

World 781

Chapter 781: Training Tactical Formations

During the march, Jack's regiment went forward as planned, acting as the vanguard troops. However, he didn't bring all 3,000 troops with him. From past experience, the monsters were scared away by the large army, except for the ones with more numbers in their pack.

He had 2,000 troops led by Bailey and Miller staying within sight of the main army, while he and the remaining 1,000 troops went ahead. He used Runestone of Marching so that their speed increased. He found that if he willed it fiercely, he could increase their movement speed up to 70%. He spread out his troops so they didn't appear too menacing to the monsters. It also allowed them to cover more ground.

His 1,000 vanguard troops vanquished the monsters as they passed through. Jack had to be within a certain distance when the monsters were killed so that he gained the exp points and souls, so he ran around along the spread army. The soldiers were rather confused why their leader went back and forth like that.

The monsters were rather low-level, so not many exp points and souls were gathered. They were still in the vicinity of the capital after all. Moving further, Jack could farm slightly stronger monsters. This time he didn't share the exp with others, so even when he farmed monsters that were below his level, his exp still increased at a faster rate compared to farming exp using the normal method.

On the second day after leaving Thereath, Jack's human age reached the eleventh month of age. His race's passive skill, Limitless Potential, was upgraded to rank 7. It now gave him HP +1500, Stamina/MP +200, and all attributes except luck +7.

As days passed, more and more players trickled in. They caught up to the army because the army moved slowly. Some of the new recruits decided to just teleport directly to Theneward to clash directly with the players who had joined Therribus. Killing players of the opposite side netted war contribution as well. Hence, before the two native armies clashed, the players had already had their mini-war in the vicinity of Theneward.

After three days, the number of players joining their camp grew to 40,000. However, the intel they gathered had players joining Therribus experiencing the same increase, to 20,000. These late joiners were mostly independent players or small guilds who were still undecided when the war quests dropped on the first day.

In terms of players, there were actually many more. In the capital alone, there were around a million. However, most lived common lives. They took up common jobs, worked for natives, worked for other players, focused on the auxiliary skills, or simply just lazed around. Only a portion who had adapted to this world or those who had gaming experience went out and leveled up. And amongst these, many were either not interested or were afraid of dying in the war. Many players had simply abused the Amulet of Rebirth wantonly and were now finding it too expensive to be bought, so they couldn't afford to die again.

On the third day, John arrived. He arrived in the evening when the army had set up camp. He met Jack first before he asked Jack to assemble all the players' leaders.

When the leaders were assembled, John immediately said without any courtesy, "All of you now answer to me during this war!"

"Damn, dude! You are even more vicious than me," Jack uttered.

The leaders looked similarly startled, but John didn't give any of them a chance to say anything. He went ahead with his first instruction, "David! Where is Serpent Boss?"

"He is at the enemy's territory, gathering intel," David replied.

"Ah, great men think alike," John remarked. He then took out a large piece of paper and spread it on the ground. "Send more of your guild members there. Your guild will be responsible for reconnaissance. I will need details on the ground for this part. I also need more information about the surrounding area and the enemy's movements."

John was pointing at the large piece of paper, which when everyone looked, was the drawing of the areas around Theneward.

"Where did you get this map from?" Jack asked.

"I asked a person who used to work as a cartoonist in our previous world to draw it up," John answered. He then pointed to someone, "Now, you!"

"Hm?" Prideful Josh was the one getting pointed at.

"We need your War Fire. What are the ingredients? We will share our supplies. Other guilds here will do the same. We need as many as you can produce," John said.

The other guild leaders looked at each other, 'We will?' Their faces said.

"War Fire?" Jack asked, to which John waved him off. Peniel answered Jack in his mind, 'War Fire is a tool that delivers fire damage over a very large area and will remain burning for a long period.'

"How do you know we have the recipe for War Fire?" Prideful Josh asked John.

"Is there a need to ask rhetorical questions? We all have spies in each other's guilds. Now, moving on. What do you need to produce more War Fires? If you need more alchemist players, we can supply them as well."

Prideful Josh frowned. Spies? He was indeed not delusional to think his guild was free of spies. Yet, War Fire was a secret known only to the important members of his guild. Did John just imply that he had a spy inside the upper echelon of his guild?

He would deal with that later, the war quest at the moment took priority. "We don't have a problem with the common ingredients nor the alchemist players. What we are lacking are two rare ingredients, Fire Grass and Erupting Berry. If you can give us your stock of these two ingredients, we will be able to produce sufficient quantity."

"All right, I will send people to deliver them to your guild headquarters. Tell your man to be ready to receive them and your alchemists to be ready to get to work at once. I need three hundred war fires ready within one week," John said. At the same time, he sent a message to Dylan. He had ordered Dylan

to be ready at a moment's notice, Dylan would mobilize his traders to start accumulating the required ingredients from all seven countries.

"Three hundred? Are you nuts?" Josh uttered. "If you want that many, then I will need your alchemist players to help out as well. Even then, I don't think it will be faster than two weeks to produce that many. Not to mention, war fires are not things that can be put into our storage bag, we need to transport them manually."

"That's why we need to hurry. I will send the alchemist players," John said. He then addressed the rest of the guild leaders, "All of you will do the same. Send your stocks and alchemists to Sins Lair!"

Sins Lair was the name of Crowd of Sins' guild headquarters.

The guild leaders again looked at each other with weird expressions.

"Do not try to cheat by saying you don't have any. I have spies in your guilds as well. Those that do not send their available stocks and alchemists will have their war contributions deducted by the end of this war quest," John threatened.

'You can do that?' Jack sent John a message.

'No, but they don't know that. Now, stop distracting me," John replied.

"Next, Black Cloak!" John called.

"Present," Kill Order responded.

"You are a famous assassin guild. Do what you do best. Send half of your guild members to this forest, preferably the strongest one. I want this forest sterile of enemy's presence. I don't think the native army will enter this forest, so the ones who do so will only be players. Assassinate anyone who enters. Once you take control, you can have some members roam around the vicinity and assassinate enemies who had wandered away from the army."

John was pointing to a forest not far away from Fort Garadhor where Prince Alonzo was holing up. That forest was also the area where he had asked David to do a detailed reconnaissance. The forest was not close enough to the fortress to influence the war. John was right, there was no reason for Therribus' army to go to that forest. So, why did John have so much interest in it? Jack wondered.

"Now, the rest of you, we will organize everyone to practice tactical formations," John said.

"Tactical formations?" Fat Gregory asked.

"Yes. First of all, you should start dividing your troops into groups. Guilds with members over a thousand number will divide into two battalions, these battalions will further divide into companies of three hundred troops. These companies divide again into platoons of eighty troops. And finally, each platoon is to be divided into squads with a maximum of forty troops. The class arrangement within each squad I will leave for you to decide, but my suggestion is to diversify the class. You should have a balance between melee, ranged, magic, and healer.

"The members of the squad should always stay near each other at all times. Have them create a party for shared buff and the like. The squad leaders should be in a party with each other and one of them has

to be always near their platoon leader. Hence, they can receive orders verbally from the platoon leaders and then relay those orders to the other squad leaders, who then relay the orders verbally to their squad. The same thing applies upward. This way, we will have quick broadcasting of orders. Let's start doing it right away!"

Jack had already created a party with the guild leaders, so John simply entered the party. The guild leaders were now sending instructions to their members.

"Chop, chop! People. We don't have all night. We need to start training right away?" John urged.

"Right away? Are you saying right this minute? Tonight?" Fat Gregory asked.

"Do I need to teach you vocabulary?" John replied.

"John, everyone is tired after a long day's march," Jack said.

"They can sleep later after we are done practicing. Starting tonight, we will have a routine two hours training starting from after dinner until before we sleep. Everyone has to be adept enough to get into formation once an order is given. We need to be able to at least do that before we engage the enemy. Otherwise, all the players here joining this war will just be cannon fodder."

Chapter 782: Restriction

It took the guild leaders a while to get everything organized. The guildless players took a longer time. Some influential individual players had formed a party with the others, so they asked these others to start relaying the message and formed groups as instructed by John. There were still many individual players who weren't included or chose to seclude themselves from the others. John couldn't afford to wait for these stragglers. He gave his next instruction once sufficient organizing structure was formed.

"Now, we will only drill the most basic tactical formations. We don't have time to do fancy shits. The formation we train will be line, column, wedge, vee, and box. Each of you needs to be able to get into these formations at a moment of notice. By the end of the drills, I want everyone to already know where you should position yourself inside each of the five formations. Who should be by your sides, and so on. It should be an automated response. No more thinking. Just act once orders are given!"

A large portion of the 40,000 players now stood ready on the wide plain the army was camping. The activity of such a large crowd unwittingly created a ruckus. Lord Commander Armstrong and the others came out of their tents and watched what the outworlders were up to.

Jack was speechless. The very first night this guy arrived, he had caused such a commotion.

Since the plain was flat and there were no hills nor large rocks for John to elevate himself, he asked two subordinates to lift him and let him stand on their shoulders so that everyone could see him. Once he balanced himself enough, he took out something that dumbfounded everyone. A megaphone.

"What the f*ck! Where do you get that?" Jack asked.

"Duh, the same place I get my binoculars," John replied.

"Is it even working?" Jack asked again.

"I won't be taking it out if it isn't, will I? This is a non-electric one. I will be the one surprised if it is not working."

