

World 761

Chapter 761: Mining the Runic Metals

'An eternal-grade guardian?' Jack's eyes went down there. There was an eternal-grade being down there? 'Wait! Does that mean the Council of Virtus also has a guardian?'

'Yes,' Peniel said.

Jack thought for a bit, he then sent a message to Jet, 'Ready your runic metal pickaxe.'

'Finally!' Jet replied. 'I am about to tell you that I will just stay and mine the one here if you still want to go further down.'

Jack decided to not take any further risk. After seeing that eye, he was unsure if going deeper would have a trial involving that eternal guardian. He didn't think the guardian would show its eye for no particular reason. One huff of its breath was enough to send him to heaven. The runic metal at this depth should also be not bad already.

Once the vortex dissipated, the two rushed out and headed to the glowing deposits below them. The green glow emitted by these deposits was much brighter than the first ones they encountered while descending. The two also sensed intense mana from them.

Yep. Not bad already, Jack thought.

He glanced down. There were several more glows down there. Those glows were so bright they were as if beacons of a lighthouse. Jack was tempted for a beat to dive down there. Yet, the temptation soon passed. He had decided to mine the one here. He would stick by that decision.

Both Jack and Jet took out their green pickaxes. They picked the deposits next to each other and started mining. When their pickaxes hit the hard shells of the deposits, an HP bar appeared. The bar showed that the hit just now was not even 1% of the bar.

'What?!' Both of them were confounded

'Shit! I thought this is like normal mining where it only takes two or three hits to break the deposit?' Jack cursed.

The two looked at one another. Then as if in agreement, they started hacking the deposit frantically.

It seemed that their attributes affected the damage they dealt because Jack's every hit devoured more HP than Jet. Jack tried using a skill, Flame Strike. The resulting damage was the same as when he did a normal hit. So, skills didn't make any difference. Hence, Jack continued hacking with just normal attacks. He activated Adrenaline Rush though, increasing his already fast attack speed to even faster. The HP bar of his runic metal deposit decreased at a visibly faster rate compared to Jet's.

Jet stole a glance at Jack's and was dispirited to see how slow he was compared to Jack. It was fortunate though that they had decided to mine the deposit here. There was still a bit over one minute of his form. If they continued down again, he would be hacking the deposit with the weaker attributes of his normal form.

After frantic mining, the shell of Jack's deposit finally cracked. Light seeped out from the crack. Jack delivered one more hit and the shell broke, revealing a brilliantly shining plate. The shine lasted for a while before dimming, but the glow didn't disappear. It stayed around the plate as if a cloak. Jack used Inspect on the plate.

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Runic Metal (Unique material)

Special usage. Link with: Storm Wind.

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'Unique grade!' Jack celebrated after seeing the description. 'Special usage? So, not just for pet armor?' He thought. He looked at the other deposits. The green pickaxe he used to get this runic metal had crumbled. He wondered if he could use a normal pickaxe to mine the others? Since there was still time till the next vortex appeared, he decided to give it a try.

He swam to the nearest one and took out a normal pickaxe. He hammered onto the glowing shell.

CLANK

A crisp sound was heard. No HP bar appeared. Jack hit it a few more times. Still no HP bar.

'You need a specialized pickaxe for these deposits,' Peniel confirmed.

Jack stored his pickaxe. He had always been counting since descending this vertical tunnel, the next vortex should hit in around fifteen more seconds. Jack looked in Jet's direction.

'F*ck! You just managed to lower it down by half? You won't make it before the vortex hit!' Jack sent him a message.

'I've been trying my best!' Jet replied without slowing down the hits.

'Have you used Strength of the Wild?' Jack asked.

Jet paused for a beat before resuming his hits. His swings became faster than previous.

'You forgot and use it just now, didn't you?' Jack said.

The HP bar was now decreasing at a faster rate. Jack tried to estimate the time they had left.

'It's still not enough before the next vortex happens,' Jack informed.

'Uh... How about we take a pause and hide first? We resume again once the vortex ended,' Jet offered.

'We can't! Hedite said before that this pickaxe will break if we stop the process halfway, remember?' Jack said.

'So, how?!' Jet was starting to panic.

Jack thought for a beat. He then said to Jet, 'Continue hacking. Even if the vortex appeared.'

'What are you planning,' Jet asked, but he didn't stop.

Instead of answering, Jack put his large dragon form body behind Jet. He then cast a spell on the wall surface. Fifteen crimson chains appeared from the wall. Jack then planted his clawed hands and feet on the wall, pinning Jet between him and the wall.

With the mana manipulation he had trained diligently, he manipulated the chains to wrap around his hands and feet. The chains moved slowly. When the energy pillar shot out, they were still wrapping Jack's limbs.

The vortex was soon formed. Jack felt the pull. It got stronger by the second. Jack activated Gold Scale Armor.

Jet also felt the force, but since he was protected and pinned to the wall by Jack's body, he could continue hacking at the green deposit.

'Faster!' Jack exclaimed. He could feel his claws were already ripped out of the wall. His chains were now straining to keep him tethered. The vortex, in the meantime, was growing stronger with each second.

After almost ten seconds after the vortex was formed, the green shell finally broke. The brightly glowing runic metal came into view. Jet didn't wait for the glow to dim. With closed eyes, he thrust his hands and touched the plate. He immediately stored it in his storage bag.

'Got it!' Jet uttered.

Jack had been straining his concentration to keep his chains holding him in place. He let go then and use one hand to grab Jet. They were sucked into the vortex. They swirled inside the vortex while being pushed upward. Damage numbers appeared one after another above their heads.

Jack's Gold Scale Armor allowed him to remain somewhat stable inside the vortex, so he could direct his flight up, utilizing the vortex's updraft to give them a faster ascent.

Jet's form was out of duration in the middle of their ascent. His total HP decreased by half, which meant each damage by the vortex ate a larger portion of his life compared to before.

When his HP was dangerously low, Peniel came out from her hidden dimension and cast Fast Heal and Group Fast Heal back to back before phasing back into her hidden dimension. Jet's HP was up to full again.

Once he saw that they were out of the sinkhole, Jack immediately directed his flight out of the vortex. He found out that the longer he stayed inside the vortex, the harder it was to leave. He struggled with full effort as he beat his wings fiercely inside the vortex. He was again saved by his Gold Scale Armor, if not for it, he would be tossed around inside the vortex without knowing where is up or down. Even someone who had the flight spell would still be unable to save themselves from this vortex if they couldn't resist its twisting force.

After much hardship, he finally tore out of the vortex. Jet's HP was again being dragged down to critical by then. Jack swam up with his dragon's flight, bursting out of the water. In the air, he could fly faster without the water friction. He shot directly at the beach.

The animals that were gathering by the beach were genuinely startled by a scary-looking dragonman who suddenly came at them at high speed. They retreated a healthy distance away.

Jack landed on the beach. Jet was just glad that his feet were on the ground already. His heart was still beating wildly, he had enough flying and swimming for today.

Grace came to them while the two were lying on the ground and resting. She had been waiting by the lakeside after leaving the two. She spent the time talking to the animals while practicing her combat skills from time to time.

"Do you succeed in getting the runic metals?" She asked.

Jack and Jet were still panting on the ground. Instead of answering, the two gave her a thumbs-up.

Chapter 762: Crafting the Pet Armor

"Unique grades? Wow, I'm genuinely impressed that you both managed to get such high-grade ones," Hedite said. Jack and Jet were now back at her workshop handing in the runic metals. "The higher the grade of the runic metal, the harder it is to mine it. You people managed to break the deposits in less than one minute? You are much stronger than the other average people of your level."

'Damn it! This woman knows it is not an easy task mining the metal if they go deeper but she left these details out,' Jack cursed within.

"So, can you work these into pet armors?" Jack asked.

"Sure I can," Hedite replied. "Stay around, it will take me a few days to work on them."

"Oh... How many days?"

"Well, for both of them, I guess ten or twelve days should do it."

"Ten or twelve? We are only allowed to stay in this village for ten days. That's eight days left now. Can't you finish them before we have to leave?" Jack asked.

"I can only work the armor one at a time. It takes me six days for one armor," Hedite answered. "I can only complete one before you have to leave, one of you will have to come back here to take the second one."

Jet immediately said, "Well, Jack boy. You have to be the one coming back then. You are the only one that can track the route to this village."

Jack gave him a side-eye. "Didn't I already tell you to just follow the white rat? You are just scared of having to go through the Lost Forest again, aren't you?"

"Damn right I am scared! I'm not going into that blasted forest again. Also, didn't you say following the rats have a small chance of ending up somewhere unknown?"

"It's just a small chance, but if you pay attention to the white ones, you should be fine," Jack said.

"Small chance is still a chance, and I might mistake a light grey rat for a white one. I'm not doing it! Miss Hedite, please craft the armor for my pet first," Jet uttered.

'Bloody hell. This is your gratitude for me helping you get that unique grade?' Jack complained within, but he didn't reject. It was indeed much safer for him to travel back here.

"Are you okay with that arrangement?" Hedite asked Jack.

"It's okay. Work on his first," Jack said.

"I know you are a reliable person, Jack boy," Jet hugged Jack. Due to his dwarf's stature, he was hugging Jack's butt instead. Jack felt the urge to kick him away.

"All right. I will get right to work," Hedite said. "Sorry for your need to return, I am the only blacksmith in this village, after all."

