

World 551

Chapter 551: The Demon Is Here

"Let me at him!" A large man with a scowling face came out. "I have longed for a worthy opponent."

"All right, Wrathful Tom will take point. Everyone rushed in and support!" Proudful Josh said.

"No! Let me have a duel with him!" Wrathful Tom uttered.

Josh eyed his teammate for a bit before saying, "I will give you five minutes."

"Haha! It will be enough!" Tom laughed and walked towards Domon. He was a level 37 Berserker. He carried a very large double-headed battle axe. He swung the axe around with his two hands as he approached.

Domon watched his play and then commented, "You use too much flair in your swinging, it opens you to too many weak points."

Wrathful Tom who heard it, immediately spat, "Old fool! Who do you think you are? A school teacher? You want to see flair? I will show you flair!"

He activated Berserk mode as black tattoos covered his exposed body. His strength and speed escalated. He made a lunge and used Heavy Cleave. The battle-axe came down heavily and cracked the ground below. Domon was standing beside where the axe was planted.

"Too wide," he said.

Domon could have struck at that time but he just stood there, this angered Tom instead. Tom shouted as he pulled his axe out. He twirled his axe around as he slashed multiple times at Domon, but none of them hit. Domon continued to evade them by a hair as he continued to comment.

"You put too much force here."

"This is too soft."

"Too fast, you can't see where you hit."

Each comment turned Wrathful Tom's anger up a notch. Even Proudful Josh felt ashamed seeing his teammate getting played that way. He gave a silent hand sign to the others, 'prepare to engage.'

"Aren't we waiting five minutes?" Lustful Elly whispered.

"Look at that! Do you think there is any point waiting?" Josh said.

Trinity Dawn and some of the other core members that followed here could sympathize with Wrathful Tom. They had to go through similar treatment every morning.

While he continued evading his opponent's battle-axe, Domon suddenly felt another attack coming from his dead spot. He leaned back just as an arrow sped through. Domon noticed other players were running toward him as well, with some magic class started casting spells.

Wrathful Tom was not even in the mood to be angry because Prideful Josh had cut his five minutes short, he just wanted to cut up this old coot in front of him to alleviate his fury. His body started spinning at high speed like a top, his battle-axe was positioned straight by his side, so when his body spun, the axe became a deadly mower blade.

Domon realized this was a game skill. No way a human body could spin like that. He backstepped rapidly as the spinning Tom chased after him.

The move executed by Tom was indeed a game skill, it was Punishing Cyclone, a skill Berserker acquired after reaching level 35.

Domon gave the spinning move a test. He swung his glaive and hit the highly spinning blade. His arm was smacked aside by a very strong impact. Domon also received a little damage, which meant the damage caused exceeded three times his normal attack.

"Very strong," Domon commented while he continued backstepping, keeping the moving spinning blade from hitting him.

"But a top has one weakness," Domon said as he squat down and stabbed his glaive.

A bright shine enveloped the blade of Domon's glaive as it struck Wrathful's Tom legs which were the axis of his spinning. The impact exploded with a burst of blue-colored energy. It was Weapon Master's Ki Strike. Domon seldom used game skills, but that didn't mean he doesn't know how to.

Wrathful Tom's Punishing Cyclone stopped as he lost his footings and suffered damage from the Ki Strike.

Domon followed up with an upward slash before giving Tom a spinning back kick which threw him back to the throng. He suffered damage from both attacks, including the kick. He crushed into his advancing teammates and was already in critical health.

Domon had spared the guy, but Trinity Dawn did not. She threw Arcane Turbulence right on the ground where Tom landed. Her Arcane Turbulence was special. Instead of spewing out multi-colored elemental energies, it was mainly ice energy. The damage inflicted was higher and all the ones hit by the spell suffered stronger slow than the standard Arcane Turbulence spell, if not outright frozen.

Wrathful Tom's remaining HP was depleted after this spell.

"Useless!" Prideful Josh cursed. The only consolation was Tom was wearing Amulet of Rebirth. Still, they were down by one top combatant.

All pretense was tossed, the battlefield was back to being messy. Crowds of Sins heavily outnumbered Domon and the others, but the cave entrance served as a choke point. So, their benefit was curtailed, especially with experts such as Domon and Trinity holding the line.

Yet, Crowds of Sins were not amateurs. Prideful Josh quickly reassembled their formation, putting the defensive players to keep on pushing in a line while the ranged players continued tossing attacks and spells beyond the front line.

Even Domon had trouble evading so many ranged attacks coming his way, especially the AOE spells. He was denied the freedom to fight the advancing melee players and was forced to retreat step by step.

Trinity and other ranged players tried to do their parts, but healers sustained the HP on the front melee row and kept them advancing without worry.

If they continued to be pushed back, the cave would soon open up to the larger cavern, where Jeanny and the others were still fighting the trolls. Their chokepoints advantage would then be nullified. Enemy large number could swarm them from every side. At that time, things would take a turn for the worse.

Everyone knew this predicament, but the best they could do was also simply delay the inevitable. Many of their melee players even died trying their best to halt the enemy's advance while being bombarded by range attacks.

Domon stole some rare chances when Trinity's spells managed to disrupt the enemy's ranged players. He slipped into the gaps between arrows and spell bombardments to batter the melee players, but he was soon forced to retreat. The downed enemy players were soon replaced by their comrades. The enemy simply had too many backups to spare.

While they were almost being pushed into the larger cavern hall, they heard a commotion further back at the enemy's backline.

Some players from the Warriors of Solidarity gang exclaimed, "Big boss has arrived!"

The others from the gang uttered a loud war cry after hearing it. The others who used to complain about them being noisy and rude had to admit that this lot was also a very efficient morale-rising group. The Warriors of Solidarity who were already at the front line halting the enemy's advance, issued a rallying cry while doubling over to push back. The others were affected by the mood and doubled their effort.

"What was that?" Prideful Josh shouted. He was in the middle of their formation and was pushing forward with the others when a commotion suddenly happened at the backside. His surroundings were too noisy, it's as if everyone was shouting. He also had to shout when he asked Lustful Elly.

"Look at leaders' party chat!" Elly shouted back.

Josh opened his message. There were multiple messages from the leaders placed on the backline. The messages were all the same, "the demon is here!"

Due to the sudden commotion at the back, Crowds of Sins players started to get confused. They asked their friends what was happening at the back. Due to this, their advance lessened. The front line also weakened their push as they felt the loss of support from the back.

Added with the rise of morale on Everlasting Heavenly Legends players, Crowd of Sins' push was completely stopped.

Seeing the reduction in ranged bombardments, Domon took the chance to make a gambling move. He rushed forward and punched through the front defensive players. Somersaulting over them and then used Death Carrying Cyclone to push everyone back. Before rushed in deeper and started hacking.

The Warriors of Solidarity made use of this gap and also rushed in. Creating more havoc as they followed Domon's wake. Crowds of Sins' formation was completely in shamble because of it, but Domon was also in the middle of the enemy's group, besieged from all sides.

Domon didn't have the overpowering attributes as Jack, if he used Jack's tactic of delving into the enemy's formation, there was a chance he might get overwhelmed. If enough people held him and applied their weights to hold him down, he would be helpless. But his expert footwork prevented that from happening. He might not have the uncanny speed of Jack, but his perfect control and awareness of the surrounding allowed him to evade anyone who tried to brute force him.

His glaive also continued dancing around players. At one point he tapped his glaive and a miniature image of the weapon appeared beside him.

It was Weapon Master's level 35 standard skill, Spirit Weapon.

Chapter 552: Letting The Enemies Go

Spirit Weapon was a summoning skill. The spirit it summoned was based on the user's weapon. The higher the grade, the stronger the spirit. Similar to other summoning skills or spells, once out, the spirit could operate on auto or controlled directly for more finesse.

Domon was not the type who bothered to control the spirit. He just summoned the spirit to afford him some leeway from the enemies surrounding him. While the glaive spirit went and hacked at the nearest enemies, Domon continued dishing out slashes, kicks, and occasional punches to the closest players.

While he was dishing out punishment, Domon suddenly felt danger underneath his feet. He quickly stabbed his glaive to the ground and pushed himself up. His body spun before his foot landed on one of the enemy's faces. He then kicked on the face to propel himself away just as Arcane Turbulence spell flared in the area he was before.

"Continue casting! No need to be afraid of friendly fire!" Proudful Josh bellowed. That old man was not less troublesome than the demon behind there. They had to eliminate the old man first before dealing with the commotion on the back.

However, none of the spells hit. Domon had dexterously used the players' heads as stepping stones. His footwork in the air made it as if his body was without weight. The others who were still fighting couldn't help but stop and watch this circus-like performance. Domon's spirit weapon followed after his trail as it continued to slash any enemies it passed by.

Some of the players whose heads were used as stepping stones tried to move away, but the old man was very spry. Domon adjusted his footwork even though the players down there continued moving around. Additionally, there was not much room to move as everyone was packed inside this constricting cave space.

His lightweight steps brought him to where the mages and healers were. He dropped down there while cleaving at one. The magic users that were present during Crestfall Plain and Heavenly Citadel battle, felt as if this was a repeated scene of when Jack came down in their midst. The aura this old man gave out was not less terrifying than the demon.

And soon, all hell broke loose.