John then put his mouth before the megaphone and started speaking, "Everyone, If I may have your attention! Since the night is late and this is the first time we practice. We will do it for just one hour and practice only two formations, line and column. Now, don't everyone agree that I'm a reasonable person? All right, we will start at first with labelings."

John put labels on each group. He used alphabets for the battalions. Since more than 30,000 players took part, there were more than thirty battalions of one-thousand-strong, which was more than the existing twenty-six alphabets. So, after he reached Z, he continued with AA, AB, and so on.

As for the smaller groups below a battalion, he assigned numbers to them. The first company within battalion A was called A1. The first platoon within the company of the same battalion will be called A11, and so on. In this way, he could address each group separately when needed.

He informed everyone that the formations should be able to be applied starting from the smallest group to the largest group. He made everyone practice by calling out their labels and mentioning the formation they should take, alternating between line and column. He first did it by using the megaphone. Once they got slightly used to it, he changed to the messaging system.

John said they were only practicing for one hour. But in the end, they only stopped a bit over two hours.

"All right, everyone! Thank you for your participation. You can go rest now," John said over his megaphone. While everyone was glad that this drill was over, John added, "I can see everyone has been enjoying the drill. I'm sure you are all looking forward to tomorrow night. Don't worry, we will do this again tomorrow, and it will be for three hours long."

Everyone threw him a glare. Who the hell was enjoying it? The guild leaders who had been listening to John from the start were especially irked. Didn't he say it would be two hours of routine training? Why now increased to three hours?

Although most were complaining, they still went with the program. They understood that in war, coordination was important. Especially if they were weaker and less in number. They needed every edge to gain an advantage. Some of the players were ex-military, notably those from Dogs of War. John enlisted them to help him train the others. They continued training daily while marching.

On the fifth day after the reinforcement army departed, Therribus' army had finally finished gathering. Their number was even more than previously assumed. They were at 120,000 strong. Therribus didn't let the outworlder troops join them. Instead, he asked White Death to lead these outworlder troops and did as White Death pleased. He had issued the war quest simply to hinder the reinforcement army. He had no interest in utilizing the outworlder force.

The large army reorganized themselves. The army was composed of multiple forces that rarely worked together. Hence, it needed time to work out their arrangements. They spent one whole day on that. Prince Therribus was taking the role of the supreme commander. Despite him having limited war experiences, no one objected to the decision. Lord Marshall Arther Pendrake would be the vice commander.

They would start marching for fort Garadhor first thing tomorrow. Their distance from that fortress was around one day of marching. So, by the day after tomorrow, they should be able to start their siege already.

That night, Prince Therribus had one last meeting before they departed in the morning. After the meeting ended, he dismissed everyone. Garland stayed when he saw Prince Therribus still seated on his chair.

"Something on your mind, Your Highness?" Garland asked.

"I can't help but feel that something is wrong...", Therribus said.

"Going against one's own blood is undoubtedly difficult. I'm sure Your Highness doesn't take this decision lightly. But for the sake of our country, we have no choice."

"That's not what I'm referring to... But never mind, It is probably just my jittery feeling before the coming battle. Have our scout confirmed that Alonzo fortified himself inside Fort Garadhor?"

"We have. Both our spies and our allied outworlders confirmed seeing Prince Alonzo entering the fort. They were now fortifying themselves there."

"I wonder why they choose to hole up there instead of just run."

"Perhaps he knows there is nowhere to run to. The only way to safety is if he can reach the capital, but we have the ways blocked. If he keeps on running, we will eventually catch up to him. He must have decided to gamble it all by fighting us."

"He should know that he is seriously outnumbered," Therribus said.

"He must have put a lot of faith on those outworlder forces," Garland replied.

"Then he is a fool! As he always is."

"He is just a brat, in my opinion. He should have just stepped aside willingly instead of becoming Your Highness' obstacle. He had brought this onto himself."

"Hmph," Therribus didn't say anything more. He closed his eyes. He was just about to retire to his tent when the guard informed him of a visitor.

"Who is it?" Garland asked.

"An outworlder named White Death," The guard answered.

"Your Highness is going to rest already. Ask him to wait until tomorrow morning!" Garland ordered.

"Halt. It's fine. Let him in," Therribus ordered.

The guard bowed and went out. Not long after, White Death entered.

"What do you want?" Garland asked.

White Death bowed respectfully. He then said, "I'm sorry to have come so late. But as My Prince had ordered, I'm in charge of the outworlders force. Some guild leaders have been throwing questions that are difficult for me to answer unless I talk with Your Highness."

"What are those questions?" Prince Therribus asked.

"I understand that Your Highness wishes to apply some kind of control over the outworlders once Your Highness ascends the throne. Might I ask for the details?"

"That is His Highness' right! Why must His Highness explain to you?!" Garland bellowed.

White Death was not flustered. "The guilds that I'm working with are all afraid that once we help Your Highness become the king, they will instead be cast aside. I need some assurance to keep them in line."

"Pah! Your kind should be glad that we don't cast you aside right this moment!" Garland spat.

Therribus lifted his hand to calm Garland. He then said, "You should know by now that the reason I'm against your kind is the danger your kind pose to mine."

White Death nodded.

"In my opinion, there is only one way for us to live together. That is by you submitting to a restriction."

"Restriction? What kind of restriction?" White Death asked.

"Level restriction," Therribus answered. "Your kind will need to submit to a restriction where we determined the highest level you are allowed to reach."

Chapter 783: Prince Therribus' Army Arrived

White Death was silent after hearing Therribus' words. The prince let him ponder in peace.

After a while, White Death asked, "May Your Highness elaborate on this restriction?"

"I may," Therribus replied. "The majority of your kind will have to stay at level thirty and below. A portion that has supported me will be allowed to level up until level fifty. Those who are the most loyal to me will be granted the privilege to level up until level seventy, but that will be the highest level allowed. Anyone who happens to go past their permitted level will have to submit themselves to the authority. They will be executed within the safe zone. That way, their levels will be reduced by one and return to the permitted level. If their level breach is more than one level, then they will be executed multiple times until they are reverted to the permissible level cap. These offenders will also be given penalty depending on the number of levels they breach."

White Death was again silent after hearing the information.

"Do you have a problem with this arrangement?" Therribus asked.

"If I am part of those that are allowed to reach level seventy, then no. I have no problem at all," White Death replied.

"Is that true?" Therribus asked while staring straight at White Death.

White Death laughed. "My goal is to be in the position of power. If Your Highness kept the other outworlders at a low level while allowing me at a high-level, then I will easily rule them. I can even crown myself the king of the outworlders in this country. Why would I not go along with this plan?"

Therribus maintained his stare, he then said, "I'm glad we are on the same page. Do you have anything else to discuss? Our army will have to depart early tomorrow."

"I have no other matter, Your Highness. Please, have a good rest," White Death bowed and retreated out.

"Do you believe him, Your Highness?" Garland asked after White Death was gone.

"No. But I believe his self-interest is helping us at this time. We will deal with him after we are done with my last brother," Therribus said.

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Outside the main tent, Yellow Death was waiting. White Death came out and they both used Guild Return Scroll.

Yellow Death asked what the prince had said. White Death told him of the prince's plan in restricting outworlder's levels.

"Do you agree with that?" Yellow Death asked.

"Why wouldn't I agree?" White Death said with a grin. "Our objective is to weaken Themisphere's country. If this country's forces fight among themselves and its outworlders are kept at a low-level, then our objective has been achieved. When Liguritutum's army came invading, they won't be able to resist."

"Do you believe that Master will keep his promise?"

"I don't see why not? He will need someone to help him manage this world. Since we have helped him conquer this country, it is logical that we are appointed for the management of this country."

Yellow Death nodded. He hoped that they didn't make the wrong gamble.

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On the seventh day after the reinforcement army departed from Thereath, Therribus' army arrived in the vicinity of Fort Garadhor.

On the wall surrounding the fort, Prince Alonzo and Jeanny stood as they watched the sea of soldiers that came into view.

"Those... are a lot of troops...," Giant Steve, who stood beside Jeanny, commented.

All the players who watched the scene gulped. Even some native soldiers were having downcast expressions.

The fort had been sealed since yesterday. The supply carts had stopped coming. Hired native blacksmiths, scrollmakers, and alchemists had left. The ones still working with the fortifications inside the fort were only players with the required auxiliary skills.

"Can we truly defend this place with so few people?" Giant Steve asked, which earned a glare from Jeanny. He received Jeanny's message at the same time, 'Stop saying things that will depress the others! We need motivation at this time more than ever!'

Giant Steve lowered his head. He knew he indeed deserved a scolding.

Jeanny started yelling instructions for the players. Most of the players here were Everlasting Heavenly Legends members. Only a small portion were the ones that joined recently due to the war quest summon. Prince Alonzo had given Jeanny the authority to command these recruits.

Commander Quintus did the same to the native soldiers. Everyone had performed drills in these past few days to prepare against the incoming siege. So, everyone knew what to do already.

Out of the few days they had to prepare, the scrollmakers and blacksmiths team had managed to restore the rune diagram that was etched on the outer walls and the gate. This diagram increased their durability and also reduce damage received to a certain extent. It also gave the walls and gate a small self-repair ability. Hence, if one wanted to destroy them, one would need to deliver non-stop damage all the time.

