

World 71

Chapter 71: Advance Class Choices

After Gilbert left, Jack and Samantha also left the house. Jack let Samantha take the lead. She took him in the route that Gilbert had described to them. On the journey, Jack remained vigilant as he continued to observe his radar along the way.

He was not sure if the Cult's people would still be registered as red, so he just paid attention to all the dots which moved in groups. He tried to avoid them whenever he found such a group.

It took them a long time before they arrived at the business district due to several detours to avoid suspicious groups. It was already midnight by then. Jack decided to take Samantha back to her house first, which was also the bakery shop. The shop was already closed at this time, but Samantha had the key to the shop, so she used it to get inside.

She invited Jack in to stay the night, they had a spare bedroom on the second floor which served as their living space. From Peniel's info, he would need to spend the night at the inn because it was not allowed to camp within the city. And he would need to pay for the inn, hence he gladly took up on Samantha's offer.

They thought that Amy had already fallen asleep at this hour, but when the door bell rang as they opened the door, they heard hasty footsteps coming down from above. Amy soon appeared before them, her hand was holding a broom. This NPC girl was pretty brave, Jack thought, attempting to fight off an intruder using a broom.

When the little girl saw her mother at the door, she burst into tears. She dropped the broom then ran to her mother and hug her. Samantha embraced Amy as she soothed her and told her everything was okay. After she let her child vent her emotion, she then thanked her. She said it was due to her sending such a capable adventurer that she could make it back.

Amy turned to Jack, she grabbed his hands as she passionately expressed her gratitude. Jack tried to tell her it's fine, that he was only completing his duty, as he heard system notification.

"Congratulations! You have completed the quest Finding Amy's Mother, receive rewards of 2 silver coins, 2400 Experience points, and a 30% discount for all purchases at Amy's shop."

When the notification ended, it was soon followed by another notification, informing him that he had reached level 14 of Fighter class. Another one more level and he could become an Advanced class. He was looking forward to it.

The mother and daughter were doing a catch-up after being separated a few days, so he tried to excuse himself. Samantha took him upstairs to the guest room. It was a very small room, only have a single bed and a small desk, but it was clean. Samantha apologized for the lack of facility, but Jack told her he was very happy to be provided with accommodation and was very satisfied with the room. She then left him alone.

Before Jack went to sleep, he took out the Container of Souls. He performed the linking process which was similar to when he linked with Second Soul Remnant. The process took half an hour.

He then took a look again at the technique books.

"So I could learn these skills in these books once I got to the advance class?" He asked Peniel.

Peniel came out of her hiding dimension. She said, "yes for the Life Burning Art skill, but for the Sword of Light skill you will need to make sure to apply for the Warrior class."

"The advanced class has options to choose from?"

"Of course. Do you think there are still only three class variations after you upgrade your class?"

"What advanced classes are there?" Jack asked.

"For Fighter class, once you level up to level 15, you can apply for either Knight class or Warrior class," Peniel answered.

"What's the difference?"

"Knight class is heavy melee class focused more on defense, while Warrior class is leaning more towards offense. You can start wearing heavy armor if you become a knight. If you are a Warrior, the best armor you can wear is still medium armor, but of course, medium armors allow you more mobility compared to the heavy ones."

"So in order for me to be able to learn the Sword of Light from this book, I will need to go for the Warrior path instead of Knight."

"That's correct," Peniel confirmed.

"What's about Magician's advanced classes?"

"For Magician, you can branch out to become a Mage or a Healer. Mage is more damage-dealing oriented, while healer, well, as its name implied."

"I see," Jack pondered about the choices. He was closed towards level 15, so he would have to make a decision soon. If he chose Warrior class to learn the Sword of Light skill, then he thought he might go for the Healer advance class for Magician. That way, he could be a damage dealer melee class while having the Healer class to make him more survivable in battles.

"So, what's your thought?" Peniel asked him.

Jack didn't tell her about his thoughts. Instead, he asked back, "Will Warrior class be better than Knight? What about Mage and Healer? Which class is better, you think?"

"Each has their own specialties," she said. "So no one class should be better than the others. It will depend on your playstyle. But then again, you are an anomaly with dual-class. There has never been anyone like you, you have more options to choose and probably certain combinations can give better results, but I cannot really tell you which one is the better decision."

Jack nodded, with the thought still lingering in his mind, he lied down on the bed. He was soon lost in a deep sleep.

The morning after, Jack decided to go to the Adventurers Association to submit his quest. Before he left, Samantha asked her if he already got a permanent living place in the capital. Jack told her that he planned to stay at the inn for the time being.

"I would have none of it, you come and stay at our place. The guest bedroom is always open to you," Samantha said.

"I don't want to intrude," Jack said.

"You are not. I will be unhappy if I don't see you tonight," she said with a stern face.

Jack thought about it for a moment, this is good as well. In this way, he would save his coins from daily cost for inn's fee.

"All right. I am very grateful for your offer," Jack said.

"That's better," she said. "Now if you need anything from this shop, feel free to browse. We will give you special prices."

"We will also sell you special wares that are not available to the public," Amy added from behind the counter.

"Special wares?" Jack was intrigued.

Amy nodded, "for special wares, you can view it from this list."

A holographic list appeared above the counters. There were four items listed on it.

Cooking Recipe: Baked Cake (Apprentice grade) – 5 silver coins

Cooking Recipe: Milk Bread (Apprentice grade) – 5 silver, 50 copper coins

Cooking Recipe: Homemade Cookies (Expert grade) – 1 gold coin

Cooking Recipe: Mother's Stew (Master grade) – 20 gold coins

All of the special wares were cooking recipes. That made sense considering it was a bakery shop. But it was surprising that such a small shop possessed a Master grade recipe, but the price was a whopping 20 gold coins. He didn't know how long was the saving required for him to get that amount. In fact, none of the recipes listed here could be purchased by him, his bag only had a little over 3 silver coins.

He then noticed another option at the bottom of the list. There was an Invest word written down there.

'I can also invest in a shop?' He asked Peniel in his mind.

"If you have built enough affinity with a shop owner, yes, you will be given the option to invest in their shop," Peniel answered. "It is not easy to get the option to invest. You must have pretty much gained their trust when you completed the quest to save the mother. You should try investing once you have the funds. It was one of the good ways to earn coins."

'Maybe I just start investing now then?'

Peniel laughed, "you won't be able to."

'Why not?'

"Click on it then," Peniel replied.

Jack clicked on the Invest option. Another series of lists appeared.

First upgrade: Medium shop – 50 gold coins

Second upgrade: Large shop – 150 gold coins

Third upgrade: Luxury shop – 500 gold coins

Jack was dumbfounded, the prices were even more ridiculous than the Master Grade recipe. No wonder Peniel laughed at him.

Chapter 72: Submitting The Quest

Before he left Amy's bakery, Jack decided to buy two Bread and a few cooking ingredients from the shop. He still had 6 bottles of medicine in his bag, but it won't hurt to have more restorative items. He spent 48 copper coins for the two bread and 72 copper coins for the ingredients, they were already included in the 30% discount.

His saving dipped to below 3 silver coins. Everything was expensive here, or he simply didn't make coins fast enough, he thought. He would burn through the coins faster if he still needed to rent an inn, luckily he got free accommodation from this bakery. He couldn't imagine what the others were doing about the coin problem.

As he walked towards the Adventurers Association, Peniel urged him to take a slight detour to a shopping street that they had passed before. The Fairy might be bossy, but she had also been quite helpful as a source of information. So Jack complied with her request. When he reached the street, she told him to go to one of the shops lined up along the street.

It was a small shop. The smallest compared to the other shops on the street. Jack looked at the wares and found them to be a blend of multiple different kinds of goods. It looked more like a pawn shop. Jack was wondering why Peniel asked him to come here. The shopkeeper was an old, thin, and bald man, with slanted eyes. He stared at Jack from his counter with a look that said, 'you are going to buy something, boy? Or just here for window shopping?'

'Um, Peniel, what are we looking for in here?' Jack asked Peniel.

"Ask the shopkeeper for lockpicks," Peniel answered him.

He then remembered that she had mentioned about it before when they were still in the Cultist's warehouse. He also remembered it to be one of the auxiliary skills available.

Jack then came to the counter and said to the shopkeeper, "I'm looking for lockpicks, you got them?"

