within a safe zone, but death in the wilderness where the outworlder lost everything. The native under contract who survived would still lose all the progress they had achieved since they started signing the contract. Rendering all their fast progress null and their time wasted. So, not only a native had to make sure the outworlder was a trustworthy person, but they also need to ensure the outworlder was not a weak person who died easily.

After their fight together against the Ice Demon Spawn, Jack believed he had built enough bond with Samuel to ask for the companion contract. He also believed that he had proven to Samuel he was someone with high survivability. Imagine having a level 55 Special Elite native under his beck and call. Princess Purple's one was nothing compared to Samuel.

As he was eager to hear Samuel's reply, the native gave his answer with a flat face, "no."

"Why? I thought we make a good team!"

"What good team? Being with you just means getting dragged from one dangerous fight to another."

"He is not wrong, you know," Peniel commented.

"You stay out of this," Jack reprimanded. Then to Samuel, he said, "Come on. By being my companion, you will improve very fast. We can become much stronger together and stand at the top of this world."

"No."

'Ugh, this guy is truly obstinate,' Jack complained in his mind.

Samuel gave Jack a serious stare when he saw Jack's dejected expression. He said, "Look, I do like you, Mister Storm Wind. I didn't at first when we met, as I'm sure you were aware, but I've grown to think you are not bad. However, I still think it is unsafe hanging around you. Aside from that, have you forgotten the pledge I made to Prince Alonzo? My life is his. So I will stay by his side to protect him. After the last incident, it is even more apparent that he needs a personal protector, and I will be that person."

Jack saw the determination in Samuel's face. He sighed and said, "I respect that. All right, you protect him and I will do my best to make him king. We will each work our parts."

"Good lad!" Samuel slapped Jack on the back.

They continued to travel on their mounts. They soon reached Heavenly Citadel.

"This is your Guild Headquarters? Not bad," Kirsi said after seeing the building. There were also several trained soldiers patrolling the territory and helping guild members level up.

Jack took the two natives inside the headquarters. Both Jeanny and John were not around. They had left to raid the monster settlement. They were still on their way there. The place was rather far, after all. Jack had sent a message informing them that he brought a native blacksmith to work for them and also about the legacy item.

The two were surprised to hear his news.

"Now, who said that I don't contribute enough?" Jack sent a mocking message to John.

"All right, I guess we will let you keep your position. For now," he received John's reply.

'This guy really doesn't know how to compliment people,' Jack complained in his mind.

Jeanny instructed him to put the Legacy item inside the warehouse's special section for leaders. They had set up such a section. This section could only be viewed by the three of them, so only they could take items from this section.

Jack did so and put the Ice Throne Legacy inside the warehouse's leader section.

Jack then brought his two guests to the Guild Hall. He set the permission so the two of them could enter. Inside was Pointy Tip. John had taught Tip how to operate the platform inside the guild hall while he was away. He took care of all the administration when all three leaders were away. John had informed Jack to take Kirsi to Tip.

After meeting Tip, Jack introduced Kirsi to him and let him make all the necessary arrangements. Their Blacksmith Workshop was still level 1, now with Kirsi joining, Jack told Tip to put upgrading the Blacksmith Workshop as a priority.

Tip said that John had instructed him to upgrade the resource collection structures, but he said okay, they had sufficient resources for upgrading the Blacksmith Workshop. They just needed to allocate some workers and slow down the construction of others. Tip also informed Jack they should be able to start construction on stable soon. Once this structure was up, they would be able to train cavalry units from the Barrack, allowing more tactical application during a battle.

Jack saw that the guild almost reached maximum members. Everlasting Heavenly Legends now had 923 members. Their fame of beating the coalition back had truly made many players eager to join. Not to mention the multiple benefits the headquarters granted. Once the news of an Advanced Expert Blacksmith joining their guild, more would request to join.

Currently, when the coalition had reduced their activity in Thereath, most members were doing their best to do guild quests. The more reputation they received, the earlier they could reach guild level 3. At that time, more structures would be available, such as the Legacy Cave.

Before leaving, Jack made another 100 gold coins donation, which drew a gasp from Pointy Tip.

Finished with the arrangement, Jack left with Samuel.. They both used the Teleportation Chamber to teleport directly to Thereath.

## **Chapter 509: Ambassador Quest**

Jack and Samuel went directly to the palace. When they were near, Jack asked Samuel. "If I come by myself, will I be allowed entry?"

"If the guards were either first or second prince's camp, you will most likely be denied, or are given difficulty. Considering their influence, nine out of ten you will encounter such a situation. The third prince's residence is on the Western side. There is a side entrance there which is linked directly to His Highness' residence. If you enter from that side, you should be fine. Come, I will show you."