Proudful Josh, seeing his team formation in shambles, gritted his teeth as he slowly admitted that things had taken the turn for a worse for them.

"What should we do?" Lustful Elly asked. "We have lost quite a number and the casualties kept increasing. If this continued..."

Prideful Josh gazed at the inside of the cave. He then made his decision. "This settlement's reward is not worth our loss. Retreat. Retreat!"

Seeing the enemy retreating, Trinity Dawn immediately issued her order, asking everyone to stop chasing and let the enemies go. Jeanny had placed her there to issue this command if they somehow won. They were not to chase after the enemy but to return to aid the main team that was fighting the trolls.

Domon also stopped when he saw his opponents lose the will to fight and move away. He was not the battle-lust kind of man who wanted to continue fighting.

There were, however, many of these battle-lust types there. The Warriors of Solidarity continued to attack their enemies even though the enemies were retreating. They completely didn't pay any attention to the chat command issued by Trinity. Even when Trinity came to shout at them, some still acted as if they didn't hear.

They only stopped when Domon came before them, slamming one into the ground while throwing another two back. Noticing Domon's presence there, they totally froze. This group of rough men was like kittens before the old man. They knew that they would have a hell of a time during the morning training if they dared to show disobedience now.

So, Domon who had been Crowd of Sins' main obstacle when they were attacking, had now turned to be their main savior when retreating. Crowds of Sins players didn't know if they should send thanks or curses to this old man.

Jack had indeed arrived and was hacking and slashing his way amid Crowd of Sins players. He had activated Gold Scale Armor. Combined with Peniel's and his own body recovery rate boosted by Gold Scale Armor, he completely neglected defense and played his sword art to his heart content. If anything happened, Peniel still had her healing skills to save him.

The enemies were powerless against him. Those that fought with him before found him to be more unreasonable now. He still run around evading attacks before, now he was like an unkillable monster. Even their attacks that caused status effects were useless to him.

The leaders who were amongst the crowd received a message and then simultaneously cried, "Halt! Halt!"

Everyone started shouting and they moved back, pulling away from Jack. Jack was about to chase but hearing their weird shout, he decided to stop and observe first. Soon the crowd parted way as Prideful Josh and Lustful Elly came out to meet him.

"Cute boy, we meet again," Lustful Elly said with her alluring voice. Jack felt a shiver from it.

"We have lost. We won't bother your guild from raiding this monster settlement. Will you be kind enough to let us leave?" She continued speaking to Jack.

Jack was slightly surprised by the statement. He had been trying to barge through so he could join with his guildmates on the other side and repelled their enemies together. He didn't expect the enemy to give up so soon.

Prideful Josh stayed silent by the side. He couldn't bear to bring himself to talk about losing, so he gave silent instructions to Lustful Elly, who read from her private chat, "Do not think that we are afraid, though. If you insist, we can continue fighting and perish together. We might not be able to..."

"All right. Leave," Jack said.

Both Prideful Josh and Lustful Elly were slightly taken aback. They were expecting this battle-frenzy demon to insist on continuing to fight. They had been prepared to have a team hold off the man while the others squeezed by the sides to escape.

Prideful Josh was still having trouble believing. It was Lustful Elly who gave the command to her guildmates to orderly go out of this cave.

Jack simply stood there watching.

Prideful Josh and Lustful Elly stayed at the back in alert until the last member walked past Jack. They remembered how Jack had decided to still attack Scarface during the battle of Crestfall Plain despite the guild leaders issuing him a cease-fire.

If it was before, Jack might have indeed continued fighting. Reducing this guild's power so they gave Everlasting Heavenly Legends less trouble in the future. But after the encounter with Master and after Wilted informed him of the coming conflict. He understood that this country would need all the strength it could muster. That included player guilds. Crowds of Sins was amongst the guilds that had gotten a Guild Headquarters in Themisphere. Which meant during the coming country wars, their strength would also be needed. Hence, Jack stayed his hands.

The two leaders of Crowds of Sins were still eyeing Jack as they retreated by walking backward. Jack laughed inwardly at their cautiousness and simply turned his back on them and went inside the cave.

Most of the team that came to halt Crowds of Sins' advance had returned to where Jeanny was to aid her. Only a small team stayed before the opening to the large cavern, in case the Crowds of Sins decided to attack again. Domon was amongst those that stayed guard.

He saw the figure of his grandson coming into view inside the cave tunnel.

"You are finally back," he said to Jack. "What have you been up to all this time?"

"Well, let's see. I met a vampire, fight with a vampire. Then I met a whole town full of vampires, and then I met some vampire nobles, kill a vampire noble, and then I got betrayed by a dwarf who I thought was a friend. After that, I met a cheater who I can't beat, yet. Got captured, got saved by a girl. We then saved a dragon, after that we saved the vampire who I fought previously before finally, we escaped."

"Interesting. Do you still diligently practice the martial arts I thought you?" Domon asked.

"Yes," Jack answered.

"Okay, that's all that is important," Domon said.

Jack simply nodded. He looked at the far side of the cavern where his guildmates were fighting with monsters.

"You are not going there to help?" Jack asked.

"We were asked to watch here, in case that group or another one came again," Domon answered.

"Besides, they needed the fighting experiences. If I keep on assisting, they won't grow."

"Well, in that case, I will stay back as well."

The grandfather and grandson continued to chat about trivial matters as they waited.

After many of their members regrouped with Jeanny's team, the pressure from the trolls was much reduced. No longer getting bogged down by the worry of a back assault, the group fought better. They rearranged their formation and slowly wore down the monsters. Even though their number had decreased, this settlement was still not something they couldn't overcome.

After another hour of fighting, most of the trolls had finally been wiped out.. Leaving only a large brown troll in armor who now stood in front of the largest wooden structures at the farthest side of the cavern.

Chapter 553: Control

The large brown troll was the settlement boss, Warrior Cave Troll, a level 35 special elite. Jeanny held the players who were just about to head out to engage the monster.

"I will deal with it," Jeanny said.

"Sis, do you want me to support you with my music?" Viral Cora asked.

"No need," Jeanny replied as she moved forward.

The Warrior Cave Troll was holding a giant cleaver. It hit its large cleaver onto the ground several times as it walked, creating cracks along its way. Small sparks of lightning could also be seen whenever the cleaver hit the ground.

Jeanny twirled her spear before lowering her stance as she waited for the boss to make its move.

The boss stopped some distance away from Jeanny as it observed the crowd behind the spearwoman. The crowd was appearing to let this spearwoman fight by herself. The troll snickered. They were underestimating it a little too much.

The snicker turned to a growl. The large cleaver that was on the ground, were violently heaved upward. The crescent-shaped lightning energy shot out, cutting the ground as it headed towards Jeanny, creating a long deep groove along its path.

Jeanny was expecting to engage the boss in melee, so she was slightly surprised by this long-range attack. She was not flustered, though. The crescent came as a vertical attack. She spun her body to the side, evading the crescent energy.

"Look out!" Jeanny heard Viral shout as she landed.

Jeanny was shocked to find another crescent energy approach. This time the crescent attack was horizontal. She jumped up. The inherent skill of a Dragoon allowed her to jump 300% higher than normal, similar to Assassin, Battle Monk, and Hidden Weapon Specialist.

The troll boss, seeing his opponent was in the air, made a super jump itself. It used two arms to swing its cleaver with all its might at Jeanny.

The troll must have assumed that Jeanny was powerless in the air due to no footing. But ever since becoming a Dragoon and receiving the boost in jump, Jeanny had practiced fighting in the air. Her Jump Attack skill could even bring her five meters into the air, higher than her normal jump. She couldn't expect her opponent to stay at the same position after teleporting, so she had to learn to adjust her stab mid-flight.

Her diligence had paid off. She was not unhinged when the troll boss came at her in the air. She thrust her spear as the troll's cleaver arrived. Jeanny had practiced so that she could unleash Seven Spears Assaulting Heaven even on air.

Her first thrust clashed with the troll's cleaver, resulting in a loud clang. Her second thrust caused the cleaver to be thrown back, exposing the troll. Her third spear stabbed at the troll's neck, causing critical damage. Her fourth spear stabbed in between its eyes, scoring another critical. She added Penetrating Stab into the fourth stab, amplifying its damage.

The four spears had been executed in rapid succession. Jeanny then kicked the troll before somersaulting backward and landing. The troll, on the other hand, fell heavily on its back.

Her teammates cheered seeing the spectacle.

"That's our leader!" Bowler yelled.

The troll rose back up, it shook its head while holding it with one hand. Its eyes glared at Jeanny. The growl that came out was no longer condescending but was instead full of rage.

It furiously hit the ground with its cleaver multiple times, then roared loudly. It lifted its cleaver high and held it with two hands, lightning crackles around the cleaver. Seeing that pose, Jack, who watched from afar half-expecting the troll boss to start uttering the most badass battle cry in history, "thunder... thunder... thunder... thundertroll, ho...!!" But disappointingly, the troll only roared intelligible syllables. The large cleaver, however, started shining yellow. Clouds of yellow lightning enveloped and swirled around it. The cleaver also seemed to be getting even larger.

The troll boss lunged. It swung its cleaver horizontally. Surprisingly, an energy wave followed its swing, extending two meters away from the cleaver. The energy destroyed everything in its path.