The shopkeeper looked at Jack from head to toe with his slanted eyes, before he took out a set of two pin-sized metal pieces with a curve end. He set it down on the counter. Jack touched the metal pieces and its description appeared.

Normal Lockpick (Lockpick tool)

Used to open locks on doors or chests. Will be broken if fail during lockpicking

Price: 10 copper coins

'10 copper? That's cheap,' Jack said in his mind.

"You are gonna need a lot of it, buy with all the coins you have," Peniel said.

'What? No way! How can I spend all my coins just for this thing?'

"Because they are going to break a lot. Do you think you will successfully pick a lock with that Apprentice grade lockpick skill of yours? If you don't want to spend all the coins, at least buy twenty!"

Twenty, that was 2 silver coins. Jack was unwilling, but Peniel's wisdom had already helped him many times, so he submitted to her will. Gritting his teeth, he took out 2 silver coins. "I want twenty of these!" He said to the shopkeeper.

The Shopkeeper grinned and brought out his order. After completing the transaction, he only had 86 copper coins left. He felt like crying.

He then continued his journey to the Adventurers Association. No more detour this time. He went directly to the Bronze Hall inside the Adventurers Association building. He went to a vacant counter which happened to be the same counter he had received his quest from. The same pretty lady was still manning that counter.

"Good day, sir Storm Wind," the lady greeted him before he had the chance to speak. She remembered him. Jack was impressed by the customer service standard. "What can I do for you today?" She asked.

"I would like to report on the quest I took yesterday," Jack said.

She took out some kind of a square crystal tray. "Please put your badge on it," she said.

Jack did as told. The crystal emitted a soft glow that encapsulated the badge and transmitted a humming sound. After the glow dissipated, the lady said to him, "the quest you have completed is higher than predicted, hence your reward had been increased. And thank you for your service, the authority had been informed about the Cult's activity. They are currently already in the process of organizing city squads to hunt down the Cult members for their crime."

That was efficient, Jack thought. He assumed he would have to explain everything that had happened, or write it down like a report or something. But turned out the badge had already recorded everything and could conveniently send the report to the Association through this crystal tray. As he took back his badge, a sound of notification could be heard.

"Congratulations on completing the quest Investigate the Cult of Phobos. Difficulty after review, is C rank, thus rewards are increased. Receive rewards of 3 silver coins, 3000 Experience points, and 30 Adventurer Points."

Once the notification ended, it was followed immediately by another notification, "congratulations on being the first Outworlder to complete a quest. Receive rewards of 10 silver coins and 50 Adventurer Points."

Jack was amazed. So the quest really was C rank, and the reward had increased by a lot, especially the adventurer points, it was ten times than it was indicated before. Added with the additional rewards for being the first person, suddenly his coin shortage problem was solved.

He also received a ton of Adventurer points from being the first person. If he could take another quest like the one before, he would become a Silver Rank adventurer immediately. But after he thought back to the quest, he decided he was not going to gamble on an unknown quest anymore.

It could be said that he had managed to complete the previous one only due to luck. It was only because of Gilbert that he had managed to escape safely from the cult. And Gilbert was there as part of Amy's mother quest. He didn't know if anything would have gone differently if he had not received Amy's quest.

"Don't forget to report your completion on Amy's quest as well," Peniel reminded him.

Jack did so, he got no other rewards except for 5 points of Adventurer points.

For the next quest, he chose a D rank quest. After all, he only needed another 15 points to get to the Silver rank. It was a quest to escort a merchant to the slum, which awarded 8 adventurer points. If he took another two quests like this, he would hit the 100 points mark in no time. And since the authority had taken action on the Cult, they shouldn't be roaming around the slum anymore, so it should be safe for him to return there.

Before he left the counter, he asked the pretty lady to show him items that could be exchanged with adventurer points. The lady took out the previous crystal tray. She did some tweaking on the tray before a holographic list appeared above it.

There were almost a hundred items on the list. The bottom half was mostly consumable items like potions, foods, ingredients. The top half contains equipment pieces, mostly low-level. Those at the top ten were level 10 to 15 equipment, which was mostly used by Bronze rank adventurers, who mostly consisted of adventurers at these level ranges.

At the top of number 1 in the list however, there were another four items to choose from. It was categorized as Exclusive List items.

Technique Book: Fast Slash – 80 adventurer points

Technique Book: Shift Injury – 100 adventurer points

Technique Book: Body Double – 100 adventurer points

Skill Book (stock: 10) – 30 adventurer points

They were all extremely expensive compared to the other items on the standard list. Especially the Shift Injury and Body Double books, he would be a Silver rank already by the time he could exchange for them.

"What's these exclusive items?" Jack asked the lady at the counter.

"It's a list where if you exchange the items, it will be gone from the list," she answered.

"So if I exchange for it, others cannot get the items anymore?"

"That's correct. That also includes you. You cannot take it twice, unless it has stock, as the Skill book here. Once all ten skill books are taken, it will be gone from the list."

"How good are the skills in this technique books?" He asked again.

"I'm sorry. I don't have that information. You will have to exchange for it to find out," the lady replied.

"The Fast Slash is Fighter class advance skill," another lady replied from empty air. "The Shift Injury is Ranger's advanced skill, so you can forget about that one. The Body Double is Magician's advanced skill."

'What about the Skill Book?' Jack asked Peniel in his mind.

"It's for granting you 1 skill point," Peniel answered, then she added, "I suggest you save your adventurer points and use it to exchange for that Body Double skill."

Chapter 73: A Call For Help

'Oh? What about the Fast Slash?'

"A so-so skill. Not much use actually in my opinion. A level-up Power Strike is still better. The Body Double, on the other hand, is very useful. Not an offense or pure defense skill, but it could be very useful when used right. As for the skill book, you can get them another way. Also, since you have that Containers of Souls, you don't really need to rely on the skill books anymore. It is better to use the adventurer points for other items."

Jack nodded. Afterward, he thanked the lady at the counter and then left the Adventurers Association. He spent the remaining day doing the quest. The quest was suggested for three people of level 10. He figured that since he had two classes and both were higher than level 10, he should be able to solo it. He did manage to complete it, but not as smooth as he had imagined it to be.

During the escort, he and the merchant were ambushed by four thugs in the slum. Under normal circumstances, it would be a piece of cake for him to take care of those four thugs. But he had to keep the merchant safe as well, and he couldn't be in four places at the same time. So he had to go back and forth when dealing with the thugs that came from four directions in order to keep the merchant safe.

He finally managed to kill all four thugs, the merchant received quite some damages though. He lost more than half of his HP bar during the endeavor. Jack was berated the entire way due to that until they reached their destination, then the mission was completed. He still received the same amount of experience and adventurer points as indicated when he took on the quest, but the monetary reward was halved due to unsatisfactory customer.

Since he had killed four thugs, he inspected the Container of Souls in his bag. There were four souls accumulated. Each thug gave him one soul. That meant he had to kill 1000 times just to get one skill point for his basic class's skills. That sounded like a lot of work.

Peniel who sensed his thought, told him, "Higher grade enemies will give you more souls. Those four thugs are only low-level common humans, it is understandable to only get the lowest soul point from them."

With that explanation, Jack felt better. He should be able to collect soul faster once he got stronger and challenged higher grade or higher-level opponents.

He then went and picked another quest the next day. This time it was a simple delivery quest. It provided him with 5 adventurer points. He completed it in half a day. He was on his way back to Adventurers Association to cash in the quest when he received a message from Bowler.

"Brother! Where are you? Flame is in trouble. We are in the Slum district. Please come if possible!"

After reading the message, Jack opened up the Map system. He was in the slum as well, but he did not see any green dot on it. The map covered the size of around four kilometers square, while the slum district was around six-time that size, so it made sense if he couldn't see Bowler and Flame even though they were in the slum as well. He sent a message to Bowler.

"I am in the slum district as well. Where are you exactly?"

Not long after, he received a reply, "thank God! We are in the Western part of the district. Flame is in a bar called Thug's Nest, while I am in a small alleyway facing the front door of the bar. The bar is being surrounded by Weary Wolf gang. Come find me in the alleyway, I'll explain everything."

That annoying gang again, Jack clenched his fist. He needed to teach them a lesson for keeping on looking for trouble with him and his friends.