The blacksmith team had managed to restore four ballistae and two catapults out of ten available for each. The fort was facing flat land on all four sides, so enemies could attack from all sides. Hence, the four working ballistae were placed at the four corners. The two catapults were placed in the middle of the fort. These catapults were able to shoot over a large distance and they were also placed on a rotating wheel, so they could be fired in any direction.

The 10,000 troops inside the fort were spread out along the four sides of the wall. They would have preferred a fort that had natural barriers on a few sides like Heavenly Citadel, but this was the only fort available nearby, so they had to deal with it.

Therribus' army stopped a distance away and started spreading out. They continued spreading until any direction one gazed from the fort, they would see a sea of soldiers. The fort had been encircled. There was no gap in Therribus' army formation. Even if Prince Alonzo's army decided to flee now, there was no open path.

The two armies remained still for a long time. Each side gauging the other, trying to estimate their chance in the inevitable conflict.

"Your Highness?" Arther Pendrake asked Prince Therribus. "Everyone is ready, we can begin."

"Let's test their defense first," Therribus answered. "Send a battalion to each of their four sides."

"Yes, Your Highness!" Arther then relayed the command to his officers, who sent the signals to the distant army. Soon, four small forces detached from the encircling horde. These detachments were mostly heavy-armored knights with large tower shields. The last row behind them were archers, mages, and healers. They proceeded slowly towards the fort.

"Ranged, get ready!" Commander Quintus' voice reverberated in the fort. "Wait until they come into range!"

The soldiers and players on the wall waited in anxiety as the four battalions were getting closer. The ranged units readied their weapons.

"Steady!" Jeanny uttered.

When the enemies came into range, both Jeanny and Commander Quintus yelled, "Fire!!"

Arrows, bolts, and spells bombarded the marching knights. Their shields were large enough to protect their entire bodies, including the more vulnerable units at their backs. The knights activated their protection skills, soft light enshrouded their large tower shields.

The walls of the fort were ten meters high. Hence, the opposing force needed to get nearer before they could return fire while the defenders enjoyed increased range for firing from a higher elevation.

The knights continued to proceed under the bombardment. Their defenses were too tough. The damages produced by the range attackers were so small that any lost HP was immediately recovered by the few healers at the back.

Suddenly, a whistling sound was heard. The knights turned to the source of the sound in time and saw a very large bolt heading to them. This bolt struck their shields. The bolt caused high damage to the knight that was struck despite his shield and also knocked him away. The force was so strong that it broke apart their formation. The knights near the point of impact were sprawled on the ground, opening them up for the attacks from the defenders above.

Before the knights could recover their formation, they saw a large boulder from above. The boulder landed in their ranks and created a large shockwave. Everyone in the vicinity received damage as well as getting thrown to all four sides. The vulnerable units hiding at the back were now exposed, the defenders didn't let the chance go. They threw all their assaults on those vulnerable units.

The four sides experienced similar situations. Each ballista took care of one side, while the catapults turned around to deal with two sides each. The defenders were fired up when they saw the attackers were losing. Some players even started cheering.

Arther who watched the scene, said, "Four ballistae and two catapults. That's the number of defensive weapons they had activated."

"Hm... All right. Send a legion to strike their rear," Therribus ordered and then added, "You should get ready as well."

"Yes, Your Highness!" Arther replied.

Chapter 784: Siege on Fort Garadhor

While the defending army got excited by their apparent victory, they heard a rumble at the rear side of the fort. The defending soldiers and players stationed at the rear side had a better understanding of what caused the sound. They were currently watching a large number of soldiers rushing at them while shouting in their advance.

The legion that was advancing at their rear numbered ten thousand strong. It was equal to their number within the fort, but they were currently defending four sides equally. So, their number was divided by four. The troops defending the rear watched with worry as the army four times their size approached.

"Hold steady! They won't be able to breach a siege with such a small force," Sturdy Serpent yelled. He had completed the crafting of his pet armor at Guila's hut a while ago and returned to join Jeanny.

"Small force? Brother, do you not have eyes?" Weird Trap, who returned together with him from Guila's hut, said.

"You normally need at least five times an army if you wish to break a siege, ten times if you want a decent chance. This number won't succeed!" Sturdy Serpent uttered.

Sturdy Serpent used to be in the military, so his words carried weight. The players who listened had their spirit lifted. One thing that Sturdy Serpent intentionally left out, though, was that although this was generally true in their past world, the world here was slightly different. Mostly due to the differences in levels and grades. If the enemies had higher levels and grades, then they need fewer numbers. Not to mention all the attacking force was natives, while one-third of theirs were players. The natives possessed higher HP which allowed them to suffer more punishments.

Sturdy Serpent had inspected most of the attacking soldiers who came into range. They were mostly level 45 to 55. Their lowest grade was elite, around half were special elite. He didn't find a single basic-grade enemy from the ones who had attacked. The players' current average levels were 46 to 48, their average equipment was mostly uncommon grades with a few rare grades. This put them slightly below the natives in terms of raw power. Sturdy Serpent did not doubt there would be higher level and higher grade natives on stand-by in the encircling army.

Not to mention, if the encircling army all attacked at once. The sight of that army looked to be ten times their number.

Yet, at the moment, they needed spirit to fight. So, Sturdy Serpent told them encouraging words, even when he himself was not encouraged.

The rear-side defenders started clashing with the attacking legion. Their bombardments had little effect on the enemy's advance. The knights at the front reached the wall and started hitting it. The rune diagram was alighted as it took effect.

The ranged defenders executed all skills in their arsenals, trying to take out as many of the enemies who were battering their wall. While the attacking ranged players shot at the defenders to hinder them.

The melee players who couldn't do range attacks threw Fire Bottles from above. It was an offensive tool created by alchemists. It required cheap ingredients and also little time to produce so they had stocked a lot. However, its damage was also small. Only 100 fire damage per bottle and a very small 1% chance of causing burn, but this was still better than nothing. It allowed the melee players to contribute to the defense.

Because the fighting at the rear was getting more intense than the other three sides. The defending troops unconsciously shifted to the rear. More soldiers and players ended up at the rear-side wall. At this time, they saw the enemy facing the front wall start moving.

The number that came for this front assault was alarming. It was twice compared to the number attacking the rear. It was a legion of twenty-thousand troops. The most worrying fact was that the one leading this legion was Arther Pendrake, a level 80 mythical native.

"Isabelle...!!" Commander Quintus yelled when he recognized the person leading the incoming force.

"I'm here," Duchess Isabelle who was on a different side of the wall suddenly appeared next to the commander.

"Are they going all out already?" Prince Alonzo asked with worry.

"No, the majority of their army is still keeping their distance," Quintus answered. He then turned to his aides, "We need more defenders here, go call those at the back!"

"Yes, sir!" The aides said and went to relay the order.

Arther, who was advancing with the legion, pointed his sword, a large two-handed silver greatsword, forward. "CHAARGGEEEE...!!!" He shouted.

The entire legion increased in speed. Everyone was running. The ground trembled from the stomping of such a large number of soldiers.

At the same time, silvery transparent wings appeared on Arther's back. He then shot into the sky.

"Isabelle...! Face me!!!"

He lifted his greatsword into the sky. The greatsword blazed with silver fire that formed a giant imitation of the sword with two large wings on its side. Those that had watched the World Tournament felt that the skill looked like the superior version of Violent Blizzard's Blue Wings Slash.

The sword image was very large. If Arther slashed it down, it would hit everyone on the front wall.

Isabelle's figure that was standing beside Quintus disappeared in a flash. The next second, she appeared in front of Arther in the sky. A sphere of light appeared around her as Arther's silvery wing sword came slashing. It crashed onto Isabelle's light sphere. A thundering sound echoed through the air as a violent shockwave radiated from the point of impact. When the shockwave passed by the people below, they either fell or had to stop to steady themselves.

Arther didn't stop his assault. His whole body was suddenly alighted. Silver flame covered his entire body as well as making his frame appear twice its original size. His speed increased after the transformation. The greatsword in his hand danced at a speed undetected with naked eyes. All that was seen was multiple sword lights slashing at Isabelle.

Isabelle didn't stay idle. When her light sphere was being pounded by Arther, she was already casting a spell. Her six-runes spell took effect. Nine different types of melee weapons that were made of light appeared before her. These melee weapons moved forward and clashed with Arther.

Sword lights and living weapons struck each other endlessly. Every collision resulted in a thundering sound.

As the two mythical natives clashed in the air, the attacking soldiers below advanced under bombardment and reached the front wall. They started battering at the structure while the defenders never stopped throwing range attacks.

When the attackers arrived, the defenders noticed that they brought something with them, several very long ladders. These ladders were then hoisted up. When the ladders hit the top of the wall, a hooking mechanism on their tops rotated and latched onto the wall, fixing the ladder firmly in place. The nearby player tried to unhook the ladder, but the latches didn't budge.

A sentinel player who was confident with his strength used two hands and tried to push the ladder, but it still didn't budge.

"Dude! Do you think we are still in our world? Start hitting it!" Another player by his side uttered.

The sentinel saw the player hitting the ladder. An HP bar and damage number were seen. In order to unlatch these ladders, they needed to destroy the latching mechanism. The sentinel started hitting. However, the HP bar went down at a very slow rate.

"Move the damn aside!" A rough voice was heard and the sentinel felt himself getting shoved to the side. He was angry at the treatment and was about to scold back, but stopped himself when he saw that the man who pushed him was The Man, a high-ranking member of his guild.

