

World 791

Chapter 791: Both Sides Retreat

Before the retreat horn sounded, when Arther's army was still in a heated battle with John's force, Jack's regiment similarly fought a fierce battle.

While Arlcard's black fog held the encircling army at bay on one side, Jack's force went to the opposite side, killing everyone they passed through. Arlcard cast his Perpetual Sword of Death and increased the killing pace. The spell's black energy swords zoomed around the battlefield, hitting enemies while sparing friendlies. It was an ultimate large area offensive and support spell. The enemies couldn't concentrate on facing their foes because they kept on getting stabbed by these black energy swords.

The Ice Fiend Demon's passive icy aura also only affected enemies, sparing allies. This caused the fighting to be easier as the enemy's movement became slower.

As they proceeded, a gap soon appeared in the encircling army. Prince Therribus' soldiers that were holding their positions next to the gap were unsure of what to do. They looked as the gap became larger when Jack's regiment went the other way and continued massacring their comrades. They had sent signal messages to Prince Therribus and Lord Marshall Arther to ask what they should do in such an unusual situation. Until they heard from them, they could only carry out their original orders, which was to stay and maintain the encirclement. They stretched out to close the resulting gap, which made their formation even thinner, but not too close to Jack's regiment that was still working their way in the opposite direction.

While fighting, Jack sent a message to Jeanny, "On which side of the wall are you?"

"The one facing West. Are you in that regiment that is fighting the encircling army?" Jeanny replied.

"I am," Jack answered.

"I know John asked us to stay put, but maybe we should come out and help? That encircling army is outside of our catapult's range."

"No! If you open the gate, this encircling army will abandon their positions and come swarming at you. Just leave everything to us. I don't call you to ask for help, I call to ask if you have copied the divine gem?"

"I have," Jeanny answered.

"You have made two extra, right?"

"Yes."

"What about the extra ten magic crystal?"

"Yes, I copied them as you asked," Jeanny replied.

"Do you bring them on your person?" Jack asked.

"Of course, it's too valuable to leave in the guild's warehouse."

"All right, I'm coming over to pick them up."

"Now?"

"Yeah. Oh, please tell everyone to not shoot at the tiny dragon that flies to the fort."

"Tiny dra...", And then Jeanny saw it. A speck flew out from the fighting regiment in the distance. It rapidly came closer and its shape became more visible. It looked like a draconian that looked more like a dragon complete with a pair of huge bat-like wings.

When one player aimed his bow up at the incoming flying draconian, Jeanny hurriedly yelled, "Hold your fire! Do not shoot! It's friendly!"

The player was hesitant but lowered his bow. The others stayed their weapons.

The flying draconian came closer and slowed down after arriving above them. It then perched on the parapet wall.

"Hey, everyone!" The humanoid dragon greeted and waved.

"... Jack?" Jeanny asked.

"Yesh, it's me. May I have the divine gems and magic crystals, please?"

Jeanny took the gems and crystals out of her storage and handed them to Jack, while saying, "I have heard the report, but I'm still having trouble believing you have a dragon form."

"It's not a normal dragon form, it's a supreme dragon form," Jack corrected while receiving the gem. After storing it, Jack turned to Prince Alonzo and said, "Hang in there, Your Highness. We have a plan. Just stay put and focus on defense."

"Thank you for your help, Mister Storm Wind," Prince Alonzo replied.

"Don't worry, I will keep him safe," Samuel said.

Jack nodded, he then said to Duchess Isabelle, "Arther is there fighting our outworlder's main army. If you can, please make some trouble at the opposite side from where my regiment is."

"Oh? So, he is there? He must have not used any high-energy skills to not let me know," Duchess Isabelle said. "All right, I will head out for a bit."

"Great, but don't stay out too long. We don't know how fast the guy is. We can't have him attack this fort while you are away. I'm off!" Jack said and shot away.

"Are you using that divine gem now?" Peniel asked while they flew back.

"No, I will have my levels stuck if I use it now, right? I will use it after all my classes are level 50," Jack said. "With this war, it looks like it won't be long."

"Why ask for magic crystals as well? Don't you already have ten in your possession? You have one extra set more than is needed for the divine treasure's upgrade."

"It's for Haon's Fire God Blessing," Jack informed.

Jack flew over where the battle was still ongoing. His spirit weapon was about to run out of duration, Jack sent a mental command for it to prepare to activate its finishing mode.

He first had Ice Fiend Demon fire its Ice Beam, creating a safe path in a straight line. This allowed his spirit weapon to rush forward into the middle of the enemy's mass. Once it was deep into the enemy's line, Jack had it activate its finishing mode while casting Myriad Venomous Vipers where the spirit weapon was. The spirit weapon also had an HP bar, it was difficult to hit the spirit weapon when it was moving around due to its slender form. However, it was static when it started its finishing mode. Hence it was more vulnerable if many enemies attacked it at the same time. The Myriad Venomous Vipers incapacitated the enemies that got into a melee mode with the spirit weapon.