"Ask him to send you his coordinates, he should be able to see the option under the map window," Peniel informed.

We can do that? Jack thought and looked at his Map interface that was still opened. There was indeed an option at the bottom of the screen to send coordinates. He immediately relayed the instruction to Bowler. Not long after, he received the coordinates.

He then sent Bowler a message, "all right, I'm on my way."

'Those assholes, aren't they afraid of penalty for assaulting another player inside the city?'

"I don't think your friends were assaulted yet. If they have, won't it be too late already by the time you arrived?" Peniel responded to his thought.

'Oh? Then what are they doing to Bowler and Flame?' Jack asked her.

"I have my guess, but it's better if you find out about the situation first. The noisy guy said he will explain once you arrive, didn't he?"

'You are right. All right, let's head there then.'

He then started walking with hastened pace. The place Bowler described was further away, it was near the outer city wall before Jack saw green dots at the edge of his Map. Once he found the dots, it was much easier. He immediately headed in the direction indicated by the Map.

As Jack came near, he saw many people were standing around a building. That must be the bar called Thug's Nest. From his radar he saw those people as blue dots, meaning they are Outworlders like him, not the native NPC. He spotted two people he recognized, Boulder and Flowing Fox. So, she really came back to life after dying in the Tutorial period.

Jack used his God-eye monocle to scan her, she was level 1. As Honuren had said, those who died in the Tutorial period lost all their levels upon coming back to life. And it seemed that she had not made any effort to recover her level these past three days. She was yelling towards the bar, Jack couldn't make out what she said as she was still a distance away.

He then looked over at an alleyway that was facing the bar's front entrance, and walked there. The players that were surrounding the bar were focused on the building, so they didn't notice him walking to a nearby alleyway. When he got near, he heard a low whistle.

He looked in that direction and saw Bowler waved for him to come over. He was hiding behind a house while he peeked at the group around the bar. When Jack came near, Bowler pulled him to the back to avoid the Weary Wolf people from noticing them.

"Flame was inside?" Jack asked him.

Bowler nodded with an anxious expression.

"What happened exactly?" Jack asked him again.

"We were going on a quest together," Bowler answered. "After we completed our objective, we came to that bar which we saw during our quest. It sold some beverages that actually taste quite good. Flame was planning to spend more time in the bar while I decided to go back to the Association to submit our quest. When I came out, that's when the Gang appeared. They tried to block me but I was already in an open area, so I ran from them. They didn't dare to throw an attack on me so they let me go, but they know Flame is still inside so they targeted her instead."

"So what are they doing exactly?" Jack asked as he peeked out to the gang, "they just stand there all this time?"

"They are waiting for Flame to lose her patience," Bowler replied.

"What do you mean?"

"I made some friends in the White Scarfs who I still have some contacts with. He told me that they had researched about this penalty. Apparently, if you attack someone, you will be marked with a criminal imprint. If such a person bumped into a city guard, they will be captured and put into prison for ten days. But there is actually a way to attack without the risk of being marked."

"How?"

"By luring your enemy to attack first. In this way, you are only considered as self-defense. Hence, are not subject to the penalty." Bowler said.

Jack remembered Peniel had mentioned this as well. He had started to get the picture.

"So they were just standing there to keep Flame from leaving the bar, with Fox throwing insults in the middle, and just wait until she got fed up and decided to attack them. That's when they will take action?"

Bowler nodded, "that is my guess. And from the look of it, that seemed most likely to be the case. I've been sending messages to Flame asking her to stay cool, but from her last reply, she seemed to be closed to snapping point."

Jack pondered about the situation. If it was like this, there was nothing he could do as well. He could not go and attack them to allow Flame to break free, they will just get what they want as well in the end. He would get a criminal imprint and got ganged up by them. Even if he could defeat them all, he would lose his freedom from going around the city, as he would be captured when he met a guard.

"So it was as I had guessed," he suddenly heard Peniel's voice.

Chapter 74: Taking Advantage Of The Loophole

'So you have guessed about this?' Jack said to her in his mind.

"Yes, this is what all newbies would do. Stupid fools they are," Peniel said.

'Why? I thought it was quite an ingenious plan. We can either waste time testing whose patience is longer or resolved to get the criminal imprint.'

"Heh, that is because you are also ignorant like them," Peniel said with a mocking tone.

'Do you mean you have a way out for Flame?' Jack asked.

"Of course! Asked her to keep her cool for a little longer. She will soon be freed."

'You sound pretty confident.'

"Just shut up and do as I say."

Jack had gotten used to her bossy tone so he wasn't bothered by it. He sent Flame a message as Peniel told him to.

He got her reply, "really? I was just about to have enough of that bitch's chattering and was just about to rush out to dice her. At least I will take her down with me."

Jack sent another message assuring her, telling her to absolutely stay still for a little longer.

'Now what?' He asked Peniel.

"Now we go for a walk," she answered.

'Huh?'

"Just do as I say. Tell that noisy friend of yours to keep the situation as it is now, we will be back soon."

Though he was puzzled, Jack still conveyed Peniel's message over to Bowler. As was expected, Bowler threw him abounding questions about what he was going to do. Since Jack himself didn't know, he just

tried to convince the anxious fellow that he would soon return with a solution, and telling him to stay put until he was back.

Bowler had no choice but to see Jack went off. He glanced back at the Weary Wolf crowd in front of Thug's Nest bar and helplessly waited.

An hour passed, still no sign of Jack. The uneasy Bowler had sent three messages to Jack, one message got a reply asking him to be patient and not to worry. The second message got the same reply. The third one didn't get any reply. He didn't know if Jack didn't reply because he was busy or because he simply couldn't stand his nagging.

Bowler's hands were itching to send another message but he forced himself not to. Instead, he sent another message to Flame. He had also sent numerous messages to her in the span of the hour. Flame, on the other hand, was pretty responsive. But most of her replies involved messages about how she was going to tear the bitching wench outside who just couldn't stop running her mouth.

Bowler peeked out, the woman was indeed still throwing insult and provocations to Flame inside the bar. Bowler wondered how the heck did she had the stamina for it. She had been shouting non-stop for hours. He loved to talk as well, but even he had to admit that he was impressed by the woman's tenacity. He imagined that she might be a politician or a crowd speaker in the real life.

As he continued to wait, he received another reply from Flame, "I'm going out."

What? Shit! Bowler exclaimed in his heart. He peeked out and indeed saw Flame appeared at the Bar's door. The Weary Wolf crowd who was relaxed due to being bored for having no action all this time, immediately tensed up. They got into formation, allowing no gap to exist between them as to not allow Flame to slip through their blockage. Bowler sneaked closer to the group, he found a large crate nearby and hid behind it.

Fox who had been babbling non-stop, when she saw Flame coming out, became silent instead. Now that her prey had taken the bait, she was now panting and trying to catch her breath.

"Why are you stopping now?" Flame said to Fox. "Weren't you flapping your mouth all this time? Why have you become quiet once I show myself? Aren't you great with all that underlings around you? What are you afraid of?"

"Who said I am afraid, you bitch!" Fox was shrieking with a high pitch sound, she was still panting. Bowler who heard it from his hiding place couldn't help but feel somewhat pitiful about the woman.

"Come out and face us if you dare, bitch! Why only stay turtling inside?" Fox added.

"I've already come out, you wench. Are you blind or mentally retarded?" Flame was not about to be defeated. "If you dare, attack me yourself! You are already a pitiful level 1. Why don't you just attack me?"

"You think I don't dare!?" Fox was just about to lunge forward but she was held by Boulder. She looked at him angrily, he slightly shook his head.

Ah, it's a pity, Bowler thought. If Fox had attacked, then she would implicate all the other Weary Wolf gang, as they were in a party. So all of them would be considered to have made the first strike and

marked with criminal imprint. At the same time, he could start attacking without afraid of penalty as he was still in a party with Flame. Although they were still most likely getting killed due to being outnumbered, there was also a small chance of making an escape in the chaos.

Fox seemed to also have realized it, so she calmed down and wore back her smug expression.

"You think you can trick me?" She said with a mocking laugh. "Spout all the nonsense you want! We will just stand here and wait. We can take turns with our members, half will go do their own things, another half will stay here. So we can stay here indefinitely! Let's see how long you can stay inside? Maybe in a few days, I will come back higher level than you, and you will still be here wasting your time inside, hahaha!"