Samuel brought Jack circling the wall to the Western side. He saw another smaller gate with several soldiers guarding it. Samuel and Jack both produced their kingdom faction badge. The soldiers gave them entry afterward.

The entrance from this side was not that grand compared to the main entrance. Jack continued to follow Samuel as he took Jack past a small courtyard and into the palace structure. Jack estimated the position they were at now was rather far from the main gate where he had entered the palace the first time.

After entering the palace, they navigated through several stairs and hallways, but not as long as when Jack came with Commander Quintus. Jack soon found himself inside the hallway that he recognized. The door to the prince chamber should be at the corner ahead.

"Do you memorize the way?" Samuel asked.

"It's not as complicated as when entering from the main gate, I think I can manage," Jack answered.

"If you happen to come by yourself, do pay attention to not wander around by yourself outside of this side of the castle, or you will bump into the first or second prince's people. At that time, they can easily frame you of trespassing, then you will have a whole lot of trouble to deal with," Samuel warned.

Jack nodded his understanding.

When they entered the prince's chamber. Prince Alonzo was standing by the window. Royal Advisor Mason was by his side.

'Is this dude always here?' Jack thought of the Royal Advisor. He didn't see Princess Sindral, though.

"Samuel, mister Storm Wind, you are back! How goes the negotiation?" Prince Alonzo said cheerfully. Jack noticed he was not as pale as before. The fact that he could now stand mean he was much better than the last time Jack saw him.

"It went well, Your Highness," Jack replied as he handed the letter signed by Haestus. "I'm glad you look much better now, Your Highness."

"Thank you for your concern," the Prince said as he accepted the letter. He opened and studied it with a smile. He said, "and thank you for your effort. I am truly grateful for it. Are you ready for your next assignment?"

'Next assignment? So soon?' Jack thought. He was not in a hurry to complete this chain quest, considering its difficulty. He thought at first there would be some waiting period in between the quests like what happened with the duke's chain quest. But then again, the struggle for the throne was against time, it was not like the first and second princes stayed idle.

At the same time, Jack also heard a notification saying that he had completed the first part of the faction chain quest. He received 500,000 exp, 30 gold coins, 2000 merit points. His Archmage class was close to reaching level 33 before this. He soon heard the notification that he had reached that level.

"What's the assignment?" Jack asked.

"Represent me as my ambassador," Prince Alonzo said.

"Ambassador...? I probably need to clarify, are we talking about a person who is sent to another country?"

"I do believe that should be the definition."

"Which country?"

"Sangrod Empire," it was Royal Advisor Mason who answered. "Aside from the Republic of Palgrost, Sangrod Empire is the other countries we are allied with. If we can gain the influence of their important members and showed the other nobles here that the third prince was able to establish a relationship with our allied country, it should build more confidence in Prince Alonzo."

"The point of your visit was only symbolical and to set up an arrangement for my formal visit," Alonzo said. "The family I have been talking to all this time is the Lucien family. You will meet up with their patriarch."

"Family?" Jack asked.

Mason took the chance to explain, "The Sangrod Empire was governed by a collection of families. It is similar to the orc clans, but the Sangrod families put more emphasis on their blood relations. Do you know what the race governing the Sangrod Empire is?"

"Vampires."

"Yes, I see you are rather knowledgeable. Not all the denizens are vampires though. Most of the common civilians are humans like us. Under the surface, our two countries might not be that different. That's probably also the reason we are allies with them. The families who governed the country, though, are a different race altogether. They were the denizen of darkness who consume blood for sustenance."

"Uh, did they treat their human subjects as livestock to be consumed?" Jack asked.

Mason laughed. "They did drink their blood, but it was done out of willingness. They of course didn't drink the human until they died, they simply take a little to sustain themselves. In return, the humans were provided protection and payments in coins. Becoming the blood donators to the ruling families is seen as an honor to the humans in the Sangrod empire, and not everyone has the luxury. Rigorous checkings were done before the humans were chosen, and when someone does, it usually is a job for a lifetime."

"Oh, very civilized of them," Jack thought. It was different from the usual depiction of vampires in his world, where they were depicted as bloodthirsty and savage monsters. Some stories romanticized the vampires into something more appealing. Perhaps these Vampires here were the types like those in the romanticized stories.

"So, this Lucien family. I only need to meet up with them?" Jack asked.

"Yes, please give them this letter once you meet with their patriarch, Caleb Lucien," Prince Alonzo said as he handed Jack another envelope.

'I have a feeling this Caleb Lucien is going to give me another task before I am sent back here,' Jack thought in his mind as he received the envelope. He heard a notification voice informing him that his faction chain quest had been updated.

He opened his Quest page to take a look. Underneath the chain quest's description, there was an additional section.