Jeanny, who thought she was standing outside of the troll's swing, was caught off-guard by this energy wave. She hurriedly placed her spear in front of her to parry. When the energy wave hit, she was still blasted away, suffering almost 1000 lightning damage despite the parry. Jeanny had 2710 HP in her current level of 38. This one hit took away more than one-third of her life.

Jeanny fell hard on her back, her body felt numb from the lightning energy. The troll boss was chasing after her. Giant Steve almost rushed out to help, but Jeanny deftly bounced herself up to a standing position. "I'm fine!" She cried, preventing the others from coming to her aid.

The troll boss lifted its cleaver high up and cleaved down. Jeanny jumped to the side and rolled on the ground as the cleaver crashed into the ground, creating a spectacular explosion.

It didn't stop, it dragged its cleaver on the ground in a circular swing motion. The energy wave again followed, about to devour Jeanny who was still in a sitting position after her roll. As the energy wave was about to hit her body again, she vanished.

Confused, the troll looked left and right, searching the spearwoman. Suddenly, a spear pierced into its skull from above. Jeanny had been ready for the energy wave and used Jump Attack to both evade the attack and deliver her counterattack.

From the troll's head, Jeanny then jumped to its back. She executed Hundred Spear skill to the monster's back. Uncountable spear images pierced through the troll's back. The troll wanted to swing its cleaver to its back, but Jeanny stabbed at its elbow, stopping its swing.

The troll wanted to swivel its body to face Jeanny, but Jeanny also moved following the monster's back, while stabbing at its knee to slow its turning. Every time the monster tried to turn or hit its back, Jeanny used her spear to prevent it or move herself to stay on her opponent's back.

"She was very good at controlling her opponent," Jack commented.

"Yes. She got the knack of it, whether controlling her friends or her opponents," Domon said.

"Then why only teach her a pure offense spear art?" Jack asked.

"Who said I only teach her a pure offense art?" Domon asked back.

"But, I only saw her using Seven Spears Assaulting Heaven."

"You are not paying enough attention. Look at her footwork."

Now that Jack paid attention, Jeanny movements were indeed profound. It was as if she could predict where her opponents would be moving to before they actually moved, and adjusted her position to follow. All the while using her spear to limit her opponent's movements.

"What's that art called?" Jack asked.

"No name," Domon answered. "It's a modification of Eight Diagram Illusory Steps and her ability to read and predict opponent's move. Not quite mana-sensing, but close. She was very observant of every detail of her opponent's movement to make the prediction. I simply aided in sharpening that particular instinct of hers. Once her opponent got trapped in her control, it would be very difficult to escape."

The troll boss was helpless as Jeanny kept on restricting its movements and harassing it from its back. At one point of desperation, it decided to jump high. But Jeanny had also jumped before it did. She then swung her spear downward and smashed the troll that was coming up. The troll ended up getting slammed back into the ground.

The fight became one-sided. The others who were tense and were ready to give aid once they saw Jeanny was in trouble, was now relaxing. Some were even sitting on the ground as if leisurely watching a show.

After some while, the troll boss dropped dead and turned into dust. Some gold coins, mana cores, and equipment dropped. Jeanny picked them up before giving her order, "let's destroy the settlement core."

"Allow me!" The Man uttered. There was no more guardian. Destroying the core was child play under this situation. The Man and some of his minions started hacking at it until it crumbled. Bright light soon appeared accompanied by a shower of loots.

When Jack arrived here, he had been added to Jeanny's party. Jeanny's leadership was at Advanced Expert now, allowing her to form a team of seventy players. Since they numbered almost one hundred players, there were originally two teams that assaulted this monster settlement. But around thirty players had perished due to Crowds of Sins' assault. So the two teams were reshuffled into one party under Jeanny, including Jack who arrived later.

With him in the party, Jack also received abundant exp points for clearing this settlement. The exp might have been divided between almost seventy players, but this was still a high-level monster settlement. Since Jack had set all the exp to go into his new ranger class, it shot up from level 1 straight to level 8.

Seeing his ranger's level, he said to Peniel, "I need to level up this ranger class to level 15 first and get the advanced class before we continue looking for Aubelard."

Chapter 554: Informing The Guild Members

Bowler and The Man was in charge of collecting the loots. They were to decide the distribution of the loots later in the headquarters. Of course, a portion of it would be given to the guild's treasury before the rest was divided between the members participating in this raid.

Jeanny came to Jack. "It was good that you came back as you did. We would have been in real trouble otherwise," she said to him. "Have you completed that ambassador quest of yours?"

"Not yet," Jack answered.

"Oh? Then why do you return."

"Something has come up. I have a matter to talk to you lots. I need you to arrange all our trustable members to gather inside our guild hall tonight."

"Sure, I will spread the words. What is this matter? You sound quite serious."

"It is," Jack said. "I will tell you about it tonight. I will go first. See you tonight."

"Where are you going?" Jeanny asked as Jack walked away.

"Grinding," Jack answered. "I need to get my advanced class fast."

'Advanced class? Aren't both your classes already elite classes?' Jeanny wondered. She didn't voice her thoughts since Jack was already far away. She guessed she would leave the questioning for tonight.

It was just a couple more hours before night arrived, but Jack didn't want to waste time by simply waiting. He felt like he was being chased by time. Master's plan would continue to proceed, so he needed to also hurry up so he was more prepared for their next encounter.

The area around here was already a high-level area with monsters around level 30 to 35, but these monsters were too weak for him. He had Pandora take him to a neighboring area that housed level 35 to 40 monsters. These monsters should give him more exp and shorten the time he needed to level up.

Just from that few hours of grinding, his ranger level had gone up another level. Power-leveling a low-level player was truly easy when you were high-level.

When he thought it was almost time, he used the Guild Return Scroll and returned to Heavenly Citadel. He went directly to the Guild Hall.

When he entered, he saw everyone was there. Everyone who spread around the hall speaking in groups automatically end their conversation and came to him when they saw him enter. Jeanny had informed everyone that it was Jack who requested this meeting.

Jack went next to the guild core before he turned and looked at everyone who was now gathering around him. He had thought a lot about how he should break this news to the others. He cleared his throat before saying, "My dearest friends. I have grave news. It is very sad for me to tell you that we are inside a game."

The others were silent. Jack took it as they were still having trouble absorbing his information, until Swellgoing uttered, "Are you high or something? Of course, we are in a game world. Are you wasting our time just for this nonsense?"

Jack looked at the man. He almost forgot this jealous man was also part of their core members.

"Do you need me to explain?" Peniel asked. "You are not very good at this."

Jack cleared his throat again. 'Argh, f*ck it!' He thought. He decided to just stop trying to be formal.

"What I am trying to say is, that this world here is a real game created by people! At least at first. Anyone here knows about the Second World game that was all over the news in our previous world?"

Almost all nodded. They were mostly gamers, after all.

"This world is that game being turned into reality," Jack announced. He then reiterated what Wilted Tree had told him, including his encounter with Master and what that man seemed to be planning. Some interrupted him with questions during his talk. He answered them at first. But after a few times, he got annoyed. So he told everyone to just shut up and listen until he finished. Anyone still asking a question before he finished will be presented with a Mana Bullet.

After a long time explaining, Jack finally told everyone that he had finished and they were allowed to ask questions. Yet, everyone was silent.

A voice finally broke the silence, "So, you are saying our old world is no more?"

"We can't go back?" Another asked.

"Yes and can't," Jack answered both questions.

"You said that this Master fellow use some kind of a machine to alter our world, right? Can't we use this machine to change the world back?"

"Good question, but unfortunately, only that Master fellow knows the answer to this question," Jack answered. "If we want to try changing the world back, we have to first find Master and beat the information of the machine's location out of him. Anyway, that is a question after we defeat Master. At this moment, we need to hurriedly build up and increase our guild's power. Master will come invading the other countries once he takes control of Liguritutum Realm."

"Country War? What can our guild's power contribute in there?" Someone asked.

"We can deploy our trained units to aid our home country when a country war happens," it was Jeanny who answered. Peniel had explained this guild feature during their talk when they first formed this guild.

"Additionally, once our guild reached level 3, we will be able to summon our trained units when we invade other Guild Headquarters," John added.

"That's right," Jack said as he took out the Eagle Rider Hunter Insignia and Ice Cannon Tank Blueprint and handed them to John. "These two items should help boost our trained units, but we need to reach guild level 3 and upgrade our Blacksmith Workshop to level 4 and also have a basic master blacksmith."

"An aerial and armored units? This will open up a lot of strategic options!" John exclaimed. "Good find!"

"Those were not found by me," Jack said. "Those were gifts from the game designer woman who I mentioned. We will need to defeat World Maker if we want to repay her."

"Defeat them we shall!" Jeanny declared, then announced to the crowd, "you all heard what Jack said. We need to hurriedly reach guild level 3. We will also be able to build our Legacy cave after that. Everyone, please work hard!"

"That's great! But I would like to add one more thing, apart from guild strength, we also need to strengthen each of our individual prowess. Our trained units might be useful in the war, but we still have to face the World Maker outside of it. From what I have seen, they are not what normal players can go against, we need to hurriedly improve ourselves not only in level and equipment but also in expertise. For that, I have one more thing that can help."