When the spirit weapon broke apart revealing its core that was enlarging and was about to explode, Jack also unleashed his dragon soul breath at the same spot. The last time inside the legacy dungeon when he was trying to act cool by using Lightning God Barrage and spirit weapon's finishing mode at the same time, he had noticed that the resulting damage was higher than the sum of the two attacks.

After he asked Peniel about it later. The fairy confirmed that some explosive attacks when combined could result in enhanced damage. Especially if the combined attacks contained different types of energy. If one of the combined attacks was one of the two special damage types, soul or chaos damage, it would increase the likeliness of enhanced damage even further.

His soul breath contained soul energy. His spirit weapon had chaos energy. When his soul breath struck his spirit weapon's core just as it was exploding, the resulting explosion was three times larger than usual. The resulting damage that swept the army was also much higher than the sum of the two attacks if unleashed separately.

All the elite native soldiers in the area of the explosion died instantly, while the special elites had less than half their lives remaining. His regiment immediately utilized the chance to sweep in and finish the ones that were wounded.

Jack continued flying above and supporting with range attacks. When high-level officers with flying ability flew up and came at him, he flew back above his regiment to allow the ranged soldiers to support him while he clash with these flying officers. Jack's flying speed was faster than their flying spell or wing tool. Luckily, such an enemy was rare in between. Considering the enemy's formation was spread out in a large circle, this was to be expected.

His beast form ended soon. He could only do battle on the ground then. After some more fighting, he saw several large pillars of light descend from the opposite side of the fort. He knew then that Duchess Isabelle had taken action.

Not long after that, he heard a horn sounding in the distance. He then saw the distant native army that was fighting John's force start to pull back. He received a message from John soon, "They are pulling back. Hurry, run away from there. The mythical lord marshall is still guarding their retreat from the water serpent's assault. Once they are free of harassment, you will be in trouble if he comes at you."

"Ah... Such a pity," Jack muttered. His level had undergone a huge level-up from all the killing in this war. All his classes leveled up by two times. His levels were now 49, 49, and 48 for Blade Dancer, Archmage, and Beastmaster respectively. His Blade Dancer exp bar was very close to reaching level 50.

He had a hunch that he now understood how Master had kept his levels high despite having so many classes. He must have given control of an army and the civil war in Liguritutum supplied a constant supply of sources for him to level up. He didn't even need to go out into the wilderness to farm exp.

If only he could have a larger army to command. But after thinking about it, he thought the size of this current regiment was already the right size for the level-up purpose. He needed to be at a certain distance from his army that did the killing. If he was too far, he won't get the exp. So, too large an army didn't mean that he would get more exp speed than this.

Jack reluctantly ordered his regiment to retreat. He summoned his Runestone of Marching to increase their retreating speed. The Ice Demon Fiend was left behind to continue wreaking havoc while Jack's regiment retreated. Arlcard was similarly reluctant to leave. The vampire didn't increase in level. But even though he didn't get express exp farming as Jack, this killing ground still provided much exp for him.

Jack unsummoned both Arlcard and Therras while retreating. Therras also didn't receive the exp gathered from the killing done by other soldiers, but it still increased by two levels to level 48.

Jack's regiment went in high speed and returned to the back of the hill where they had come out from.

When Arther's army had pulled back a certain distance, he flew to Fort Garadhor. He didn't chase after Jack's regiment. Duchess Isabelle had been causing trouble while he was away. So, he now returned to make sure the Duchess didn't cause more damage. The duchess was standing on top of the wall in plain sight. Arther stopped after seeing the duchess. The two stared at one another. They both understood now that they were both a deterrence for their respective armies. Both of them could not move away from one another or else their armies would be the ones to suffer the consequences.

Chapter 792: Both Sides Wait

After the battle was over, both sides reviewed their losses.

Although it could be said a victory for the reinforcement army, the outworlder force didn't exactly come out unscathed. There were many high-level officers aside from Arther in the battle. The players had taken the brunt of their might. Out of 40,000 players under John's command, more than half were killed. They had already fallen into a chaotic situation when Arther received the order to retreat. Despite his calm exterior, John was already having a cold sweat when the horn sounded.

Luckily, players were immortal. They did lose a level, though. And half of the ones who perished opted to not join the war anymore. They figured that they would just be satisfied with their current war contribution rather than sacrificing another Amulet of Rebirth.

The others who were still willing to rejoin went to work on another Amulet of Rebirth before rejoining on the next day. The player army was now down to around 30,000 players.

