

World 611

Chapter 611: Busted

When Jack was being ushered inside the headquarters, he had been sending messages to Jeanny and John, asking them where they were. Since Jack departed late and took normal steed, it was already evening now. Jeanny and the others were already on the move, but they would still take hours to arrive here.

"Is something wrong?" Jeanny asked.

"I don't know... Something feels off," Jack answered.

"We will try to move as fast as we can. We originally plan to move slowly to avoid attention, but if you think we need to arrive earlier, we will do so," Jeanny said.

After thinking for a while and seeing that he was being brought into the warehouse, Jack sent his reply, "rush here please."

But when he sent this last message, he received a notification that his message was unable to be sent.

'What the...' Jack tried again but received the same notification.

'Something is blocking your messaging system,' Jack heard Peniel say in his mind. She was hiding inside her hidden dimension. Though Unrivaled was an Archmage and was not weird to have a familiar, Peniel was one of a kind. She would get recognized straight away.

Inside the warehouse, Jack was looking at Scarface who was staring back at him with the others. Beside Jack was Stonecleave who made a gesture for him to go to Scarface. Jack walked forward. Though he was sure now that something was wrong, it was also too late to back off. Might as well see what was going on. Hopefully, it was just unnecessary worries.

Jack came before Scarface, who was now a level 45 Archmage. There was a small imp that flew above him. Jack deduced Scarface to have completed his elite class trial on the first try and get Call Familiar spell as well.

Jack asked him, "What do you need confirmation with?"

Scarface turned and gave Red Death and Yellow Death a glance before returning his attention to Jack. He asked, "You are level 41 Archmage? For someone with your expertise, isn't your level a bit low?"

Jack's Archmage was actually still at level 40. Level 41 was referring to his main class, Blade Dancer. When he used the Orb of Disguise, he could set up any class he wanted for a disguise. The orb's system only considered his Blade Dancer class when working on the disguise. If he had set up his disguise as a Sentinel, he would be a level 41 Sentinel, following the Blade Dancer's class.

"There are some unfortunate setbacks. Why? Is my level a problem?" Jack asked back.

"Well, I have been calling you for some time now. I thought you were busy questing and leveling up so you couldn't heed my calls. I must admit I'm a bit disappointed when I see your low level," Scarface said.

"I apologize. I'm occupied and couldn't reply. I meant no disrespect."

"That's okay. But I do have something that weighs on my mind," Scarface said.

When Scarface didn't continue, Jack gave him a questioning look.

Scarface smiled. He said, "Do you remember when we accepted you into our guild, I mentioned there was another person that is similar to you?"

"You did?" Jack asked, but inside his mind, he said, uh-oh.

Scarface nodded, "I did. I said that this person had stats too high for his level, which defied the logic of this world. You know what? Turns out this person has two classes. He was a Blade Dancer now. Can you guess what his second class is? Archmage, same as the two of us."

"He does? How peculiar," Jack said with a laugh. Scarface laughed with him. Some from the crowds laughed as well, which added to the oddities of the situation. Jack, in the meantime, was already paying attention to the possible exits of this warehouse. There were no visible windows. The door he came in should have been closed. Jack didn't turn back to take a look, it would be suspicious, but he was sure that the door was locked already.

"Yes. I also find it peculiar," Scarface said. "Now, of course. After finding out that he has two classes, I thought probably you are the same. That's why you are so strong for a magician back then, perhaps you are hiding a fighter class. It's ok if you don't want to tell us. Everyone is entitled to a secret. But what was in my thought at the time was, this is good! If we have a member that has two classes as well, that will be great! We can do a lot of things with such a member."

Jack shrugged, still laughing. He neither confirmed nor denied it.

"But then, something else came into mind. You see, around a month ago, one of us got his hands on an item, a consumable item, that allowed us to change our appearance, into someone else... And then I started thinking. What is the chance of one person gaining a godly item that gives him two classes? I haven't met one except that other person I mentioned, and of course, you. But then again, what if it is actually just... one person? The other one was the same person... in disguise."

"What are you trying to say?" Jack asked, no longer laughing.

"As I said, I just want to confirm. Have been calling you for a while for this. If my suspicion is true, that will also explain your constant absence," Scarface answered.

"What do you propose I do to disprove this allegation?" Jack asked.

Scarface took out a magic scroll. He said, "This is a rare scroll, similar to an invisibility scroll. Haven't found a place that sells it. We got this from a boss drops, and only one even after all this time. The spell inside this scroll is called Dispel. It can break away all illusions and disguises."

'Is it true?' Jack asked Peniel in his mind.

'If the spell inside the scroll is as he said. Yes, your disguise will be revealed,' Peniel answered.

"Do you mind if I use this scroll on you?" Scarface asked.

Jack stared at him in silence. The crowd was also in silence. The whole warehouse became eerily quiet.

After what seemed like a long time, Jack said, "Go ahead." If he was to be found out either way, better made them lose that Dispel scroll.

Scarface gave Jack a hard stare, before bursting into a laugh. The magic scroll on his hand disappeared back into his bag. He clapped Jack's shoulder. "You passed the test. I am worried for a minute there that you will reject me. But since you agree to it, we can be sure now that you are not Storm Wind."

"Of course, I am not! How can I be anyone else," Jack laughed as well. Fully relieved on the inside.

"Come! We have a difficult quest on hand. With your help, we should be able to complete it in no time," Scarface said as he went to a nearby table. Some papers were scattered on the table.

Jack walked over, but halfway there, he suddenly felt danger coming from his back. He immediately jumped to the side. The range of his jump had seriously increased after becoming a Beastmaster, so he was out of the danger zone from just one jump. When he turned back, he saw Warpath and Grimclaw, standing behind where he stood just now, with their weapons extended.

Warpath was now a level 43 Blade Dancer, he was still using two longswords on both hands. Grimclaw was a level 44 Avenger, he twirled his halberd after missed hitting on Jack.

The rest of the crowd was now spreading out, encircling Jack. Red Death was level 45 now. Yellow Death was level 44, he being one level less than Red Death was probably due to Jack's fault. Jack did kill him when he tried to ambush Jack.

"Your instinct is truly troublesome," Scarface said.

'It's not instinct, it's mana sense,' Jack thought. To Scarface, he said, "I thought I passed the test?"

"There is no test," Scarface said. "I'm pretty certain you are who I think you are. I just thought we can get a drop on you by having you lower your guard. In the case I'm wrong, well, doesn't matter losing one member who never presents anyway."

"Are you truly Storm Wind?" Red Death asked.

Jack looked at her. Guess the cat was out of the bag now, Jack thought. He deactivated the orb of disguise and returned to his original appearance. Some from the crowd gasped. Probably some still have a problem believing it.

"As expected. This explains how Saint John knew we were coming for him after the top guilds meeting," Earmouth said.

'He was already expecting you people to come at him,' Jack said inwardly, but he didn't bother to explain.

"Fine, let's get this show started," Jack said as he brandished his sword and magic staff. "You should have assembled more people, or call in those native soldiers. These numbers are hardly an exercise for me."

Jack then cast Magic Weapon spell, or at least tried to cast. No spell formation appeared.

"Huh?"

Seeing Jack's puzzled expression, Scarface said, "You just tried to cast a spell, didn't you? Hehe. Do you think we are going to take you on without preparation? Not only spells, but you won't be able to use any skills as well!"

Chapter 612: Old-fashioned Brawl

Jack continued to try sending messages and using skills and spells. None of them worked.

'How did they do this to me?' Jack asked Peniel inside his mind.

'There are several possibilities. Most likely they possessed one unique artifact, Hex of Power Restraint. It prevented anyone within a set area to be unable to use any active skills or spells. See how they also don't use any skills or spells?'

'You are right!' Since he couldn't cast a spell, Jack had exchanged his magic staff with a second sword. He had been moving around and clashing with the crowds using only his martial arts.

'No wonder I see so few magic users in the crowd,' Jack came to a realization. Scarface himself had retreated to the back of the crowd. Jack also understood now why they only used players here. Native soldiers without skills are only good for tanking due to their high HP. For this fight, Scarface required players with martial experiences, who were still deadly even with just normal attacks. This fight had turned into an old-fashioned brawl without skills and spells.

Jack's three classes' attributes still trumped everyone, allowing him to contend while being so outnumbered. But the inability to use skills had taken a large chunk of his edge off. A lot of his opponents were decent martial artists, with several being top-class ones. Jack couldn't continue to go on like this.

'You also can't use your healing spells?' Jack asked Peniel.

'I can't,' she answered.

'Damn, f*ck! How did they get their hands on this powerful artifact? They could have used this artifact on me in yesterday's battle.'

'They can't. This artifact required one hour to power up before activating its effect. It is also not movable during power-up and activation. So, they had to make sure their target would have to be at the place where they wanted it to be.'

'I see... Such a tool will not be practical in a war unless you play the defensive side. Damn! That's why they made me wait and took me into this warehouse. Motherf*ckers! I fell right into their trap!' Jack cursed. 'Can I stop the artifact's effect if I destroy it?'

'You can't destroy it, but it will stop its repression if you hit at it. However, I don't think they place it in this room. The artifact was rather large. We should be able to see it if it is. It is most probably placed outside, its area of effect can still cover this entire warehouse despite being outside.'

Seeing no option to cancel the artifact's effect, Jack continued to slash and repel all attackers that came his way. Although he couldn't use active skills, his passive skills were still in effect. His Hard Power Gauntlet increased the knockback effect on every attack. With his already powerful strength stat, almost every opponent was smashed away even when he was not using Flame Strike. This caused the opponents to be unable to completely swarm him even with their superior number.

His Eight Diagram Illusory Steps had also undergone much improvement, as well as his advanced mana sense and superior dexterity. Most of the attacks coming his way missed. He slipped in and out of everyone while continuing to counterattack.