Hearing that, a thought came to Jack. "Hey, will it help if I help with the work?" Jack asked.

"Oh? You can do blacksmithing work?" Hedite asked.

"My blacksmith grade is Advanced Expert," Jack answered.

Hedite gave an impressed expression. "Didn't your kind only arrive in this world less than ten months ago? Are you a skilled blacksmith where you come from?"

"Uh, no," Jack said.

"Anyway. Yeah, you can help. You just need to follow my instruction to the letter. With your help, I could probably cut my time to eight days and complete the armors before you have to leave."

"That will be great!" Jack uttered.

"What about you? Do you want to help as well?" Hedite asked Jet.

"I don't know shit about blacksmithing," Jet replied.

"Well, then get the hell away from my workshop. We will start working soon," Hedite shooed Jet away.

"Go train your skills. Don't waste your time here," Jack reminded.

"Okay. Don't you slack off in your work as well! I will want a refund if I'm not happy with your work!" Jet returned.

"Bloody heck! I paid the coins for your pet armor, remember?" Jack uttered.

"I still want a refund if I'm not satisfied!"

"Take this refund then!" Jack took out his magic staff and shot a mana bullet.

Jet jumped back while punching the mana bullet. "So uncivilized, losing a debate and using violence instead," Jet said. He was walking away while keeping his attention on Jack.

"You outworlders are weird. Isn't he supposed to be your elder?" Hedite asked.

"He is what you call a childish elder. Never mind him. By the way, since I help with the forging process, shouldn't I get a discount?"

"I don't mind working alone. You are welcome to come back twelve days later to pick up your pet armor."

"Let's start working!" Jack uttered.

"All right. Here," Hedite handed a runic metal to Jack. Jack checked it and found out it was his since the description said it was linked to him.

"As a matter of fact, if the owners work the metals themselves, the resulting armor might be improved," Hedite informed. "I will work on your friend's one while you work on yours. You can use these tools."

Hedite brought him to a large anvil next to the smelter. There were various blacksmith tools including a hammer by the side. Jack picked up the hammer and inspected it.

"U—Unique grade...?!" Jack stammered. His mobile blacksmith tools were only rare grade. Even the blacksmith workshop he rented in the capital only provided rare-grade tools as the highest option. He would have been happy if these tools were super rare grades, but instead, it was even better than he hoped.

"May I use these tools for other purposes?" Jack asked.

"Once you complete the task of forging your pet armor, I will think about letting you use them," Hedite replied.

"Sweet!" Jack uttered. He had been hoarding ores every time he entered a city. He had lots of ores in his bag, but his high-level armors also needed tons of ores for leveling up, mainly because of the high failure rate. He preferred to not use the guild's ore stock for his private use. Those ores inside the guild's warehouse should be used to help his guildmates. Hence, he had just been stockpiling materials all this time without using them yet. With these unique-grade blacksmith tools, he should be able to reduce the failure rate significantly. Thus, reducing his material waste.

"Follow this instruction," Hedite said.

A holographic video appeared before Jack, showing the forging process.

"Study it. You can ask me if there is something you don't understand. Otherwise, you can start working," Hedite said. "You don't need to worry about failure in working this runic metal. This is a special metal that won't fail. In exchange, it required a very long time to process. Hence, why I need so long to craft the armor. If you make a mistake, the process will simply not be registered, you will have to repeat it."

Jack nodded. He watched the video attentively. Hedite stayed by his side for a while. When she saw Jack didn't ask any questions, she was rather amazed. She then went away and prepared her own work.

Actually, the video showed some complex processes. However, Jack had experienced these processes during his short stay in the Blacksmith Circle. Grenmir who was the blacksmith tutor there had explained how to work out the kinks when encountering such processes. Hence, why he didn't ask Hedite about it.

The runic plate was heated first before Jack hammered it following the tutorial video. The process was lengthy, much more lengthy than the ones he had done in Blacksmith Circle, the spots that he had to hit with the hammer were also not large, so he had to take care of not making a mistake. After finishing the

process, he cooled the plate inside a tub of water beside him. Then he was asked to repeat the process. The cycle went on endlessly. He could see the runic plate slowly changing shape with each cycle.

After hours of working. The plate suddenly broke apart. He was fairly startled when it happened. Terrified that he had somehow foiled the forging process.

Seeing his expression, Hedite chuckled. "Don't worry. I said before this process won't fail, right? This is normal. Your pet was big, how do you suppose such a small plate can cover its body? The plate has split so you can craft each part at a time."

Jack looked again at the broken pieces. Even though they had split into nine, each of their sizes was the same as when they were still one, probably larger even.

"Now that you are ready for the next phase. Here is what your pet armor's end product should look like," Hedite said. The tutorial video in front of Jack was replaced by a holographic representation of Therras. A version of Therras that was covered by majestic armor.

His Therras already had a bulky body, this armor added to his body mass. It made his pet look like a tank. Jack was worried if this would make Therras slow.

"Can we make the armor a bit slimmer?" Jack asked.

"Oh? You don't like the look?" Hedite asked. "I had actually made a few options when I was measuring your pet. This one will give the pet armor priority in defense. If you prefer, you can see these other ones."

Hedite made a swipe and a different holographic image replaced the current one. It was still Therras but with thinner armor. It had that aerodynamic look and even sported some sort of a backpack with small wings on its back.

"This prioritizes on speed," Hedite explained.

She did another swipe and a different image appeared. The armor this time sported spikes all over, with two large tusks by the side of the helmet.

"This enhances your pet's offense."

Another image. The armor looked more high-tech this time.

"This also prioritizes defense but not as much as the first one. In exchange, your pet gets the ability to produce a temporary force field for enhanced defense."

Chapter 763: Linking the Pet Armor

When Hedite didn't show another image, Jack asked, "Only four?"

"How many do you expect?" Hedite asked back. "Do you think I spend my time working on a hundred different looks for just your pet?"

"Four is good. Four is good," Jack hurriedly said. He didn't want to offend the person that was helping him craft his pet armor.

"So, which one do you prefer?" Hedite asked.

Jack swiped the holographic images back and forth to take a look again. After a while, he decided. "I will take this one," Jack said.

He had chosen the one that prioritized speed. He had built his abilities around speed. He would need his pet to be able to keep up with his fast movements.

"Okay," Hedite said and did something with the interface. "Okay, the design had been inputted. It will show you the process to work on each part. There are nine parts. Head, neck, upper body, lower body, four leg parts, and rear guard. You just press the part you want to work on first and it will show you the process."

Jack pressed on the head part in the holographic interface. The image was then replaced by a tutorial video showing the crafting process.

When Hedite saw Jack proceed to work, she left him and went back to her work as well.

The two worked for the whole day. During the forging of the head part, Jack finally encountered some roadblocks where he asked Hedite questions. Hedite was rather surprised with how few questions Jack asked, yet she noticed that Jack's work progressed smoothly.

By the end of the day, Jack completed the helmet part. Hedite gave him pointers to do a few finishing touches. Some smoothings and shapings using different tools as well as applying spray for color. Jack asked if these were necessary. A good look was fine, but it was not his priority. He preferred to not waste workhour on this unnecessary embellishment. Hedite assured him that these were necessary if Jack wanted his pet armor to be considered complete.

Hedite stopped working once the sun was setting. Jack wanted to continue working but Hedite closed the holographic interface and took the hammer from Jack's hand.

"Hey!" Jack protested.

"Go! We rest when the sun rest," Hedite said.

Jack left unwillingly, but his mood was lifted again when he saw how much blacksmith proficiency he had earned from this half-day work. If he continued this for the rest of his stay here, he could probably be the first outworlder to become a basic master blacksmith, at least in his guild because he knew no one had yet to achieve that level.

"This place is truly a good place to build auxiliary skills," Jack muttered.

He returned and found the same scene as yesterday. Grace and Jet were practicing their combat skills while conversing with Captain Whitebeard and Shortpaw. No, there was another additional member this time. It was the owl that they met when they entered this village, Oldeye.

Jack greeted them. He then noticed that Oswald was also there but he was sitting quietly in the corner with his eyes closed.

"What's he doing? Is that one of the ways he sleeps?" Jack asked.

"He is practicing mana sense," Grace answered.

"He did?" Jack was astonished.

"He saw me doing it during the day. He asked me to teach him as well, so I did," Grace informed.

"Yeah, I give them some pointers," Jet said. "That native is rather serious about learning it. He is very hardworking, and this place is a very good place to learn, considering the dense mana."

"I see," Jack thought. He wondered if he should teach Arlcard as well? But he had a feeling that would be an exercise in futility.

Jack decided to spend his evening the same as them, increasing the proficiency of his combat skills and spells while conversing with the talking animals to increase his diplomacy skill.

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They spent the rest of their days in this same routine. Grace trained her mana sense during the day while Jack did the blacksmithing work. At night they trained combat skills while conversing with the native animals. Jet trained his combat skills all day and took some breaks to swim and conversed with the other locals, especially the young women. Oswald spent almost all day practicing mana sense.

"Looking at him, I'm afraid he will be able to sense mana before you," Jack commented.

"Doesn't matter. This is not a competition," Grace said.

"Sure it is," Jack returned.

During those days, he also received a notification, "Guild Everlasting Heavenly Legends had become the first guild to have members of all seven races. Receiving secret rewards of 100,000 reputation points, 50 gold coins, 100 food, 100 minerals, 100 woods, and a blueprint to construct a Global Embassy structure."