Arther's 30,000 troops that had clashed with John's army lost less than 5,000 soldiers. The majority of the loss was from the rear attack executed by the guilds' trained soldiers. The players themselves were too busy trying to stay alive to mount any decent attacks.

There was not much loss for guilds' trained soldiers, but the guilds would have to wait one week before they could summon these troops again.

While on Armstrong and Therribus' sides, both lost no more than 3,000 soldiers. The two armies mostly just fought with reservation. They both weren't committed to doing an all-out attack just yet.

The biggest casualties were from the encircling army. Jack's ambush had reaped around 8,000 casualties despite only bringing 3,000 soldiers with him. Jack's regiment itself lost less than 500 soldiers.

White Death lost three-fourths of his player army. Their guilds' trained soldiers also suffered lots of casualties. They were the side that lost the most in the battle. Many opted to leave or just stayed at the side. They would only join if an opportunity arose for them to score some war contribution points. The ones that were still willing to return and be commanded by White Death were reduced to only 7,000 players.

In the end, aside from the player force, the native armies didn't suffer many casualties. Therribus's army still vastly outnumbered the reinforcement's native army. If he didn't have to spare a sufficient number to encircle the fort, he would have been able to crush the reinforcement army easily.

Therribus no longer underestimated the reinforcement army. He now returned his troops to reinforce the encircling army while keeping a decent number to watch the reinforcement army's movement. The two sides ended up just watching one another in the following days.

A day after the battle, a war meeting was again held in the reinforcement army camp. This time, John was formally invited aside from Jack.

When the two outworlders arrived, Armstrong gave his praise. "I'm impressed by your achievement yesterday. It truly open my eyes."

"I'm also wondering. If we have lost during the battle, what will you have done?" Jack asked. "Arther's army will rejoin Therribus' army and they will outnumber you."

"If we see your army is about to lose, we would have gone all out to break through Therribus' army and saved Prince Alonzo before attempting an escape," Ahab said. "We were just about to do that before we saw Storm's regiment suddenly come out of the blue and struck the encircling army. Then we decided to continue to stay and watch."

"There is no need to explain, I know you want to see if we are worth it to be included in your army," John said with his usual nonchalant expression. "So, are we worthy now?"

"You are," Armstrong said.

"I must also admit that I might be a bit hasty in my judgment," Ahab said.

"In that case, will you be agreeing to my proposal of not taking any more aggressive action for now?" John asked.

"For another nine to eleven days?" Armstrong asked.

"Give or take," John answered.

"The supplies inside the fortress might not last that long," Ahab warned.

"As long as they rationed the supplies, they should last a few more days than the time we need to set up our last confrontation."

"Will your strategy surely work on the enemy?" Armstrong asked.

"There is no certainty in war," John replied.

"Then let me rephrase my question, are you that confident of your strategy?"

"I am."

"Although I still have my doubts, I will follow our supreme commander's decision," Ahab said. "However, even if we decide to wait, how sure are you that our enemy will do the same?"

"They have been doing it for the past week. No sense for them to change their approach now, even more so that we are here. They are simply waiting for the supplies inside Fort Garadhor to run out," John said. "Once the force inside the fort is forced out of hiding, they will then converge all their troops. When that time comes, their superior number will easily take all of us down."

"I think they should know the rule where we can't summon our guild troops for one week," Jack said. "We have also exhausted many of our tools. Won't they take this chance to attack us?"

"I don't think it's likely," John said. "Destroying the reinforcement army is never their primary target. All they want is Prince Alonzo. As long as we don't make a move, I don't think they will risk taking an action against us as well."

"I dislike waiting, but I agree with this outworlder's thought," Ahab said.

"But even so, there is nothing wrong with being prepared," John said. "Supreme commander Armstrong, I would like to request permission to intergrade our armies."

"Intergrade?" Armstrong asked. They had thought about this idea before they departed from Thereath, but that idea was scrapped because they weren't sure if the mixed troops could function well. After seeing how the outworlder carried out their formations yesterday, Armstrong now thought differently.

John nodded. "Our outworlders army has the number, but we lack the quality. If we can combine our two forces together, it will reduce our weakness and allow us to better contend against the enemy's high-level officers in case we clash again. Currently, both our armies are almost equal in number, rather than having our outworlder troops as a separate army, let us mix them with your army. So, each squad will have an equal number of natives and outworlders. When in battle, during each squad confrontation, your native troops will take care of the high-level officers while our outworlders provide support. This way, we can cover each other weaknesses, your loss in number and our low level."

"Hm... How about the chains of command?" Ahab asked.

"We can maintain our current setup with the same leaders. Four armies, the center, right-wing, left-wing, and reserve. The difference is a portion of our outworlder troops go to your three armies while a portion of your native troops joins our reserve army."

"Will those outworlders that join us listen to our orders?" Ahab asked.