Without skills that caused tremendous damages, his standard attack could not kill the players in a single strike. Especially those opponents that had also changed to elite classes. These opponents after getting damaged, hurriedly move back to the rear before drinking recovery potions. They then returned again.

Against such unending attacks, Jack didn't think he could continue for long.

'F*ck! I can't see any exit. There is no window. This warehouse is different from ours. That door had a wooden plank barring it. It looks strong, I don't think I can break it while so many people ganging on me,' Jack said within his mind. Any guild structures after being built would follow a standard design, but one can modify it as long as one spent resources. But such a modification was purely cosmetic, normally competitive guilds wouldn't waste resources to do it at this stage.

'I will try to look around. Although they can make modifications, there should be at least one mandatory window,' Peniel said as she came out of her hidden dimension and started flying around.

Some arrows and bolts soon came flying her way. It's a good thing she was small and her flying was not slow, so she could dodge. Yet all these attacks still caused her to be unable to focus on looking for possible exits.

Arrows and bolts also came at Jack. Despite his excellent mana sense and evasion capability, he was still struck once in a while. The opponents didn't allow him the chance to drink recovery potions. His passive recovery ability was slowly unable to keep up with these endless attacks.

'This is bad,' Jack thought.

The most troublesome were the four expert martial artists, Warpath, Grimclaw, Stoncleave, and the pretty yet deadly Red Death. And then there was also the gunner, Yellow Death, whose bullets contributed the most in hitting Jack while he contended against the four melee experts.

"Buzz off, you three musketeers!" Jack exclaimed as he executed forty-eight burst slashes. Warpath, Grimclaw, and Stonecleave were forced back by the technique.

Red Death, who had circled behind Jack, attempted a backstab. Jack moved away with eight diagram illusory steps before the stab hit. Yet, Red Death followed closely, she moved and stabbed with deadly precision. Even Jack's illusory steps had a problem dodging every stab.

Jack sent her a slash to force her back. Her body split into two from the slash, or at least she appeared to.

She then stabbed Jack from the left. When Jack dodged away, the other image which Jack thought was an afterimage slashed from the right. Jack swayed his body back, hardly managed to dodge this other slash.

Jack then felt his legs getting swiped. He lost his balance and fell on his back.

Before he could react, he saw Red Death falling above him, her two daggers coming down on his face. He tilted his head away just as the two daggers came down and hit the floor. Red Death's body was on top of her at the moment, her head next to his.

"Southwest corner, small window," Jack heard her whisper.

Jack was puzzled by her words that he paused. Red Death suddenly jerked up and away as if being pushed.

'Eh? I didn't do anything,' Jack thought. But he quickly realized what was going on. He did a rising handspring back into a standing position before spinning his body around while slashing his two swords. Not exactly a whirlwind slash, but it still pushed everyone back.

'Southwest, southwest...' He thought as he looked around. Crap! He couldn't tell which way was Southwest. He then directed his thought to his little companion who was still flying around amongst the hail of arrows and bolts, 'Peniel, can you tell where is Southwest? There is supposed to be a small window there.'

'Southwest?' Let me see. She said and flew in a direction, obviously knowing where Southwest was.

Jack continued to fight as best he could. The three musketeers were back again. Grimclaw, using his long-reaching halberd, sent Jack multiple thrusts. Jack parried half and dodged the rest.

Stonecleave, who was using a two-handed greatsword before, had now changed to a spear. He joined Grimclaw in thrusting at Jack. Warpath came at Jack from the side with his shadowless slashes. Jack had to use his burst slashes again, but this move was seriously causing him fatigue if used too often.

Stonecleave, who saw an opportunity, changed his weapon again to a hammer this time. His passive Weapon Master's skill was in effect despite the artifact's repression. Jack couldn't dodge this heavy smash, so he crossed his sword to parry. Despite not being a power strike, the blow still pushed him away.

Jack felt multiple attacks coming from his back. Still unbalanced, he allowed himself to fall to the ground instead, evading those attacks. Before slashing backward, cutting the legs of those players who tried to backstab him.

'There are lots of boxes here!' He heard Peniel's words in his mind.

The boxes must be put there to hide the window, Jack thought. He didn't think Red Death was lying to him. She was not a stranger to dirty ploys, but she still preferred direct confrontation when against someone she deemed worthy, like how she issued him a duel in the past.

With a clear direction to go, Jack didn't dilly dally. He rose back and used his enormous strength to ram people over, receiving several hits at the same time. The players were rather surprised by his sudden forceful move. Jack managed to clear a small area due to this.

He then jumped. His super-human jump brought him high into the air. He was coming down on a sentinel. Seeing the opponent falling on him, the sentinel reflexively lifted his shield to cover himself. Jack landed on the shield and kicked, doing another super-human jump.

The next one he fell to was a knight who also had a shield. With the same reflexive cover, the knight provided Jack another foothold, so Jack jumped again. His jumps were not as graceful as when Domon did it during the fight with Crowds of Sins, but it still served its purpose. Jack's enhanced jumps afforded him to use the players as stepping stones even when he had less finesse compared to Domon. He only needed to target those with shields as the destination of where to jump to.

Arrows and bolts came at Jack. Some with the enhanced jump passive ability also jumped into the air, trying to attack Jack mid-air. But Jack's jumping speed was fast. Those who happened to come near him were easily sensed. Jack's one slash quickly sent each of them back slamming to the ground.

Scarface, who was observing everything from afar, immediately shouted, "Don't let him step on you, move away!"

The ones Jack was targeting, were knights and sentinels who were used to parry or block instead of dodge. So it was their instinct to block when Jack came down. Even after Scarface's shout, the next target Jack came to still lift his shield up. His comrade at the side had to push him away, just to not allow Jack another foothold again.

Losing the foothold, Jack slashed down instead on the guy who had done the pushing. He landed and then made rapid slashes while continuing to dance and move forward. He was not far from where he wanted to go already.

Scarface, who was having a better view of the whole situation, looked at where Jack was trying to go. He then looked over and saw Jack's fairy flying around the box near the wall.

"He can't be... How does he know?!" Scarface muttered with apprehension.

Chapter 613: Underwater

Scarface, who understood the situation, hurriedly organized the players near him to go the Southwestern wall, attempting a blockade.

Yet, Jack had been too close and too fast. He had arrived near those stack of boxes. Jack spun his body, his swords smashed aside all the enemies' weapons before he performed a roundhouse kick, driving his besiegers back with a serious headache.

He then sent a quick slash at one of the boxes. A damage number appeared as well as an HP bar. The boxes were destructible. Without further ado, Jack used his burst slashes. The boxes abruptly turned into cut cartons, revealing a small glass window behind them.

Scarface had modified this warehouse into an enclosed space with just one exit and almost no other opening except that one small mandatory window. He never expected Jack to find out about that small window. He had placed boxes there intentionally to hide that window.

"F*ck! Should have boarded that window instead!" Scarface cursed. But then again, the boarded planks might easily get crushed to pieces by Jack's strength as well.

"Do not think you can flee...!" Grimclaw came from the side. He swung his halberd wildly with full strength. The afterimages of the swings made it look as if a hurricane was coming at Jack.

"Taste my Tearing Twister!" Grimclaw exclaimed.

Jack watched the martial-art-created hurricane as it approached. The hurricane seemed chaotic, but Jack could feel the mana flowing through the attack. He felt the part where there was almost no mana, the center of the attack, the eye of the hurricane.

Jack thrust out. His thrust was so straight that his sword-light created one straight line. It was another sword art Domon had taught him, One Word Thrust. A companion art with the One Word Slash that Domon had exhibited during the fight with the undead swarm. But Jack's move, of course, wasn't fueled by mana manipulation since he had not reached that stage yet. The thrust though, was still as deadly as it was accurate despite its simplicity. It struck the eye of the hurricane, which was Grimclaw's hand that was holding the halberd.

The hurricane art was abruptly broken. Grimclaw recoiled with a painful yell. His hand almost let go of his halberd.

Jack felt another bullet hitting his body. His HP bar was below half now. He couldn't afford to hang around and continue playing with the people here. Warpath and Stonecleave were also closing in, with Red Death on their heels.

Jack's and Red Death's eyes met for a brief second before Jack turned back and dove at the small window. His two swords thrust out, breaking the glass before his body shot through. He fell to the ground and rolled. He stood back up and found that he was already outside.

Some players and native soldiers outside saw him breaking through. He had been expelled from Death Associates before the fight started in the warehouse. He was no longer a member and his status was now marked as an enemy. The native soldiers came running soon.

Scarface never expected Jack to find out about the secret window, hence he didn't arrange any blockage outside. But even if he did, it would still be difficult to hold Jack down since it was no longer an enclosed space.

Jack hurriedly drank a healing potion during the reprieve, before hurriedly running towards the nearest wall. He still could not use his skills and spells. He didn't want to waste time searching for the artifact. It was too risky.

Jack's speed combined with his Eight Diagram Illusory Steps, gave him an easy time running while evading through the incoming native soldiers. Once he was nearby the wall, he jumped.

His super jump brought him halfway up. He backhand stabbed his Storm Breaker into the wall for an anchor. He continued running up as he backhand stabbed his other sword to the wall as well. As if using ice axes, his two swords stabbed one after another while continued running up the wall acrobatically.

"Shit! It is like looking at a weird monkey with climbing tools," uttered one of the players who was watching from below.

Some ranged players sent their shots at Jack. Jack ignored them completely, relying on his high defense and HP to tank through the climb. He finally reached the top, which he found was facing the large river. He could see some players and native soldiers coming at him from both sides of the wall.

Without hesitation, he leaped out of the wall and dove into the river.