Jack took out the Time Pearl and gave her to Jeanny.

"You certainly brought many gifts every time you return," John said.

Jeanny read this Time Pearl's descriptions and gasped when she found out it was Legendary grade. She then shared it with the others.

"Time Chamber? What help will that bring us?" Bowler asked.

"How is your martial art and mana sense training going?" Jack asked back instead.

"Uh, tiring?" Bowler answered. He saw Domon glare at him and he shrank away.

Jack nodded. "I expect none of you have made much progress. Only one month had passed since you started practicing. I myself took eight weeks to learn that mana sense and even that was because I have the basics from my childhood training. Most of you might need a longer time. Time, however, is a thing we lack. This chamber will assist in that department. Once this Time Chamber is built, you will all practice mana sensing and martial arts inside this Time Chamber. The time inside this chamber is

multiplied by ten times. Meaning one day you spent inside will be ten days outside. This way, Domon's training session will be increased. I hope I can see some improvements soon."

The faces of most that heard were getting pale after hearing Jack's words. They were already undergoing hell every morning from the training. Now the session was going to be extended by ten times?

But considering the stakes, they admitted that this was not the time to whine. If World Maker was allowed to have it their way, they would spend the rest of their lives living under tyranny. No one would want to live that way. Every free person had the obligation to prevent that from happening. Their pale expressions soon turned into determination.

Before, some of these core members only consider martial training as an obligation that the guild's three leaders had enforced. Now, they felt it was something that they should truly endeavor to learn seriously, for the sake of the current world they were living in.

They had some discussions after that, Jeanny dismissed them when the night was getting late. John immediately used the platform 3D interface to start redirecting the workers to work on the Time Chamber. Constructing this Time Chamber took priority now. The construction was surprisingly fast, only needed one day.. They would be able to start training using this chamber soon.

Chapter 555: Direction For Third Elite Class

When the others had left the Guild Hall leaving only Jack, John, and Jeanny, Jack gave the God-eye monocle which he had taken from Rawprocessor to John.

"Wow, expert! Thank you very much!" John said as he accepted the God-eye monocle. He immediately equipped this special equipment.

Jack turned to Jeanny and said, "Sorry, I only manage to loot one."

"Doesn't matter, that equipment is more suitable for his tactical expertise anyway," Jeanny replied.

"Yeah, with this. I can better instruct my minions on their positions," John said.

"Can you please stop referring to your teammates as minions?" Jack complained.

"I do consider them as one, but they are not who I am referring to just now. I am talking about my summoned creatures," John said. Then he turned to Peniel, "By the way, I believe a summoner will continue to get summoning spells as we level up, correct? So my number of minions should increase?"

"Yeah, but some summon spells have a unique condition where they can't be summoned when another particular creature is being summoned. If you want to maximize your number of summons, two special classes specialize in them, Necromancer and Minion Master. If you managed to become one of these two, you can create a small army in a fight."

"How do I get these special classes?" John asked.

"I don't know, you will encounter them in random special quests. Or some special unknown pocket worlds like that Valley of Tempus Jack fell into," Peniel answered.

"Well, then it's useless for me to have the information, right? Am I going to reject a quest that gives me a Summoner's special class which is not those two? Am I to just wait and hope that I stumble upon those two classes?" John said curtly.

Peniel's face was red. She was about to scold back when Jeanny hurriedly step in, "John! You are being rude to someone who gives you valuable information!"

"Hm, I suppose I'm in the wrong," John said. Jack was not sure that was supposed to be an apology or what, but Peniel's expression seemed to soften.

Jeanny continued speaking, probably trying to change the subject, "I got a good stuff from that monster settlement we raided just now." She said as she fetched out a parchment.

Jack and John studied it. It was described as Ice Tower Blueprint. It provided them with the option to construct this tower. It was a defensive structure to be placed around their Guild Headquarters, like the watchtower. But a watchtower required them to place a ranged unit in it to be effective, while this Ice Tower will automatically attack any intruder that came into range. Its attacking power was also much higher than any current ranged unit they possessed, and it also slowed or even froze the target. These towers could be built immediately, they didn't need to wait until they were guild level 3.

"Great, this should increase our defense a grade further," John said. "We can also craft traps to be placed all around our headquarters now. That Kirsi you brought back the last time truly help us a lot. With her around, we don't waste many materials for crafting those traps. If left to our blacksmith players, their success rate is still very low."

"Yes, now we are no longer afraid of other guilds coming to attack again," Jeanny said.

"Not until they reach level 3. They can summon their trained units after that," Jack said.

Hearing that, John commented, "Hm, As I know, four of the guilds in the coalition already have Guild Headquarters. If all four of them summoned their trained units to invade us..."

"Only one guild can summon their trained units during an offense," Peniel interrupted. "There is no limitation to players who came to invade, but for trained units, if one guild already does the summoning, the others won't be able to."

"Yes, Wilted thought of balance when she designed this guild war system," Jack said. "In this case, we should be fine. We can counter their advantage in player numbers using our defensive structures and traps. As for trained units, we shouldn't be any less than theirs as long as only one guild is allowed to summon."

"Your words are inaccurate. Our trained units will be better! Since I will be the one controlling them," John announced.

"Yes, yes, of course, forgive my blunder," Jack said.

"Will you be leaving again?" Jeanny asked.

"Yes. My kingdom faction quest is still in progress. We need to hurry help Prince Alonzo ascend the throne. This way, we can coordinate better with this kingdom's army to go against World Maker. But I

will stay a few more days to grind first. I don't know if in my journey I can find the academy to get my advanced class, so I need to do that before I depart."

"Advanced? Aren't you an elite class already?" Jeanny asked, remembering Jack mentioned this earlier.

"I got a third class during my scuffle with the World Maker," Jack said. He didn't mention this when he was talking to the core members just now.

Jeanny and John stared at him with wide eyes. Jack laughed and told them about how Wilted Tree and he stole Master's Second Soul Remnants, preventing Master from getting his sixth and seventh class.

"Damn! Maybe I should have followed you when you were captured. Maybe I would have gotten my second class," John said.

"If you were there when Master attacked, he would have killed you. He got no point capturing you back," Jack countered.

"Anyway, I can't believe that Master got five classes. How are we going to beat such a player?" Jeanny said. Jack also didn't mention Master's five classes during the talk just now. He thought there was no point scaring the others unnecessarily.

"By doing it together!" Jack said. "The dude is too arrogant. He might be a genius, but all his minions follow him out of fear and benefit. He only cares about himself, sooner or later he will find himself alone. No matter how powerful he is, being alone has its limitation. We will beat him as long as we stick together!"

Jeanny nodded, her confidence was roused after Jack's words. John, on the other hand, said, "a bit unrealistic, but I like your optimism."

"Do you need help with your exp grinding?" Jeanny asked.

"No need. I level up faster when I am alone," Jack said.

He left the two soon. He visited the warehouse first and used his contribution points to clean up all the common equipment and common ores inside. After a month, the stock had piled up again. He didn't go to work immediately, he rested early and did the blacksmithing the next morning.

He managed to fuse super rare gloves and belt. With them, he finally had a full set of super rare equipment. He also used the ores to upgrade them to level 46, the limit where he was still allowed to wear.

Hard Power Gauntlet, level 46/66 (super rare medium armor)

Physical Defense: 158

Magical Defense: 136

Durability: 50

Strength +12

+5% to all physical status resistances

Increase knockback effect on every attack

Solid Earth Belt, level: 46/66 (super rare medium armor)

Physical defense: 139

Magical defense: 122

Durability: 40

Endurance +10

Earth Resistance +20

increase defense by 20% when HP is below 50%

Since he had a large number of ores, he proceeded to upgrade his remaining armors all to level 46 as well. As a result, the rare grade armors he put back into the warehouse were mostly not high in level. From this session of blacksmithing work, his Blacksmith skill increased to Intermediate Expert.

Jack would leave Jeanny and John to deal with these armors. He informed them about this new batch of rare armors inside the warehouse before he used the teleportation chamber to leave Heavenly Citadel.

He had asked Peniel about the most beneficial place to grind level 40 monsters. The area where he did exp-farming yesterday was not the most ideal one according to Peniel. He teleported to another small town he had registered during his travel to Tranviste, then spent two hours riding Pandora to the area Peniel indicated.

The monsters in that area were swarm-type monsters with less defense and HP but high attack similar to the Mouseant he farmed at Busculla Plateau. This allowed him to kill them en masse, collecting a large number of exp points in a short time.

He spent three full days there farming for exp points. On the morning of the second day, he reached four months of age. He received a new racial skill, Willpower. This skill allowed him to break free from all movement restrictions with a cooldown of five minutes. This skill meant he no longer need to rely on tools like Liberty of Movement.

However, this skill only let him break free once, it didn't provide a short time immunity like Liberty of Movement did. Meaning if he was facing a continuous restriction spell like his Myriad Ensnaring Chains, the chains could just grab him again when he broke free the first time.

At the end of the third day, his Ranger class finally reached level 15. He was now ready to upgrade this class to an advanced one.

"Which advanced class will you choose?" Peniel asked Jack once they were planning to return.

"Rogue, but I'm still not sure if I want to become a battle monk or assassin yet. Technocraft and Bard are certainly out."