She cackled maniacally. Bowler's hair was standing on its end hearing that eerie laugh. Damn it, he thought, how could her gang members stand being with her? It was like having a lunatic as a friend. Flame was also quiet. Her provocation had failed. She couldn't stand the sight of that woman laughing at her. She gripped her dagger tightly.

"Don't fall to her provocation!" Bowler sent her a short message.

"Oh? Can't stand it now? Why don't you attack me then? As you said, I'm only level 1. I bet you can kill me with one strike. Come on, I won't evade. I will stand here and let you do it," Fox continued her verbal harassment.

Flame gritted her teeth. She was prepared to lunge at Fox as she sent a final message to Bowler, "argh..! Can't stand her! It's better to just end this and start over than wasting time here!"

"Wait! Wait!" Bowler knew he couldn't prevent her from making a move any more by just sending messages, so he jumped out yelling from his hiding space. "Don't do anything reckless! You would just fall to their scheme!"

The Weary Wolf gang turned to Bowler who had revealed himself. Fox grinned, "We thought you have run already, so you are still lingering around here. Can't stand to leave this bitch behind? How touching! No worry, you will be next. After that, we will look for that other friend of yours. We will make sure the three of you will forever be level 1."

Her grin then turned savage, "we will make sure you regret the day you dare to cross us! Cross me!!"

"Like hell we are! Why don't you take a mirror and look at that ugly self of yours, you are the one that had gone back to level 1 because of crossing us!" Bowler retorted. "You think this petty trick of yours is awesome? You are just a bully that takes advantage of the loophole in the system. Why those lackeys beside you can stand a loser like you ordering them around like some wimpy puppies who wag their tails at your bidding is beyond my understanding. But don't think for a second that a group of losers like you can get away with this. Wait until my brother comes, he will send you lots packing with your tails between your legs!"

"Why you...!" Fox's face turned dark. She would never be able to win a verbal battle against Bowler. Losing his patience, she called her buddy to attack, "get him!"

"Hold!" Boulder, however, was not taking the bait. "Don't fall for his provocation! Maintain formation."

Flame who saw Fox losing her patience felt slightly better, she held herself back. She realized she was being rash, but she was still restless. It was not her style to just wait and do nothing. Until how long would she have to just stay here and suffer this humiliation? It was better to just get over it now.

Chapter 75: Utilizing The System

"Hey! Why are you so quiet now?" Bowler continued his taunt. "Come and get me! All you chickenshits only there to go against one woman? There is no lowlife who is more lowlife than you lots!"

"Asshole! You want to die!"

"Annoying little prick!"

Several of the gang members were getting restless as well.

Boulder was more clearheaded. "Ignore him!" He said. "There is nothing that he can do aside from yapping his mouth. His turn will come soon. Let him enjoy his own talking a bit longer."

The gang cooled down after Boulder's words.

Bowler sent a few more insults, but it didn't seem to have any effect anymore. The gang members were not even looking at him any longer. Fox had ignored him altogether and went back to provoke Flame. He could see Flame was getting restless again. He didn't think he could hold her back any longer."

"Bro..! Where are you?!" Bowler sent a message again to Jack in his panic.

"I am here!" He got a reply, but not in the form of a message. Jack's sound reverberated in the neighborhood. Fox who was passionately throwing insults at Flame paused and looked over to where Jack's voice was heard from.

The place was brightly lit as it was still noon, but the slum road itself had much dirt. A lot of wind was blowing at this time, lifting the dust up from the road and covered the distance. Jack came out from a cloud of dust obscuring the street, walking calmly towards them.

Fox laughed when she saw Jack trying to act cool like some kind of a knight in shining armor. She mocked him at once, "haha, here comes the savior, eh? What can you do? Even if you are very strong, there is not much use if you can't attack us! Or do you want to receive criminal imprint and deal with the guards of the city?"

"Guards of the city?" Jack lifted his brow, "do you mean guards like them?"

Jack pointed to behind him as several shadows were seen from inside the dust cloud. Not long after a squad of guards in full armor appeared. They were following behind Jack as he continued to walk towards the Weary Wolf gang. The gang members were dumbfounded, what's going on? Why are the guards coming here, why are they following a player?

Boulder calmed everyone down, "the guards were simply having a round. He was just using the coincidence to fool us. Stay in your formation."

Hearing their leader's explanation, everyone thought it made sense. Some even threw a mocking grin to Jack as he approached. One of them scoffed, "you think you can trick us? Your child's play is laughable!" They then laughed as they made fun and pointed at Jack with disdain.

Jack was looking at them calmly like he was witnessing a bunch of fools making fun of themselves. He shook his head as one of the guards came over to him. "Are they the ones causing trouble?" He asked.

"Yes, sir, they are blocking the road preventing my friend from passing through," Jack said to the guard.

When the Weary Wolf gang heard their conversations, their laughter died down. Some who were further away couldn't hear so they continued laughing but soon they stopped in confusion as they saw their other friends' faces turned grim.

The guard who spoke with Jack waved to the other guards. He seemed to be their squad leader. The guard which numbered around twenty started to surround the Weary Wolf gang people. The squad leader guard came towards the Weary Wolf people. Boulder immediately came out to talk to him, "sir guard, what's wrong? We haven't done anything wrong, we didn't attack anyone."

The squad leader guard looked at him and said sternly, "move aside!"

Boulder was stunned, but he didn't dare to disobey. He and his people immediately make way for the guard, who passed through and came to Fierce Flame who was also standing in confusion.

"Miss," the guard greeted her, then asked, "I was given a report that you were being harassed and denied passage out from this place, is that true?"

Flame was unsure for a moment but she immediately replied, "yes, they had been blocking my way for hours already."

The guard nodded, he then called a few NPCs from inside the bar and asked them a few questions as well. Bowler who had been making his way to Jack arrived by his side and asked, "this your doing, bro?"

"Yep," Jack answered.

"What did you do?"

"They thought they could take advantage of the system, but they don't really get the whole picture of the rules yet. The system already had a failsafe against this kind of thing. All we have to do is just find a guard and report it to them. They will come and sort things out."

Bowler's face was brightening, "so we can do like that? Damn, if I have known, I would have gone searching for a guard once this started."

Jack nodded, "you shouldn't be too stuck to the idea that this is a game, despite many of the rules following the game system. This place is much like real life where there can be many solutions to a problem."

"Smart ass, I remember you were also confused as to what to do before I told you about this," Peniel sound was heard beside him.

'Can you please let me have my moment here?' Jack retorted.

The squad leader guard had finished asking the NPCs who had witnessed the ordeal. They concurred with the report. He then gave the order to his squad, "these Outworlders had violated the law of free passage on public property. They are hindering and creating disorder. Take them all back to the station! Anyone who dares to resist will be marked as criminal and are entitled to be put down where they stand!"

All of the Weary Wolf gang members' faces turned pale. They turned to Boulder and Fox, asking what they should do. The duo was also shocked, they didn't expect things would turn out this way. Should they run? Should they fight back?

Although they outnumbered the guards, the guards were all level 50. One hit from them would be enough to send them to their graves, and they would be marked as criminals, which meant they would lose their freedom in the city. They had to go outside the city wall or stay hidden else they were captured and imprisoned. But if they do nothing now, would they get imprisoned?

They were not sure, the research they had learned and heard from were just when players got attacked by other players. They didn't know what was the penalty for obstructing passage in public property.

After making some fast considerations in his mind, Boulder finally decided to not risk fighting the guards. He told his members, "we have no choice. Do not resist the guards."

"Wise move," Jack said to him with a smile.

The gang leader glared at him with hate but didn't say anything.

After being frustrated for quite some time, Flame didn't let go of the chance to throw some salt into the wound as well. She said to Fox, "Have a nice stay in the prison. When you come out, let's do this again so we can send you back to prison again where you belong."

Fox was fuming with rage, she hissed at Flame, "don't you think you have won, you stupid bitch! This is not over! Just you wait, I'm gonna make you regret one of these days!"

"I will be waiting," Flame retorted with a mocking grin as the gang was being herded away by the guards.

Once they were gone, Flame rejoined Jack and Bowler.