Scarface and the others, after running for a while, came to the wall where Jack leaped from. They looked down at the water below. No sign of Jack.

"Damn!" Scarface cursed as he hit his fist on the wall fence. "How can we still let him escape after all that?!"

This was such a pity, Scarface thought. If they had managed to kill Jack here, it would have redeemed their failures. The coalition members would see them in a new light and probably give them the respect they deserved again.

"Second boss won't be happy about this," Stonecleave said.

"That dude just has to show up when boss White Death and Blue Death was out on a quest," Earmouth added.

Scarface didn't comment. He just looked at the water with a turmoil heart. After some while, he took a deep breath and exhaled. Things had happened, there was no need to dwell on the past. He looked over to his side. Red Death was standing some distance away. She was also looking over from the wall to the river. Scarface came to her.

When he was beside her, he asked, "Why are you pulling your punches?"

"I didn't," Red Death replied.

Scarface looked at her for a bit, her expression didn't change. "I've known you for a while. That move of yours, Twin Dragon Stabs, should have hit faster than just now..."

"... I am not feeling well," Red Death said.

"That's a pity. He wouldn't have been able to escape otherwise," Scarface said.

Red Death didn't say anything further.

Another pair of eyes were watching her from afar. It was Yellow Death's.

Underneath the water, Jack discovered what John had suspected after he cast the Living Water Prison, that he could breathe just fine underwater.

There were some games where players started losing breath and then their HP if spending too long time underwater. There were also games that players were completely fine underwater. Guess Wilted and her partner had opted for the latter version when making Second World.

Jack was not complaining. He had been able to remain under the water indefinitely because of that. He could even drink his healing potion underwater. Weird, but he was again not complaining. He continued swimming away from Death Associates' headquarters.

Several small fishes were swimming around him.

Hope there was no water monster, he prayed within. As if defying his prayer, some red dots appeared on his radar, coming fast at him.

'Shit! Can I fight underwater?' He asked Peniel in his mind. The fairy had retreated into her hidden dimension when Jack plunged into the water.

'You can. You can also use skills and spells. You should be out of the artifact's sphere of influence by now,' Peniel answered.

'Why didn't you come out? You can breathe underwater as well, right?'

'I can, but I don't want to.'

'Why?'

'I don't want to get wet,' Peniel answered.

Jack didn't know what to say to that. He just readied his weapon as he tried to get into a fighting pose, which was weird, considering he was floating in the water.

The hostiles came into view already. There were three of them, they looked like water snakes. Jack used his Inspect.

Stinging Eel (Basic monster, Aquatic), level 35

HP: 18,000

'Easy,' Jack thought. The eels were swimming towards him. Jack slashed his sword down. The eels picked up speed and dodged his slash. They swam to his back. Jack whirled back, but he couldn't do it as fast as he wanted. His foot was not touching anything. Because of his slow movement, the eels bit his back. Jack felt the pain as he lost some HP.

'Damn! This underwater fight is difficult. Will need some practice,' he said.

He kept on slashing but continued to miss his targets. Getting annoyed, Jack replaced his left-hand sword with his staff. He cast Energy Bolts. Felt good to be able to cast spells again.

The bolts chased after the eels and hit them. When the eels came back to him again, he cast Ice Ring, freezing one of the three. Unable to move, Jack slashed the eel while ignoring the other two who continued biting him. Their damages were small.

Seeing Jack ignore their attacks, the eels used their skills. Electricity covered their bodies as they bit, dealing lightning damage. Jack, however, had high lightning resistance due to Lightning God Blessing. The two could do nothing as Jack slashed their frozen friend to death.

Jack then cast Magic Bind, catching another eel and repeating his bully.

When only one was left, Jack reequipped two swords again.

'Now, let's use you for practice,' Jack said.

Chapter 614: Letting Go to Return the Favor

Jack spent some time dueling the lone Stinging Eel. He could have finished it fast using magic as he did with the first two, but instead, he insisted on melee. Fighting melee against the water denizens was extremely difficult. Jack could see now that melee players were seriously handicapped for battling underwater.

He did not give up though. He was not a good swimmer, but he still knew the basics. Even though the underwater breathing mechanism in this game world was unrealistic, the movement was real enough. Most of the time when he wanted to change position, it was done using kicks. His high strength and dexterity stats allowed him stronger kicks to move faster, but they were difficult to control. He couldn't stop or change direction anytime he wanted to.

While fighting, he found it was easier to just stay still and only slashed when the opponent came at him. Of course, since he was still getting used to it, he missed most of the time and ended up getting bit by the eel. But after many tries, he started to get the hang of it.

He disliked staying at a spot when fighting, it made him feel passive. He tried several times propelling himself forward with a strong kick and slashed, but attacking using this method had scored him zero hits. Probably this could be done when fighting a larger and slower opponent, but against this small and agile eel, it was impractical.

He continued practicing until the eel's HP was critical, then he intentionally missed to not kill it, simply because he still wanted to continue practicing.

Then he saw another red dot coming from behind.

'Uh, perhaps I have played too long,' Jack said. He waited for the eel to come again and deliver the killing slash.

The eel's damage was too small. Even without Peniel's boost on his passive recovery, Jack's HP bar still recovered to full during his underwater practice. Jack turned back as a large shadow was enclosing.

It was fast, Jack thought. He kicked to the side to get away from the shadow's trajectory, but the shadow changed direction to follow him. Visibility was poor underwater, but his Dragon Eye gave him better clarity than it should be.

The red dot soon came into view. It was a very large fish. The ugliest fish that Jack had ever seen. It opened its mouth and rows of sharp teeth filled its mouth. This mouth was coming at Jack, fast. Jack made an inspect as he crossed both his swords in front of him for a parry.

Giant Sawteeth Coelacanth (Elite monster, Aquatic), level 35

HP: 37,000

The beast slammed onto him. Its teeth clanged with Jack's two swords. Jack was helpless as he was dragged by the fish's momentum. The fish tried to clamp its mouth but Jack's swords prevented it. It shook its head around fiercely until Jack was thrown to the side. It then swam away before turning around for another charge.

Jack decided to not play around this time. He used his magic staff and cast Magic Weapon, before firing a Mana Beam.

The fish was agile enough to dodge the beam, but Jack easily swung the beam following the fish's movement and hit it. Jack then fired Mana Bullet and Energy Bolts before continuing with standard range attacks.

The fish tried to dodge a few times before it lost patience and decided to just tank through those range attacks, coming at Jack.

Jack tested a spell that usually only appeared on the ground, Myriad Ensnaring Chains. What happened when there was no ground? Instead of a circle on the ground, the spell now created a sphere floating in the middle of the water. The twelve chains shot out from this sphere, binding the fish.

Jack then tested another spell with similar requirements, Arcane Turbulence. It also created a sphere from the center of where Jack aimed at. The torrents of energies rampaged around this sphere, causing damage to the fish while it was still immobile by the chains.

Done with his experimentation, Jack decided to just finish the fish. He sent Wind Slash and Sword of Light at the bound fish, as well as non-stop shooting standard range attacks.

By the time the fish was free, its HP was low already.

When it still insisted on coming at Jack with its sharp teeth, Jack wait for it to approach and executed Devouring Cross, finishing it. The fish disintegrated, leaving some coins and mana cores floating on the water.

Jack picked them up and decided to no longer dilly-dally underwater. What if a stronger monster appeared? His movement was not that fast to allow him a quick escape. It was better to not take further risks.

He swam to the riverside before resurfacing. He looked around and saw no players around, so he got out from the water.

Peniel only reappeared after Jack was on land.

Jack checked himself on the map. He was amazed to find that he had actually swum rather far from Death Associates' headquarters. Now that he was no longer in danger, he had time to check his messages.

There had been several messages sent by Jeanny after his communication was blocked. Mostly asking him what had happened? Why couldn't he receive her messages? Her last message told him to hold out, they were rushing as fast as they could.

Jack sent her a message, "Abort! Mission abort!"

"Abort? What happened to you? Why couldn't we contact you? Are you all right?" Jeanny sent a reply.

"I'm fine now. They have discovered my cover. They used an artifact that prevented me from sending messages as well as skills, spells, and tools. We have a tussle and I, fortunately, managed to escape. However, our strategy cannot be used anymore. And from what I see, if we insisted on the attack, we might suffer high casualties. I opted to abort our assault."

Jack waited for a while before he received her next reply.

"I've been talking with John. He agreed to abort the attack. Since you were already fighting with them just now, high chance they expected us to come, so no point in a surprise attack anymore. We will retreat."

"Okay, I will return to Thereath. I might be spending some days there. What will you people do? Do you plan to try hitting the other guilds in the coalition?" Jack asked.

John chimed in on the chat, "I was against retaliating since the start. Doing so will just deplete our resources. Not to mention, if we fail, it will eliminate the image of us being unbeatable. This one with Death Associates could have been an easy win if our original plan works. With the others, we will sacrifice more manpower, which might open us to another attack. We should hold out on the offensive and focus on recovering our lost units and building more structures."

Jeanny added, "I agree. On another note, that Ice Throne Legacy Dungeon is already up and running. We have cleared the Easy difficulty multiple times, but the Medium difficulty still eludes us. Can you come and give us a hand? The loots from the Easy difficulty are rather good, so we think the Medium will be better."

"I need to catch up with some things in Thereath first. I will come help once I am free."

"All right. Another thing, since you are going to Thereath. Commander Quintus has been asking for you several times now. I told him you were still busy. You better go see him once you have the time."

"Okay, I will do that tomorrow."

After finishing the chat, Jack looked in the direction of Death Hall and muttered to himself, "You let me go, so I let your guild go as well."

"Huh? Who are you talking to?" Peniel asked.