'Oh? We have finally recruited draconian and ethereal members as well?' Jack thought after hearing the notification.

Jack turned to Grace and Jet who showed no reaction. He guessed this notification was only heard by guild leaders or those with high enough ranks.

"What is this Global Embassy structure?" Jack asked Peniel.

Peniel who had also heard the notification through Jack, answered, "That structure provides links to all the Guild Associations in every main city of the seven countries. Now all the natives will be able to easily send you guild quests via their cities' Guild Associations. I must say, with this structure, you will see a sharp increase in available guild quests."

"Amazing," Jack remarked. With this, it should not be long before they reach guild level 4.

A message from John arrived at this time, "Expert, do you mind asking that talking encyclopedia of yours what this Global Embassy does?"

Jack had expected either John or Jeanny to ask, so he told John what Peniel had just informed him.

"Excellent! I will divert resources to begin construction immediately," John said. Jack could feel the excitement from John's message.

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At the end of the fifth day since he started forging his pet armor, the seventh day after they arrived in the village, Jack completed the last piece of his pet armor.

"I am surprised. You actually did it at the same pace as me," Hedite complimented.

"That's because you spent your time helping me as well," Jack tried to be modest. "If you just focus on your work, you would have finished yours earlier."

"That is correct," Hedite said, not trying to be modest. "All right, the last step now is to link them all together. Once you did, you will be able to register it to your pet and the armor will automatically be equipped."

"How do I link them?" Jack asked.

"Carry the hammer and the parts and follow me," Hedite said. She was also carrying her hammer and the completed parts for Jet's Crimson-maned Lion. They walked to the stalls where the two pets were still inside.

Hedite went to the one containing Jet's pet. She put the nine parts of the armor on a bench next to the stall. She then accessed a panel by the side of the stall's gate. A holographic image appeared around the stall, with the Crimson-maned Lion at its center. Jack saw nine boxes floating around the pet. Every box had different hollow shapes. After further observation, Jack found that the hollow shapes were the shape of the armor parts.

Hedite operated the panel and the hologram turned around until the box with the hollow shape of a helmet came before her. She then took the helmet from the bench and put it inside the hollow shape. It clicked inside as if the hologram was a tangible thing. The helmet part was now floating inside the box.

Hedite turned the hologram again to the box next to it and inserted the neck part. A link appeared between the two boxes. Hedite readied her hammer as a red bar appeared above the link. The bar had a pin and a triangle that kept moving from left to right. These pin and triangle, however, always moved opposite from one another.

When the pin passed by the triangle, Hedite struck her hammer at the spot they were crossing. Blue areas appeared on both sides of the bar, reducing the originally red area. As the pin and triangle passed by again, Hedite hit a second time. The red area was further reduced and the blue area increased.

As the red area reduced, the speed of the pin and triangle increased. However, Hedite had no problem hitting the spot they passed one another with uncanny accuracy. She did it a few more times until all the red area was replaced by the blue. When that happened, a notification appeared indicating the link was successful.

Hedite turned the hologram again and inserted the third armor part into the next box. She turned to Jack and asked, "Did you get all that?"

"I think I do," Jack replied.

"Then get to work," Hedite said.

Chapter 764: Upgraded Terras

Jack followed what Hedite had done and activated the panel on Terras' stall. The same holographic image appeared around Terras. Jack then worked the hologram and had the box with the helmet part came before him. He inserted the helmet and then the neck part, copying Hedite's sequence.

The linking bar appeared. Jack readied his hammer. He paid attention to where the pin and triangle passed and then struck. He had plenty of experience blacksmithing as well as hitting something with a one-hand weapon, so his accuracy could be considered high. He was successful with his first hit. The blue areas appeared at the edges. Jack then readied himself to make the second strike.

The speed of the pin and triangle increased. Jack was concentrating to make a perfect hit, so he took his time. He let the pin and triangle pass one another a few times without making any hit. He wanted to get familiar with the rhythm before he hit.

"The blue area will reduce if you wait too long," Peniel informed.

"What?" Jack looked at the part where the blue and red areas intersected. It was indeed as Peniel said, the red area was pushing the blue area back.

'Crap! That means I don't have the luxury of taking my time,' Jack thought. He struck when the pin and triangle next passed one another. Success.

With urgency, he continued striking. At an unfortunate time when his strike missed, the red area expanded a large portion, nullifying his several attempts. Jack felt like crying seeing that. So, not only that he was not allowed to take his time, but he was also not allowed to make a mistake.

Jack stole a glance at Hedite. She never missed a hit. He thought, Damn! In terms of striking accuracy, he couldn't believe that he lost to a blacksmith.

Jack had a few mishaps during the minigame of linking the armors. Luckily, there was no failure for this pet armor crafting. The mishaps just meant that he took a longer time to complete the process.

Hedite had completed the process. Once the linking was done, the nine parts flew to the Crimson-maned Lion and strapped themselves on each part of the pet's body.

During the beginning of the forging process when Jack learned about the different design options for the pet armor. Jack asked if Hedite had also prepared different options for Jet's pet. Hedite had. She asked if Jack wanted to see and choose the option or let her decide as she originally planned.

Jack asked to see. While checking the options, Jack sent Jet a message asking him if he wanted to come and choose himself. Jet said that he trust Jack was a better expert in the game matter, so he let Jack decide the whole thing. Jack knew the guy was just lazy to come back to the workshop.

After studying the designs, Jack had chosen an armor design that balanced offense, defense, and speed. The end product looked both durable and flexible. Jack had even requested the armor to be colored golden during the finishing touch. When the nine parts armored finally attached themselves to the Crimson-maned Lion, it was dazzling enough to make Jack stop his armor-linking operation.

"Hey, the red area is growing back!" Peniel warned.

Only after Peniel's alert that Jack hurriedly returned his focus to linking his pet armors.

The Crimson-maned Lion, who had just gained a new armor, uttered a triumphant roar. The armor accentuated its already majestic presence to further height. The Crimson-maned Lion was visibly proud of its new look.

Jack was glad that Jet was not around at the moment. Otherwise, that old geezer would surely boast non-stop. It would just disturb his concentration then.

"Do you need me to take over?" Hedite asked when she saw Jack still had halfway to go.

"I got this!" Jack replied and concentrated.

Hedite open the gate of the stall that held the Crimson-maned Lion. As she did, the runic diagram around the stall faded. Once the restrain was gone, the Crimson-maned Lion vanished. Jack assumed it must have automatically unsummoned since Jet was not nearby, but that old beastmaster should be getting a notification at this moment.

Confirming his speculation, he received Jet's message not long after.

"Woo-hoo! Jack boy, did you see my lion? It's so cool! I bet my pet is the best there is amongst current players!"

Jet continued to send a few more messages containing only ramblings. Jack had the urge to block the guy's messages. In the end, he just focused his mind to ignore the messages.

After a long struggle, he finally completed the last linkage. The nine armor parts flew and slapped themselves onto Therras' body. The parts adjusted themselves following Therras' contour. The edges where the parts met reshaped and merged, forming an interconnecting full body armor.

When the process was completed, Therras also uttered a thundering roar similar to Jet's Crimson-manned Lion. Jack could feel Therras' excitement through the link with his pet. The runic diagrams inside the stall died down and the gate opened. Therras strutted out. It wasn't unsummoned since its owner was nearby.

Jack observed his pet's new look. Therras was now covered by layers of sturdy plates, held together by elastic material that looked both leather and metal. The backpack with the small wings that Jack had seen in the hologram representation looked more like a jetpack in its final form. The armor didn't appear to hinder Therras' movements. It accentuated the pet's majestic appearance.

Jack had chosen to use light blue color with gold lining for the armor. The armor brought more life to Therras' dull dark grey color. Jack knocked on the armor. It sounded hard. Jack used Inspect on it.

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Therras Supersonic Armor (Unique pet armor)

Physical defense: 1978 (43x pet level)

Magical defense: 1472 (32x pet level)

All attributes +30%, Movement Speed +50%

When HP is below 50%, reduce all damage received by 20%

Nullify movement restriction (Response-ability), cooldown: 30 seconds

Supersonic Mode (Active ability): Increase speed by 500%. All melee damage dealt during this mode is increased by 20%. Moving without hitting any enemies during this mode will accumulate 100% damage per second, to a maximum of 1000% damage. Duration: 1 minute. Cooldown: 3 hours

Special condition ability: When Therras damages an enemy, place a mark that lasts 45 seconds. If Storm Wind damages an enemy with this mark, the damages are increased by 30%.

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The defenses were so high, Jack thought. It was much higher than his combined Sword Fiend's Gears defenses. Considering this armor was unique while his Sword Fiend's Gears were only super-rare, this was not surprising. Additionally, the defense of this pet armor scaled up as Therras increased its level. So, there was no need for him to level up this armor by blacksmith process.

Still, Therras' original defense was already high, with this extra defense, it was now a real tank. He wondered if he had chosen the armor version that prioritized defense, wouldn't his Therras be unkillable then?

Hedite also checked the armor. She said, "You know, this special condition ability appears because you fully craft this armor yourself."

"Really? Are you saying the Crimson-mane Lion's that you've crafted doesn't have this special ability?" Jack asked.

"No. That lion's armor has four abilities as any other unique grade equipment," Hedite answered. "This fifth ability is all due to your effort. You can see from this special ability that it highlights your relationship with your pet. However, I can't help but notice that the overall ability in this armor is slightly stronger than normal. That must be the effect of the runestone you used when forging."