"Thank you," she said to Jack. "I don't know if I would have stayed my hands any longer if you hadn't come with those guards. How do you know that we can make a report and ask for help from the guard?"

"Yeah," Bowler agreed as he looked at Jack.

"Nothing special," Jack replied. "I just considered this as if back in real life. What we should do when encountering such a problem. We will go to the police, no?"

Bowler threw him a thumb up. "You are the man!" He said.

"Do you know how long the guards will detain them?" Flame asked.

"Two days. If they repeat the offense again, it will be longer the next time." Jack replied with the information that he had gotten from Peniel before.

"And how do you know that?" Flame asked again.

"Um... The guard told me. Say, are you guys on the way to submit your quest?" Jack asked to divert the topic.

The two of them nodded.

"Me too," Jack said. "Let's go to the Association together. How about we do the next quest together?"

Chapter 76: Picking Up A Group Quest

Bowler and Flame were excited by the idea and immediately agreed. The three of them then headed back to the Adventurers Association to hand over their respective quests. The crowd in the Bronze Hall was more lively than before. When Jack checked his radar, he was amazed to see many among them were blue dots, which meant that they were players like him.

The others sure were fast to find out about this place. He had to work faster if he was to keep his lead. Jack went to an unoccupied counter while Bowler and Flame went to another one. From the delivery quest, he received 1 silver coin, a few experience points, and 4 Adventurer Points. He was now only 3 points away from becoming Silver rank and had enough points to buy that Body Double Technique Book. He heard a notification sound after receiving the reward.

"Congratulations, you have reached level 14 for your Magician class."

Great, now both his classes were only 1 level away from being able to apply for the Advanced class! Jack couldn't wait to increase his level.

He then went to one of the benches at the center of the hall while waiting for Bowler and Flame. He looked at the list of quests available on the Quest board.

'Peniel,' he called in his mind. 'If we take a quest together with other people, will the rewards be divided?'

"No," she answered. "All participants will receive the same rewards as indicated in the reward section. But there is a limit to how many people that can take the same quest. The participant limit is the same as the number indicated by the recommended section."

'Oh, when I completed the escort quest that recommended three people, I didn't receive anything extra. So that means it is better to just do the quest with the recommended number of people, since doing it solo doesn't grant any extra rewards?'

"That is correct," Peniel replied.

'Why didn't you tell me this when I took that escort job?'

"You looked so confident. What's wrong with doing it solo if you can complete it as easily with other people?"

Jack shook his head helplessly. This guide of his gave him information based on mood. Sometimes she let him know, another time she withheld the information. He didn't think further on the issue as he

continued to read the quest lists. By the time Bowler and Flame approached, he had found a quest that he thought was suitable. He pointed at the quest for the two of them.

"You two interested to do that quest?" He asked.

Pick a blue magecrest flower for an apothecary at the foot of Siren Hill

Difficulty: D (recommended: Party of 4, level 12)

Rewards: 3 silver coins, 2000 Experience points, 14 Adventurer Points

It was a quest that required them to go out from the city. He figured they would have to leave the city at one point, might as well do it now for a quest while they were together. Furthermore, this quest gave out the highest Adventurer Points that he could find among the D rank quests on the Quest board.

Flame and Bowler read the descriptions on the quest.

"It said party of four, we are going to do it just with us three?" Bowler asked.

"I don't think that will be a problem," Jack replied.

"Well, considering your strength, I supposed we can count you as more than 1 person," Bowler said.

"Ok, I have no objection. What about you, Flame?"

"I am game with it," she said.

"It's decided then." After the two of them agreed, Jack formed a party with them and then took them to the counter. They made the necessary procedures to take the quest. After everything was finished, they went out from the Adventurers Association building.

"When should we start?" Bowler asked.

"Why wait? Let's start now," Jack replied.

"It's past noon already, by the time we reached the hill, it would be closed to evening. We will need to spend the night outside." Bowler said. They had asked the counter lady inside the Adventurers Association for the direction to Siren Hill. The counter lady had informed them that it was a couple of miles West from the capital.

"What's wrong with that?" Jack said. "We will have to spend the night in the wilderness sooner or later. Might as well get the experience now when we are together. Do you have a tent already? I saw a place that sells it among the shops not far from here."

"I know the place, I bought one already from there," Bowler said.

"I don't have one," Flame said.

"Let's have you buy one first then," Jack said. "What about restorative items, do you guys still have stock?"

Both of them nodded.

"Ok, then let's go buy you a tent," Jack said. They then proceeded towards the mentioned shop.

While Flame was purchasing a tent, Jack heard Peniel's voice, "if you mean to head outside the city wall, you better go to that opposite shop as well. Purchase a couple of antidotes, just in case. You never know if you encounter poisonous beasts in the wilderness."

Jack saw the wisdom in her words, so after Flame completed her transactions, he took them both to the shop Peniel mentioned. Each of them proceeded to buy three antidotes, costing 30 coppers each. They had gotten quite an amount of coins from continuously doing quests, so they could afford it. Jack also saw a material shop next door, so he proceeded to buy 10 Iron ores which cost 20 copper coins each.

After settling the shopping matters, the three of them went towards the Western gate of the city. There were three gates that lead out of the capital, East, North, and West. When they came the first time, they had entered the capital from the North gate. the South side of the capital was an untraversable mountain, creating a natural barrier from invasion.

Same as the North Gate, the Western Gate also had some sentries keeping guard over it. The gate itself was opened as citizens and adventurers freely came in and out. The guards were only there to keep watch on monsters who might roam too near to the capital.

The three of them went out the gate and proceeded West towards the direction of the hill. They didn't see any beasts or monsters even after traveling for half an hour. It felt more like a walk in the countryside than a journey through hostile wilderness.

However, Bowler and Flame kept their vigilant. They had heard from Honuren, the Demigod who presided over their passage into this world, that if they died outside of the safe zone of a city or town, they would lose all their possessions and had their levels revert back to level 1. Jack, on the other hand, was pretty leisurely. He had his radar to inform him if any beasts or monsters came near.

After walking a little longer, they finally see a hill shape scenery not far off.

"That must be the Siren Hill," Bowler commented after seeing the hill.

"It should be," Jack agreed. "We should still have an hour of sunlight upon reaching there. Let's search for the flower while it's still bright. When the sun sets, we will look for a place to camp."

With that plan in mind, they hastened their footsteps, so they could reach the hill faster and thus had more time to look for the flower. If everything went smoothly, they might even start heading back to the capital by tonight, saving them from spending a night outside.

Bored from the monotonous journey, Bowler opened up his quest window again, looking at a picture of the flower they were looking for. The quest provided them with a picture once they accepted the quest, so enabling them to look for the correct flower. It was a small common flower with six blue petals, the stem had some tiny thorns around it. There was nothing special looking at the picture. If not for the quest, maybe they wouldn't even notice if they passed this flower on the field.

"Hold it!" Jack suddenly told the two of them.

"What's wrong?" Bowler asked.

Jack looked at the distance. He took out his sword and told the two, "get ready, something is coming towards here."

Chapter 77: Pack Of Silver Wolves

Bowler and Flame had already experienced Jack's ability to sense their surroundings, so they didn't doubt his words. They pulled out their weapons and faced the direction that Jack was staring at.

In his radar, Jack saw six red dots coming at high speed. The speed was much faster than any other monsters he had faced during the Tutorial Period. Meaning the ones that came were new monster which he had not encountered before.

As the six red dots approached, the three of them could see six silver figures in the distance. They were running with fast speed on four legs. As they got nearer, they could identify the monsters. They had shapes that were similar to a beast in their real world, they were wolves. Their fur shined with silver color, there were two sideburns extending from the side of their eyes to the tip of their tails. Their sizes were slightly larger than the wolves of their real world. Their running speed was extremely fast, they were just a speck of silver dust before, but in a short moment, they had come dangerously close.

Jack scanned them when they came into view.

Silver Wolf (Basic monster, Beast)

Level: 10

HP: 950

Level 10, wasn't too strong, Jack thought.

"Same strategy! I will engage them, Bowler sent them range attacks, Flame protect Bowler!" Jack yelled out the tactic as he ran forward to engage the wolves.

Bowler started the fight by casting Energy Bolts. Four bolts sped out towards the wolves. They tried to evade by spreading and moving away from the bolts' trajectory, but the bolts followed their movement. Each bolt hit one of the wolves, delivering 28 to 30 damages.