"No one. I was just mumbling," Jack replied. He then used the Town Return Scroll.

In Thereath, he went to Ellie's Restaurant and Amy's bakery. It's already nighttime, he planned to take his investment profits before resting in Amy's Bakery.

He had not yet taken his profits the last time he came to Ellie's Restaurant because of the thing with Wicked Witches and then John's betrayal. He intended to take them now. He only had 57 gold coins inside his purse.

Despite the Jagara region providing him strong draconic monsters to slay for two months. They didn't drop many coins. In this way, he could see that players would still need to focus on using Hunters Association if they purely wanted to focus on collecting coins, or go for trade quests as Dylan did. He heard from Jeanny that the kid was rather rich now. He contributed his gold coins regularly to the guild, though, so Jack could rest easy now knowing he didn't make the wrong choice inviting the kid into the guild.

While for investing in native shops or opening their own, not many players did yet.

Players needed to build enough reps with the native owners before they were allowed to invest. Jack had been fortunate with saving Amy's mom's quest to gain the two natives' trust in just one quest. Others needed to build trust through multiple endeavors.

While for opening player's own shop. They had the difficulty of collecting enough coins to buy the land. Even then, they needed coordination with other players to provide the merchandise. Guilds and other organizations had started to go this route, but they were a bit late. The prime areas had been swept up to be used for building Guild Bases. Plots of lands became scarce so prices had skyrocketed. Many had no choice and end up buying lands in the slum district, but business there wasn't exactly accommodating.

From this, Jack could see how fortunate he had been for getting a free plot of land so early and started building his restaurant before others. He was also grateful to have gotten two talented chefs and also Dylan who provided sourcing on the materials.

He figured he was probably the only player who did not need to do anything and still had coins rolling to him through his two investments. Except, of course, Wilted Tree and Master, those two had a deep understanding of this game world's mechanics. He bet they had some secret ways of procuring coins easily.

But despite having an advantage in coins, he didn't let this make him complacent. The coins were just assistance for him to get stronger. It's good that he could get enough of them without needing to spend too much effort, meaning he could focus his effort elsewhere for getting stronger.

Chapter 615: World Tournamen

The profits accumulated in ten weeks from the two investments were 610 gold coins. Jack felt rich again. A feeling that seemed to have left him when he last left this city with just a few coins in his bag.

Ellie even apologized, saying that the first few weeks had fewer profits because she had been spending the coins to hire more workers as well as buying accessory goods to dress up the restaurant to make it more palatable. Jack replied by saying that he was more than satisfied with the coins he received.

Amy's Bakery had closed already at this time, so he knocked on the door. It was Amy who opened the door. The girl hugged him once she saw him. Jack was rather surprised by the hug. He only patted her head with a laugh.

Jack went inside and chatted with her for a long time. Samantha had to force her to end the talk to have her go to bed. Jack told the two that it was time to upgrade their shop. He would do that tomorrow morning since he wanted to spend the night here.

The next morning, after spending 500 gold coins, a translucent fabric covered Amy's Bakery. Amy was grinning seeing it. Jack was happy too, he had fulfilled his promise to the girl.

He bid the mother and daughter goodbye. Amy told him to come often, Jack said he would when he was free.

Jack spent the morning going around the city buying up ores before entering the noble district. He went directly to Commander Quintus' residence.

When he knocked, it was Lindsey who opened. "Mister Storm!" She exclaimed. Hearing her passionate exclamation, Jack thought for a second there that she was going to hug him as well, which was not unwelcomed. Sadly, she only said, "My father had been looking for you for quite some time."

"Yes, I heard. That's why I come here today," Jack said.

"He is in the palace, discussing the matter in which he needs you for. Come, I will bring you there," Lindsey said.

The two of them rode towards the castle.

Aside from being the commander's daughter, Lindsey was also a good friend to Prince Alonzo and had been frequenting the palace often, so the guards didn't make things difficult even when they entered through the main gate. They still threw Jack some suspicious glares though.

There was a courtier who welcomed Lindsey and Jack, he ushered them inside the palace.

Jack saw they continued to walk through the main hallway. "We are not going to the third prince's quarter?" Jack asked.

"The princes were discussing in the throne room," the courtier answered.

"All three princes?" Jack asked again.

"Yes," the courtier confirmed.

'Then why are we brought into a meeting between the three princes?' Jack wanted to ask, but he doubted this courtier had the answer.

They came upon a very large door that was guarded by two high-level knights. They stopped in front of this door while the courtier announced their visit. The knight opened the large door slightly before whispering to someone behind the door. Afterward, they waited.

The door opened some time after, another knight from the inside gestured for Jack to enter. "Only the outworlder," he said.

Lindsey waved to Jack, "See you later."

Jack waved back and entered the throne room.

The throne room was larger and more extravagant than he imagined. The ceiling was probably four-story in height. Stone pillars around two meters in diameter lined up the side. Behind them were walls with wide and very tall stained-glass windows, their heights almost reached the ceiling.

At the end of the room was an elevated platform with an oversized throne made of wood and stone and was adorned with some gold and jewel decorations. It must be very uncomfortable sitting on that oversized chair, Jack thought.

Before the elevated platform, luxurious chairs lined up the two sides. The people that were already in this room, however, were not sitting on these seemingly comfortable chairs. They were standing and speaking in the middle of the hall. The discussion appeared rather heated.

Jack saw the three princes, royal advisor Mason, Garland Thunderhand behind Prince Therribus, Red Death and a native with a cloak stood behind Prince Rhemos, while behind Prince Alonzo were Commander Quintus and Duchess Isabelle.

'The duchess was cured already?' Jack thought as he walked over.

Although Jack had known Red Death to associate with Prince Rhemos, he was still surprised by her presence. When her eyes met Jack's, Jack waved at her with a smile. She turned away.

'Still so cold?' Jack thought. But she did save him yesterday, he would go over and thanked her once this meeting was over, and probably ask her again if she mind adding him to her Friend list.

"Another outworlder?" Prince Therribus' voice boomed with displeasure. "Since when did we keep allowing vermins to pollute this royal chamber?"

Jack acted as if he didn't hear and came to Prince Alonzo's side. He bowed and said, "My prince."

He also greeted Royal Advisor Mason and Duchess Elizabeth with a bow. To Prince Therribus and Prince Rhemos, he simply said to them, "Hi and hi."

Therribus was clearly vexed by Jack's casual greeting. What did he think this was? A meeting between equals?

Therribus might be angry but he didn't let it show. The man behind him, on the other hand, couldn't stand his liege being treated that way. "How dare you lowly outworlder shows such disrespect! I can fry you where you stand!" Garland thundered. Yellow lightning sparks appeared around him in an intimidating display.

"No, you can't," a sweet voice came from behind Jack as he sensed an invisible force enveloping him. Jack turned back and saw it was the Duchess who spoke. Jack used Inspect on her.

Isabelle (Mythical Human, Duchess), level 70

HP: 1,500,000

Jack almost jumped after reading the data. This Duchess was at the same power level as the gold dragon, Syndrillis, in her weakened condition. No wonder the Duke said she was more powerful than him if cured. He was not kidding about it.

Knowing such a powerful being was backing him, Jack looked back at Garland with a grin. "Yeah, you can't," he said.

"Whelp!" Garland uttered furiously. His lightning sparks danced uncontrollably around the room.

"Garland, control yourself!" Therribus ordered.

The lightning receded after the reprimand. Garland bowed and said, "My apology, your highness."

Jack also didn't agitate the big guy any further. The man was still too powerful for him, after all. He turned to Prince Alonzo, "I heard you need me for something?"

"Yes, we need you to represent our country," the prince said.

"Represent for what?" Jack asked.

"A world tournament between outworlders."

"World tournament?"

Prince Alonzo nodded, "there is a tradition among the seven countries to hold a world tournament every three years, where we sent our finest champions to compete for glory. That tournament was still half a year ahead. However, since the appearance of outworlders, the council in charge of this tournament had arranged for a preceding tournament that was exclusive for outworlders. Most of the countries had agreed and will send their outworlder champions to join."

"That's right. Since the king had been unavailable, I've taken the liberty to accept the invitation," Royal Advisor Mason said. "Winning this tournament will bring glory and prestige to our kingdom."

"So you want me to participate in this tournament?" Jack said.

"One of the participants. Yes," Prince Alonzo said.

"How many outworlders are required to join?"

"Total ten. Five for team battle. Another five for individual battles."

"I see... Are you discussing who to send for the rests?" Jack asked.

"No, we are discussing how many slots for the three of us," Prince Alonzo said.

"What is there to discuss?! I am the eldest. I should have the most slots. Five of the outworlders should come from my camp! You two can discuss the remaining slots," Therribus announced.

"Big brother, please be reasonable. Everyone knows you hate outworlders. You don't even know any of them, how will you be able to send proper candidates?" Rhemos countered. "I have the most connections amongst the outworlders. I know who are the best combatants and thus, I should be provided the most slots."

"Brother, I beg to differ," Prince Alonzo uttered. "Although I admit you might have better connections, the outworlder guild I associated with is the number one in this country. They have clashed multiple times with the guilds from your side and came out on top. The top combatants are surely in this guild. I demand more or at least an equal amount of slots."

The three continued to bicker. Jack roughly had the idea after listening to them. The three were competing for slots of how many outworlders under their banner to join this competition. It was another battle for influence. If the outworlders under them secured victory or performed well in the tournament, the glory would also be theirs in turn.

He whispered to Commander Quintus, "When will this world tournament take place?"

"Three weeks from now," the commander whispered back.

'Plenty of time then,' Jack thought.

Jack continued hearing the princes argue. When he saw there was a pause in their argument, he lifted his hand and spoke, "May I offer a suggestion?"