Jack had used his Runestone of Enhancement when he did the finishing step for each nine armor parts. This act further improved the armor's stats.

Jack unsummoned Therras after he was done admiring it. "So, I can use the workshop for my own stuff?" Jack asked.

"Sure thing," Hedite replied. "After you do one thing for me."

"Didn't you say you will let me use your workshop tools once I completed the pet armor? Why add another requirement?" Jack protested.

"I never said I let you use it. I said I think about letting you use it. This is me thinking about letting you use it."

Jack sighed. "What do you need?"

Hedite handed Jack a green-colored pickaxe. Similar to the ones she gave to Jack and Jet before. "Get me another runic metal of at least the unique grade, I will let you use my workshop."

Jack received a notification of a quest, Recover a runic metal for Hedite.

"That's all?" Jack asked Hedite

"That's all," She replied.

"You could have given me two of this pickaxe and I would have gotten the runic metal for you when I get ours," Jack said, accepting the green pickaxe.

"I never thought you outworlders are capable enough to get the unique grade one," Hedite said. "I admit I have underestimated you."

"Wait, didn't you say that the mined runic metal formed a link with its miner? If I give it to you, won't it be useless then?"

"See the runes on that pickaxe?" Hedite asked and pointed to the pickaxe he had just given Jack. Jack observed and saw that there were indeed some rune carvings that were not there in the previous green pickaxe he used to mine his runic metal.

"It's an enchantment that allowed it to link to me despite you being the one who mined it," Hedite explained.

Jack nodded. He then said confidently, "Don't worry, you will get your runic metal tomorrow morning. By the way, do you have another green pickaxe to spare? Maybe I can get an extra runic metal for myself?" He remembered the metal's description mentioning that it was for special usage. So he thought he probably could use the metal for some other purpose.

Hedite replied by shaking her head. "Sorry."

Jack shrugged. Worth a try, he thought. He then checked his newly acquired quest's description on his quest page.

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Recover a runic metal for Hedite

Difficulty: S

Rewards: 1,200,000 exp, 30 gold coins, permission to use Hedite's workshop

Get a runic metal of at least the Unique rarity

Chapter 765: Leveling up Equipment

Within these five days of work, Jack's blacksmith's proficiency had increased greatly, but not enough yet to level up. One of his other auxiliary skills had increased, though. During the day, he had conversed with Hedite regularly. At night, he conversed with the animals. His Diplomacy skill had upgraded to Intermediate Expert.

When Jack returned to where they were staying, Jet immediately showed off his armored Crimson-maned Lion. Jack did admit the lion looked much more impressive with the new armor. The lion's armor also possessed an active skill. The skill was called Supremacy.

The skill increased Crimson-maned Lion's attributes by 100%, all its attacks inflicted additional 30% fire damage, and it was immune to all movement restrictions while the skill was active. The skill lasted two minutes with a cooldown of six hours

When the Supremacy skill was activated, a red fiery aura enveloped the Crimson-maned Lion, making it look more fierce than it already was.

Jet kept on flaunting his pet in front of Jack. Jack ignored it at first but he got annoyed after a while. He uttered, "Dude, do you forget that I also forged an armor for my pet?" He summoned Therras and had it stand before Jet's lion.

"Oh? Is your ugly-whatever-beast you have here trying to challenge my great lion?" Jet uttered.

"How dare you call my majestic Therras ugly? You are asking for a beating. My Therras will beat your kitty down no sweat!" Jack didn't back down.

"You are on! Let's fight then!"

"Come!"

"If you two want to be kicked out of this village, go ahead!" Jack and Jet heard a voice from under them. They looked down and saw Captain Whitebeard looking up at them with arms akimbo.

The mouse continued, "We tolerated you throwing your skills or spells around as long as no one is hurt. But fighting one another, even if it is a friendly match, is too much. We don't tolerate that kind of conflict in this village. I guarantee you will be kicked out the minute you defy our value of peace."

Grace came by and said to Whitebeard, "They are just kidding, Whitebeard. They are not truly going with it." She then turned to Jack and Jet. "Right?" She asked with a glare.

"Y-Yes, we are just kidding," Both Jack and Jet replied. The two unsummoned their pets.

Jack spent the rest of the night with his routine. Talking to the animals while practicing combat skills and mana manipulation. He also used the two gemstones from the treasure chests to upgrade his runestone. He used the super rare amethyst for his Runestone of Probability and his unique diamond for the Runestone of Luck.

The Runestone of Probability upgraded to a super rare rank.

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Runestone of Probability (super rare runestone)

Increase approx. 40% success chance to auxiliary jobs.

Elemental energy required for upgrade: 710/10,000

*

With this increase, he would be able to reduce the failure rate for tomorrow's equipment upgrade even further.

As for his Runestone of Luck, the unique diamond was not enough to level it up. He still needed 5,150 lightning energy to level it up. That required at least two more unique amethysts or diamonds plus a rare grade one.

Jack asked Grace and Jet if they want him to upgrade their equipment as well. The two happily gave him their current equipped equipment. But Jack informed them first that he would prioritize his ore stock for his own use. He would only work on theirs after he was done. The two had no problem, they even gave Jack whatever ores they had on them. The quantity was pitiful compared to Jack's stock, but it was better than none.

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The next morning, he went directly to the lake and dove in. Now that he was doing it alone, it was much easier. Last time he began his dragon transformation starting from the fifth hole. This time he didn't transform until the sixth hole. He could still swim until the sixth hole in his human form, albeit barely.

The deposits containing unique grade runic metals were after the seventh hole. Since he only transformed starting from the sixth hole, his beast form still had plenty of time to spare when he reached the seventh hole. He was tempted to go down further. The quest indicated that he needed to get at least the unique grade, which meant if he got an even higher grade, there was a possibility of an increase in the reward?

But after some pondering, he decided against it. He might be reckless sometimes in taking risks, but it was always a calculated risk. If there was no eternal-guardian beast dwelling down there, he might have taken the gamble. But he was sure if he went down further to get the legendary-grade runic metal, the guardian beast would involve itself as an additional obstacle to test if one was worthy enough to get the material.

If he somehow failed and was killed, he won't be able to get back here from Themisphere in three short days. He didn't think Meratis would let him stay for long on his second visit. He would then be unable to utilize Hedite's workshop.

So, he decided to play it safe this time and mined the deposit under the seventh hole. Once he got the deposit, he waited for the vortex to appear before utilizing the updraft to push himself back up to the lake's surface. He then jumped out of the lake and flew in the sky directly to Hedite's workshop.

Hedite was visibly startled when a humanoid dragon landed right in front of her workshop. Jack saw her expression and immediately transformed back.

"It's you? I thought which abomination dares to attack our village. I was about to attack you myself. You are lucky you changed back when you did," Hedite said.

'You, attack me?' Jack wondered. He inspected Hedite again to make sure. 'Yep, she is still a level 20 elite. Does she not know my level?'

Jack didn't bother too much with that thought. He took out the runic metal from his bag and gave it to her. "One unique grade runic metal, as requested," Jack announced.

Hedite received the metal and Jack received a notification that his quest was completed. He received exp points and gold coins.

"Can I use the workshop now?" Jack asked.

"Knock yourself out," Hedite said. She was still admiring the runic metal in her hands.

"Yes!" Jack went inside. While preparing the tools, he asked Hedite, "You don't happen to have any ores I can buy?"

"This is a workshop, not a store," Hedite replied. She was walking back to her house beside the workshop. On her way, she said, "I remember everything inside this workshop. Don't you dare to snatch anything!"

"Do you think I am that kind of person?" Jack asked. He then looked at the unique-grade blacksmith hammer in his hand. 'I am tempted to be one, though,' He thought.

He spent the day working on enhancing his equipment. With the unique-grade blacksmith tools assisted by the super-rare runestone of probability, the failure rates were very much being suppressed. After he leveled up his Rapid Dazing Staff and Sword Fiend's Gear set to level 56, he still had many ores to spare. So, he took a spare super rare grade longsword and leveled it up to level 56 as well. He then fed that longsword to his Storm Breaker, bringing it up to level 56.

At level 56, his Sword Fiend's Gear set combined with Beastmaster's inherent defensive boost gave him a total of 1742 physical defense and 1562 magical defense. He almost caught up to Therras' unique-grade armor physical defense, while his magical defense was now higher than his pet's armor. Considering his gears were level 56 while Therras was still level 46, this didn't come as a surprise. If Therras leveled up to 56, its unique-grade armor would give a much higher defensive stats.

For his Rapid Dazing Staff, its magical damage had increased to 427. While his Storm Breaker's physical damage increased to 470.

Since he still had a decent number of ores, he used them to upgrade both Grace and Jet's equipment. He concentrated on their weapons first. Grace was level 49 and Jet was 48, Jack leveled up Grace's mace and shield to level 59 and Jet's katars to level 58. He left the remaining ores for their armors.

Before that, he noticed some of their armors were still of the rare grades one. He checked his stock and found that he had enough heavy and light armors to fuse them using his Transformation Prism into the super rare grade, so he did so. Afterward, he leveled their armors up.

He didn't save any ores, he used all his current stock. Even if the benefit was not for him, he did so because he didn't think he would have the chance to use Hedite's workshop again after this.