The Man shouted, "All those with high damage, attack the ladders. Everyone else stepped aside!"

The ladders were small. The space where melee players could hit them was limited. Only two players could hit them at a time, three if the players were small. So, it would be a waste to let low-damage players hit the ladders.

However, even with the high-damage players hitting the ladders frantically, the HP still went down at a slow rate. When the ladder's HP was around forty percent, a shadow suddenly shot up the ladder. The Man who had decent mana sense, immediately performed a defensive maneuver as a hurricane of knives exploded in front of him. He managed to use his axe to tackle several of the knives while jumping back, but some still hit. He lost more than half his life. His comrade who was hitting the ladder beside him was not that fortunate, he died after getting stabbed by the hurricane of knives.

The one that had executed the attack was a level 60 special elite native. He now stood in front of the ladder, preventing anyone from attacking the ladder. Several players tried to attack the native, but they were all repelled. Not long after, another enemy soldier came up the ladder.

Chapter 785: A Long Siege

"Let me!" The players heard a voice and saw Commander Quintus arrive. When the special elite enemy was about to stab the commander, his body split into twenty shadows. The twenty shadows struck at the dagger-wielding special elite as well as the soldier that had just come up the ladder.

The soldier that had just come up was struck by several shadows. He was pushed back and fell away from the wall. The dagger-wielding special elite received the majority of Commander Quintus' shadow strikes. He suffered a large amount of damage and was forced away from the ladder. He was then surrounded by several of commander Quintus' aides.

While the special elite enemy was preoccupied, Commander Quintus lifted his super long katana high. His katana burst with a dark flame. He slashed down. A streak of dark light followed his slash. His katana hit the latch that was holding the ladder and broke it. The ladder slowly detached from the wall and fell away, carrying several soldiers that were half climbing the ladder.

The current Commander Quintus was also stronger than when Jack first met him. He was like Duke Alfredo and Bailey. He had received the Council of Virtus' blessing and training. He had undergone a breakthrough like Bailey. His level had not only increased to 65, but his grade also increased to Rare Elite.

The players aided the natives and fought the dagger-wielding special elite. Being alone, the special elite was soon defeated. Commander Quintus had run to another side to help deal with the other ladders.

The fight continued for a long time. The two ballistae at the front corners as well as the two catapults all concentrated their attacks on the legion that was battering the front wall. The legion was too many for the defending army to vanquish. However, the legion also did not achieve any significant progress in breaching the wall. The wall's HP and defense were too high. After half a day of fighting, the wall's HP was still above 90%. Even the gate's HP was only a bit below 90%.

The ladder climbing was also not so effective. The siege ladders were reusable tools. Despite their latches being destroyed, after a short cooldown, the latches would repair themselves. The soldiers could then latch the ladders and climbed them again. Even so, most climbing soldiers failed to climb up before the latches were destroyed again.

In the end, the attacking forces suffered more casualties while the defending force suffered almost none.

All the while, Duchess Isabelle was keeping Arther busy in the air. Their clashes continued to create thundering sounds that kept reminding the armies below that the battle was far from over.

After almost a day, a horn was heard from the main base of the sieging army. Hearing the horn, the assaulting force slowed down before starting to retreat. The defending force on the wall looked at the retreating legion while panting. Their adrenaline was still high. They watched the surrounding army on alert, believing that another attack would be coming from a different side.

Arther who was in the air also stopped his offense. Duchess Isabelle didn't push on the offensive when she saw her opponent end his aggression.

"You are a worthy opponent," Arther praised. "Despite spending your time mostly at court, you are surprisingly a very able combatant."

"I am also surprised. Your reputation as a war hero is not just hollow recognition," Duchess Isabelle returned.

"Heh. Let's do this again another day," Arther said. He then flew away, following his retreating army. Duchess Isabelle watched the retreating war hero for a bit longer before teleporting back to the fort.

"Are you all right?" Prince Alonzo asked. The prince had also joined the fight on the wall with Samuel and Jeanny on his side. Even with their protection, Alonzo was not without wounds.

"As long as he is involved, I won't be able to help in defending," Isabelle answered.

Prince Alonzo nodded. He watched the army surrounding them with a grim expression.

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After the two attacking legions returned, a survey was immediately conducted. An officer soon came to Prince Therribus to report the results of today's attack. Out of the 34,000 troops that were sent, they lost more than 10,000 soldiers. As for the defending army, they estimated the loss was only around 800. They lost more than ten times the defending army. If one only saw the comparison, anyone would say the attacking side had suffered a huge loss.

"Should we go all out tomorrow?" Garland asked. "From the look of today's battle, we should be able to destroy them if we send everyone."

"We can, but we will also suffer a huge loss," Prince Therribus answered. After pondering for a while, he said, "No, we will play the long siege. There is no need in gambling everything. Their supplies are limited. As long as we keep them on a siege, they will run out of supplies and will have no choice but to come out. We can easily destroy them then."

"What about their reinforcement army who is on the way here?" Garland asked.

"What about them? They are only half our number. Not only that, more than half of them consisted of outworlders. If they meet us in an open field, they will be the ones who are crushed. That will be fine as well. If the ones inside that fort see us squash their reinforcement, their morale will drop. They will become easier prey."

"The report says that those cowering inside the fort managed to collect supplies that probably last them three weeks. So, we will wait that long?"

"We might not need to. Claudius!" Therribus called. "How goes those siege weapons?"

"They are en route, Your Highness," Claudius answered. "Because all of us rushed here in speed, we cannot carry the siege weapons. But they continued being transported as we speak. Looking at their speed, they should arrive in two more weeks."

"Then two weeks from now, we will bombard that fort. Let's see if they can still hide inside when those walls are no more," Therribus said with a grin.

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In the following days, Therribus' army maintained its encirclement. Therribus didn't send large forces anymore like he did the first day they arrived, but he still sent small forces to harass the defenders continuously, even at night. Simply to keep the defenders on edge.

The small forces were mostly high defense units that retreated once their HP was low, hence minimizing the loss. The defenders didn't know if those small skirmishes were only distractions before Therribus sent a large force, as he did on the first day. The tense situation kept the defenders from being fully at rest. Hence, supply consumption continued at a steady rate. The defenders couldn't ration the supplies too much or the soldiers would not be at their best when a real attack did come.

On the fourth day after he arrived, Therribus noticed the defenders' response to the skirmishes weakened. So, he sent another legion of twenty thousand soldiers. After half a day of battle, Therribus pulled back his soldiers after seeing that the legion was unable to breach the defense. Even though the attack failed, the defenders had woken up and were on alert again. Thus, Therribus didn't consider the attack as wasted. He ordered his army to resume with small skirmishes again. The situation continued in this way for days.

The defenders could see their enemies' intention, but there was nothing they could do about it. They could only hope the situation would be different when the reinforcement army arrived.

The reinforcement army continued to march at a steady rate. With Jack and his vanguard army clearing the road, they didn't encounter a situation where they needed to slow down.

John complained about why Jack didn't share the exp points this time. Jack asked John back if he had three classes that need feeding? Jack explained he needed to be in tip-top condition or else he also won't be able to do anything in the war. Hence, he had decided to be a bit selfish this time.

Although the monsters they passed through were generally below level 40, with only a few short areas having monsters above level 40, Jack's level still increased at a faster pace than usual. A day before they arrived near Fort Garadhor, Jack's all classes had increased in level. His Blade Dancer increased by one level to 47, his Archmage increased by two levels to 47, and his Beastmaster increased by one to level 46. While in his Container of Souls, there were 384,000 souls.

Jack figured that once they clashed with Therribus' army, his exp and soul's income would skyrocket, considering if his regiment didn't get wiped out miserably.

He used the 12 free attribute points for his Wisdom stat again. While for his free skill points, after some consideration, he used all the free skill points from Blade Dancer, Archmage, and Beastmaster, totaling 12 skill points, in addition to 300,000 souls to level up Spirit Weapon 15 times. Spirit Weapon was a skill received from a Universal Technique Book, such a skill was permitted to be leveled up using skill points from any classes.

His Spirit Weapon was now level 16. Each level-up increased the skill's duration by 24 seconds. His Spirit Weapon could now last eight minutes long. If he max-level it, the Spirit Weapon would last ten long minutes. He figured that during the war, there will be a long grueling battle, so the longer his Spirit Weapon lasted, the better.

Chapter 786: War Meeting before the Day of Confrontation

During the reinforcement army's march, John continued to drill the player force every night. By the day before they arrived near Fort Garadhor, every squad had a decent speed in taking their positions once John issued the order. As for the larger forces, for example, when John wanted several battalions to form a single formation, they took more time to get into formation. More time than John was comfortable with, but he guessed this would have to do for now.

The production of War Fires didn't go as fast as John wanted. It took several more days before the quantity John asked for was completed. Then there was the matter of transporting the completed War

Fires. The faction Dylan was in, provided transportation service for a fee. John had asked Dylan to arrange the service for transporting the War Fires once they were ready.

Dylan made an estimation. Calculating the distance of Sins Lair to Fort Garadhör in comparison to the transport caravan's speed, it should take a week for the transport to arrive. This meant that whatever ploy John was planning for, it could only be carried out then. They would need to survive until that time.