Chapter 616: Selection Tournamen

"Outworlders stay out of this!" Prince Therribus said curtly.

"Considering they will be the ones that participate, I say their voices carry weight," Prince Alonzo countered.

Jack didn't wait further for them to start another argument of whether he was to be allowed to speak or not, so he just spoke, "How about you organize another tournament within this country? All three of you select an equal number of contestants. Let's say ten or twenty. Have them compete. Ten winners will be the ones joining this world tournament. This will ensure you get the best to represent this country, will you not?"

Everyone was silent after hearing it. Prince Therribus broke the silence first, "that is a terrible..."

"I agree with that idea!" Rhemos cut in while Therribus was still speaking.

"Me as well," Alonzo threw his support.

It's two against one, Prince Therribus wore a scowl on his face. It was as Rhemos had pointed out, Therribus had the least interaction with outworlders. His interaction with them was mostly through quests he put out via his underlings for missions that were too shady or too menial for his men to do directly. This idea heavily put him at a disadvantage since most of the more skilled outworlders should have thrown their allegiance to the other two princes.

"I say this is reasonable as well," Royal Advisor Mason added his support.

"I thought so too," Duchess Isabelle joined in.

Seeing everyone was having an agreement, Therribus knew there was no point to continue debating.

"Hmph! Just tell me when and where this selection tournament will take place," he uttered and then turned around and left. Garland gave Jack a hostile glare before following his liege with heavy steps.

Alonzo turned to Jack and asked, "do you have a suggestion as to the format of this selection test?"

"That will depend on the nature of the world tournament. You said you will need ten participants, five for team battles and five for individual ones? Meaning ones that joined individual can't fight in the team and vice versa?"

"Yes," Alonzo answered. "Additionally, the individual battle is separated into class categories. The five will each represent classes that came from the advanced classes. Knight, Warrior, Archer, Rogue, and Mage."

"No tournament for classes from Healer advanced class?" Jack asked.

"After reviewing your outworlder's class, the tournament council concluded that Healer class is not suitable for single combat. In exchange, the team battle requires one spot reserved for the healer class. The other four are unrestricted."

After pondering for a while, Jack said, "How about this? You organized the selection by advanced classes as well. So there will be six selections. How many participants for this selection process is up to you, but we only need one winner from the healer class section, and two winners from the other five classes."

"We will have one winner more than we need," Red Death said.

"You are correct," Jack agreed. "Except for the healer class, the one who placed the first on each of the sections will join the individual battle. The remaining five will take a vote themselves on who is the one player to be excluded. They should be able to decide by themselves which composition suit better for the team and make the decision."

"Ain't that mean the team match will be composed of runner-ups? Except for the healer," Rhemos stated.

"Well, that's true..." Jack said.

"The glory and reward for the team battle are the most out of the tournament. We can't ditch the team match for the individuals," Mason said.

"Uh... In that case... Well, easy. Just place me as a participant in the team battle," Jack said.

The others looked at him. Rhemos and the cloaked man behind him carried disdain in their gaze.

"I'm serious. As long as it is not one particular outworlder, who I'm pretty sure won't be joining, I'm confident I can take care of five outworlders."

'Are you talking about Master? What makes you so sure he won't join?' Peniel asked inside Jack's mind.

'The guy was busy conquering a country to pave the way of him becoming a God. Do you think he will spare the time for a measly tournament?' Jack replied.

"If you underestimate other players just because you have three classes, you will regret it sooner or later," Red Death said.

"Oh? So you already know I have three classes?" Jack asked.

"The report of your fight with Saint Edge had already spread," Red Death replied. Then to Prince Rhemos, she said, "That being said, I also agree that if he is placed in the team battle, our winning chance will be high even if the rests are second-rate."

Rhemos considered Red Death's opinion. He then said, "Nevertheless, he has to join the selection like the rest. We can't just place him into one of the slots for team match while the others have to go through the selection."

"I think it's pointless but fine, I will join the selection tournament," Jack said.

"Good. Now that we agreed for a selection tournament, let's talk about the details," Mason offered.

Jack wasn't fond of this talking session, but since he was already invited, he joined and gave his opinion whenever he thought of one. The selection tournament was decided to take place one week from now. Each prince would use their connections to gather thirty participants under their banners, totaling ninety participants.

The participants were to come equally from all six advanced classes, meaning there would be fifteen participants in each class. This selection tournament would mostly be dueling matches, but details on its format would be further discussed later among the three princes.

For the healer class, they plan to have a special battle. Two healers were to enter a constructed dimension where two teams of four equal-level puppets fought one another. The healers were to support their teams using healings. If the team won, the healer won.

The kingdom was planning to talk with the League of Champions to borrow the arena inside their venue.

After they hashed out the general outlines of the tournament. The two princes separated to their quarters to discuss their own selection process. Mason went to inform the details to Prince Therribus. Jack wanted to talk with Red Death before leaving but the woman just left with Prince Rhemos without even a glance.

When they were back at Prince Alonzo's quarter, the prince first thanked Jack for the success in securing prince Horatio's support, he then formally requested Jack to represent him in participating the World Tournament.

Jack received notification that his ambassador quest had been completed. He received exp, coins, and merit points. The exp pushed his Beastmaster class to level 37, while the merit points made him an Earl now. Another notification followed, informing him that he had received the third part of his faction quest, win the world tournament.

This quest provided even more faction points from the previous part. It granted twenty thousand merit points upon completion. But seeing the quest was described as winning the world tournament instead of joining the world tournament. Jack thought this reward suited the quest's high requirement. Jack figured if he placed second in the tournament, the quest would be considered a fail.

The prince also asked Jack to prepare fifteen participants from his guild. The remaining fifteen he would gather from other sources. Jack didn't think that was weird, he didn't think that his guild was the only one the third prince had associated with. Being asked to fill half of the required participants already meant that the prince gave Jack's guild a very high preference.

He immediately sent a short message to Jeanny regarding this. He said he would explain in length later today when he was back at the headquarters.

As for the first prince, Jack learned in later days that he made a country-wide announcement to gather participants under his banner. Since he had little interactions with outworlders, other than the few he had unwillingly associated for shady missions, the rests he had gathered by using that announcement. This method mostly gathered those independent experts. Commander Quintus mentioned that other countries used this similar kind of method to gather their participants before having a selection screening.

After the discussion ended, Jack exchanged some pleasantries with the Duchess, asking her condition. She thanked Jack because she knew Jack had been the one that got her the cure. She said she was still recovering at the moment, which drew wide eyes from Jack. Jack asked her what's her real power was if she fully recovered. She informed him that she was level 80 before she was afflicted by the curse, drawing another wide eye from Jack.

Jack also took the time to apologize to Prince Alonzo about Heathcliffe, saying it was his carelessness that cause the knight to lose his life. Alonzo said he had known about the knight's death. Heathcliffe was with the army so he had a soul registry under the army. Any soldiers losing their lives would have their names greyed out in the registry. This way, no one would wonder if a missing soldier was indeed missing or had died.

Jack informed the prince about World Maker. He didn't tell him about the nature of this world, he simply told him that World Maker had been manipulating Liguritutum politics and was planning to attack the whole world once they secured their power, including Themisphere. He asked him to have his men take notice if members of this guild were seen. If possible, to have them barred from entering Themisphere. Alonzo told Jack that he had no such power. Unless he could persuade his other two brothers, it was impossible to ban a particular organization. But he promised he would send out a command to have his people on alert if they encountered any such guild member.

By the time Jack left the palace, It was almost sunset.

"Damn! This is very wasting time. I should have been spending my time leveling up," Jack uttered.

"Yeah, you are no politic man," Peniel agreed.

Jack was not sure if that was an insult or what? So he ignored her.

"What will you be doing now?" Peniel asked.

"One week is too short for me to go back to the Jagara region to farm essences. I think I will just help Jeanny with that Ice Throne Legacy dungeon. But tomorrow I wanted to go first to both League of Champions and Order of Magi."

"Yes, you have collected quite many challenge points."

"That's right. It's time my ranks rose in those two factions!" Jack declared.

Chapter 617: Entering Stage Fifty

Since Amy's Bakery was still in the renovation process, Jack stayed the night in Heavenly Citadel. He had also promised to talk with Jeanny about the World Tournament and the Selection Tournament.

Jeanny said she would take care of selecting the thirteen remaining participants since she and Jack planned to join.

"You don't want to join?" Jack asked John who was there with them as well. "I won't ask this in the past, but after our last fight, I think you will stand a chance even if you are fighting by yourself."

"Of course, I stand a chance!" John uttered. "But such childish tournament is not my cup. I prefer a non-conditioned confrontation where I can use any deception and ploy as I wish."

"I see. Well, I'm sure many such confrontations will come to a villain like you sooner or later," Jack said before turning to Domon who was there as well. "What about you?" He asked.

"Hm... It has been some time since I join any tournament. To be frank, I always thought I am too old for this kind of thing. But in this world, perhaps it will be interesting."

"Yes, it will. Just think of the number of people whose ass we are going to whoop!" Jack encouraged.

"Haha. When you say it like that. Okay! I will join," Domon said.

"Great! Then we already have one individual battle and one team battle secured in that world tournament!" Jack announced.

"Isn't that being too confident? The world is wide, we don't know what manner of opponents we might meet in that tournament," Jeanny warned. "Also, how can you be sure Domon will join the individual and not in the team with you?"

"He is not suitable for team battle. He is best when he goes one-on-one in a duel," Jack replied. "Also, if I am in the team, there is no need for any other experts. We better used the best ones for individual battles."

"As I said, you are being too confident," Jeanny complained.

"Let him. If he fails because of that confidence, we will have a good laugh," John said.

"Say someone who has blind confidence on his ploys," Jack countered.