Even with the repressed failure rates, he still couldn't level up all their armors to the maximum. He only managed to level them up to around levels 56 and 57.

When Grace and Jet received their gears back, they were lost for words.

Jack himself received a boon after his altruistic act. His Blacksmith skill had finally leveled up to Basic Master.

Chapter 766: Emergency Summon

Jack's auxiliary skills had received many upgrades during this short stay. No wonder Wilted came here so early for his Diplomacy skill. Her diplomacy must have skyrocketed if she focused only on that during her thirty days stay in this village.

Aside from Diplomacy, Influence, Lockpicking, Runecraft, and Blacksmith, Jack also did Cooking every day for their meals. He also used Inspect every now and then. These two auxiliary skills had also improved. They were now both at the intermediate expert level.

A few of his game skills were also upgraded. Amongst them, Penta Slash received its second star, Roll at four stars, Myriad Ensnaring Chains was five stars, while Adrenaline Rush reached the sixth star. The Phantom Blade skill gained its first star. Each star of Phantom Blade increased its damage further by 2%.

That night, he was again with Grace and Jet practicing game skills while conversing with Captain Whitebeard, Shortpaw, and Oldeye. Jet and he only had two days left before they had to leave the village. Jack determined to not let the remaining days go to waste. Since he was no longer doing any blacksmithing work, he could fully focus on training his combat skills and spells.

He used the Organic Seed that night. After much consideration, he decided to use the seed on the Myriad Ensnaring Chains spell. Peniel mentioned that the seed would turn his skill or spell alive. It was a rather vague description. His Myriad Ensnaring Chains could be said to be half-alive considering the chains auto-targeted opponents in their vicinity, but their grabbing mechanism was too straightforward. Those with fast reflexes and excellent body control like his grandfather could still easily avoid capture. Maybe turning them into real-alive would erase this weakness.

Jack activated the mechanism and selected Myriad Ensnaring Chains as the target of the Organic Seed. As before, the name of the spell changed after a seed was used. Its name was now Myriad Venomous Vipers.

'Vipers?' Jack thought. He was about to open the skill description before a sudden blaring sound rang in his mind.

"What the heck!" He uttered.

"What's wrong?" Grace asked.

"You people didn't hear that?" Jack asked when he saw everyone looking at him with a questioning expression.

A notification then sounded in his mind.

"Oh...," He uttered after hearing the notification. Looked like he didn't have the chance to utilize the remaining two days left here.

He took several things out and said to Grace, "I have an urgent matter that requires me to leave right now. I will have to leave something with you for Wilted who is coming here." Jack had told them about his encounter with Goddess Serenity and about the items that the Goddess gave.

"Leave? Why?" Grace asked.

"No time to explain, I'm in a hurry," Jack said. "This is the Goddess' whistle and the Pipe of Monster Control. Please pass them to Wilted when she arrived. Oh, right, please give her this as well."

Jack gave her the Chris Memory Stone. However, as soon as the stone left Jack's hand, it vanished from Grace's grasp.

"Huh?" both of them were confused.

Jack sent his consciousness to his bag and found that the stone was back inside the bag again.

'The description does say that this stone can't be discarded. So, giving it to anyone other than Wilted is considered discarding the stone as well?' Jack thought. Since it was so, he thought that he could only give this stone to Wilted the next time they met face to face.

Jack gave her something else in exchange, two bottles of Grace of Tranquility potions. He also gave Jet two bottles. Now he had five bottles left in his bag. Once he was done, he disappeared with a flash of light.

Grace watched where Jack was standing a moment ago with a look of sadness.

Jet who saw her expression sighed. He said, "He is one free kid. He has always been like that since small. Come and go as he pleased like the wind, causing headaches to his grandpa as well. Falling for a kid such as him, you are sure to get such headaches as well."

Grace didn't say anything for a long while. Captain Whitebeard and the others also stayed silent after feeling the atmosphere. When Jet was about to give her some space, she said, "In that case, I will also have to be strong enough to be able to follow him without slowing him down."

Jet saw the determination in the girl's eyes. He was moved by it. "In that case, let me help you. You use a mace, right? I will teach you martial art using short sticks. I used to be hired by the police force to teach them this art. They practiced it using their batons. Though a mace is much heavier than a baton, with the unnatural stats we possessed in this world, you should be able to handle a heavy mace as easy as a light baton."

"Teach me!" Grace said.

"Excellent. Now watched closely. I can only stay here for two days so I will teach you its basic principles," Jet said, "Once I left, you have to practice it diligently to familiarize yourself. Now, borrow me a mace or any other short blunt weapon."

Grace lent him her mace. Jet then got into position. He performed some moves in slow motion and said, "This art is called the Phantom Beating Stick technique."

As he continued making repetitive short but fast strikes, he explained, "The version that I thought the police force was the modified version which was less lethal. I can't exactly teach law-enforcing officers a move that is mainly designed to kill the lawbreakers now, can I? But I will teach you the full and deadly version. This move prioritized fast and short movement with accuracy on the opponent's weak spots. This art is actually more deadly if you use two short sticks on both hands, but with the right application, one hand can be fatal as well."

Grace watched with concentration as Jet explained the essence of the art. After Jet was done displaying the move, he asked Grace to give it a try. Jet gave her pointers when needed. He could see that Grace was truly serious about learning the art.

As Jet paid attention to Grace's training, a voice asked him, "Do you have a move that uses twin daggers?"

Jet turned and saw Oswald was the one asking.

Next to the Busculla Plateau, where Jack once did his exp farming, was a plain called Swordhill Plain. It was a mostly flat plain but with several areas consisting of low hills. On this plain, a group of thirty players was riding their mounts. The lead of this group was Red Death.

"Faster! We need to get to Prince Rhemos' camp or our guild chain quest is as good as over!" Red Death uttered. She was urging her steed to go faster, but there was a limit to how fast a rare-grade steed could run. The others with her were all riding rare steeds as well.

As they proceeded, Red Death saw another group of people to her front. A larger group than hers. She was alarmed at first and slowed her steed's speed, but soon relaxed after seeing the people of that group. She approached that group and asked, "Yellow, what are you doing here? Are you the reinforcement I have requested?"

She had requested reinforcement after finding out a piece of crucial information regarding the second prince. The three princes were currently out of the capital on their trips around the country to gather influence. Rhemos had almost completed his trip and was currently setting up camp not far away from here. She was heading there to meet the prince and warned him about the information she had learned.

She was expecting reinforcement to come from her back since there was no closer city they could teleport to for reaching Rhemos' camp. Hence, she was rather surprised to find her reinforcement arrived here before she did.

"I am," Yellow Death answered. Behind Yellow were Bigarm and Grimclaw. The group with Yellow numbered almost a hundred.

Seeing the large number, Red Death felt much better. Perhaps she could still help Prince Rhemos escape the ploy that targeted him. If anything happened to the prince, it would be a serious blow to the quest that they had been focusing on for so long. She had also sent a message to Scarface to ask for reinforcement from any of the coalition's players in the vicinity, but she didn't put much hope in that. The relationship between the coalition was not exactly harmonious at the moment.

"All right, let's head immediately to—" She didn't finish her sentence because she sensed attacks coming from all around her.

Her fast reflexes allowed her to make a jump to escape. While somersaulting, she saw her steed receive countless magic and range attacks. It died shortly.

When She landed, she noticed everyone around her had their weapons at the ready.

To add to her consternation, a notification informed her that she had been expelled from the Death Associates guild.

Chapter 767: Despair

"What's the meaning of this?!" Red Death asked. She looked around. Everyone was displaying a hostile expression. She didn't understand why everyone turned on her. Even more, she didn't understand why she had been expelled from the guild. She was pretty high up in the guild ranking, the only one who had the authority to do so was only White Death.

"What's the meaning of this? Hehe, you still dare to ask? You should know what traitorous act you have done against our guild," Yellow Death said.

"Me, betraying the guild? Stop spouting nonsense!" Red Death uttered.

"No? All right. I will spell out your transgression," Yellow Death said with a grin. "You have conspired with our sworn enemy, Storm Wind, and acted in a manner that put your own interest over our guild interest."

"Don't be absurd! Are you talking about what happened during the world tournament? I have said that my decision at the time is for the larger picture. You can bring up your complaint to Black Death once she returned to us."

"Oh, is that how you gain a sudden level increase at the end of the tournament? I know you go somewhere with Storm Wind's group after the tournament. Don't you deny it, I saw it myself. You also get that nice new boots. Is that how he enticed you to make us lose the tournament prizes? So that you get a better one yourself? And don't you think you can rely on Black Death's protection. She is nowhere to be found. We aren't even sure if she is in this world at all. I have taken up your case to White Death and he agrees that you should be punished."

"Then do it after we deal with the matters at hand. We need to reach Prince Rhemos fast or our guild chain quest will be in jeopardy."

"Don't you worry about the quest anymore," Yellow said. His grin turned wider. "It is no longer your concern."

Red Death frowned at Yellow's words. What did he mean by that? This quest had always been the main concern in the guild. Since she didn't see any chance to reason with Yellow, Red Death turned to her other former guildmates, "All of you. You can't be serious about going with this. You all know how much we have put in our effort for the success of this quest. Yellow is bitter about his private vendetta because I have supported Storm Wind during the World Tournament, but this is not the reason to risk our guild quest. If we don't get to where Prince Rhemos is soon, our guild will be in a serious setback."