"May I suggest you take the Archer route instead?" Peniel said.

"Huh? I don't plan to strengthen my ranged capability. I still prefer melee prowess," Jack said.

"There is one elite class that change direction to melee from Archer class."

Jack thought about Peniel's words before uttering, "Beastmaster? Why should I go that route?"

"Remember the Therras Beast Egg in your inventory?"

Chapter 556: Continuing The Faction Chain Quest

"Ah... I see what you mean. So I can have a Therras Beast pet, right?" Jack said.

"Yes, considering that beast was this country's national mascot. It will carry a great significance for you to have such a beast as your pet," Peniel said. "Not to mention it was also a very powerful beast. It was a top-class beast of choice for any Beastmaster."

"A beastmaster can also transform into a beast during a fight, can't it?" Jack asked.

"Yes, that should increase your melee prowess," Peniel answered.

"Hm... All right! Let's go Beastmaster route then!" Jack declared.

With the choice decided, Jack used Town Return Scroll to teleport directly to Thereath. On the way to the Archer Academy, he sent a message to Fierce Flame. He had previously asked about the Rogue trial as preparation for him undertaking the test. The Rogue's trial consisted of a long lane filled with contraptions where a Ranger must pass through. Similar to the whirring blade contraption he found inside Temple of Divine Squall, but with more varieties and less deadly. A Ranger would not get instant death when hit by this contraption. There was, however, a time limit. If they failed to reach the other end when the time ran out, they were considered to have failed the trial.

Since he was now no longer taking the Rogue trial, that information was no longer useful. Fierce Flame sent him all the information about Archer Trial. It was an accuracy test. One was provided a bow to use or the Rangers could just use their Throw Weapon skill, this skill had no cooldown during the trial. The Ranger must hit several targets within a time limit and from a predetermined range. The first half of the trial had static targets, the last half had moving targets. The Ranger had to reach a minimum score to pass the trial.

Jack was not a veteran ranged player, but after using a Mage class for a while, his accuracy had increased. He should have a decent chance to pass the trial. Still, he went to a secluded alley and practiced throwing his weapon first. He equipped a dagger for that. He found that throwing a dagger was much easier compared to throwing a longsword.

After several throws, he was satisfied by the result. Although accuracy was not affected by his stats, the finesse and throw-power his Dexterity and Strength provided respectively allowed his throw to fly straight for a long-range, so less chance for a miss-throw.

Jack came into the Archer Academy and followed its due process.

Although he did pass in the end, he had some stumble at the very last part of the trial. The moving targets provided more challenges than he expected. Especially in the last few seconds, the targets moved at a very fast speed. Jack activated his Dragon's Eye to allow him a more easy time targeting them. He passed the trial a few points shy from the passing mark.

He exhaled a relief when he saw the points. He couldn't afford to wait a few more days to retake the trial.

After passing the trial, Jack was now officially an Archer class. He received the precise Shot skill, which he had no use of. He could still use this skill in conjunction with the Throw Weapon skill, but he didn't think he would rely on this skill much. So, all the 15 skill points he had received from Ranger class were kept in stock, he would use them for Beastmaster's skills later.

The 15 Attribute points, on the other hand, he spent them all to Endurance stat.

"Are you ready to continue your faction chain quest again?" Peniel asked after they came out from the Archer Academy.

"Yeah. We will again be shopping for common ores first. After that, we will depart," Jack said.

"You said before that you have an idea of how to look for Aubelard, right? I thought at first you are going to ask for help from your guildmates."

"They have their own tasks to worry about. I can't burden them with mine. Also, though they could roam the wilderness already, their mobility is still limited. Some areas are still difficult to explore. Their help won't be efficient."

"How about asking the prince to use his army for the search? He should have enough manpower for that," Peniel suggested.

"We will leave that to our last option," Jack said. "I personally don't want to go that route. That Aubelard we are searching for is in hiding. A large-scale search by the army will be easy to be spotted. Aubelard might move away or go into even deeper hiding if he finds out. If that happens, it will be much harder to find him."

"So, what do you have in mind?" Peniel asked.

"What I have in mind will need your help."

"Me?"

"Yes, more precisely, your knowledge. Out of all the cities or towns or villages in this Themisphere Kingdom, are there any particular places that receive less sunlight throughout the year? For example, a village that is surrounded by high mountain, so it is shrouded by mountain's shadow most of the time."

"Oh? You think because he is a Vampire, he will be looking for places like that to live?"

"If I'm a vampire, I will be looking for such places to live," Jack answered. "Don't forget that Horatio said he is wounded and can't move too much. He will be looking for a permanent place to stay when he escaped into this country. It will be weird if he stays in a place and only comes out at night. People will start wondering something is wrong."

"A vampire can still come out during the day, you know. It's not like they die after exposure to sunlight. They are simply weakened," Peniel explained.

"Yes, but remember Horatio's info about the vampire's disguise. It is not workable under sunlight. I doubt he will be exposing himself using his real appearance, a vampire's feature is rather easy to notice. He will be using disguise if he stays in one place. Which means he will be looking for a place where he can use his disguise most of the time. So, is there such a place or not?"

Peniel gave the matter some thoughts. "Well... Actually, I can think of several places."

"Several?" Jack was astounded. He would think that a place that lacked sunlight will be rather rare. He had been afraid that Peniel will tell him there was no such place, but now the fairy was telling him there were several. He was both glad and concerned. Glad because now he had a starting point of where to look. Concerned because if there were too many of these places, he would still spend a long time searching.

"How many of such places are there?" Jack asked.

"Six," Peniel answered. Jack sighed a relief. Six was still a reasonable number.

"Four were the case to which you mentioned before, they were mostly blocked by a mountain, causing them to receive little sunlight during the day. One had a strange phenomenon where the sky was always covered by thick dark clouds. The locale said it was the result of an ancient wizard's spell gone wrong. The last one was because it was built underground."

"Underground?" Jack asked.

"It was originally built by a family of dwarfs who migrated to this country. More settlers came and the place grew. It was now the size of a small town."

"Impressive, but I think we can rule out this underground town and the one with permanent dark clouds. Or at least left them for the last places to search."

"Why? I thought that will be the most ideal place if one wants to avoid sunlight," Peniel asked.

"They are. But they are also too obvious. I bet Horatio's undercover agents would have searched these two places already," Jack answered. "A more likely place is not too obvious but still serves its function. We will look for those four places covered by mountains. Are they small towns as well?"

"One is a large town, two are small ones, the last one is a village."

Jack opened up his Map interface. After traveling to Sangrod and Liguritutum, a subsection had appeared on his map, showing a country map or world map. Of course, when he opened, most was still clouded by grey fog. Only the places he had been to have the fog cleared.

He opened the country map version and said to Peniel, "Can you mark their locations on my map? Just their rough positions are fine."

"Sure," Peniel said and went on to interact with Jack's map. Soon the marking dot appeared inside the grey fog area.

Jack studied their positions. Then said, "Let's try this one first."

Peniel looked at the one he was pointing at. "That one was the second closest to Tranviste. Horatio said Aubelard escaped from Tranviste, right? Why don't we look for the closest one first?"

"If I am Aubelard, I will be cautious enough to put as much distance from Sangrod Empire. So I think the closest one will be the most unlikely. We will search inside the second closest place first. If we find nothing, we will go to the third closest and then the furthest one. If still no result, we will then look in the closest one."

"If we still don't find him then?" Peniel asked.

"Can you please not be so pessimistic?" Jack said wryly.

Chapter 557: Thesylvania

After he was done with the ore shopping, he visited the Hunters Association to pick up ten monster hunting quests as usual. Now that he was a Gold-rank Hunter. He could pick A and S grade difficulty quests. S-grade was still too difficult for him unless he had Samuel or an equivalent native accompanying him. But even then, it would still take too long a time dealing with monsters in the S-grade list.

So with Peniel's info, he took the A-grade hunting quests of which he was most likely encountering along his way.

Next, he headed to Ellie's Restaurant and Amy's Bakery to pick up his profits. On his way, he received a message from Dylan.

"Dude. Where are you? I got a quest that you might be interested in," his message said.

"That's rare of you to contact me about a quest. Let me guess, this quest involves fighting?" Jack replied.

"That is correct. It appears your brute skull is not so empty. So, are you interested? I will decline it if no one helped me on this one. It says here in the quest description that upon completion, our guild will receive a native Scrollmaker that is willing to work inside our Guild Headquarters."

"Scrollmaker? What grade?" Jack's interest immediately perked up.

"Grade? Is it important? It said here, Advanced Expert."

'Ah... One grade lower, such a pity,' Jack thought. If it was Basic Master, he would have gone over to where Dylan was. He needed a Basic Master Scrollmaker to have Commander Quintus teach him his sword skill. But since it was only an Advanced Expert, it was not enough to make him delay his faction chain quest.

He sent a reply to Dylan, "I'm not available at the moment, I will ask Jeanny to arrange a team to help you with that quest."

"Without you? Hm... Fine then. Just make sure she doesn't send useless people."

"Don't worry. Just send your quest description to her and she will arrange suitable experts to deal with your quest. There is no need for me to come personally. I know you miss me. There is no need to find an excuse to see me. We can meet once I have some free time."

Dylan simply sent him a one-word reply, "Bye!"