"That is not confidence, that's simple facts!" John replied.

"So, will you be helping us with the Ice throne Legacy dungeon?" Jeanny asked Jack, ignoring the two's bickering.

"Maybe late tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. I still have something to do in Thereath," Jack answered.

"Let me know when you are available, I will assemble the people for the dungeon raid," Jeanny said.

*

Jack spent the night there. The next morning, he teleported back to Thereath. He went to the League of Champions. Currently inside his League of Champions Badge were 678 challenge points, while his Order of Magi badge contained 629 challenge points.

When Jack entered the League of Champions' building, he planned to go directly to the colosseum-like hall where he took the challenges, but the sight of someone took his attention.

That someone also coincidentally glanced at him when Jack looked over. Their eyes met. There was a brief pause as they stared at each other before the person Jack was looking at turned away and headed towards one of the doors reserved for high-ranking staff.

"Oh, no, you don't!" Jack uttered before executing Shooting Dash, covering a great distance in an instant. His sudden execution of movement skills startled the others who were there.

The person he was chasing continued walking towards the door as if not aware of the commotion.

"Don't you try to leave!" Jack yelled as he used Charge after his Shooting Dash ended. His charge brought him to the sidewall close to the door the person was heading to. Instead of crashing on the wall, Jack jumped towards the wall. With his feet planted on the wall, he started running sideways towards the person.

"What the...!" The person was dumbfounded seeing Jack was already next to him with acrobatic moves.

Jack used the momentum and sent his clenched fist at the man's jaw.

WHAM

"Ow!"

Instead of the man who had his jaw sucker-punched by Jack, it was Jack who uttered the pained voice.

"What the f*ck! Are your jaws made of steel?" Jack said to the man.

The man, who was Gruff, was massaging his jaw that had just been punched. "The hell are you doing, kid? I can catch you for recklessly using skills in a public space and for assaulting a senior member of this faction, you know?"

"Well, that's for tricking me with that quest you gave me!" Jack was not backing off. "And don't think you are off just from that one punch... Considering it is me who is hurt from the punch instead of you."

"Not really, kid. I also felt the punch. What is your level now?"

"Forty-one," Jack answered.

"Damn, that is fast! You outworlders are crazy. You probably will catch up to me in a short time. But then again, the others were mostly level 42 and 44, why are you slower than them?"

"Hey, don't change the subject! How do you plan to compensate me? Considering you have tricked me," Jack said.

"All right, how about I give you another quest so you can get more challenge points?"

"Buzz off! You already tricked me with the last quest. I will be a fool if I accept any quest from you again!"

"Okay, okay. I will give you complimentary challenge points and we call it even. How about that?"

"How many points will you give me?" Jack asked.

"Ten," Gruff answered.

"How about you let me hit you one more time? But this time instead of using my fist, I use my sword?"

"You are truly a tough sell. Fine! I will give you one hundred points. How about it?"

Jack made some calculations. He then said, "Two hundred points!"

"Kid. I'm already being generous for giving you a hundred points free. Don't push it!" Gruff said.

"Then give me a hundred free and another hundred as credit. I will pay you back when I get enough points. How about that?" Jack asked.

"Oh? Why are you so eager to get an extra two hundred points now?" Gruff asked.

"If I get another two hundred points, I should be able to become a Centurion," Jack answered.

"You want to beat stage fifty?" Gruff asked with astonishment. He then burst into a laugh. "Tell you what, kid? If you do pass stage 50, you don't need to pay me back. Take your badge out."

Jack brought his badge out. Gruff also took out his and brought it near to Jack. Some stream of light started flowing from Gruff's badge to Jack.

After a while, the stream stopped. Jack checked his badge and there were 878 challenge points inside.

"You go ahead and do your challenges first. I will be there soon," Gruff said.

"Oh? Why do you want to be there?" Jack asked.

"To make sure you truly pass stage 50, of course!" Gruff uttered.

Jack was confused. Why did he passing stage 50 had anything to do with Gruff? Well, maybe this old warrior was passionate about his improvements. Maybe that's why Gruff gave him these challenge points as well. Thinking this, he thought this old warrior was not bad, after all.

Jack thanked the old man and went to the colosseum-like hall. There were even slightly more players than the last time he was here. But it didn't matter. It's not like they had to queue to take the challenge. They would be sent to different dimensions even if they challenge the same stage.

Jack headed for stage 29 and used the challenge points in his badge to activate the challenge.

With his current three class' attributes, these early stages were nothing, even if he could only use Blade Dancer skills. Jack completed one stage after another. Starting stage 41, things required a bit more effort, but it was still easy. In this stage, he fought against five level 35 special elite monsters, ten level 38 elites, and ten level 40 basics.

After completing stage 43, he saw Gruff in the hall. Interestingly, several other natives who looked like important personnel of the league were with him. Jack even saw the grumpy Dormu amongst them.

Jack came and greeted Gruff.

"Are you having difficulty already?" Gruff asked.

"No," Jack answered.

"Then what are you waiting for? Hurry up and finish stage 50!" He urged.

Jack was confused. Why did it look like that guy was more eager than him to have him pass stage 50? Jack didn't think too much about it. His goal was indeed stage 50. With encouragement or not, he definitely would make it today. He walked back to the wall and enter stage 44.

He continued non-stop. By the time he came out of stage 49. It was not only Gruff's team that was watching. Many of the other players were also watching. Apparently, until now, the highest stage a player managed to get to was stage 46. Hence, his act had also drawn other players' attention.

Jack was slightly awkward seeing the attention.

"Go on now. One more stage to go. You can do it!" Gruff encouraged.

Jack nodded at him. He stood before stage 50 and looked at his badge. There were only 59 challenge points left on his badge. He spent 50 challenge points and was transported into the challenge space.

In front of him were thirty Werewolves. There was no basic grade anymore. Twenty of them were level 45 elites, nine were level 42 special elites, while the last one was a level 40 rare elite.

Chapter 618: Decimating the Pack

"Shit! A rare elite already?" Jack looked at the lead werewolf with disquiet.

This rare elite was one level below him. He remembered in Jagara Region he had beaten a rare elite, but that was with the help of his Therras Beast and when his Archmage's spells were available to him. This time, he could only rely on skills that originated from Fighter's branch or those that were classless. Not only that, but Peniel was also not available since she was considered as part of an Archmage's spell.

But he remembered when he was going against the rare elite in Jagara Region, he had managed to contend against it at first even without his pet, there was just more risk. So he only needed to be more careful. Considering he had also leveled up his equipment when he returned to Heavenly Citadel, he should be stronger now to better deal with one?

Anyway, Jack didn't plan to just give up. He only needed to fight more carefully than usual.

The rare elite howled, the elites and the special elites came swarming at Jack while the rare elite stayed back. Jack didn't dare to slack, he activated Life Burning Art to increase his overall stats and Adrenaline Rush to increase his hand speed.

The werewolves came at him one after another, from every direction. Their coordination was very good. This was just like his wolf pack, he thought. The individual wolf in his pack was nothing to write home

about, but the pack became more efficient when all of them were going up against the same opponent. They covered each other's weaknesses while targeting their opponent's weak spots. This werewolf pack behaved the same.

Luckily, Jack's Formless Flowing Sword Style was perfectly good against large numbers, combined with his Hundred Synchronous Thoughts, Eight Diagram Illusory Steps, and almost perfect mana sense. He could perceive all the assaults coming his way and either parried or dodged them.

But the werewolves' number was indeed too many and their coordination too good, Jack was having trouble coping with them.

'Is my bloodline getting nullified here?' Jack wondered and used his thought to try activating the skill.

Golden scales covered his skin.

'Yes! In this case, that other inherent skill should be available as well!'

With the gold scale armor protecting him, Jack had less trouble dealing with the pack. But suddenly, one thought that he left to monitor the rare elite found that the alpha werewolf had vanished from its initial position.

Fully alert, Jack focused his mana senses to search for it. Only to find it was dangerously close at his back.

Jack immediately activated Dragon Eye's active ability. Turning everything to slow-motion. He unleashed forty-eight burst slashes at the same time. Repelling all the werewolves surrounding him with the largest portion of the slashes directed at the rare elite who was trying to sneak attack him.

After that, he immediately used Shooting Dash to break out of the encirclement. The whole pack was grouped in close quarters at the place where he originally was. Jack had been waiting for the rare elite to come as well before making his move. His Storm Breaker activated its Overlimit ability as he used Lightning God Barrage. Twenty large lightning balls shot towards the clustered werewolves.

Explosions after explosions detonated amid the pack. By the time the lightning energy dissipated, only the rare elite and the nine elite werewolves were left. All the elite ones were already turned to dust.

Half of the elite ones were inflicted by Paralyze status. Jack didn't let the chance go to waste, these elite werewolves had one of their feet in the grave already. Jack swung his sword, two streaks of wind energy shot out, cutting four immobile werewolves that were paralyzed, claiming their lives.

He made another swing and a crescent light shot out, hitting another werewolf amid its running. This werewolf also fell.

Seeing his pack getting decimated, the rare elite lunged at Jack, preventing him from claiming more of his underlings. The remaining four special elite werewolves spread out. Jack saw green numbers appeared regularly above their head, meaning they were recovering even during combat albeit at a slow rate, similar to beastmaster's HP recovery effect during beast form.

Jack was not going to give them the time to recover. If he was to have a chance against this rare elite, he needed to remove all the other werewolves first. He used Charge, evading the rare elite and approaching the nearest special elite. The special elite was startled by Jack's sudden approach, it tried to flee in another direction but Jack was faster. One slash at its legs caused it to stumble and another slash finished it.

Only three critically wounded werewolves were left and one rare elite with two-thirds of its life.