The night before they arrive in the area where Fort Garadhör was located, the native leaders convened to have a war meeting. Jack had been invited. He brought John into this meeting. The native leaders eyed John when he entered but otherwise didn't say anything.

"We are around a half-day journey from Fort Garadhör. By noon tomorrow, we should have made contact with our adversaries," Ahab informed. "This is the situation on-site."

He gestured to the 3D image above the war table. Fort Garadhör was in the middle. Surrounding it was a large number of red triangles.

"They are surrounded...?" Laurent asked.

"Prince Therribus is hell-bent on not letting Prince Alonzo escape," Ahab said. "But this can work to our advantage. If he maintained this encirclement, he will not be able to send his full force upon us."

"Will we be able to coordinate with the force inside Fort Garadhör so that we can pincer attack them from two sides?" Nicholas asked.

"No. The gate of Fort Garadhör will stay close. If they opened, Prince Therribus won't let go of the opportunity to storm into the fortress. We are on our own."

When no one asked further questions, Ahab said, "Everyone should make sure that they have enough rest for tomorrow's conflict."

"I advise that we don't meet them in combat yet," A voice was heard from the back. When everyone looked at the one who had talked, they found it to be the outworlder that Jack had brought in.

"If you are afraid, then you can just stay back," Ahab said with disdain. He then turned to Armstrong, "I told you we shouldn't have put too much hope on these outworlder troops."

"Lord Commander Armstrong," Duke Alfredo addressed the Lord Commander. "I suggest you listen to this outworlder. I have undergone a war situation with this outworlder before. At that time, we were battling an army from Verromor twice our number. It was all thanks to this outworlder's tactic that we have managed to beat them back without too many losses."

"Are you talking about the battle at Fulgur region eight months ago?" Armstrong asked.

"That is correct," Duke Alfredo replied.

"I have read the report. You are saying the strategy applied in that battle is his?" Armstrong asked again.

"That is true," Duke Alfredo confirmed.

"Hmph! What's so impressive about an outworlder's strategy?" Ahab uttered.

"Have you read the report?" John asked Ahab.

"I don't have the time to read every war report," Ahab replied.

"Then you shouldn't—"

"Then you should read it. It is a very good strategy, Lord Commander Ahab," Jack interfered before John could finish his speech. At the same time he sent John a message, 'If you try to antagonize anyone here, I will throw you out!'"

"It is indeed a good strategy, I've read it," Armstrong said. He then looked at John. "Let us hear your opinion then."

Jack turned to John and gave him a look that warned, 'Be polite!'

John rolled his eyes at Jack before making an exaggerated bow to Armstrong. "Thank you, wise Lord Commander Armstrong," he said. When he rose, he gave Jack a look that asked, 'that polite enough for you?'

He then said, "There are two reasons why I advise we avoid combat for now. One, because the enemy is waiting. From the day they arrived until now. They only had one big battle on the first day. After that, there were only small skirmishes. With a few medium-scale battles which were pretty much meant to just harass the defending force. Even if we stay and watch, Prince Alonzo's force inside the fortress won't be in any real danger."

"How do you know all that?" Ahab asked.

"I have my scouts as well, I don't feel satisfied if I leave my information gathering to others who don't answer to me," John replied.

Jack was not sure if that was impolite. But from Ahab's expression, he was not too happy with John's answer. It was an indication that John didn't trust their information.

Ahab sneered and asked, "So what do you suggest? Do we just sit there and watch each other? You are right that our enemies are waiting. They are waiting for the defenders to run out of supply. So, do we also wait until that happens before we start engaging our enemies?"

"No, we will wait for another ten or twelve days top. By then, I will have the means to win this war," John answered.

Ahab laughed disdainfully. "That is one bold proclamation. What kind of means is that? Enlighten us."

"I'm sorry, I prefer to keep important strategies to myself. You never know who is listening," John said.

"What do you mean? Are you saying that one of us here might be a spy?" Ahab uttered. He was visibly agitated. Armstrong also frowned.

"Don't get offended, it's not that I don't trust you. It's that I don't trust everybody," John replied.

"That's true, sir Lord Commander. He doesn't even tell me," Jack said, trying to dampen the situation.

"Well, in any case, we can't just sit and do nothing," Armstrong said. "We will continue with our offensive operation tomorrow."

"And your outworlder force should attack as well. If you do nothing but only watch from the side, we will not let you off!" Ahab warned.

John touched his chin while pondering, he then said, "All right, if we must attack, then we must be given independence. We will do it our own way."

Armstrong's frown returned. He didn't like the idea of his army dividing into two and doing their own things.

"Don't worry, we will follow your lead," John caught Armstrong's mood. "We will attack when you do, but I request that we are allowed to pick where and how we strike. Oh, and another thing, I wish the left-wing of Duke Alfredo to join our side in our attack."

"That's ridiculous! The left-wing is part of ours! How dare you propose them to separate from us!" Ahab yelled.

"Lord Commander Ahab, please calm yourself," Duke Alfredo mediated. "I don't think his request is unreasonable. If the outworlder force is left to fight for themselves, they will be easily defeated considering their strength is mostly just at the regular soldier's standard. They will need some of us natives to help them take on the stronger enemies."

"Then they should just follow behind us, why take action separately?" Ahab argued.

"Because if you just clash directly with the enemies tomorrow, we will be doomed," John said.

"What did you say?!" Ahab yelled, smacking the war table. "How dare you demoralize us on the eve of battle!"

"I'm just telling the truth," John said.

"Hold!" Armstrong uttered, stopping the two from arguing any further. "If the situation is like this, I don't see there to be any good coordination between our native force and outworlder force. Fine, you have the independence to do what you want with your outworlder force, as long as you time your assault at the same time as ours. However, I can't spare you the entirety of our left-wing. You will get only the regiment that is commanded by your friend."

"Lord Commander Armstrong...", Duke Alfredo tried to argue, but Armstrong gave him a signal to be quiet.

"I have spoken," Armstrong said.

Duke Alfredo sighed, but John instead said calmly, "Thank you for the lenience, Lord Commander Armstrong."

"If there is nothing else, let us dismiss. We all need the rest to face tomorrow's battle," Armstrong said.

Everyone started dispersing until there were only Armstrong and Ahab remaining. "Commander, are you sure?" Ahab said once everyone was gone. He was disciplined enough to not question his superior's decision when in public, but now that they were alone, he couldn't help but express his disagreement.

"Ahab. Truthfully speaking, I'm not that confident of our chance as well. We are outnumbered. The majority of our force is outworlders. If they are useless, then this operation is as good as gone. Since the outworlder has offered themselves to let us see their capability, we might as well take them up on their offer. Tomorrow will be a good chance to see how they perform."

Chapter 787: The Two Armies Meet

The next morning, the reinforcement army continued their journey. As they had estimated, before noon, Fort Garadhor came into view. With it, they saw the army encircling the fortress. The area around that place was mostly flatlands. Only a few parts in the West had hilly terrain, a forest a distance away in the east, and a river far north.

The reinforcement army came from the South. When they approached. They noticed Therribus' army was already assembled and waiting for them.

They had expected this. The scouts from both sides had checked the situations beforehand, so this encounter was no secret to the two armies.

Therribus had reorganized the army so that the bulk of his force gathered at the Southside, where the reinforcement army was coming from. During the siege all these days, he had lost less than 20,000 soldiers. The only high casualties he had suffered was the siege on the first day.

He still had a bit more than 100,000 soldiers at the ready and 20,000 outworlders which he just put to the side all this time. White Death had been having quite a headache trying to calm the players down because since there was no action, there were no war contribution points as well. They had been wasting their time doing nothing here.

With the appearance of the reinforcement army, White Death had requested Prince Therribus to allow them to join. Therribus had granted his wish. The gathered army at Therribus' camp facing the reinforcement army numbered 60,000 native and 20,000 outworlders.

Therribus left the remaining 40,000 soldiers to maintain the encirclement of Fort Garadhor. Because of this, the encirclement army was much thinner than before. Therribus didn't think that would be a problem. If Prince Alonzo came out to break this encirclement just because it had become thinner, all 40,000 soldiers could easily converge onto Prince Alonzo's location.

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The reinforcement army looked at their opponents with trepidation. Even while keeping a portion maintaining the siege, Therribus' army still outnumbered theirs which consisted of 30,000 natives and 40,000 outworlders. Not to mention, their portion of outworlders was larger, which was weaker than the native force.

While the native soldiers from the reinforcement army were having this bleak thought, a large portion of their army suddenly broke apart and headed West. They looked at the separating army. It was the

outworlder force. They turned to the leaders who didn't say anything. Perhaps it was some kind of a strategy? They thought.

Armstrong watched the outworlder force move away.

"They are truly going with their plan," Ahab remarked.

"Let's concentrate on our part," Armstrong said. "I wonder how our opponents will react."

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Therribus watched the opposite army break into two. He also wondered what his enemy was up to.

"Should we attack Armstrong's force since they have separated?" Garland asked.

"We shouldn't be hasty, they might be aiming to flank us when we go for Armstrong," Arther said.

"Most of their force is outworlders. What can they do? We will crush them no matter what trick they use!" Garland said vehemently.

"Sir! Almost all the force that is breaking away is outworlders!" One of Therribus' officers, who had an eye skill to see distant things, said.

"Is it so?" Arther commented. "Perhaps they tried to distract us. Goading us to pay attention to that larger force while they are actually the weaker one composed of only outworlders."