This shouldn't be too difficult, Jack thought as he reached one of the wolves. He slashed downward to cleave the beast's head. Contrary to his expectation, his sword only hit empty air. The wolf had nimbly jumped to the side. While he was stunned by the wolf agile dodge, his radar beeped as he saw a red dot coming at him from behind.

He immediately sidestepped, narrowly escaping a wolf who clawed at his back. But before he knew it, he felt pain in his thigh. He looked down and saw the wolf that had evaded his slash was now biting at his leg. He lifted his sword to strike it, but it hurriedly let go and moved away.

Damn! They were quick and cunning! Jack cursed in his mind.

The other four wolves went towards Flame and Bowler, ignoring Jack. Two of them jumped at Flame, while the other two separated and came towards Bowler from his front and back. They were forcing the three people to fight independently while pressuring them with their speed and numbers.

Bowler cast Magic Bullet, but since it didn't have tracking ability, the wolf easily dodged it. Bowler followed up with a couple of standard range attacks, but the wolf just jumped left and right, none of the

attacks hit. While he was dealing with the wolf in front, the wolf behind him clawed at his back and then bite his neck. The neck bite had caused a critical, he received 10 and 28 damages.

Flame was doing much better, she rolled away from the wolves' jump attacks. Then dashed back to make a counter-attack, but the wolves separated and attacked simultaneously from two sides. Flame stepped towards the wolf at his right, using her speed to cope with the wolf's fast movement, and sent a Swift Stab into the wolf's abdomen which scored a 36 damage. But she soon found herself getting jumped at by the second wolf. She couldn't dodge the attack so she reflexively lifted his left arm to defend. The wolf bit into the arm, causing 15 damage.

The wolves' damages were low, but their speed was fast, making them very hard to be hit. Especially for Bowler who had slow speed and no melee capability, he couldn't do anything but be the wolves' biting bag.

As Jack analyzed the situation, he sent Bowler a message, "Forget about attacking! Use Magic Shield and focus on defending. We will come to your aid once we deal with the ones on our sides!"

He himself decided to forgo technique and just engaged them with brute force. This situation was similar to the time when he fought with Red Death. If he had difficulty matching their nimble moves, he would just trade blows with them. He slashed at them each time they clawed or bit at him. The beasts' attack only caused him 8 to 14 damages, while his normal attack took out a chunk of over 60 damage from their HP bar. When he used Power Strike and Swing, the wolves lost even more damage.

With this method, when Jack lost around a quarter of his HP, he had managed to kill the first wolf, with the second one at critical health. Jack glanced at Bowler, even when he just defended with Magic Shield, the guy still lost half of his HP. Jack picked up the pace and charged at the second wolf. The wolf seemed to know itself was in danger, it ran away. Jack was not going to waste time chasing the wolf around. Its running speed was faster than him, he won't be able to chase it. So he turned around and ran towards Bowler.

The wolves that were harassing Bowler didn't seem to be aware of Jack's approach. Jack took advantage of this and sent Power Strike to one of the beast's back. It scored a critical and caused a huge 256 damages. The wolf was also sent flying. He then came to Bowler's side and helped him deal with the other wolf.

"Sent your Energy Bolts to that wolf who is closed to death!" Jack said to Bowler as he pointed at the wolf with critical health who had avoided him. Bowler canceled his Magic Shield and followed Jack's order. The wolf with critical HP tried to run around to dodge the Energy Bolts, but the four bolts all tracked his movement. In the end, it was blasted to death by Bowler's Energy Bolts.

With him freed from the Wolves' harassment, Bowler could finally go on the offensive again. He put some distance away as Jack kept the two wolves which originally were fighting with him, and then started sending range attacks whenever he got the chance.

With the battle rhythm back in their control, it didn't take long before the remaining four wolves were defeated.

When the fight ended, Flame only had a third of his HP remaining. She took out one wolf by herself and killed the other one with Bowler's assistance. Jack's HP was still more than half. When Flame and Bowler

noticed his HP bar, they couldn't help but ask, "exactly how much is your HP? We saw you get bitten quite a lot, but why is your bar is still so full?"

Jack laughed it off, "I ate some restoration potions during the fight. What, you didn't see it?"

They were pretty sure he didn't do such a thing, but then again, they were focusing on the fight, so they might have missed it. They didn't pursue the issue further. They took out their own restorative items and started consuming them to restore the health they had lost.

Jack took a peek at the Container of Souls and found out that the collected souls now numbered 10. The addition was the same number as the wolves they killed, assuming that one wolf gave out 1 soul. He asked Peniel, "the container can collect soul even if it is not me that deal the killing blow?"

"Yes. The souls will be automatically collected as long as it was within a set distance, no matter how it dies," Peniel answered.

That was good news, Jack thought. At first, he thought he would need to personally do the killing in order to be able to collect souls. That would be troublesome when he was fighting in a team. Trying to land all the killing blow in a team fight might end up ruining the team's coordination.

The group noticed that each of the wolves had dropped something. They picked it up.

Wolf's fur (Junk trophy)

Can be sold or exchanged for some coins.

It was junk? That meant this thing had no usage but to be sold or threw away. But there was also a trophy in the indication, what does it mean? Jack asked Peniel but she said she would explain when they were back in the city. Again with the withholding of information, but Jack didn't force her to answer. He divided the six furs between the three of them, so each person got two Wolf's fur.

Afterward, they continued on their journey. The battle had made them waste some time. The sun was pretty low on the horizon already.

Chapter 78: You Looking For This Flower?

They encountered another two packs of wolves before they reached the foot of Siren Hill. But since they were now more familiar with how the wolves fight, they were not as flustered as the first time anymore. There were also fewer wolves in that subsequent packs. One had only four, the other had five. They collected another nine Wolf's Fur from those two packs, and divided three for each of them.

During the journey, after witnessing Fierce Flame's fighting style again, Jack asked Peniel in his mind, 'Peniel, I am familiar with Fighter and Magician class' skills, but I never really learn about the ranger class' skills. I have my presumption after seeing the way several rangers fought, but I would like to know for sure. Can you describe for me their skills?'

"Heh, took you quite a while to ask," Peniel replied in disdain. "All right, let me educate you. The ranger class had a single target offensive skill called Swift Stab that they received when they started the class, much like your Power Strike. It deals only 120% damage at level 1, but stab speed is increased to 200%, it has 5 seconds cooldown. At level 2, Ranger receives Roll skill, it increases the defense by 100% during

the roll, it has 10 seconds cooldown. Of course, they can still do their own roll during the cooldown, the difference is it's a manual roll, they won't receive the bonus defense."

"At level 5, they got Throw Weapon skill, it deals 150% damage with a range of 8 meters, and has 30 seconds cooldown. Do not expect the Rangers that performed this skill to be weaponless after the throw. The weapon thrown using this skill will be automatically returned to the Ranger's hand. And the last skill a Ranger in basic class will receive at level 10 is Silent Step skill, it reduces footsteps sound when they move. Useless during a fight, but very useful for initiating a fight."

Jack nodded. Some of the skills were more or less as he had presumed, but knowing the details of those skills was helpful. With this knowledge, it would be more effective for him if he had to fight another ranger again, and he would also be more efficient when cooperating with one.

When they reached the foot of Siren Hill, the sun was about to set. It's probably not more than half an hour until they lost the sunlight. The hill was rather large, they were not sure that the area they arrived in would be the place where they would find the flower, but there were indeed some patches of field with grasses and flowers scattered around the places. Since he didn't see any red dots on his radar, Jack recommended they spread out between the fields to save time in searching.

Jack took the middle section while Bowler and Flame went to his left and right, he told them not to wander too far. In this way, he could still notice if some beasts came to ambush them. Jack opened up his Quest window again to see the image of the flower, and then compared it with the flowers he saw around the field. Some look similar, but not the right color. Most of the colors of the flowers in the field were white and red, no blue ones.

After searching without result, they moved to another part of the foothill. When the last ray of sunlight disappeared among the mountain range in the West, they still haven't found the flower. The visibility was low, so it would not be effective for them to keep searching.

"Let's find a place to spend the night and look again in the morning," Jack said.