Jack laughed at the reply. He then sent Jeanny and John a message about Dylan's quest. Jeanny said she will contact the kid and make the arrangement. After experiencing the benefit of having Kirsi inside their headquarters, having another native with a high-grade Scrollmaking skill was enticing. The players with the highest Scrollmaking grade in their guild were still at Basic Expert.

While he was chatting with them, he remembered something. He told them to issue a red notice to all their guild members on a dwarf player named Sinful Pleasure. Anyone who encountered such a person in the wilderness was to kill the guy on sight. If he was encountered inside a safe zone, he should be tailed until he was in the wilderness before killing him. This was to be done regardless of his level.

Jeanny and John were rather confounded by Jack's request.

"Expert, did this guy kill your sibling or something? I don't expect such an extreme request from you," John said.

Jack explained Sinful Pleasure's nature to them. About what he used to do when he was in the real world.

"I will relay the notice. Contribution points will be awarded to anyone who successfully makes a confirmed kill," Jeanny said without hesitation after hearing Jack's explanation, and then added, "More contribution points will be given if one managed to capture the dwarf alive. We will then imprison him inside our Guild Headquarters' jail. Let him rot there for eternity!"

'Damn, girl! You are even more vicious than me,' Jack thought. He also relayed that Sinful should be back to level 1 by now, and his last known location was in Travinste. However, Jack was not sure if Sinful had set Travinste as the place to resurrect after dying.

Jack soon arrived in front of Amy's Bakery. He had been gone for almost a month since the last time he collected his shares. There was four weeks' worth of profit in Amy's Bakery. While for Ellie's Restaurant, there was three weeks' worth. The total coins he received from those two venues were 187 gold coins.

After deducting the coins he spent to buy ores and other necessities, his purse now had 454 gold coins. By the time he returned to this town again, he expected he would be able to perform the last upgrade to the restaurant.

Amy nagged at him to spend one night and tell her stories again, but this time Jack declined. He would love to, but after what he learned, there was a sense of urgency that drove him. He apologized to the girl and said that he promised he would chat with her when his affairs were done.

He also reminded her to not be too friendly to unknown strangers, especially outworlders. Not all outworlder is kind and trustworthy, especially the dwarf named Sinful Pleasure. Amy remembered the dwarf after Jack mentioned him. "He seemed like a nice fella," Amy said.

Jack stressed to her that that was the danger of an Outworlder. Some of them might appear nice on the surface, but rotten on the inside. Unless she had confirmed with him that the outworlder was truly his friend, Jack asked her to stay on her guard towards any outworlder stranger.

After picking up his profits, Jack didn't think he had any further matters to deal with in the capital, so he headed to the Zone Portal. He teleported to a small town inside his teleport list that was the closest to the marked destination on his map.

From there, he summoned Pandora and galloped off.

With Pandora's speed, Jack spent around two days before arriving at his destination. It was a village surrounded by tall mountains. The village was rather small, so he just spend one day checking everything out. He showed Aubelard's photograph to a few key people which included the village chief. After making sure Aubelard was not in this village, Jack took off the next day.

He spent another three days to reach his next destination. That included the time he spent to kill new monsters and complete the quota needed for his hunting quests. Even though he didn't do much grinding, his Archer class still increased two levels. He was a level 17 Archer by the time he arrived in a small town that was beset by steep hills.

The town was called Thesylvania. It was smaller than the border town, Theseval. No walls protected this town and the houses were situated sparse from each other. Wild shrubberies and trees occupied the space between the houses. It looked very much like an unattended town. There were very few townsfolk in sight. He felt as if he had entered a ghost town. Those few that were seen gave him odd stares.

Jack unsummoned Pandora and continued on foot as he observed the town. It was late afternoon and the sun was blocked by steep hills. He supposed this town was only exposed to the sunlight for a short time during midday when the sun was at its highest.

"All right, let's head to the information collection center," Jack said.

"Where is that?" Peniel asked in confusion.

"The tavern," Jack answered.

He tried approaching the locals to ask for direction, but many ran away when he approached. Some went inside their houses and locked their doors.

"The heck," Jack cursed. Bewildered by the townsfolk's reactions.

After much difficulty, he finally managed to speak with someone who didn't avoid him when he approached, a small girl. The girl pointed her finger in a direction, Jack figured that should be where the tavern was located.

While he was looking in that direction, he was startled by a shriek. He turned and saw a woman come running before snatching the girl, pulling her away from Jack. The small girl was calling the woman, mom, who continued dragging her away frantically as if saving her from a beast. The woman and the girl then disappeared into a house. The door was slammed shut.

"What the hell was that about?!" Jack exclaimed in confusion.

"Don't know," Peniel shrugged. "The mom probably thinks you are a bandit."

"How can such a charming man like me be misunderstood as a bandit?"

"You do have that menacing aura. She probably thinks you are a beast who is about to devour that little girl."

Jack ignored Peniel's mocking. He looked again in the direction the little girl had pointed. "Okay, let's find this tavern," Jack said.

The tavern was a house that was repurposed into a place of gathering. Its outside appearance was not that different from the other houses around. If it was not for the large signboard hanging above the door, Jack wouldn't have known the place was a tavern.

The door was in an open position, probably to indicate that the place was open. Jack went in and found a wide hall. There was a bar counter on one side while the rest of the hall was filled with tables and chairs. Only one of the tables was occupied by a couple, the rests were empty.

Jack didn't find this place's lack of customers strange. It was still early. Most folks only came for drinks at night after work hours. He went to the bar counter, a bartender was there cleaning the place.

The bartender, who was a rough-looking middle-aged man with a face full of beard, frowned when he noticed Jack approached.

"Good day," Jack greeted him with the warmest smile he could summon.

The bartender didn't return his greeting. He instead scrutinized Jack from feet to head. "Adventurer?" He finally asked.

"I am," Jack said. From the corner of his eyes, he saw the couple suddenly turn to him when the bartender called him an adventurer. Jack didn't pay them any mind, he asked the bartender for a drink.

Instead of preparing his drink, the bartender just stared at him with hostility.

Chapter 558: Missing Children

The staring contest lasted for a while. Jack was not sure why the hostility but he was not backing down. 'A bartender's job was to be friendly, for God's sake!' Jack complained within.

The bartender finally broke his silence, "What's your purpose coming into this town?"

"I was planning to buy a drink first before going into this talk, but since you insist, ok," Jack said as he pulled out Aubelard's picture. "Have you seen this man around here?"

The bartender gave the picture a brief glance and answered, "never seen him before."

"Are you sure? You just glance at it. You probably should take a better look," Jack insisted as he moved the picture closer to the bartender's face.

"Hey! A bartender is used to recognizing people's faces, don't you think? If I said I never see him before, then I never see him before."

"Aw, hell..." Jack said dejectedly and slumped down onto one of the chairs of the bar counter.

"... Your first time here?" The bartender asked.

"Yeah," Jack answered.

"... What do you want to drink?"

Jack turned to the bartender. 'Now that's better,' he said inwardly. "Give me your strongest drink."

"What strongest drink? Do you think we are that fanciful tavern in the city? We only have beer, ale, mead, and wine here."

"Uh, give me wine then," Jack replied.

Jack looked around while the bartender prepared his drink. The couple was still eyeing him. 'Hm? What's their problem?' Jack thought.

He didn't think too much about it. The bartender came back with a glass of wine.

"Do you have a problem with strangers here?" Jack asked. "The townsfolk weren't exactly friendly."

The bartender sighed. "Everyone is on edge these days," the bartender said. "They probably blame a stranger if they see one."

"Oh? Is there something going on in this town?" Jack asked, but regretted as soon as the words left his mouth. He couldn't afford to be tied up by a quest in this small town. He needed to focus on looking for Aubelard.

The bartender was mum. His expression showed that he was considering. 'No need to tell me,' Jack said in his mind as he kept quiet as well, he didn't push the bartender for an explanation.

When Jack was about to ask a different question to take the bartender's mind off, a woman's voice spoke to him from the side. "Mister, are you an adventurer...?"

Jack turned to the side and saw that it was the couple who had been eyeing him. The man was behind the woman half-pulling the woman away. "Mirian, we shouldn't bother this man..." The man said to the woman.

The woman, who was called Mirian, swatted the man's hand away. "Mister, are you an adventurer?" She asked again. There was a plea in her eyes.

"I am," Jack answered.

"Can you help us? Can you help us find our Charlene?" The woman said. Jack could hear the hopeful tone in her voice.

"Charlene?" Jack asked, confused.

"Our daughter. She had gone missing," Mirian said, half-sobbing at this point.

Jack didn't know what to make of it. A missing child? What did he get entangled with this time?

The bartender let out a long sigh. He then came out of his counter and arranged a table with four seats. "Come, everyone. Sit," he said.

The woman was sobbing already by this time. The man helped the woman onto the chair the bartender had arranged. The bartender looked at Jack indicating for him to come as well. Jack took the prepared sit. Now all four of them, the bartender, the couple, and Jack was sitting around the same table.

The bartender sighed again, he said, "My name is Brad. This lady is Mirian, and this is her husband, Ted. As is pointed out by Mirian here, her daughter, Charlene, had gone missing, yesterday night."

"Yesterday? Could she just stay at her friend's house? I didn't see any large-scale search going on, did no one believe the girl is missing?" Jack asked.