"Hmph! I say let us just crush Armstrong's army. Even if that outworlder force tries to flank us, they won't be able to do much. Their average level was only at the level of our common soldiers," Garland uttered.

"No. Do not forget our objective," Therribus said. "Armstrong's army are our fellow countrymen as well. If possible, I do not wish to have them suffer too many casualties. They too will serve me after this is all over. It is good that the outworlders had divided themselves. We can destroy them without reservation. We will split into two as well! Garland, you and I will face Armstrong's army with 30,000 soldiers. Arther, while we hold Armstrong down, you take the remaining 30,000 soldiers and 20,000 outworlders and crush that opposing outworlder force. Kill them all if possible!"

"Yes, Your Highness!" Arther uttered.

"One more thing," Therribus added.

"Yes, Your Highness?"

"Send our outworlders force first. Let them kill each other. It will save us the time when we enact the rule of limiting their levels."

"I will carry out your order!"

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The reinforcement outworlder army that was moving away, watched the opposing army also break into two, with a large portion coming their way.

"F*ck! You are right. They choose us as their primary target," Bowler cursed.

"Of course, I'm right. I'm always right," John said.

"Well, since you are so capable, you have a way for us to survive this, don't you?" Bowler asked.

"As long as everyone carried out my orders, everything will be fine," John answered.

This time, Bowler hoped to God this annoying guy didn't disappoint.

They continued moving West, ignoring the enemy that was moving toward them. When they arrived at the hilly regions John started organizing everyone's placement. With the enemy approaching, they didn't have much time. It's a good thing that they had drilled during their journey. Everyone already understood John's commands, so they were not confused following his directions.

John had received sufficient information regarding the terrains here, all thanks to Dogs of War's reconnaissance. This way, he already knew where to position everyone to get the best advantage of the terrains. His opponents were as he had expected, underestimating them and coming at them, this allowed them to pick where they chose to fight.

John arranged the defending troops in line formations. Most squads in his army had a balanced composition of classes, but he had also organized several squads that were mainly composed of defensive classes. These squads now lined up the front line, with the balance squads supporting them from behind in layers of line formation. Then at the back were squads composed mostly of Elite Marksman and Gunners which had the longest range. They were placed at the top of the hills, giving them the high ground advantage. John had chosen the hilly terrains on the west for this reason.

"Get ready!" John shouted while sending a message to the leaders who then relayed his order below. He also sent a private message to Jack, "You get ready as well!"

The enemy soon arrived. They noticed the ones at the forefront were players. They felt better at that sight. This meant no high-level natives yet.

Arther had given his order for White Death to have his force at the front line. White Death of course understood Arther's intention, but he didn't care. His objective was not glory in this war. He persuaded the others by saying that this was the chance for them to score war contribution points. Since the others had been itching for action for quite some time, they didn't object to this arrangement. White Death also lied that the native force would be close behind them offering support. They were at the front so they had more chance to score war contribution points. Otherwise, the natives would have wiped out everyone before they had the chance.

White Death's army's advance was a far cry from John's organized formation. White Death never truly bothered uniting the different forces under his command. Most of his current force advanced in groups based on their guilds. They were all loosely bunch that rushed to the enemy without any semblance of coordination.

John told everyone to hold.

When the enemy's front line almost hit the defensive line, John gave the order to act. All the Elite Marksmans and Gunners executed their long-range skills. Hails of arrows and bullets rained down on the

attackers. The defending front line also activated their defensive skills. Sentinels activated their Protection Field and Shield Stance while Paladins used Divine Armor and Heaven's Shield.

John had arranged Paladins at a fixed interval, hence when they all activated their Heaven's Shield. It was like a row of giant shields lined up before the defender, forming a wall. The attackers crashed into this shield wall, unable to pass through. They then received hails of arrows and bullets from the backline.

In just that first contact, uncountable players from White Death's army perished.

Because their momentum was too fast and fueled by the lack of coordination, they continued to push on. The ones closest to the front line, who watched the players die like flies, were unable to stop since the players from the back kept on pushing them forward. All they could do was activate their defensive skills and try to survive as long as possible. Even the range players were also getting pushed forward by the momentum. They couldn't get into positions to make decent attacks.

White Death who was monitoring the attack from his base platform was shocked to see such a drastic outcome. The level difference between the players in his army and the ones in the enemy's army shouldn't be that big, should it? After the failure of this first wave, he decided he couldn't hold anything back. He looked at the three others beside him who similarly had the base platform, Manager Steelhand, The Real Man, and Regim. The four of them had used their Guild Army Summoning Crystals.

They controlled their guild army to advance together with their players in the second wave.

Chapter 788: Arther's Army Takes Action

The native soldiers that were summoned by the four guilds numbered almost ten thousand. Effectively increasing White Death's outworlder force by fifty percent. Although they suffered heavy casualties in the first wave, the summoned guild soldiers easily replaced those lost troops. The second wave advanced with similar fervor as the first. This time, however, the summoned native soldiers served as the tip of the sword.

Arther remained at the back, surveying the situation. He just stood there not far away from where White Death and the others were. Manager Steelhand and the others noticed Arther's passivity and sent a silent message to White Death, asking about it. The Lord Marshall's action was not what White Death had told them.

White Death simply feigned ignorance and said that probably Arther was also surprised by the first wave's shocking defeat. Hence, he was observing the situation first.

This answer caused dissatisfaction among the three guilds. Many of the casualties in the first wave were their members. Those players had died pointless deaths without scoring meaningful war contribution points. White Death said that he understood their frustration. His members were also among those who died in the first wave. He told them now was not the time to complain, they needed to focus on the battle at hand.

"Should we send orders for our sleeper agents to strike?" Manager Steelhand asked.

"Not now. The report says they have imperial guards inside their headquarters. I don't know how they get those guards but the report also says these guards only spent a week there before they left," White Death answered. "This is only the first clash. Wait until the decisive battle when the Prince they come to save is in danger, then we activate our sleeper agents."

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John had seen the guild's summoned soldiers approaching from the 3D projection above a miniature platform. He and the other six guilds' representatives in his force had these command platforms in front of them, which meant they had used their Guild Army Summoning Crystals. Yet, their summoned guild soldiers were nowhere to be seen.

John also used his binoculars to take a better look. Therribus' army was not yet joining the fight. All the native soldiers that were coming at them were the trained soldiers from the four opposing guilds.

He gave the order for the front line to change formation. The front line followed the command and turned into a vee formation as the enemies approached. The transition proceeded smoothly. The squads behind the front line moved back to allow the middle line to shift back. They had drilled many times so the squads didn't hinder one another when the formation change took place.

As the vee formation formed, the two forces started clashing on the sides while the enemy's middle section continued forward. This created a large killing zone in the triangle area before the vee formation. All the range players on the hills concentrated their attacks on this killing zone.

The summoned native soldiers clashed with the defensive line, but they couldn't break through in a short time. John had replaced the previous defensive squad with a backup defensive squad who had not used their skills. Hence, the same combination of Paladins and Sentinels' skills from before were used again to create an impenetrable wall that held the enemies.

All the while these enemies inside the killing zone were battered by range attacks. Magical spells also bombarded them from the magic classes staying behind the defensive lines. These spells were not just ordinary spells, they were the combination versions from two magic class players.

After the last battle between Everlasting Heavenly Legends with the coalition, everyone had known about the existence of combination spells. The guilds had started experimenting to find out which spells could be combined, but such experimentation was limited. John understood this was not the time to be stingy, so he shared a few of the most common combination spells, and had them practiced during the march here. This allowed his current army to increase its firepower.

The Jackal Crews members who were skilled at sneak attacks tried to disrupt John's army formation. However, they met opponents of equal caliber, members of Dogs of War. All their attempts to breach the defensive lines were foiled by the equally capable members of Dogs of War.

During the time that John sent this guild to collect intelligence, they similarly collected information about the opposing player guilds. They were not foreign to the Jackal Crews. Their two guilds had clashed several times when they carried requests from opposing sides. As mercenary guilds, such a clash was inevitable. Hence, they were familiar with each other's working methods.

The difference this time was, that Dogs of War was playing defensive. So, they occupied a better position. They just needed to guard the most likely spots the Jackal Crews might be targeting. Hence, none of Jackal Crews members managed to do anything to change their army's current situation.

Red Death was amongst the front line, her expertise allowed her to survive there despite her class was not built for direct conflict. Blackjack was next to her providing support.

"Red!" She heard a voice calling her from the opposing force. She turned to the voice.

"Blue..."

"Oh, the lovelorn dude," Blackjack uttered.

"Who are you called lovelorn, you suckup?! Are you looking for a fight?" Blue Death returned. He was a level 48 Mage Knight. His real body was further back fighting another player while his spectral projection came to the two.

"Of course, I'm looking for a fight! What do you think we are doing here? A tea party? Come! I'll take you on any time," Blackjack said.

Blue Death thought he was wasting time quarreling with Blackjack, so he turned to Red Death and asked, "Why do you betray our guild? It is that Storm Wind, isn't it? Where is he? Why don't I see him anywhere? I won't forgive him!"

"... You should be glad that he is not here," Red Death said.

As time went on, although the second wave of White Death's army was doing better than the first wave, they still suffer much more casualties compared to John's army. This was even under the situation where John had not utilized their guilds' trained soldiers yet.