"Stop spouting your nonsense!" A woman with a spear and heavy armor came forward. "I have always been sickened by your high and mighty act. I have been waiting for the chance to do you in!"

The woman was a level 47 Dragoon named Killingred. She was a long-time member of Death Associates and had carried a long grudge against Red Death, a grudge that was out of jealousy. A grudge that was strong enough that she expressed it in her alias. Red Death simply ignored her all this time and think of her as a joke.

Yellow Death chuckled. "You should stop trying to goad everyone. Your crime goes further than before the tournament. Everyone must be wondering why Storm Wind still managed to escape after we managed to trap him inside our guild warehouse. Well, wonder no more."

Yellow Death took out a recording stone which then played out the scene where he had spied Jack and Red Death conversing during the night before the tournament started.

'He was listening in at that time?' Red Death's scowl became deeper. In this case, it was pointless to try persuading them. She used Vanish. Her figure disappeared.

Yellow Death wasn't troubled by her sudden disappearance. An orb appeared in his hand. It was the Orb of Detection.

"Over there!" Yellow Death knelt and activated Shooting Stance. Several Elite Marksman in the group aimed their bows and crossbows at where Yellow Death's rifle was pointing at.

Yellow Death used Rapid Shot. His Rapid Shot was originally at level 10, but his full set equipment bonus increased his Gunner's standard skills by five levels, so it was considered to be at level 15. The bullets that came out of his rifle numbered five. He shifted his rifle when he made the shot. The five bullets came out in a fan shape, covering more area. The Orb of Detection only allowed him to pinpoint the general area Red Death was, not her exact position.

The Elite Marksman players, who had followed his aim, used their Fan Shot skills. These Fan Shots covered a much larger area than Yellow's Rapid Shot. The shots were also aimed at different elevations.

With that many shots flying her way, Red Death couldn't dodge them all. She shifted to a position where the arrows were fewest and cut the ones that she couldn't dodge. She survived the barrage but her invisibility was dispelled.

The Elite Marksmen followed up by using Shower of Arrow. Innumerable arrows came from the sky raining on Red Death. She could only take a defensive stance and again cut at any arrow that was coming at her.

When she was defending against the arrows, the other players came and surrounded her again.

"Forget about escaping! All the ones I bring here are elite class players," Yellow shouted. He continued to shoot using his max-level shooting stance that covered a great distance. "Your pride of never getting an Amulet of Rebirth has come back to bite you now. You never imagine you will be in such a situation, do you?"

Red Death indeed never bothered getting an Amulet of Rebirth. She thought such an item would only weaken one's resolve. Additionally, the amulet wasted an equipment slot and didn't carry any strengthening effect.

"She is mine!" Red Death heard a yell from above at the same time she sensed the attack. Killingred had used Jump Attack.

Red Death made a swipe to strike the other players around her at the same time dodging Killingred's stab from above. She then backflipped with a leg striking Killingred's head. Killingred was smacked away

by the kick. No damage, only the pain on her face, but the pain of embarrassment in her heart was greater.

Red Death activated Trinity Assault and Combat Clone. She had the clone block her rear while she tried to escape. She and her two copies by her sides stabbed at anyone who tried to block her.

She suddenly sensed a threatening force from the side. She turned and saw Grimclaw with his martial art, Tearing Twister, coming at her. She tried blocking the best she could, but she had been unprepared when the twister came. She couldn't stop all the erratic assaults within the twister. The halberd finally struck her waist.

Several Magic Binds locked her while she was reeling from the attack. She then sensed multiple backstabs coming behind her while she was retreating. She used her race's skill, Willpower, to break the magic binds before making a super jump to dodge the backstabs.

"Shoot her!" Yellow Death ordered.

Multiple ranged and magic attacks flew at Red Death who was in the air. Some magic class even placed Arcane Turbulence at where Red Death should be landing. However, before their attacks hit, Red Death made another kick in the air. Her kick hit the air as if it was a solid object, she then jumped a second time in a different direction.

The ranged attackers were all taken aback by Red Death's feat. That feat was due to Red Death's unique-grade boots. It possessed the ability, Double Jump, allowing her to jump the second time in the air.

She drank a healing potion while in the air. This double jump saved her but the enemies were still nearby. It only gave her a short breath of reprieve. She wanted to resume her escape but several wolves and pets came blocking. While she was dealing with those pets, the other players again surrounded her. With so many enemies, she couldn't help but feel despair. The fact that these people used to be her comrades further added to the anguish.

'He... help..., ' A voice surfaced in her mind.

"Hahaha, accept your defeat, Red!" Yellow Death shouted.

Hearing Yellow's laugh, Red Death's resolve was instead being hardened. The despair that she felt turned to anger and fury. She had determined a long time ago to not depend on another. She would solve her predicament herself. Even one that seemed to have no way out like her current situation.

She gritted her teeth then let out a steely cry. Her daggers stabbed in a flurry as she slipped in and out amidst her opponents. However, even with her determination, it was still not enough to overcome such a disadvantage of being heavily outnumbered. She suffered damage after damage.

At one point, Yellow Death's Snipe hit her shoulder. Her HP was now very low. Yellow's snipe pushed her to the side. A side where she saw an opening that was not blocked by any players. She instinctively ran that way. In her haste, she didn't sense the mana on the ground. The ground she stepped on lightened up. She received small damage that brought her life to critical and was unable to move. She had stepped onto the Immobilizing Trap that a Technocraft had placed. Unable to move, she was helpless as the enemy approached.

Killingred was the closest and also the most passionate. She used Charge with her spear ready to impale Red Death. She wanted to see Red Death's expression up close when she delivered the final blow.

Red Death looked at the spear that was coming. Watching the inevitable demise, her despair returned. While her heart was down, a small shining plate suddenly floated before her. It took her an instant to recognize that it was the recall plate that Jack had given her.

Chapter 768: Emergency Rescue

The recall plate in front of Red Death exploded with bright light. She had to shield her eyes due to the sudden brightness. When she opened her eyes again, she saw the back of someone familiar.

Jack was now standing in front of Red Death. Killingred's spear that was about to stab Red Death instead stabbed Jack. Damage number 186 appeared on his head.

Jack looked at the spear that was stabbing him and then at the dragoon woman who was holding that spear with a look of surprise. He then turned back and saw Red Death who was wearing a similarly surprised face, then to the players around them.

He had used Inspect while doing it. He saw that Red Death no longer carried Death Associates' guild tag in her description, while all the players here were Death Associates members. He could roughly hazard a guess as to what had transpired.

He then looked back at the woman who still had her spear impaling his body. "You stab me?" He asked.

"I... I stab you...," Killingred stammered. She knew who was the one before her. She had joined the previous clashes between her guild against this person.

"Then you don't mind me returning the favor, do you?" Storm Breaker appeared in his hand with a swift thrust.

Killingred felt the sudden stab and hurriedly retreated. She suffered 907 damage.

'So high!' Killingred exclaimed in her mind. That one simple stab took almost a quarter of her life.

'So low,' Jack thought within. He had tried applying mana manipulation in that stab just now. It didn't work. The damage was just the standard damage without using any skill. He concluded it would still be a long way before he could apply mana manipulation in real combat.

After that one stab, Yellow Death was awakened from his trance. He had no time to wonder why this demon suddenly appeared here out of nowhere. He sent an order in the party chat, 'Everyone wears your Amulet of Rebirth!' He proceeded to do so himself.

He sent the next order, 'Concentrate your attacks on Red Death. No need to deal with him! We disperse once we kill Red!'

Yellow Death knew they had no chance of winning with the numbers they had at the moment, but he was unwilling to go back with failure. No matter what happens, at least they should kill Red Death.

Jack activated Dragon Eye. With his perception of time slowed, he cast one spell after another. He first cast Magic Wall, protecting Red Death from all the attacks from one side. He then cast Barrier and put himself on Red Death's other side, using his body as a shield. Then he cast Tracing Beams, Mana Beam, and Arcane Turbulence at the enemies' range players, causing them disruptions. All the spells were cast in the span of a few seconds. His casting was already fast due to his multi-runes casting. Combined with the time warp perception of his Dragon Eye skill, it was as if multiple archmages were casting the spells at the same time.

With his body still protecting Red Death, Jack sent her a party invite as well as gave her a bottle of Grace of Tranquility Potion.

Red Death didn't bother checking the bottle using Inspect. She also didn't waste time asking Jack how he was able to appear here at this exact moment. She believed Jack meant her no harm and she knew she had no luxury of time. So, she accepted the invite. She took the bottle and downed the content immediately.

Her HP and stamina were fully refilled. Not only that, she heard the notification that she had received attributes, defense, and recovery buffs, as well as being immune to all mental status effects for twenty long minutes.

She looked at Jack with astonishment. Jack simply grinned back. Jack could have asked Peniel to heal Red Death, but he wanted her to have the buffs for extra protection. Jack said to her, "Leave everything to me." Then to Peniel, he said, "Stay with her."

Jack turned back to the crowd. He summoned his wolves, who circled Red Death in a protective formation. He then summoned Therras and his spirit weapon. He could have decimated the crowd here in an instant using his Lightning God Barrage, but he wanted to test his upgraded pets and spirit weapon against these players.

Therras didn't waste time, it unleashed Autocratic Roar once it appeared, damaging and causing multiple negative status effects to all the enemies in the vicinity.

"Supersonic mode," Jack gave the order. Jack was rather happy with this opportunity. He had been itching to see how Therras' new ability performed.