Jack tried to chase one of the near-death special elites but they were not foolish. They ran away evading Jack while the rare elite came at Jack again.

With the three classes' attributes, Jack was faster than these werewolves, but they were not exactly slow as well. With the interference of the rare elite, Jack saw no chance of him finishing those three fleeing werewolves, so he redirected his attention to the rare elite.

The objective was to have a one-on-one with the rare elite. If those three did not dare to approach, then it's fine as well. It's a good thing they had no ranged capability. Those three might have recovery ability, but the recovery was very slow. It would take them probably almost an hour to fully recover their lives. Jack's battle with the rare elite would be long over by then.

So, Jack clashed with the rare elite while having a part of his attention monitoring the three wounded special elite werewolves. He would deal with them if they approached. If they didn't, that's completely fine as well.

The rare elite werewolf's assaults were all melees. Its movement was fast. Its assault was mostly using claws and bites. Every swing of its claws created a streak of light. Its ferocious attacks seemed non-stop.

Jack didn't back down. His Formless Flowing Sword Style was also superb in non-stop assault. His off-hand was back to using Whirlwind Falchion since Magic Weapon spell was unavailable. His two swords swiveled around, meeting the werewolf's claws strike by strike.

After several rounds of contests, Jack was actually in advantage. Mostly it was due to the profoundness of Jack's sword art, where the werewolf's assaults were mostly just mindless savageness. On several occasions, Jack deflected the claws using his swords and at the same time continued his slash to hit his opponent with one smooth motion. This allowed Jack to chip the werewolf's HP while preventing his opponent's attacks from landing on him. But still, some attacks still landed from time to time, the rare elite was not exactly weak, after all.

The rare elite werewolf whose life had been reduced by Lightning God Barrage continued to go down. Its life was now below half already. Seeing their alpha losing the confrontation, the three special elites could not afford to continue staying by the sideline anymore. They ran circling to Jack's back before coming at him at high speed.

Jack, who never had his attention leaving those three with the help from his Hundred Synchronous Thoughts, was already aware of their actions. He waited until they were almost upon him before he used Flame Strike to force the alpha back. He then used his super jump just as the three werewolves were about to hit him.

The three special elites passed by from below him. When he landed, the three were in front already. The three stopped abruptly since their prey had jumped away. Jack utilized this pause and used Devouring Cross which had high damage and also covered a large area to his front. The three were devoured by the dark energy. The HP they had recovered all this time went down by a large chunk again, at the same time replenishing Jack's HP which was down to almost half after a long contest with the alpha.

Jack chained the skill with Swing and Whirlwind Slash, cutting those three special elites to their demise.

The alpha lunged forward trying to work together with his remaining three underlings, but when it arrived, those three had fallen already.

Jack never paused his assault. As soon as the Whirlwind Slash ended. He used Blitz Slash on the rare elite that had just arrived. Blitzing past it while delivering slashes to its body. Once he was behind him, he turned around and used Penta Slash. Following his previous trick, he combined the last slash with his race skill again, Slash of Determination, scoring a very high-damaging last hit.

The rare elite howled in fury. Some clouds of red swirled around its body after the howl, enhancing its speed and strength. Yet, those increases were not too drastic. Jack could still contend with it. Jack had a feeling that howl could affect the whole pack, making all the werewolves in the pack more dangerous. But the beast had used the skill too late. There was no more pack.

Jack fought more reservedly when the alpha was covered by the clouds of red. He knew that skill had a duration. Once he saw the red clouds disappear, he went on offense.

Not long after, the rare elite fell.

Chapter 619: Birth of a New Centurion

In the colosseum-like hall inside the League of Champions' building, a crowd was gathered in front of the wall with the roman number of fifty. Suddenly, that wall glowed with blue light, indicating that a contestant inside had succeeded in passing the stage and was about to come out. If one failed, the color would be red instead.

"YES...!!" Gruff exclaimed loudly.

Jack came out from the wall at that time and was puzzled to find Gruff cheering so passionately.

"You make it! You are awesome!" The old warrior uttered. "Behold the birth of a new Centurion!"

Jack felt gratified. He never imagined Gruff to feel that strongly about his success. His opinion of this warrior had been less than favorable after finding out that Gruff had tricked him before during the expedition. Now, however, he felt that this guy was not bad at all.

Gruff then swiveled to the crowd behind him. "Now, pay up! Pay up!" He said as he took out his League of Champions badge. The others despondently took out their badges. Streams of light started flowing from their badges into Gruff's badge.

Jack froze seeing the scene. The genuine respect he had just felt for Gruff had now plunged back down again.

"Thank you... Thank you...", Gruff said as one by one his colleagues were done transferring either challenge points or glory points to his badge. The people who had made the transfer left soon after. All of which gave Jack one last glance before leaving. Dormu wore an especially deep frown when he left.

After everyone left, Gruff came over to Jack with a victorious expression.

"A*shole! Did you use me for a bet?!" Jack cursed.

"Haha. I've learned to not bet against you after our first meeting," Gruff replied, referencing the time he had lost the bet against Jack when Jack took the Warrior class trial.

"What do you get from them? Challenge points or Glory points?" Jack asked.

"Glory points, of course," Gruff answered. "What do I need challenge points for? It's not like I can pass stage 79 yet."

Jack took out his badge and gave it to Gruff.

"What's this?" The old warrior asked with a confused expression.

"I want my share of course," Jack replied.

"Haha," Gruff simply laughed.

"Hey! I'm serious. It's me doing the work. I should at least get some glory points as well."

"Didn't I already give you 200 challenge points?"

"Don't expect you can swindle me out with that measly two hundred points. Also, those are only compensations for the last time you tricked me. The bet just now is a different matter altogether. Now, give me some glory points!"

"Hm..." Gruff seemed to be doing some pondering.

"Hey, come on! What are there to think about?"

"I hear you will be representing Themisphere for the world tournament, will you not?" Gruff asked.

"Don't try to change the subject!" Jack said.

"Fine, fine, here. Five hundred glory points," Gruff said and transferred the points into Jack's badge. Jack checked his badge after. When he came out of stage 50, his badge contained 1,035 glory points. Now, there were 1,535 glory points. 500 points were equivalent to him repeating stage 50 ten times. Jack felt elated with this unexpected boon.

"Now, let's get back to the world tournament subject. You will be representing Themisphere, right?" Gruff asked again.

"Yeah," Jack answered while storing his badge.

"How confident you are in becoming the champion?"

"Well. If I say 100%, it will sound too cocky. So, I guess I will say 99% then."

Gruff rolled his eyes at Jack. He then said, "good, good. You have to put in the most effort to become number one!"

Jack's eyes narrowed to a slit. "Are you going to bet on me for the world tournament championship?" He asked.

"Hahaha," Gruff simply laughed again.

"Whatever you bet on. I want a share!" Jack uttered.

"Fine, if you managed to become a champion in the world tournament, I will give you one thousand glory points," Gruff declared.

Jack gave him a hard stare that made the old warrior slightly uncomfortable. Jack then said, "I think you are swindling me again. I'm pretty sure you will be betting more than that. I want five thousand glory points!"

"You are vicious!" Gruff uttered. "three thousand points then."

"Four thousand!"

"Kid, do you think you are buying fish in a fish market? Three thousand! No more. But since we are such good friends, I will throw in one rare grade chest armor as a bonus."

"Rare? Should at least be a super rare grade. All the armors I wear now are already super rare, what do I need a rare grade for?" Jack asked.

"Really?" gruff knocked Jack's breastplate. "It does feel like super rare quality. Damn, kid! No wonder you just keep on defying expectations. You truly are one special outworlder."

"I like to think so," Jack said. "Now, do we have a deal?"

"Hm... Fine! Three thousand glory points and one super-rare armor. Now, go and make sure you become the champion! I will be there to cheer on you."

"You will be watching the tournament?"

"A lot of important people will be watching," Gruff replied. "Not only is this tournament a special event, but it is also held in the arena inside Daminos Square Garden. This place is closed to the public except during this sort of tournament. I wouldn't waste the chance to visit that place when it is available."

"Really? It's such a special place?" Jack asked.

"The place is a settlement built atop the summit of Mount Audacias, one of the mountains inside Hydrurond Dominion, the country of Draconian race," it was Peniel who explained. "The place is special because it housed the Council of Virtus. It's an organization that worships the God of Courage and carries out his will in this world."

Gruff turned his attention to Peniel. He had seen the fairy on Jack's shoulder but didn't give her much attention because he thought she was just a simple familiar until she spoke just now. "I believe I have not yet made your acquaintance, miss..."

"Peniel," Peniel answered.

Gruff gave her a slight bow. "As the fairy had spoken. This place is very beautiful, but most of all, the place is the gathering place of the mightiest warriors and knights."

"Hearing you two say it like that, I'm really looking forward to visiting the place," Jack said.

"You should! Now don't forget our deal. If you fail to be a champion, I won't forgive you!" Gruff warned.

"Don't worry," Jack said confidently.

After Gruff left, Jack asked Peniel, "The God of Courage, isn't that one of the Gods that have been erased?"

"If Wilted was telling the truth, then yes."

"Does this council know their God is no more?"

"God rarely makes any contact with the mortals. They do lay down their values to their worshippers though, so those worshippers can still carry out their duties even without their God's divine intervention. But I suspect the head priest of the council would have had an idea that something is wrong. He is the person that has the most connection to the God of Courage."

"That is sad... If only someone managed to save that God as well," Jack lamented.

"By the way, that Gruff just now gets an easy way out by just giving you five hundred glory points," Peniel said.

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Well, I can't say for certain, but from the number of energies being transferred. I think the glory points he had received from his comrades should total around six or seven thousand points."