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Arther, who saw the battle from the back, could finally take it no longer. He had hoped this outworlder force under their umbrella could at least soften the enemy by a little. He uttered to White Death and the others, "Useless! Pull your force away. I won't be responsible if they get trampled!"

Arther then turned to his officers and yelled, "Forward! Let's show these worthless outworlders how to do a battle!" His 30,000 native soldiers moved forward in a neat formation. The ground rumbled as they advanced.

Manager Steelhand, The Real Man, and Regim were outraged by Arther's affront. This native had made them send their force to gauge the enemy while he didn't provide any support. They had lost so many members and yet Arther didn't value their sacrifice but instead treated them with such contempt. The three had the urge to change sides at this moment. However, it was just a thought. They couldn't change sides even if they wanted to. Once they were registered to take one side in the war quest, they couldn't cancel it until the war was over.

Only White Death remained impassive by the insult. His agenda lay elsewhere. The outcome of this war mattered little to him.

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John used his binoculars and saw Arther's army movement. He also saw from his 3D projection that White Death's army started retreating. He thought that probably White Death couldn't take more losses. They had lost more than half their force, after all.

However, his side was not without casualties. He had lost around 3000 players in the last battle.

As White Death's army retreated. John rearranged his front line again. They were back to the layered line formation as Arther's army approached. The front-most squads of Paladins and Sentinels were reshuffled again, allowing the ones who had their defensive skills off cooldown to face the incoming enemies.

John noticed from his binoculars that Arther was coming using a wedge formation.

"Hm... Facing a proper military is indeed different from facing those players who attacked haphazardly," he commented. He then sent a command to the leaders in his army, having them change formation again.

The right end of his army started to move back while the left end maintained their positions. It was like the horizontal line formation rotated at one end and turned into a diagonal line. During their march here, when John saw that the army was getting used to the five basic formations, he added two more formations to drill. The two new formations were echelon left and echelon right. The one they were forming now was echelon right.

Arther saw John's formation change, but he paid it no heed. It was too late to modify his army's current formation while charging. Aside from that, in his opinion, all these tricks could be smashed with brute force.

When Arther's troops almost arrived, John instructed the use of the Enhanced Defensive Ability magic scrolls. These were the scrolls produced from the Protective Framework rune diagram that Jack had registered into the guild. They could not produce too many of the scrolls but it was enough to cover the front line. The scrolls enhanced all ally's defensive skills and spells within their area of effect. With this enhanced effect, the Sentinels and Paladins at the front line activated Protection Field and Heaven's Shield. A row of imaginary shields appeared again on the front line. There were now even some Archmages who cast Magic Wall, further reinforcing the shield wall.

The two troops collided. The enhanced wall of shields managed to hold the native army at bay. Because Arther was using wedge formation while John was using echelon right. Only the left side of Arther's wedge formation met the enemy, while the right side was too far away. They had to proceed further before they could join the fight. This effectively had John's full force dealt with only half of Arther's force in the initial clash.

The range players on the hills immediately executed all their skills to capitalize on this advantage. Arrows, bullets, and magic rained down on the native army.

However, no matter how good the coordination and plan were, if faced with overwhelming power, all would crumble. The overall situation still had John's army at the advantage in the first clash, but then one figure shot up into the air. On his back was a pair of silvery transparent wings. It was Arther Pendrake, the mythical-grade Lord Marshal.

A large image of a fiery silver winged sword shot up from his two-handed greatsword. He slashed it down as he lunged back to the ground. The gigantic silver sword image crashed onto the front line. All the ones on that spot were obliterated.

John's front line now had a large gap in its formation.

Chapter 789: Everlasting Heavenly Legends' Soldiers Line-Up

"Jet, use it!" John sent a message.

"Is that how you address your elder? You should at least call me uncle Jet," Jet complained. He was already back from the Village of Peace a while ago. He only had two days left in that village when Jack left, after all. He had caught up to the army and joined the march after returning.

Grace expressed her desire to return as well when she heard about the civil war, but Jack told her not to. It was a rare chance to stay inside the village. Jack told her to not squander it. Jack said that they will take care of this war and asked her to just focus on getting stronger. That way, she would be of greater help to the guild later.

Jet was placed not far from the front line, but not too close to get hit by Arther's devastating blow just now. He was now holding a large crystal high in the air. It was the Water Serpent Summoning Crystal that he and the others had gotten from the gold treasure chest inside the Village of Peace's lake.

The crystal thrummed with soft blue light. Tendrils of water-like light burst out of the crystal before turning into a large wave. The wave then washed over everyone in a large area. All the allies that were washed by the wave had their HPs refreshed, while all the hostiles received damage and were pushed back a long way.

Arther resisted the pushback. He stood his ground. He then found himself face to face with a gargantuan water serpent covered by brilliant blue scales. The serpent's two blue glowing eyes stared at the Lord Marshall before it. Two watery orbs were floating at the end of its two long whiskers, which were waving around beside its gigantic head. There were currents of water swirling around the serpent, as if its existence demanded water to always be present.

"Hah! So, you dare to oppose the crown prince just because of this? I will smash this serpent and destroy your people's hope!" Arther roared as he charged at the water serpent. He used Holy Incarnation, his body mass doubled and was covered by silver flame.

The water serpent was not intimidated. Despite its opponent being ten levels higher, it had a draconic bloodline. It would never back down from the challenge of a lesser being. It roared and a water sphere formed before it. This water sphere then slammed onto the charging Arther. Violent energy exploded upon their impact. Arther's charge was stopped.

The serpent's whiskers then slashed out. The two watery orbs at their ends glowed and shot bursts of high-pressure jets of water. Anything the water jets cut through received high damage. Some native soldiers who were already low in HP were literally cut apart by the water jet when their HP zeroed. Arther's body zoomed around as his transparent wings flapped, evading the water jets that were targeting him.

While Arther was preoccupied with the water serpent, John tried to patch his formation. However, Arther's army also had plenty of other high-level officers. Many special elite and rare elite natives above level 50 took points to break through the defensive front line.

"This is the time to give it your all, ladies and gentlemen. Do not hold anything back," John said to the other leaders beside him. "Your war contribution points will pay back all that you lost here!"

Of course, John was only spouting nonsense. He didn't exactly know that to be the truth. However, seeing that John had used such a valuable resource that summoned a level 70 mythical creature for this battle, the others couldn't help but believe his claim. They instructed their people to also use their summoning crystals.

Soon, many gigantic summoned creatures started appearing in the battle. None was as impressive as the water serpent, of course. These summoned creatures tried to hold down these high-level officers while the players held the average soldiers.

"Is it time yet?" Proudful Josh asked.

John looked at the right side of the enemies that had now started clashing, both armies were now fighting along a long diagonal line.

"Send them in!" John uttered.

The others quickly sent the command. Not long after, a legion of around 17,000 guild soldiers from the seven guilds appeared from behind the hills on the right side of the battlefield. Because the native army was now fighting in a diagonal line facing the left, this legion of guild-trained soldiers came up to their rear.

At the head of these guild-trained soldiers were five large armored vehicles. Those were the Ice Cannon Tanks, created from the blueprint given by Wilted Tree. Everlasting Heavenly Legend had leveled up their blacksmith workshop to level 4. With Kirsy's Basic Master grade blacksmith, she had helped craft these five tanks.

Inside these tanks were two players who had trained to pilot the vehicles. One in charge of driving, the other in charge of its weapons, in which there were two, the ice cannon and ice gun. The ice cannon shot a thick beam of ice energy, dealing high damage as well as a high chance to freeze and slow the enemies, but it had a long cooldown. The ice gun shot ice bullets that dealt lesser damage but could be used continuously.

The tank itself, other than possessing a high defense, also had an ice shield that protected it from any attack. One needed to first break this ice shield before causing any damage to the tank. If the tank didn't receive damage for a period, the ice shield would start to regenerate. This meant that to destroy the tank, one needed to continuously assault the tank without a long pause.

The five Ice Cannon Tanks initiated the offensive by firing their ice cannons. Five huge beams swept the rear side of Arther's army, freezing and slowing many. The bandit archers stayed behind these tanks and attacked as they advanced, using fire and movement tactics.

The guild-trained soldiers soon crashed into the enemies.

Since Arther's army was facing left, many at its rear were fragile ranged and magic soldiers. They were very surprised by this sudden back attack. They could no longer support their front line. Arther's army now had to deal with battles on two fronts.

Within the guilds' trained soldiers, Everlasting Heavenly Legends had the highest count of troops, numbering 2770 soldiers, not including the five Ice Cannon Tanks. These 2770 soldiers were comprised of 700 squires, 500 bandit archers, 300 imperial knights, 350 cavalries, 300 mages, 300 devout healers, 150 eagle rider hunters, 120 blood counts, and 50 twilight champions.

The Devout Healer was a variant of the Healer unit. It was modified by an insignia that Bowler had gotten from his league faction, Church of Creation. These variant healers were more effective in healing. Their heal spells also covered a longer distance compared to normal healer units.

It was daytime now, so the blood count units didn't show their best potential, but they were still deadly as they weaved around the battlefield in shadows, taking out those with low HPs.

In the short two weeks of the march, Everlasting Heavenly Legends had managed to train fifty Twilight Champions. Jack had teleported back every time the marching army was close to a town, so that he could buy the training boost using his merit points. This had helped the guild in rushing the training of these champions.