"Oh, they do believe she is missing, that's why most had shut themselves inside their houses," Brad replied.

"Huh?" Jack didn't understand. Shouldn't there be commotion and everyone came out to look when a child is missing?

"The thing is, Charlene is not the first child to go missing," Brad said.

"Not the first?"

Brad shook his head. "There has been a string of disappearance. Mostly children. It started around five years ago. Everyone came out and performed a large-scale search when the first child went missing. However, even after rigorous searching, they failed to find anything. Several months passed, and a second child disappeared. Another search was organized, but the same result. And then the third. By then, the town had arranged mandatory curfew, and lookouts were formed around the town by volunteered townsfolk."

"What about the soldiers? Did they not find anything as well?" Jack asked.

"We are a secluded town," Brad said. "There are only two soldiers stationed here. Two rather undependable ones, if you ask me."

"What did the mayor do about this incident?"

"We have no mayor. As I said, secluded town, the kingdom might as well have forgotten about us. What we have as this town's figurehead leader is the Count."

"The count?"

Brad nodded. "Count Dante. He had been the one organizing search parties and lookouts. But even then, the children kept on missing. One child within several months at first. But in this year, the missing had increased in pace, especially the last two months. The last child that goes missing, Charlene, she was the fourth one already within these two months."

"So, whatever is causing this disappearance continues to increase in pace," Jack surmised.

Brad nodded again. "I'm afraid it will just get worse onward. Folks are now afraid to come out. All the children were kept inside the house, especially at night."

"Could it be a beast?" Jack asked.

"We thought so at first, but impossible for a beast to steal so many children without being seen. There is even a rumor going around that these are all the deeds of one of the townsfolk. Now, everyone is distrustful of everybody. It is impossible to organize another joined search again, not that it brought result the last time it was conducted."

"I implore you, adventurer! We don't know who to turn to anymore," Mirian plead. "She is just nine years old, she is still so young..." Ted hugged Mirian's shivering body, trying to give as much consolation as possible.

At this time, Jack received a quest request notification. He had been expecting it. The quest was called 'Thesylvania's missing children.'

Jack found it difficult to reject such a request. He sighed. He guessed he could only postpone his kingdom chain faction quest first. He accepted the request and took a look inside his quest page.

Thesylvania's missing children

Difficulty: SS

Rewards: 3,000,000 exp, 80 gold coins, additional rewards possible

Investigate the missing children case in Thesylvania and put a stop to it.

'F*ck me! SS difficulty...?!' Jack almost blurted out loud. His body jerked up though.

"Something's wrong, adventurer?" Brad asked.

Jack shook his head. "You can call me Storm Wind," he said to the bartender.

In his mind, he was blaring at Peniel, 'How the f*ck is a missing children case in a small town in the middle of nowhere is an SS difficulty quest?'

'How should I know?' Peniel thought back. 'Probably the beast that is responsible for those missing children is very high level.'

'It's not a beast, they said,' Jack reminded.

'Okay, the individual responsible for the case then,' Peniel returned.

Jack was pondering this heavily. This case was totally out of his league. But when he looked at the imploring stares of Mirian who was staring at him with such hopeful eyes, he gave a long sigh and said, "I will do what I can. I need more information to proceed, though. What is the Count doing now after the last incident?"

Brad answered, "He continued to organize a search, but fewer and fewer volunteered. In fact, some families had even decided to move to another town. This town is becoming more vacant by the days. The count continues to search with fewer people, but they still can't find anything."

"Not even a clue? None of the previous missing children ever been found? Not even... their bodies?" Jack asked. Mirian sobbed harder after Jack's last words.

"No. It's as if they have completely vanished from this world," Brad answered.

Jack thought about it for a moment, he then asked, "Is there any possibility to get a general idea of where in town the missing children were last seen before they disappeared? I know there had been many cases over these five years and some had happened a long time ago, but it will help me get started if I can get this information."

"I know almost everyone in this town, a perk of the job," Brad said. "I can try talking to those who have missing children, but it will take me some time. Come again tomorrow.. Hopefully, I can get enough information for you by then."

Chapter 559: Yellow Dress

About the latest missing girl, Charlene, Jack asked the parent where she was last seen. Thankfully, the father did the explaining. The mother had too many sobs in between conversations, the day would have passed if she did the talking.

The father, Ted, said their girl was playing around their house. After all the other missing children incidents, most parents kept their children inside the house or at least close to the house. Charlene was still playing in the courtyard at the time. Ted was out working. Mirian was inside the house preparing meal, she was preparing it on the table under the window so she could see Charlene outside. She had to move away from the window briefly to take some vegetables, when she returned, Charlene was no longer visible.

She ran out immediately after, but the little girl was nowhere in sight.

Jack frowned. The girl was taken during such a small time frame?

"What about people who passed by? Are there no people outside that saw anything?" Jack asked.

"Many folks no longer venture outside unless necessary. This town is a quiet town to begin with. With these incidents, there were fewer and fewer people who dared to go out of their houses," Ted answered.

It was indeed so. Jack's first impression of this place was of a ghost town.

Jack asked to be shown their house. The incident just happened yesterday, so hopefully, some traces were still available. Jack told Brad that he would come back again tomorrow for the information.

But before he left, he asked the three if they ever noticed someone in this town who never came out to the street during midday, when the sunlight fell upon the town.

The three couldn't be sure. The sunlight only lasted for a brief one to two hours during midday. They never really paid attention if they saw or not saw anyone during that time. Jack supposed that was understandable.

'Are you still not ruling out Aubelard to be in this town?' Peniel asked through their minds.

'Yeah, I can't rule that out just because they never see the guy in the picture,' Jack replied. 'He can disguise himself, remember?'

Ted, Mirian, and Jack left the tavern. They walked for a bit. The terrain of the town was uneven, there were many slopes. Jack saw a large mansion not far away, it was built resting on the cliff of one of the hills surrounding this town.

"Let me guess, that's where the Count lives?" Jack asked, pointing at the mansion.

Ted confirmed Jack's conjecture.

"Does he always live here?" Jack asked. "It's weird for a noble to live alone in the middle of nowhere."

"I'm not sure if he is a noble. The two soldiers in this town didn't appear to treat him like one. The Count's ancestors owned a large part of the land here. They have been leaving here for as long as I can remember. I still remember seeing the Count's father when I was still a little kid."

"So, the Count lives with his father there? Is he married?"

"His father has already passed away a long time ago. He was now living with his son," Ted answered.

"Only a son? No wife?"

"No... I never see his wife. There was never a wedding as well. The son is probably adopted, we don't know. We are not privy to the Count's private life."

"So, only the Count and his son live in that huge house?"

"There are one butler and one maid. Aside from them, yes, only the Count and his son."

"I might need to talk to the Count as well. Will it be all right if I just go visit him in that mansion unannounced?"

"I think it should be all right. The butler will simply turn you away if the Count is indisposed at the moment."

The three of them arrived in a small wooden house with a courtyard. The nearest neighbor was a distance away. As Ted had mentioned, there was almost no pedestrian.

"This is where she was playing the last time I saw her," Mirian said. She started sobbing again when she remembered the image of her girl in her mind. Jack felt pity for her but there was nothing he could do to console her, so he decided to just keep this professional.

"Did any of you move anything in this courtyard after the incident? Or clean anything up?" Jack asked.

"No, my wife has been running around trying to look for her since. I joined together with the Count and the others after learning the news. We don't have the time to do anything else. The courtyard is as it was yesterday," Ted answered for Mirian.

Jack nodded, he looked around the courtyard. The place was already dark due to very little sunlight, with the night approaching, it became even darker. Ted turned on a lantern and brought it out to help Jack see, but when he came out, there was a bright ball floating above Jack, illuminating the surrounding area.

Jack's Dragon Eye allowed him to see in the darkness but he still cast the illumination spell just in case some clues required light. Nothing was out of the ordinary, there was no sign of struggle. Jack was also hoping for his God-eye monacle or his Investigator talent to do their magic and picked up some trails, but nothing happened.

He walked around the house. With all the shrubbery and trees, there were simply too many places to hide. With how quiet the street was, no one would notice someone stalking the courtyard.

"What are your thoughts?" Peniel asked.

"I think we can rule out beasts and strangers," Jack answered.

"How so?"

"The girl was snatched at exactly the time when the mother looks away. A beast won't plot to that detail. It also indicates that the snatching had been planned. It requires long surveillance to study the victim. This place provides many hiding places for that. But even so, a stranger will still be easily spotted if he or she hangs out for too long here. This town is a secluded one, not many strangers pass by. One that comes by will surely attract attention, such as I. Remember how they all avoided me? No way this stranger can roam around the town watching potential preys undetected."

"So, it is one of the locals?"

"I suspect so," Jack said.

Jack had circled back to the spot the little girl was last seen. Both Ted and Miriam were still standing there.

He thought for a second before asking the mother, "Did you hear nothing at all? No scream or any strange sound?"

Mirian shook her head.

"How friendly is her to a person she knows? Will she follow such a person without telling you first?" Jack asked again.

"No. We have stressed out to her not to leave the house or the courtyard unless she is with me or Mirian," Ted answered. "She is an obedient child. She won't just wander off without telling us even if it is his close friends that call to her."