"W-What...?!" Jack uttered. "He gave me not even ten percent and still dared to grumble about it? That a*shole! I should have punched him harder!"

"Wasn't your fist hurt when you punched him? If you punched him harder, doesn't that mean more pain to you?"

"I will punch him again when I become stronger! Forget that a*shole. Let's go see what my current glory points can give me. I should be able to get some battle skills now, right?"

"You are a Centurion now. So yes, there should be some battle skills for choosing," Peniel replied.

Jack headed over immediately to the hall with the booths for exchanging glory points. He came to one of the free booths and asked for the list. He had gone up two ranks to a Centurion after completing stage 50, so the items displayed were much more numerous than previous when he was still a Principales.

Jack skipped the list from the Principales' section and went directly to the upper ranks. In the Pilus' rank section, there were some battle skills, but mostly only basic skills for Fighter and a few advanced skills for Warrior. In the Centurion's section, more advanced skills were available and a few elite skills. Jack checked on the elite skills first, but seeing the required glory points to exchange, he knew that he could not afford to be a spendthrift.

Each of these elite skills required around eight hundred to more than one thousand glory points.

Chapter 620: Becoming a Novice in the Order of Magi

Seeing this, Jack concluded he had to be selective. He could only choose one elite skill for now. He ignored all the basic and advanced skills and only looked at the elite skills.

There were also elite skills that were restrictive to other classes such as Weapon Master, Berserker, and Mage Knight. He also ignored them. He only checked the skill for Blade Dancer and the one that could be used by all four classes branched out from Warrior. There were three such skills; Flash Slash, Drilling Thrust, and Wings of Devastation

Flash Slash was similar to his Flash Step skill. It teleported him a short distance. The difference was at the end of the teleport, he unleashed a slash with enhanced damage. This skill cost 950 glory points.

Drilling Thrust was similar to Jeanny's Penetrating Stab, but it added a drilling animation to the stabbing energy. It dealt decent damage and ignored the opponent's defense. It also reduced the opponent's defense for subsequent hits. This would have been the perfect skill to deal with the Hard-shelled Drakeling in Jagara Region. It cost 1,200 glory points.

Both Flash Slash and Drilling Thrust could be learned by any classes that branched out of Warrior class. The last elite skill, Wings of Devastation, was an exclusive class for Blade Dancer. It was executed by slashing both swords outwards, arms expanding upon the end of the move as if spreading one's wings. It created a V-shaped wave of energy resembling wings. This energy wave swiped forward a long distance. Everything engulfed by this wave received devastating damage. This skill was the most expensive at 1,600 glory points. Jack's current points were not enough for this skill.

"Any suggestion?" Jack asked Peniel.

"They are pretty straightforward, up to you," Peniel replied.

"Well, with my current available points, I only have two choices. Ok, let's take the Drilling Thrust. That should help me if I meet an opponent with high armor value," Jack said.

He proceeded with the transaction. 1,200 glory points disappeared from his badge. He received the technique book and learned the skill without delay. He opened his skill page after.

*

Drilling Thrust, level 1/20 (Active skill, melee, requires melee weapon)

Deals 200% physical damage to a single target, ignores defense.

Reduces target's defense by 30% for a duration.

Duration: 30 seconds

Cooldown: 1 minute

Stamina: 60

*

"Not bad," Jack said.

Satisfied with his gain, he took a look again at the exchange list. One item had caught his attention, but because he prioritized studying available skills, he didn't look at it yet. Now he was clicking at the item to see its description.

*

Exp Pill (common grade)

Grant 50,000 exp points

Cost: 100 glory points

*

"This pill... It can help me solve my leveling problem," Jack uttered.

"You need a lot of glory points though. Do you want to spend your points for this pill?" Peniel asked.

After consideration, Jack said, "Nah, the exp provided is too little. I only have 335 glory points left. Three of those pills is not even 5% of my current exp bar to level up. I better save the points for better skills. By the way, I see that this pill is common grade, does it mean there is a higher rarity grade of the pill?"

"Yes. The higher the rarity, the more exp points provided. The rare grade one provides one million exp points," Peniel answered.

"Now that will be rather useful for my current level. You don't happen to know where I can get that pill easily, do you?"

"The higher rank of this faction should have them, but of course, the glory points needed are also more expensive. These pills can drop from loots, but very rare though, and not every monster has the chance to drop it. I have no information which monster has the better drop rate."

"I see. Never mind then," Jack said. "Let's head over to the Order of Magi now."

*

In the hut that was the entrance to the order, Jack of course saw Janus on his desk.

"Sup, yo!" Jack uttered once entering.

"What?" Janus asked with a confused expression.

"Uh... You really need to hang out more, man. I meant, what's up?" Jack clarified.

"Then you should have used proper language," Janus reprimanded. "What can I do for you today? Mister Storm Wind? You forgot to change. You do know that I can't let you in with that appearance, don't you?"

"Oh, right," Jack said and activate his Orb of Disguise. He changed into his Mage persona.

'Well, this disguise has been found out but I guess it still has its use,' Jack thought. To Janus, he said, "I would like to take on the challenges."

He walked directly to the back of the room while talking, not waiting for Janus' answer. Same as the last time. the rectangular void appeared once he was nearby.

"See you on the other side," Jack said and walked inside.

He came out at the huge plaza with the obelisks. He looked around and as expected, another Janus came and greet him.

"Come to continue the challenge?" This Janus asked.

"Yes, I'm going to rank up to novice today," Jack declared. He then asked Janus with a hopeful feeling, "Any chance for me to loan challenge points? I need 370 points to rank up to Apprentice."

"Haha, you want to challenge stage 50 at your current level?" Janus asked.

"How about we make a bet? You loan me the points I need, if I managed to clear that stage today, I don't need to pay you back. If I fail, I will pay double the amount."

"As interesting as your offer, I'm afraid I must decline. I am not allowed to gamble," Janus said.

"You specifically? Or, all of you?" Jack tried to make sure.

"All of us," Janus said.

"What about a loan? Is it possible?" Jack didn't give up.

"I'm sorry," Janus shook his head. "That complementary ten points I gave before will be the only gift. No more gift and no loan."

Jack shrugged, "Okay then. At least I tried." He then walked over to the obelisk with number 24 floating above and activated the challenge.

Since the difficulty of the stages here was similar to the League of Champions, he had no problem on all stages below stage 50. He used up 627 of his challenge points and cleared stage 42. He was at Novice rank already by then. He had only 2 points left afterward. His knowledge points, on the other hand, were 903 points.

He asked Janus for the exchange list.

Same as the League of Champions, new items were added after he became Novice rank. Only basic and advanced spells though, no elite spells were available yet for this rank. He saw the fire, ice, and lightning enchantment in the list of spells. He heard in the previous guild battle, both Trinity and Selena used

these spells. There were also fire, ice, and lightning resist spells. All of those were only learnable by elementalists though.

Seeing no elite spells, he planned to just save his current knowledge points for the elite spells when he increased to the next rank.

"Get that Float spell," Peniel said.

"Float?" Jack was not paying attention to the spells, he only checked their grades. Now that Peniel mentioned it, he looked at the spell.

"Oh, this must be the spell Master used to float when he fought me?" Jack asked.

"Yes," Peniel replied.

"No flying spell?"

"You will need another spell in addition to this Float spell for flying. Just grab this one first."

'Need another spell? Why do I need two spells for flying?' Jack thought within, but he decided to not ask further since Peniel was ignoring his thought anyway. He paid the required six hundred knowledge points for the Float spell. It was one of the more expensive advanced spells on the list.

Jack received the technique book and learned the spell. The spell required three runes to cast. It only allowed him to float up and down vertically. The maximum height he could travel with this spell was twenty meters. The duration of this spell in its first level was thirty seconds.

He didn't see much use of this spell aside from avoiding melee contact or getting to a high elevation. Considering that he preferred melee combat, there was no point for him to use this spell to flee. So to him, this spell was only useful for traveling. Nevertheless, if having this skill allowed him the chance to fly, he gladly accepted it. After all, who didn't dream to fly?

Jack said goodbye to Janus and left.

There was one more place he wanted to visit before he called it a day. He went to Commander Quintus' tower. Arriving there, he asked the staff for the merit exchange list. Now that he was an Earl, there should also be more services he could use his merit points on.

The staff in charge displayed the list. There was a new section for Earl rank. Like before, there was a page for individual service and another for guild service.

*

Individual list:

- Superior Training Ground = 50 merit / 3 hours
- Use silver mining cave = 50 merit / 3 hours
- Use training cave (level 30-40) = 100 merit / 5 hours
- Use training cave (level 40-50) = 200 merit / 5 hours

*

Guild list:

- Imperial Guards - Hire a squad of thirty level 50 Imperial Knights to be stationed inside Guild Headquarters for one week. The squad cannot be controlled. Will act only if headquarters is breached. Only one squad can be hired at a time = 2500 merit
- Imperial Knight Insignia (Limit: 1) - Convert trained Knight unit to Imperial Knight unit = 5000 merit
- Training Boost (cooldown: 1 week) - Boost training speed of headquarters' soldiers in the next 3 days = 1000 merit
- Building Boost (cooldown 1 week) - Boost building speed of headquarters' structures in the next 3 days = 1500 merit

*

The training cave looked tempting, but their guild had one as well. Also, Jack had promised Jeanny that he would help with the Ice Throne Legacy Dungeon.

After some consideration, Jack forked out 6000 merit points to exchange for the Imperial Knight Insignia and the Training Boost. They had lost a decent amount of trained units in the last battle. As John had pointed out, recruiting new soldiers for replacement should not be a problem, but training them to the appropriate level was. This training boost should help ease the effort.

Finished with the exchanges, he activated Guild Return Scroll and teleported directly to Heavenly Citadel.