Even though they only had fifty units, these champions shone at the front line. They cast a living shield that revolved around their body, automatically defending attacks that came their way. In a similar fashion, they cast another spell that summoned a living sword that slashed any enemies in range. They could also conjure darts that struck enemies far away. This unit excelled in both melee and ranged, offense and defense. They were all-around high-class units.

Leading the troops of Everlasting Heavenly Legends was the hero, Uruk. He now donned different equipment from before. Jack had given him a full set of super rare equipment. The hero was level 62 now. He raged as he led the twilight champions ravaging through the enemy's healers and mages.

But the most impressive was the huge figure flying high above the guild-trained soldiers. It was Penny, the matured lava dragonet that was Everlasting Heavenly Legends' guild guardian. Because the girls had put such attention on her, she had grown into a powerful adult lava dragonet. Her level was level 60 and it had attributes higher than normal.

Not only that, this time Peniel was not wrong, the lava dragonet had upgraded from its youngling grade which was rare elite, into a mythical grade when it matured. This guild guardian was now raining lava breath at the enemy army below as she flew past.

When the other guilds saw the line-up of Everlasting Heavenly Legends' force, they made a mental note to never offend this guild. Especially the guilds who used to be in the coalition. They were now congratulating themselves that they had changed sides.

Chapter 790: Make A Sound in the East, then Strike in the West

While the joined guilds-trained soldiers were wreaking havoc at the rear of Arther's army, the players themselves were not having a good time. Even with the help of the summoned creatures from their summoning crystals, there were just too many high-level individuals in the army. These high-level

individuals had all gone to the front during the assault, hence why the guilds' trained soldiers could do as they like at the rear against the weaker native soldiers.

For the seven guilds who had headquarters, they preferred it this way. The players would only lose one level as long as they wore Amulet of Rebirth. But if they lost the guild's trained soldiers, it would take a long time to retrain a decent number. It was the guilds who had no headquarters and the independent players who didn't like this arrangement. They had to go up against strong enemies at the front line while the guilds' trained armies took care of the squishy soldiers at the back line. But then again, these trained soldiers were the seven guilds' properties. It was their right to use these trained soldiers however they liked.

The assault of Arther's army at the front line was less intense compared to when the two armies first clashed because Arther's front line had lost support from its rear. However, even with this and the defending army's solid formation and the boost from the Enhanced Defensive Ability magic scrolls, the players at the front line were still dropping like flies under Arther's high-level officers' onslaught.

If this continued, John's army would soon be having problems maintaining their formation. Those that had companion tokens had already summoned them to endure the onslaught, but most of their companions were less in levels and grades compared to the native army's high-level officers. Players with high martial expertise like Jet and Red Death were still able to cope to an extent. Although they couldn't kill these high-level natives, these natives also had a hard time landing a hit. But this kind of player was rare in between.

"This doesn't look good!" Fat Gregory uttered.

"Hold on. They will retreat," John said.

"I can't think of a reason why they will be doing that," Kill Order said.

"They will!" John repeated. In his message, he asked Jack, "Where the hell are you?! Why haven't you engaged?"

"I'm about to!" Jack sent a reply.

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At the furthest hill of the Western hilly area where Arther's and John's armies were having a battle, a regiment of 3,000 soldiers came out from behind that hill. It was the regiment under Jack. This regiment was rushing on their steeds heading towards Fort Garadhor which was surrounded by Therribus' remaining 40,000 soldiers. Jack had his Runestone of Marching summoned by his side, increasing the regiment's speed under his command.

Therribus' soldiers that were encircling the fort soon noticed this incoming regiment. They hurriedly readied themselves to face these enemies. The archers and magic users started sending ranged attacks as Jack's regiment came near.

Jack's regiment all unmount from their steeds. The shield-bearing soldiers took the front row as they used their shields to receive this first barrage of ranged attacks. They didn't stop their advance while doing that. Jack, who was right behind these shield-bearing soldiers, came out when they were almost

upon the enemies. He activated all his offensive-boosting skills, including his Storm Breaker's Overlimit. He then used Wings of Devastation.

Thick green energy in the shape of gigantic wings emerged when Jack slashed his two longswords. The energy rushed forward and struck scores of enemies over a large area. The energy also traveled a long distance. All those who were hit lost around 11,000 HP. Many were also afflicted by Bleed and Dizzy status.

Jack was not done, he immediately followed up with Lightning God Barrage. Twenty lightning balls flew towards the enemy army. Jack spread the lightning balls out, hitting as many enemies as possible. This reduced the damage received by each soldier but many of the soldiers that were hit were paralyzed.

Due to the paralyzation, they couldn't carry out a proper defensive action. Jack's regiment was soon upon them. The quality of the soldiers in the two armies was equal but Jack's regiment outnumbered the enemy.

The reason was, that even though the reserve army encircled the fort numbered 40,000, they were spread out in a very large area. This 40,000 army formed a large circle with the fort as its center. In the area that Jack's regiment hit, the enemies clashing directly with them numbered only a bit over 1,000 soldiers.

The soldiers in the direct vicinity where the battle had taken place went to give support. But the soldiers further away stayed in their positions. Their order was to keep the fort encircled. What if when they went and clashed with the enemy, the third prince decided to flee at this time by utilizing the gap in the encirclement? They couldn't afford to leave their positions. If it was the force from the fort that came out, this encircling army was allowed to leave their positions and converged on Prince Alonzo's position. But if it was any other force, they had to stand their ground. Hence, the encircling army further away could only watch as their comrades clashed with the ambushing regiment.

Jack summoned Therras, his wolves, and his spirit weapon. He then took out his companion token and activated it. Arlcard appeared followed by black ominous winds.

'Level 55?' Jack thought after seeing Arlcard's level. This vampire was not joking about his passion for leveling up.

Arlcard surveyed the situation. "What is this? A war?" He asked.

"Yes. Please use your Sonata of the Night to hold the enemies coming from that direction," Jack said.

Arlcard didn't say anything further, but Jack noticed the excited glint in the vampire's eyes. Arlcard must be thinking this was another good opportunity to reap exp points. Spell formations quickly formed. Thick black fogs soon covered the battlefield.

While the black fog blocked one end of the enemy's line, Jack had his regiment moving to the opposite side while killing as many soldiers as possible. Jack also fed 100 mana cores into his amulet, summoning an Ice Fiend Demon. This demon and Arlcard soon joined Miller and Bailey in taking on the enemy's high-level officers on site, which was not many considering the enemy's army was spread out, and so too were their high-level officers.

With their overpowering number, they continued to kill enemy soldiers and worked along the encircling line to continue killing as many as possible. Jack used his Supreme Dragon Form to help speed up the massacre. This situation soon came to the attention of both Arther and Prince Therribus when messenger soldiers came bearing reports.

They looked in the direction of where Jack was wreaking havoc. Both of them were having the same reaction even when the two were far apart. Their faces scowled with distaste. Both of them reviewed their current situations.

On Therribus' side, the two armies were evenly matched. Therribus never meant to take down Armstrong. His intention from the start was simply to hold Armstrong's army at bay while Arther decimated the outworlders army. However, after so long, he saw that Arther's army was still in a heated battle.

On Arther's side, he was similarly surprised and upset about not yet finished slaughtering the outworlders. Despite John's rear ambush, his army was still at an advantage. Given time, his army would surely annihilate all these outworlders. However, from the current situation, it would take a rather long time. Too long than what he would like it to be.

Arther looked again in Jack's direction. Unless they gave the order for the encircling army to forego their encircling position, they would continue to lose soldiers in this way. Would losing those soldiers be worth the annihilation of these outworlders here?

In his uncertainty, he was hit by the Water Serpent's water jet. He suffered damage and lost mobility. A large pillar of water soon came down from the sky. It slammed onto him and force him down to the ground. Before Arther could regain his bearing, a large tsunami summoned by the water serpent hit him and all the native soldiers in his vicinity. They were washed far away while receiving large damages each second they were inside this tsunami.

Rage overcame Arther, he unleashed an enraged roar. A white fiery sphere enveloped his body, pushing all the water away. He then blasted out of the tsunami and became a meteor as he flew towards the water serpent.

The water serpent saw the incoming Arther. It again formed a water sphere that blocked Arther's advance. But different from the last time, when this water sphere hit Arther's white sphere, the water sphere was blasted apart. Arther's speed didn't even slow. He slammed directly onto the water serpent. The curtain of water that swirled around the water serpent tried to form a cushion to soften the impact. However, they evaporated once coming into contact with Arther's white fiery sphere. The collision was so hard the impact sent the water serpent shredding through the ground for a long distance. A long trench was formed in the ground due to the water serpent's friction with the ground.

The water serpent was not winning throughout its fight with Arther. It had been steadily losing HP. With the last attack, its HP was less than half already. All the players were worried when they saw Arther's increased ferocity. If the water serpent died, nothing would be able to stand against this fearsome Lord Marshall.

The water serpent, however, didn't show the intention of giving up. Despite its loss just now, it looked back at Arther with defiance. It uttered an earth-shaking roar. As if daring the Lord Marshall to attack it another time.

But before Arther could continue his assault, he sensed a blast of high-level energy and saw several pillars of light come down on the encircling army in an opposite direction from where Jack's ambushing regiment was creating havoc. Not long after that, he heard the sound of a horn from where Prince Therribus was. He looked over with chagrin.

The horn was an order for a retreat.