The other two agreed and they climbed a little bit up the hill. They found a flat clearing that allowed good visibility to their surroundings, and decided to set up their camp at that place. The three tents were easily built as they were system-based items. They then collected dry woods and dry leaves and made a bonfire. Jack took out his cooking tools and made dinner for them.

As he had been cooking a lot since back in the Tutorial Period, he heard a sound of notification congratulating him for becoming Intermediate Apprentice Cook. He then took out his blacksmith tool and 3 iron ores that he had bought before in the city, and made three whetstones. Because Jack didn't use his blacksmith job often, it still needed many proficiency points before he upgraded to Intermediate Apprentice rank. He gave to Flame and Bowler each one whetstone.

During Jack's cooking and blacksmithing, Bowler also took out his Alchemist tools and created some basic healing potions. He gave Jack and Flame each two of the potions.

"I found a shop that sells the ingredients," Bowler said, "so it's easy for me to concoct the potion now. Thought the ingredients were rather expensive."

Jack inspected the potion.

Basic Healing potion (Normal consumable)

Recover 200 HP instantly

cooldown: 3 minutes

The potion had a cooldown? That meant he couldn't abuse by drinking the potions continuously to keep his HP up. But the instantly recovering effect was quite good, compared to restorative foods like bread and medicine which restore the HP gradually.

Flame was the only one out of them three who didn't practice the auxiliary jobs. She thought it was a waste of time, it is better for her to focus on honing her fighting skills and leveling up.

After they finished their meals and cleaned up. They divided the task to keep watch, Bowler will go first, Jack second, and the last would be Flame. As Jack was about to enter his tent, he paused. There were three blue dots heading towards their place.

Jack warned Bowler and Flame and then stood facing the direction where the blue dots would come from. Was it Weary Wolf gang again coming to look for trouble? But they should have been locked up by the guards for two days. Or was it the Death Associates people? They had been keeping quiet for a while now, Jack wondered if they had decided to take action now?

Two of the three blue dots stopped some distance away, a lone blue dot proceeded towards their place. It stopped not far from them. From its position, Jack calculated it to be behind a big boulder around ten meters away. He could roughly see a shadow poking out from the boulder. The person was peeking at them.

It might have surprised the peeper to see that the people he was peeking at were all aware of his existence and were looking directly to where he was at. But the fellow seemed to be able to regain his calm pretty swiftly as he came out from the boulder and greeted them.

"Good evening, gentlemen..." When he noticed Fierce Flame, he immediately added, "... and lady. Fancy meeting you out here."

Jack scanned him using his monocle

Saint John (Magician, level 12)

HP: 220/220

Jack was speechless looking at the name. Who the heck was boastful enough to call himself a Saint?

"I am John," the stranger introduced himself. Jack was not sure if John was his real-world name or he was referring to his alias of Saint John. He continued, "seeing that you all come all the way here, you lots must be pretty capable players. And I happen to be in need of assistance from capable players. Would you be willing to help me as a favor?"

"Not interested," Jack answered without hesitation. He was not in the habit of involving himself with a stranger's affair. An NPC affair might lead you to quests, but another player's affair most of the time only brought you trouble, this was Jack's wisdom after playing VR games for a long period.

"Don't be too hasty to reject, please," John said as if expecting their refusal.

He then brought out something from his bag. It was a tiny flower with six blue petals. Jack and the others had a recollection to have seen the flower somewhere. Wait! Wasn't that the flower they came all this way for?

"I assume you are on a quest looking for this flower?" John asked with a grin.

Chapter 79: Forced To Cooperate

"Where do you find that flower?!" Bowler exclaimed.

"Oh, just some part around here," John answered, "but don't bother to go searching. You won't find the same flower like this. There is only one in the entire area."

"And how do you know that?" Jack asked.

"Because I have done the same quest from Adventurers Association that asked for this flower two days ago. I can only find one after going around the entire foot of this hill searching for it. I came back here again for another of the Association's quest yesterday, and found the flower at the same spot again. I guess that after I submit the quest, the flower respawned. I then pick it up just due to curiosity, but it didn't respawn even after one day had passed. I assume that as long as I hold this flower, it won't respawn."

"Then you know we need that flower for our quest. please give it to us, will you?" Bowler asked in a friendly tone.

"No. I won't give it to you," John replied calmly. "Not unless you do me a favor."

"Are you blackmailing us!?" Bowler couldn't stay calm anymore.

"Oh, Indeed I am," John replied without a hint of guilt.

"You really have balls to pull this stunt! Can't you see that you are alone while there are three of us? What stop us from just killing you and take the flower?"

"Then you are still ignorant of the rule in this world. When we die outside of the safe zone, we lose all our items, but it doesn't mean that we drop all our items for others to take. We will only drop some random one or two items. So the chance of you getting this flower was minuscule at best."

"I-If so, then the flower will disappear and it will respawn, right?"

"I don't think so. I think it will only respawn if you declare the quest fail and retake it again after. But you are welcome to try if you like," John said indifferently.

"You are really a detestable fellow," Bowler told him as he lost his temper.

John replied with a shrug.

'Is he telling the truth?' Jack directed his question to Peniel in his mind.

"It's more or less as he said. But I will add that a quest item taken by unaffiliated party will be automatically removed from their possession after five days had passed. Same thing as if it disappears due to the owner getting killed, it will respawn after three days. Or you can do as he said, cancel the quest and reapply the same quest again."

All options were the same where they have to waste time. The fastest would be to cancel the quest and reapply, but that would have them return to the capital and come back again later.

"Let's just kill this prick!" Bowler said to Jack in anger.

Jack thought about it for a bit. He then asked John, "what kind of favor do you need?"

"That sounds more like it," John grinned. "Nothing much, I just need help clearing a cave from monsters dwelling inside. You see, it's for my quest. So you help my quest, I help yours. Everyone got their happy endings."

"What help, you are clearly hindering ours!" Bowler was unwilling.

John shrugged again, he said, "think about it. If you look for this flower yourself, you might spend the entire day just searching for it. Trust me, because it had happened to me. Now if you help me clear the cave, not only you save time running around the hill searching for a single flower, but you would also get experience from killing the monsters in that cave. Won't that be more profitable?"

"Profitable my ass, I just don't like your attitude!"

Jack gestured to Bowler to calm him down, then he said to John, "come over and let's talk more about this cave then. Oh, and tell your two friends back there to come over as well. There is no need to sneaky."

John frowned when he heard Jack, but his expression soon returned to his calm demeanor. He glanced back and yelled some words, then he came down to where Jack and the others made their camp. Not long after another two people came to view, from their garments, one was also a Magician, another was a Ranger.

"This is Pointy Tip, that one is Weird Trap," John introduced the Magician and the Ranger as they approached. "And I am Saint John."

He then took the liberty to sit down near the bonfire, and invited everyone to take a seat as well.

"Who makes you the host?" Bowler said unhappily as he sat down.

"Don't be too hung up on the details," John said. "Come, let's discuss about the plan to raid the cave."

Jack inspected John's two comrades. Both of them were level 11. He then said, "first thing first, we are not going to help you for free, and that flower doesn't count. The drops from the monsters will be divided, with us taking priority, as our group is averagely higher in level."

"I'm only interested in clearing the quest," John said. His two comrades turned to him with wide eyes. Jack assumed they were unhappy with this condition, but oddly they didn't voice out any objection.

"That is generous..." Jack said with suspicion. "Seeing as you are looking for reinforcement, I reckon that you have ventured into the cave? And the monsters inside are too strong for you to handle?"

"The monsters inside are strong," John nodded. "But they are not the main problem, we can still eradicate them with patience. The problem is there is a boss-like monster inside. And we can't be considered to have cleared the cave as long as that boss is still inside."

"How strong is it?" Jack asked.

"Level 20," John answered.

"F**k me! Level 20?" Bowler exclaimed, "you go and find other people to help you complete that suicide quest of yours. How the heck you get an Adventurers Association's quest that gave out such an impossible mission?"

"I took the mysterious quest, the one with many question marks on it."

"Why would you do that?"

"I'm curious," John shrugged.

"Only a fool took a quest that is so ambiguous!" Bowler scolded.

Jack coughed.

He thought about the level 25 Priest of Phobos who he had fought before. This time it was level 20. He had no chance to defeat the level 25 elite NPC, but if it was level 20, perhaps he could still cope? He asked Peniel, 'do you think we can win against this level 20 boss?'