Part 2: Ambassador to Sangrod Empire

Difficulty: S

Rewards: 1,000,000 exp, 40 gold coins, 5000 merit points, additional rewards possible

'Wow! 5000 merit points. Once I complete this job, I will be an Earl,' Jack thought. His kingdom faction nobility badge had accumulated 5170 merits, with 3240 exchangeable points.

"As for your success in your first assignment, also to assist you in the next, I want to give you another reward," Prince Alonzo made a gesture and a soldier in heavy armor came forward.

"This is Heathcliffe, a dedicated soldier. I don't know if you notice him, but he was one of the soldiers under your command during the expedition."

"He is?" Jack honestly didn't remember. There were too many soldiers in the vanguard troops he commanded during the expedition.

"I have requested the soldiers who have followed you in that expedition. Who amongst them was willing to be your companion? To my surprise, quite a number had come forward. I took the liberty to choose the best."

A companion? Jack was surprised. He had failed to get Samuel to be his companion, but unexpectedly he had been presented with another. Jack used Inspect on the soldier.

Heathcliffe (Elite Human, Knight), level 45

HP: 65,000

Not as powerful as Samuel, but better than Princess Purple's companion. At this time, having any companion was a luxury only a few players possess, so he would not complain.

"Thank you, Your Highness," Jack exclaimed. To Heathcliffe, he said, "I will be relying on you."

Heathcliffe made a bow. He presented something to Jack. "This is my Companion Token. I had already bound myself to it."

A runic symbol appeared as that token was presented.

"Use your hand and touch the center of that symbol," Peniel explained.

Jack did so. He felt a rush of energy blanketing his arm. Some tickles were felt for a while before the runic symbol dissolved.

"This token is now also bound to you. Anytime you need me, just activate this token and I will be by your side."

Jack accepted the Companion Token with elation. Now he had his personal tank.

"By the way, Your Highness mentioned several soldiers were willing to be my companion? Why not have them all follow me?"

Prince Alonzo paused from Jack's question. The Royal Advisor laughed. Peniel hit Jack on the head and said, "one can only have one companion. If you bind a contract with another one, the previous one will be nulled."

"Oh..." was the response Jack gave. He hurriedly laughed it off and said to Heathcliffe, "Doesn't matter.. Heathcliffe here is more than enough, anyway, haha."

## **Chapter 510: Heading To Another Country**

Prince Alonzo shook his head. He then gave Jack another thing. A pouch.

"What's this?" Jack asked. In his mind, he thought, 'another reward? This prince is truly generous.'

"Quintus had informed me about how you approached the Healer Society. That was a great move you make. We need everyone if I am to have a chance for the throne. I also heard you use your own coins to persuade them for support. It is inappropriate if I don't return the coins."

Jack received the pouch and found it to have 100 gold coins inside, the amount he had given to Andrea, the Grand Healer in Thereath Infirmary. He was overjoyed. With this, the amount he just donated to the guild had returned.

"Where should I go in Sangrod Empire?" Jack asked, getting back to the quest on hand.

"Tranviste, one of the main cities in Sangrod Empire that is closest to the border between our two countries," Mason explained. "this city was also run by the Lucien family who you will be meeting."

"Is there a time limit for this ambassador mission?"

"As fast as possible. It wouldn't paint a good picture to make our ally wait," Prince Alonzo said.

"All right. I will depart at once," Jack answered. He originally was planning to join Jeanny and John's raid on the monster settlement. If he teleported to Thesewal and use Pandora's speed, he should still be able to catch them before they started the raid. But guess he should just leave that monster settlement to them.

"So, who will be coming with me?" Jack asked.

The prince again paused for a while due to Jack's question, before he answered, "you should be going by yourself."

"Oh...", Jack made the same response again. He thought that because he was on a diplomatic mission to an ally country, he would be provided an entourage. At least one person such as Samuel like the last mission. But then again, the prince had already given him a companion, albeit weaker than Samuel.

"Aren't the areas around the border of countries dangerous?" Jack asked.

"Yes, but our intel said you possess a Nightmare steed, didn't you?" Mason asked. "That is one of the main reasons why Prince Alonzo and I chose you for the mission."

"Ah, ok," Jack said. With Pandora's fear aura, those highly dangerous monsters on the border would still move aside.

After chatting a while more, Jack said his farewell and left. He used the exit on the western gate, the one he entered just now with Samuel.

After leaving the palace, he headed to the Adventurers Association. Not to pick up any quest, he no longer had the time to deal with these neutral factions. However, he still had two completed neutral quests which were registered under his completed quests. Test of Courage, the quest from the Valley of Tempus, and Freeing the Fire Mana Site, the quest from Haestus. He could receive some adventurer points if he reported these two neutral quests in the Adventurers Association.