Upon receiving the command, Therras activated its armor supersonic mode. The jetpack on its back truly was a jetpack. The back of it was an afterburner, a long tailpipe fire shot out of this afterburner. It propelled Therras forward. At the same time, the two small wings by the side of the jetpack extended out. The small wings were now two long wings projecting out to Therras' two sides.

No, not wings, Jack thought as he saw Therras pass by the Death Associates members. They were blades! Two large blades cut the players as Therras zoomed past them. With its enhanced speed, Therras just ran around the enemy ranks chaotically. Damage numbers occurred non-stop as Therras continued to ram and bash at anyone it passed by.

The spirit weapon on Jack's other side activated its melee mode since there were enemies nearby. It just dove into the enemies with its two long blades dancing around using the Formless Flowing Sword style. With the fast and consecutive cuts, its chaos damage mowed down the enemy's front line effortlessly.

Jack didn't stay idle. He was interrupted when he was about to read the description of his evolved spell. Now, he decided to just see the effect directly. He cast the Myriad Venomous Vipers.

Death Associates players who were still unsure of what to do, suddenly found the ground below them was shining an eerie green. It took them just a beat to decide to run from that shining ground. However, as they started running, numerous green shadows leaped out of the ground. The shadows' speed was frightening. Before they knew it, they had been wrapped around by very large green ropes.

No, not ropes! They realized. The end of these so-called ropes stared back at them. They were large snakes. The snakes opened their mouths and bit at the ones they had ensnared. The players received damage from the bites as well as suffering from Poison status. They couldn't do anything because the snakes' long bodies were still entangling their bodies. The snakes didn't stop with just one bite. They bit, again and again, causing damage each time as well as refreshing the Poison status.

When their captives died, they turned to those outside their area. These players had been scared shitless by the scene and put a safe distance away. When they thought they were safe, the snakes opened their mouths and spit. Green liquids shot out and hit those at the distance, they suffered damage and received Poison status as well.

Jack was amazed by his spell's transformation. The spell was not only a crowd control spell now, it was also an offensive spell, both melee and range. The unique-grade seed was indeed not disappointing.

Yellow Death was speechless at such a drastic turn of events. In just a short moment, a large number of casualties had occurred on his team. He turned to Red Death, thinking about stealing a killing shot. But when he saw her HP was back to full, his heart sank.

"I... I think we should flee," said Bigarm, who was beside him.

"No, we should finish our mission and kill that bitch!" Killingred uttered. She was not willing to let go of this opportunity of taking down Red Death. It was a dream come true for her. How could she let it go?

Before Yellow Death could answer, he noticed three flashes of green light. He jumped away instinctively as three wind energies rushed by. He was cut by one of them and suffered huge damage. Bigarm and Killingred were not that aware. All three wind energies sliced their bodies and took out all their HPs. The two fell lifelessly to the ground.

Yellow turned to the source of the green flashes and was terrified when he saw Jack so close. Jack had used Shooting Dash to cover the distance. He then activated Adrenaline Rush and Overlimit before executing Wind Slash.

"This will be the second time you lose your Amulet of Rebirth because of me," Jack said with a grin.

"Don't you think it will be easy!" Yellow yelled. He frantically called out his Drone and his pet and threw a grenade at Jack.

Jack shot Mana Bullet at the grenade, detonating it mid-flight. His reflexes and accuracy were good enough to perform the feat. When Yellow's elite-grade pet, Nimble Cat, arrived, Jack said, "You are still using this weak pet? Let me do you a favor."

Jack's Storm Breaker was still at its Overlimit state. He activated Phantom Blade and used Penta Slash. Five slashes from the real blade and five slashes of the phantom blade took out a large portion of the pet's life. Jack followed up with Devouring Cross, all the while ignoring the small damages caused by Yellow's drone. The Nimble Cat soon turned into dust.

"Now you can focus on finding a better pet," Jack said after the deed. But Yellow was already fleeing from the moment he called his pet out. He was again using the tactic of sacrificing his pet to cover his escape. But unlike the tournament, his pet died for real this time.

When Yellow thought he had put enough distance, he suddenly found another Jack in front of him.

Chapter 769: Heading to the Second Prince's Camp

Jack had used Body Double after sending his minions. Yellow Death's attention was on Therras who was wreaking havoc at the time so he didn't notice when Jack was casting. Jack then sent his three copies out in different directions, in preparation if the enemy's leaders decided to flee.

One of his copies now caught Yellow in his escape path. Yellow instinctively shot at Jack's copy. The bullet passed through Jack's copy as if he was not there. Jack switched place with that copy then and used Blitz Slash. With his Overlimit still active, his five slashes took out Yellow's HP.

Jack looked at where the fighting was still taking place. Death Associates members were panicking now. They were fleeing in all directions. Jack's Spirit Weapon had changed to range mode. Its eight tiny blades chased after the fleeing players and cut their legs to slow them down. Its core then fired a thick beam at those that were slowed.

Therras' supersonic mode was over, but it was still ferocious enough to deal with the players. With its armor, it completely ignored all attacks. It just tanked everything and went for total offense.

Red Death also didn't stay idle, she chased and killed many of her former comrades. Jack's wolves stayed by her side assisting her hunt.

In a short while, most everyone was routed. Some had escaped, but Jack didn't bother about them. He called everyone to return.

When the fight was over, the bodies of the players disintegrated. A few left behind loots. Those must be the ones that didn't wear Amulet of Rebirth. Maybe those players had lost too many amulets of rebirths so they couldn't afford one anymore.

Jack instructed his wolves to help him gather the few loots on the ground while he approached Red Death. "Let me guess, I am the reason you get kicked out of the guild?"

Red Death didn't answer. She was looking around where her former comrades had fallen which were now replaced with loots. She was feeling complicated about what had happened.

"I'm not kicked out. This is an attempt at insurgency. Once our true leader, Black Death, is back, this will be straightened out," She said. "How do you appear here? Does it have something to do with that plate you have given me?" She had checked her bag. The recall plate was gone already.

"Yes. It is something that summoned its owner when a pre-set condition is met," Jack answered.

"What pre-set condition?"

"Depends on what the owner input before giving it away. In your case, I set it to summon me when you are feeling desperate and are thinking of help."

Jack could only set such a vague condition for Red Death. He couldn't set it like the Recall Plate he gave to Paytowin where Paytowin could call him deliberately. Jack knew that Red Death would never intentionally summon him, even in her most desperate moment. He also couldn't set it with a condition such as when Red Death's HP was lowered to 20% or something like that. It would be awkward if he appeared and found out Red Death's HP was lowered by a boss that she was hunting with her guildmates. What should he do then? Help them kill the boss?

He set such a condition because he knew Red's personality. She would not be getting desperate in a monster fight, even if the boss was insanely strong. The only way he thought that she might get into such a state was when she found out she was alone, like truly alone, bereft of any ally. And that was precisely what Jack was worried about. She had assisted him on more than one occasion. This would come back to bite her sooner or later. That was why he had given her the recall plate.

"Then that plate should have malfunctioned. I have not been desperate nor call for any help," Red Death denied.

"I set it to sense your mind. I know you won't call for help openly even if you die," Jack said.

"Hmph," Red Death harrumphed for a response.

"What are you doing out here anyway?" Jack asked.

The question reminded Red Death. She hurriedly opened her quest page. The quest was still there, even when she was already out of the guild. Although this was a guild quest, this quest was initiated by her and she had also been in a great part of its progress. Maybe that's why she was still considered a part of the quest. The description had changed and become her individual quest, though.

"I need to get to Prince Rhemos' camp quick! Borrow me your steed whistle," Red Death demanded. Her steed had been killed during Yellow Death's ambush.

"Um... Even if I do, I don't think my steed will allow you to ride her," Jack said. "But I can carry you."

Jack summoned Pandora. His wolves had finished gathering all the loots then. He simply chucked them all into his storage bag. He then told the Nightmare politely that she would be carrying an extra passenger. Pandora huffed in response.

"Fine, but don't do this often," Peniel translated.

"Great, come!" Jack climbed to Pandora and offer his hand to Red Death.

Red Death wondered why Jack was being so courteous to his steed, but she had no time for that. She took Jack's hand and sat behind him.

"Where to?" Jack asked.

Red Death pointed in a direction.

"Hold tight!" Jack said and asked Pandora to bolt.

Red Death had seen Jack's steed before. She knew how fast this steed was. He held Jack's waist firmly. Yet, when Pandora shot forward, it still caught her in surprise. She spontaneously tightened her grip and pressed her body to Jack's back.

Feeling the sensation on her back, he sent a thought to Peniel, 'Can you persuade Pandora to let me do this more often?'

Peniel could sense the source of his excitement. She rolled her eyes at him.

"What's wrong with prince Rhemos? Isn't he traveling with his private army?" Jack asked.

Jack had been receiving regular reports about the country's situation from Bowler and the others. After coming back from the world tournament on Mount Audacias, the three princes had doubled their efforts in securing support. They had been traveling all over the country, visiting the nobles and factions in one city after another. Of course, they didn't do it together. It would be awkward if they were lobbying the same family at the same time. They each chose a different city as a starting point and then worked their way from there, so it was less likely for them to be in the same city during the same period.

All three princes brought their private army during this trip. Firstly, it was for security. Secondly, it was a show of force. Any organization would prefer to back one who was more likely to win. By bringing more army than the others, it would show that one force was superior.