"Depends whether it was an Elite or a Special Elite," Peniel answered.

'The boss is only 6 levels difference from me, with my double attributes increase from dual-class, our attributes difference shouldn't be that far off, right?'

"If it is monster below level 15, then yes, it should be. But after level 15, attributes increase for each level are higher than before level 15. This is to cope with Adventurers who had upgraded to Advanced class, their attributes increase per level are also higher. So if it is a Special Elite level 20 Boss inside, I would say that the difficulty will be somewhat similar to that level 25 Elite Priest you fought."

"Did you see if that level 20 Boss is an Elite class or is it Special Elite?" Jack asked John.

"I don't have time to do an Inspect. We ran the hell out once we found out it was level 20," John answered.

"Then how do you know it is level 20?" Flame asked.

"well... There were in fact four of us originally. The missing one was a Fighter who did the Inspect. He blurted out level 20 before he got squashed by the monster. And hence we immediately escaped."

"Then ask that friend of yours, he should resurrect in town already, shouldn't he?"

"He is not my friend, we just met at the Adventurers Association and we formed a party together for this quest. After he died, he disappeared from the Party list. So I have no way to contact him now."

John looked at his other two comrades. "Did either of you happen to add him as a friend?" He asked them.

His two comrades shook their heads.

Jack sighed, "well, I guess there is no other way but to go see for ourselves. Let's go then."

"Now?" Bowler complained, "I thought we are going to rest."

"Why waste time? I'm not tired yet. Are you?" Jack replied. "We didn't continue searching for the flower because it is too dark to do the search. But the cave is dark anyway. So it makes no difference if we go in by day or by night."

"Actually..." John interjected. "We should still wait till tomorrow morning, we have another party coming for reinforcement."

Chapter 80: Men Of Solidarity

"There is still another party?" Jack frowned. "Are they your friends?"

"Never met them before," John replied. "Got their recommendations from Tip here."

Tip was bewildered hearing his name was mentioned, he hurriedly said, "I just happened to bump into them in one of the taverns in the city. The leader added me as a friend and said to contact him if I ever need a service or help with quests."

"A mercenary group?" Bowler facepalmed. "Are you kidding me? You already have a group that will come to help you, what are you doing blackmailing us for?"

"Friend, please, it's cooperating, not blackmailing. You made it sound so bad," John said. "It's a level 20 Boss inside, you can't be too careful. The more the safer, ain't it?"

"How are you going to pay that mercenary party?"

"Well... I said we are only interested in completing the quest. Anything they find inside they can take," John smiled sheepishly.

"You... scoundrel!" Bowler stood up in anger. "Didn't you said the loots inside will be given to us?"

"Actually, if you try to remember. I only said that we are only interested in clearing the quest," John defended. "I never said anything about the loot."

Jack now understood why the two men besides John looked at him strangely when they talked about the loots.

"Let's just kill this asshole and hope the flower drop," Bowler said to Jack.

"Please calm yourself. I'm sure an agreement could be negotiated with the other party once they arrive."

"Who is this group that you had invited?" Jack asked.

John gave a nudge to Pointy Tip, who reluctantly spoke, "they called themselves Men of Solidarity."

"Wait, do you mean Warriors of Solidarity?" Bowler said.

"Um, no. Not that famous guild. You can look at them as a cheap knock-off from that guild."

"What the... Can you at least find someone more reliable? You have to go and find some famous guild wannabee?"

"Friend, it's not like we have many options," John said with exasperation.

"How good are them?" Jack asked Tip.

"I'm not sure, but they look strong. I mean, from real-world standards they would look strong. They are rough men. Like the Warriors of Solidarity, they only accept men into their gang. And they actually went further by only accepting men who use Fighter class. I'm not sure about the others, but when I met the leader two days ago, he was level 11."

"Not too impressive then," Bowler said.

"Friend, you are level 11 yourself," John commented sarcastically after using Inspect on him.

"I wasn't comparing the guy to myself! I was comparing him to my big bro here!" Bowler explained in annoyance.

John looked at Jack, "What is your level? my Inspect skill kept on failing on you."

"Fourteen," Jack didn't try to conceal his level.

Tip and Trap opened their mouth wide upon hearing it. John however kept his indifferent face. He said, "that's impressive. That should be your bargaining power when you negotiate with them for the loots then."

"How many of them that will come?" Jack asked.

John shrugged, he looked at Tip, who also shrugged.

"You told them about the level 20 boss?"

Tip scratched his head, and said, "well... John here said no need to mention the level. Just say we got a very very strong boss monster that we need help with."

John shrugged, "Didn't want to scare them away before they arrive, right?"

"You are one sly meanie," Bowler quipped.

With nothing better to do, they decided to spend the night together. At first, Jack thought about going into the cave for a recon. If it was possible for them to kill the boss without had to wait for the other party in the morning, then there would be no need to negotiate about the loots distribution anymore.

But Peniel reminded him that even though the boss inside was only an Elite, it would still be difficult for him to win with current members, unless if he exposed all his trump cards, which included his dual-class and his sword's Overlimit skill. Jack thought that it made sense, and so decided against it.

Jack distributed the night watch as if their three new friends were non-existent, because he did not trust them yet. So Bowler would keep the first watch, Jack would be second, and the last was Fierce Flame. John upon hearing that they were not included in the night watch rotation was completely fine with it, he went to sleep immediately without any worry. Bowler was grumbling seeing his carefree attitude.

During the night, they were attacked two times. One during Bowler's watch by the Silver Wolves, another during Jack's watch by Goblins. During those two attacks, Tip and Trap woke up to help repel the attacks. John, however, amazingly slept through both ordeals. Bowler had the urge to kick him awake.

In the morning, Jack cooked a lot of meals as preparation for when they ventured into the cave. He made three Chicken Soup for Bowler, Flame, and himself, and eight sets of Egg Fried Rice, which ingredients were cheaper and easier to find.

The Egg Fried Rice was for John and his two comrades and the people from Men of Solidarity. He didn't know how many members of that gang that would appear, he spared five for them just based on the spare ingredients he got at the moment.

After finished with the cooking, he took Bowler and Flame to go grind monsters for experience while waiting for Men of Solidarity to arrive. Before they left, he added John as his Friend, so he could notify him when the Men of Solidarity arrived.

They hunted for two hours before John sent them a message. During the hunt, they have decimated two packs of Silver Wolves and one pack of Goblins. When they returned to the place where they had camped the night before, they saw a crowd. There were eleven people apart from John, Tip, and Trap.

As described, the Men of Solidarity were a rowdy-looking bunch, and all of them wore Fighter armors. John was speaking with one of the men, who was a tall middle-aged man with a bulky frame. He wore full leather armor gear including a leather cap, an armor piece that Jack still lack. When John saw Jack approaching, he smiled and called out.

"My Friend, you have returned! Come, let me introduced you to this fine gentleman, this is The Man, leader of Men of Solidarity?"

"Who?" Jack asked, afraid that he had heard wrong.

"The Man, leader of Men of Solidarity," John repeated.

"Which man?"

John clasped the man with full leather armor beside him, "the man, T-H-E, space, M-A-N! His name is The Man."

Jack was dumbfounded, he inspected the man using his God-eye Monocle.

The Man (Fighter, level 12)

HP: 340

There was indeed every kind of people in the world, Jack thought. He nodded towards The Man. "Nice to meet you," he said.

"Can't say the same," The Man replied rudely. "I heard you are the fools that plan to steal our loots?"

"What do you mean steal?" Bowler said. "It is a cooperation! So it is normal for the loots to be distributed."

The Man laughed, his other members laughed as well following their leader's lead. The Man looked at Bowler disdainfully, "you think you have the right to discuss cooperation with us? Look at you three. Didn't your school teacher teach you how to count? You think you can compare with eleven of us?"

He then turned to John, "forget these three clowns! We will finish the quest ourselves. Show us the cave!"

All the other members of Men of Solidarity started to make noise.

"Yeah, what are the need for these three weaklings! We will defeat the Boss monster ourselves!"

"Take us to the cave!"

"Let's kill the Boss!!"

Jack looked at John and asked him. "Did you tell them already that the Boss is level 20?"

The crowd died down after hearing Jack's words.