When he entered the association's building, it was packed full of players. Now that more players could travel in between cities, more players had come to visit the capital. Jack went to the silver hall and found that it was also crowded.

All the counters were occupied. He had to queue in line if he wanted to talk with the staff at the counters. He then remembered his Adventurer Badge was a VIP grade. He never used that feature before, it was time to exercise this privilege.

He looked for one of the guards overseeing the security of the hall and asked for direction. He was shown to a set of stairs that brought him upstairs. Up there, he saw several enclosed cabins. Most of the cabins had their doors opened, two were closed.

A staff approached Jack and asked, "Can I help you, sir?"

Jack showed him his VIP Silver Adventurer Badge. "I would like to submit a quest completion. I was told a VIP member can use the counters here?"

The staff checked his badge and confirmed, "you can use any of the unoccupied cabins. Inside is a staff that will process your requests."

Jack nodded and went to the nearest cabin. Before entering, he observed the place. There were ten of these cabins, two had their doors closed. Does it mean there were other VIP members? Were they natives or players like him? He didn't really see many of the native adventurers even in the silver or bronze halls. There were only a handful of native adventurers, players had taken up the major bulk of the membership, so these two were most likely players as well.

As Jack entered the cabin and the door closed by itself, he wondered if any players had achieved gold-rank membership in this association.

Inside the cabin, there was a counter, similar to the silver hall downstairs. The process was the same so he submitted his two quests speedily without any problem. He received 2100 adventurer points from those two quests. Despite not being formal Adventurers Association's quests, these two still net him lots of points because they were both S-rank quests.

His accumulated adventurer points were now 9954 points, and available points for exchange were 8874 points. He was only 46 points short of becoming a Gold-rank member. He was very tempted to take one quest from the association and cross that borderline before departing for Sangrod Empire, but he culled his desire. It would be really bad if he failed the important matter to chase this small attainment.

Jack then made another visit to the nearby Hunters Association. As usual, he took the ten hunting quests for the most likely monsters he would meet on the way.

He went around shopping in the business district after, stocking up on recovery potions, magic stones, and as many ores as he could find. He went and bought a few Wind Jet and Magic Wall scrolls. He refrained from buying any other magic scrolls.

The day was getting late already by then, so he decided to spend the night in Amy's Bakery again before leaving. He took the 34 gold coins profit from Ellie's Restaurant first before going into Amy's Bakery. The bakery's weekly profit was not due for another four more days, so he didn't get any from there.

After dinner and chatting with Amy and Samantha, Jack went to his room and took out the Transformation Prism and the sixteen rare medium pants he had, which included his Shadow Bear Tasset. He activated the prism and fused all sixteen rare equipment into a super rare grade.

Fortunemaker Chausses, level 35/65 (super rare medium armor)

Physical Defense: 105

Magical Defense: 91

Durability: 50

Wisdom +12

Luck +3

Coins and loots quality from monsters and chests increased by 25%

'Oh, my luck increases again,' Jack commented after reading the new armor's description.

He took out his rare mobile blacksmith tools and started upgrading his armors. Because of the limitation of his ore stocks, he only managed to upgrade two armors, his chest piece and these new pants, to level 44.

His Sin Devouring Breastplate now had 163 physical defense and 142 magical defense. While the Fortunemaker Chausses increased to 150 physical defense and 136 magical defense

For the free points he received after becoming level 33 Archmage, he used the 3 free attribute points for Dexterity again. The 3 free skill points he used 2 to max out Call Familiar. Peniel now had 100% of Jack's



HP and acquired the fifth skill, Second Life. The skill when used would allow Jack to be resurrected with full HP if killed during the skill's duration, which was 3 minutes. The cooldown of this skill was 24 hours.

The remaining 1 free Archmage skill point he added to Myriad Ensnaring Chains, making the spell level 2.

Early next morning, Jack departed.

On his way out of the capital, he sent a message to Jeanny and John informing them of his faction quest and that he would be unavailable for quite some time.

"Damn! Expert, you truly are not kidding when you said you will go off on your own doing whatever you like," John commented.

"Dude, I told you about the importance of this quest, right? Imagine the benefit we will get if our guild gets backing from the king of this kingdom," Jack replied.

"He is not wrong," Jeanny joined in. "Our core members have already received many invitations to join the kingdom faction. Our guild also receives some special quests given directly by the nobles and the military. These quests provided more reputations than the quests from Guilds Association. We will improve much faster with the imperial support."

"Fine, do what you must. We will manage on our own," John said. "But do us a favor. Try to establish as many teleport links as possible with the main cities you pass through. Apart from giving our members access to those cities, you can also teleport back in case of emergency and continue back from those cities. That way, you don't need to travel too far back again after."

"Yes.. That is also my intention," Jack replied.