In this case, Prince Therribus' camp brought the largest force. He had always been the most feasible candidate to inherit the throne according to the general masses. While among the three, Prince Alonzo had the smallest force. However, he settled this problem by enlisting the outworlders. Many of Everlasting Heavenly Legends' core members had joined Themisphere military faction. Commander Quintus had taken the chance and issued a kingdom faction quest for them to join this trip.

Additionally, prince Alonzo had also sent an official request to their guild. So, other members of Everlasting Heavenly Legends who were not part of the kingdom faction could still join, as a guild quest. In the end, a large portion of Everlasting Heavenly Legends' members ended up going on a parade with Prince Alonzo's camp.

The number of outworlders that joined the camp bolstered prince Alonzo's army and allowed him to not be seen as too weak compared to his two brothers' camps.

It had been more than one and a half months since they started their trips. They were nearing the end of the journey. All three princes should be on their way back to Themisphere at this time.

"Hey, Cleo! I asked, what's wrong with Prince Rhemos?" Jack asked again when Red Death didn't answer his question.

"Just hurry!" Red Death replied without answering his question.

Since Red Death was not in the mood for conversation, Jack didn't ask her further. He instead opened his skill page. He had not yet checked his evolved spell because he had been interrupted. He had seen the spell in action but seeing its description would provide a better understanding.

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Myriad Venomous Vipers (Active Skill), level 20/20, star: 5

Mark an area of 5 meters in diameter, 15 vipers with a length of 25 meters will come out of this area and ensnare anything in range.

Vipers can bite and deal 200% earth damage, as well as shoot range attacks that deal 120% earth damage. Range attack covers a distance of 50 meters.

All attacks have a 60% chance of inflicting the Poison effect.

Range: 20 meters

Duration: 40 seconds

Mana consumed: 100

Cooldown: 5 minutes

*

'Cool,' Jack uttered in his mind.

"Oh, no." Red Death's voice took his attention back. He soon found out what had caused her distraught.

In the distance, in the direction where they were heading, there was a sign of a large fire and lots of smoke.

Chapter 770: Deceit

When Red Death was yet to be beset by her guildmates, Prince Rhemos was receiving a guest inside his camp.

"Where is Red?" Rhemos asked.

"She is currently occupied with an important matter, so I have come to replace her," Earmouth said.

"More important than a meeting with me?" Rhemos said with displeasure.

"Forgive us, Your Highness. It is a sudden issue, we are helpless about it as well."

"Fine. How goes the search for the information I have tasked you, people? Have you made any progress?"

"We make more than progress. We have found one of the acolytes."

"Really?" Rhemos, who was sitting leisurely all this time, sat upright now. He was visibly excited by the news. "Where is this person?"

"We have negotiated with this acolyte, but he is unwilling to come to this camp because of all the soldiers. We have brought him to the closest hill just outside this camp, but he is only willing to meet Your Highness in person."

"That is absurd," the cloaked man behind Rhemos uttered. "Where is this acolyte's position? Let me know and I will go catch him."

"Please don't, Sir Rayne," Earmouth pleaded. "If you fail and the acolyte flees, we won't be able to find him again."

"Hmph, he won't escape me," Rayne said with confidence.

Rhemos waved his hand. "There is no need to antagonize the person. We need him to bring us to his God. The God of Greed had helped me before when one of his acolytes gave me the poison for Duchess Isabelle, but his cult had strangely turned silent for a while. I need to find them again. We have an agreement that they will help me secure the throne. Go gather a battalion, we will march to this hill."

"I am sorry, Your Highness," Earmouth said again. "The acolyte mentioned that he will only meet my Prince alone. If he sees guards, he will leave."

Rhemos frowned at the words.

"This is taking things too far! How can we allow His Highness to take the risk out in the open!" Rayne uttered. He then turned to Rhemos. "My Prince, let me go and capture this acolyte."

"He is just right there on the next hill," Earmouth said. "We should be able to call for help easily if anything is wrong. If my Prince worries, my Prince can send troops to the surrounding area. He won't notice as long as the troops don't come near his position."

"I agree with sending troops. This way, we can cut his retreat path if this acolyte decides to flee," Rayne said.

"Which company is scheduled for the next scouting duty?" Rhemos asked.

A knight captain next to Rayne answered, "Wilson's company is scheduled to go scouting within the next five minutes."

"Good. Go relay my command that once they are out of sight, they are to sneak back and surround the little hill next to this camp," Rhemos ordered.

"Right away, Your Highness," the knight captain replied and immediately went out of the tent to relay the command.

"We will wait ten minutes before we go meet this acolyte. It should be enough time for Wilson's company to take their positions," Rhemos said.

"I will go to inform the acolyte that Prince Rhemos is willing to meet," Earmouth said.

"Wait! You tell him that I will be following my Prince," Rayne uttered. "Do not expect me to leave my Prince's side."

Rhemos was silent. He didn't disagree. If the acolyte couldn't agree with him bringing at least one bodyguard, then forget about it. He would just opt for the forceful method of capturing the acolyte, even if that might risk offending their God.

Earmouth nodded. He then exited the camp.

"I don't like this," Rayne said.

"We can't understand how Gods think. Their acolytes most likely share their peculiarities," Rhemos said.

"What I don't like is that outworlder," Rayne clarified. I have worked with many weasels, I know one when I see one.

"I have seen him before with Red Death. He is in the same guild as her. We should be able to trust him," Rhemos said. "Or, do you think he has jumped ship to my little brother's camp? That Alonzo is too straight. The boy is incapable of trickery."

"He has gained rather strong support lately, though. His prestige has increased after returning from the World Tournament."

"Hmph, that cub is nothing. We will deal with him later. It is my big brother we should worry about. Where is he at the moment?"

"The last info from my spies put him in Thenident two days ago," Rayne answered.

"I just heard that our father's condition has deteriorated. He is mostly in bed these days. Most likely, he won't last long. We can't afford to slack because of this situation."

"How so?"

"You don't know Therribus as I do. That man is capable of doing anything for what he considers right. The only thing that holds him down is our father."

Rhemos stood from his seat. "Let us prepare."

*

Since he was going out, Rhemos wore a full set of armor. Rayne stood beside him. The two of them were standing at the edge of their camp. They were looking at the series of hills next to the camp. After some while, they saw a tiny flash of light in the distance. The light flashed a few times in a specific rhythm.

"They have taken positions," Rayne informed after interpreting the message from the flashes.

"Let's go meet this acolyte and see what he offers then," Rhemos said.

Some soldiers followed after them when they walked out of the camp but Rhemos instructed the soldiers to stay.

The hill closest to their camp was low, but around it was higher hills. They saw a figure wearing a hooded cloak waiting there. The person's back was to them. Earmouth was nowhere to be seen, this cloaked person was alone. Rhemos and Rayne continued walking toward the person but they stopped without getting too near. Rayne stood slightly in front of Rhemos, just in case this person turned hostile.

Rhemos looked around. "Where is that outworlder?"

He had a bad feeling about this, he was about to tell Rayne to retreat when the cloaked person in front of them spoke, "I was starting to worry that you don't come."

It was surprisingly a voice that he was very familiar with. The cloaked person turned around and removed his hood.

"Therribus?!" Rhemos uttered in surprise. "Why are you here? Where is the acolyte?"

"There is no acolyte," Therribus answered.

"What do you mean there is no... Where is Earmouth? It can't be. He is working for you? No way! You hate outworlders."

"Many people misunderstand me," Therribus said. "It's not that I hate outworlders. Instead, I fear them."

"Fear? You?"

"Yes. Me. The big brother who never shows any fear. Do you know why I fear them so? Just look at them. It was not even a year since they arrived in this world. How fast do they grow? They are nothing when they first appeared, but now they can compete against our common soldiers already. What do you think will happen when the majority of them reached level 70? Do you think they will still abide by our rules? The balance of power will shift. This world will become theirs. They will become the masters and we will be their helpers if they are kind, their slaves if they are wicked. If we don't act now, it will be too late to act. You are not a fool. Surely you can see the danger they represent."

"So, what do you think we should do? Banish them?"

"Control them! Limit their growth!" Therribus uttered.

"They won't accept it lying down," Rhemos argued.

"Then we give them no choice! That's why our country needs an iron hand to deal with this outworlder situation. Someone who can make the difficult choice."

"Someone like you?" Rhemos answered.

"Someone like me," Therribus said.

"Hmph, all that talk. In the end, what you want is still power. Tell me, why do you really come here?" Rhemos asked.

"... I am here to offer you a choice," Therribus answered. "Bow to me and accept me as the rightful inheritor of the throne."

"Or...?"

"Or, I will be forced to make a difficult decision."

Shadows came out on the higher hills around them. Lots of soldiers. Rhemos looked back to their back and found there was also a row of soldiers blocking their retreat path.

"You have planned this...," Rhemos said. "Never pegged you as someone who uses deceit."

"To be honest, I didn't think of this ploy. It is offered by an outworlder."

"You are working with the enemies who you are trying to control?"

"Sometimes you have to work with the devil," Therribus said. "My original plan was that."

Therribus pointed to where Rhemos' camp was. From this higher elevation, Rhemos saw a large force approaching his camp. The sentries in Rhemos' camp finally noticed this incoming force and sounded the alarm. Once the alarm sounded, the incoming force picked up the speed. They soon collided with Rhemos' unprepared army.