Jack decided to walk around the house one more time. He went slower this time as he scrutinized every detail. Suddenly, his eyes caught something. He knelt and observed the unusual thing that caught his attention. It was a small piece of torn fabric. It was lodged onto a sharp twig. The fabric was yellow.

At this time, a marking appeared. He saw a trail going off through the shrubberies.

'Yes!' He exclaimed within. He was not sure this was his monacle's doing or the effect of his Investigator talent.

Before he went off following the trail, he came back to the parent and asked, "Was Charlene wearing a yellow dress when she disappeared?"

"Yes, she was! How do you know?" Mirian asked with a hopeful tone.

"It might be nothing. Please, go back inside your house. I will proceed by myself from here," Jack told them.

"Please, mister... You have to find her. Please...", Mirian begged.

"I will try my best," Jack replied.

He hurriedly went back to the trail and started following it. The trail continued through shrubberies, not going out into the street. The perpetrator was careful to avoid being seen after abducting the girl.

The trail took him to where there were fewer houses. It was not exactly outside of town, but this sector was clearly not residential. As he continued, he started seeing tombstones.

Graveyard?

It was already night and there was a fog. Jack saw more shadows of tombstones obscured by the fog. It created an eerie feel of the surroundings.

'This is a perfect setting for a horror scene,' Jack thought as he felt a chill. He summoned his Storm Breaker. He felt better after holding his sword. 'Heh, it's different than the time when I was trapped in that nightmare test. This time, any ghosts dare come out, I will cut them in two.'

As if to test his resolve, the sound of feet dragging through the ground was heard. Jack spun to where the sound came from. He saw some shadows from the fog, humanoid shadows.

He looked to his radar, which showed nothing. It seemed that this fog was not natural. Rapid Dazing Staff appeared on his left hand. With his two weapons ready, he bravely went forward to where the shadows were seen.

They soon came into view. They were grotesque humanoid creatures, slightly hunchbacked. Naked with dark skin. Their hands were long and ended with sharp claws. Jack used Inspect on them.

Cemetery Ghoul (Elite monster, undead), level 35

HP: 32,000

Chapter 560: Fight In The Graveyard

"Hm, they are close to my Blade Dancer's level. How convenient," Jack said as he walked forward and cast Magic Weapon. His staff transformed into its sword form.

Six Cemetery Ghouls were sighted. Jack was not sure if there were more hiding inside the fog. But if they were level 35 elite, he didn't have anything to worry about even if there were more.

He dove into amongst the ghouls and started dancing with his sword art. The ghouls were not slow like zombies, they were even faster than average monsters, but Jack was still faster. Their advantage in number was non-existent as Jack expertly evaded every attack with Eight Diagram Illusory Steps while slashing them at the same time. His persistent training showed its result, his evasion art had now reached a decent level. He could easily evade nine out of ten attacks.

The ghouls didn't possess any special attack skills. Their claws, however, when hit, caused Poison and Weakness. Jack used his Golden Noble Headband's ability to purify the negative effects. He curbed his reckless assaults and fought more prudently to avoid getting hit again after that one time.

After he took out half of the six ghouls, a pair of hands suddenly emerged from the ground underneath him and grabbed his leg, immobilizing him. It gave him a decent jump scare due to this unexpected obstruction. While he was still in shock, another pair came out and held his other leg.

The three Cemetery Ghouls didn't let go of this chance as they pounced at Jack while he was immobilized. Jack hurriedly used his racial skill, Willpower. The two pairs of hands were swatted away by an invisible force, letting go of Jack's legs. But they soon came back to make another attempt at grabbing. Jack did not let them. He somersaulted back, avoiding being grabbed again and at the same time moving away from the three ghouls that came clawing.

When he landed, another pair of hands came out. Though he was surprised, he now paid attention to the ground as well, so he took action before his legs were grabbed. He backflipped, again and again, because when he landed, another pair of hands came out non-stop.

'How many f*cking hands are down there?' He cursed while backflipping.

When he reached the edge of the cemetery ground. Finally, no more hands came out. The hands disappeared back into the ground.

"Shit, does this mean I can't fight within the cemetery ground?" He wondered but didn't think too much of it. Since he had put so much distance to the three ghouls that were still coming at him. He aimed his magic weapon at them and started shooting ranged attacks and spells.

The three ghouls were already low on health after the previous batterings, so it didn't take many hits to finish them. All three went down before they reached Jack.

With the threats gone, he tried stepping into the graveyard again. No hands coming out. He could continue his investigation again. The trail brought him deep into the graveyard before the ghouls interrupted him. He was not sure if the ghouls were originally in this graveyard or they were connected to the missing children case.

He walked back to the previous place where he last followed the trail, all the while paying attention to the ground. In case those freaky hands decided to play grab again.

Before he reached the place, though, he heard a screeching voice. It was low at first but increased in intensity as time passed. It was now a wail, a hair-raising wailing. Jack had a problem determining where the wail was coming from. The fog not only incapacitate his radar, but it also distorted the sound.

His mana sense suddenly told him something was coming from his left. He turned and saw a ghastly-looking ghost-like apparition. It was an old woman in a grey robe, floating in the air as she approached. Her hair was swirling around as if weightless. She had two round black holes instead of eyes and her mouth was opened wide. The hair-raising wailing came from her.

"Scary. But I'm facing you as Storm Wind, not Jack," Jack uttered fearlessly while using Inspect.

Banshee (Special Elite monster, undead), level 40

HP: 98,000

The Banshee suddenly screamed. The voice was so loud it hurt Jack's head. He tried to put two hands on his ears to dampen the voice but to no avail. He backstepped away from the Banshee while receiving notification that he was afflicted with Fear and Confused.

The Fear effect gave him an irrational feeling to flee the scene and prevent him from attacking the one that cause the effect, while the Confused effect made his skills and spells have a chance at failing.

The Banshee made another scream, but it wasn't a long shrilling shriek like previous. It was a short shriek that caused the air in front of her to distort as bullet-like energy came rushing at Jack.

Jack used Ranger's roll to dodge. He was originally planning to use the Roll to bring him closer to the Banshee for a melee fight, but he ended up rolling sideways, away from the Banshee.

"Crap! This Fear status is more potent than I thought!" Jack exclaimed.

Since he couldn't get near, he started shooting again using ranged attacks and spells. No problem with the standard ranged attacks, but when he cast Energy Bolts, it fizzled and nothing came out. Yet, the cooldown was still applied.

"How can I prevent myself from her scream that causes status effects? Does that scream have a cooldown?" Jack asked. Even if he removed the effect now, it would be pointless if the Banshee screamed again.

The Banshee continued shooting her voice bullets while Jack dodged and sent her his ranged attacks in retaliation.

"You can't dodge a voice attack. Other than having high status-effect resistances, there is little you can do to," Peniel answered. "But that long scream of hers does have a cooldown. It was around two minutes."

"Two minutes? Okay then, Fast Heal!" Jack uttered. His Fear and Confused resistances were at 30%. Although they could be considered high amongst players, he was still going to be affected two out of three times. He was also worried at first that the graveyard hands would come out again. They hadn't all this time, so Jack decided to go on the offensive.

Peniel cast her healing spell, healing Jack's HP and removing all negative status effects at the same time. Jack then used most of his heavy-powered range skills and spells while running over, Sword of Light, Wind Slash, Shredding Fang, Mana Beam. He didn't use them before because it would be a waste for these skills and spell to fail due to the Confuse effect.

He cast Barrier then Charge to rush over to the Banshee. He noticed that the Banshee received less damage from his physical attacks and skills. But the magic weapon on his left, caused normal damage when it hit because it delivered magic attacks instead of physical.

"This Banshee had incorporeal form, which reduces all physical damage," Peniel explained.

One weakness of this Banshee, though, was that she was slow. She almost never moved from her floating position. So Jack could easily hack at her like she was a stationary punching bag. But she was not exactly doing nothing while being attacked. She emitted a scream that radiated outward. It was not the

one that caused status effects like the first one, but a damaging kind like the second one. This third one was AOE, so Jack couldn't avoid it. The damage it caused was lesser than the second one, though.

The battle became a contest of who could dish out more damages. No evasion or dodging was required.

Under normal circumstances, the special elite monster's high pool of HP would ensure the monster's advantage in this kind of contest. But Jack's high passive recovery allowed him to survive such a contest. Yet, his HP bar still went down at a faster rate compared to the Banshee.

When two minutes had passed and the Banshee uttered her long scream again. Jack activated Gold Scale Armor, reducing the damage he received while becoming immune to all negative status effects and buffing his recovery speed. His HP bar was no longer going down but steadily increased instead.

When the three minutes duration of the Gold Scale Armor was out, Jack asked Peniel to use Healing Field, keeping him immune from the status effects again. By the end of the Healing Field's duration, the Banshee fell.

Jack had activated Runestone of Luck. Gold coins, mana cores, and a familiar-looking plate were on the ground where the Banshee was floating before.

He stored the coins and cores. After using Inspect on the plate, he found that he didn't recognize wrong. It was indeed a Recall Plate. The same one in Sinful's possession that had summoned Master. While still looking at the plate, he heard some clappings.

He turned and saw a mysterious figure wearing a coat and a hood coming out of the fog.