"They will. They might be unruly but they are pretty much good at listening to orders when needed, as you have seen our display yesterday. I have also talked to them. They will have no problem with this arrangement."

"So, you have come here prepared with this proposal," Armstrong said. "All right. Let's reorganize our army as you proposed."

"I will like to propose something as well," Duke Alfredo said. "I'm never a military type. Leading an army is not my forte. I suggest we just keep our setup into three armies instead of four. Mister Storm and Mister John here can take over the control of my left-wing army. I will be by their sides to assist."

Armstrong raised his brows. "You are truly okay with this?" He asked.

"I am," Duke Alfredo replied.

"All right, then let us reorganize following this discussion."

Out of the remaining 26,500 native army and the 30,000 outworlder army. Both were reshuffled into a mixed force of 56,500 troops. Armstrong commanded the central army of 20,000 troops. Ahab's right-wing army had 19,000 troops. Left-wing that had been taken over by Jack and John numbered 17,500. Jack had been named the commander of this left-wing while John and Duke Alfredo as his co-leaders. Jack wasn't sure how this would affect the exp distribution, he was just glad he had gained more underlings to collect exp for him.

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It took around one day to reorganize everyone. They also did daily drills to have both natives and outworlders familiarize themselves with each other. All under the watchful eyes of Therribus' army.

"They seemed to be very active. They are probably planning something," Garland said after hearing the report.

"As long as they didn't attack, there is no need to bother ourselves with them," Therribus said. He then turned to Rayne. "Do you see any suspicious behaviors from them?"

"No, Your Highness, they simply did normal drill. However, their forces now seemed to be a mix between outworlders and natives," Rayne answered. Rayne, who was originally Rhemos' subordinate, had been chosen by Therribus to scout the enemy's camp. This was because Rayne had the zoom vision ability as well as the Hide skill that turned himself invisible so he could scout near the enemy's camp. He couldn't enter though, because the Hide skill would deactivate if anyone came too close. Additionally, there was normally detection spells cast inside military camps.

"Hmph, petty tricks," Garland mocked. "All they do is weaken their native army."

"They are just trying to reduce their inferiority. There is no need to mind them," Therribus said and turned to Claudius. "How much longer before the siege weapons arrive?"

"They should be here in one week, Your Highness," Claudius answered.

Chapter 793: Siege Weapons

In the following days, everything went on as if before the reinforcement army arrived. Therribus sent small detachments just to keep Prince Alonzo's force inside the fort on their toes. Arther maintained his position close to the fort, taking action whenever Duchess Isabelle did. The two deterrents stood their ground.

Therribus sent a larger attack on the fort the third day after the reinforcement army arrived. His intention was as before, to keep the force inside the fort tense. However, the reinforcement army also attacked at that time. This forced Therribus to pull back his attack on the fort. In response, the reinforcement army also retreated.

As a result, Therribus abandoned the skirmishes altogether. With the reinforcement army on standby, he knew he couldn't apply enough pressure on the force inside Fort Garadhor. Might as well just save their strength and continued to wait.

The situation after that third day went breezily as if no war was going on. The armies just stayed there watching each other in an uneasy peace. This truce seemed to be able to last forever, but everyone knew this was just the calm before the storm.

On the fifth day since the reinforcement army arrived, Jack was standing outside the periphery of the army camp.

"What are you doing here?" Jack heard a voice he knew well and turned to see Red Death there.

"What are you doing here?" Jack asked back the same question.

"I liked to do my daily martial art training outside the camp. I do it there," Red Death answered while pointing to a spot that had a natural rock formation with a cavity at its center. It provided a secluded spot in this otherwise wide expanse of flatland. She then repeated her question, "What are you doing here?"

"Uh, um, I..."

"He is waiting for someone," Peniel answered while Jack was stuttering.

"For who?" Red Death asked. Before Jack or Peniel answered, the sound of a galloping horse could be heard. Someone was riding a steed coming at them at a high speed.

"I see...," Red Death said after seeing the person on the steed. She turned and walked away to the rock formation.

Grace unsummoned her steed after arriving. She glanced at Red Death who was walking away while approaching Jack. She had just completed her thirty days stay in Village of Peace. She had returned to the Heavenly Citadel and then teleported to Theneward before coming directly here.

Jack was still scratching his head, unsure whether he should say something to Red Death.

"How is the war?" Grace asked. "I heard the fighting was pretty fierce."

"Only on the first day after we arrive. It is pretty much just look and wait nowadays," Jack replied. "How is your progress? Do you get much improvement during your stay in the Village of Peace?"

Grace turned around. "Try hitting me," she said.

'Oh? Has she managed to...' Jack decided to test it out. He equipped a common sword and slashed at Grace.

Grace moved away when Jack was about to hit. Jack made another two tries but Grace continued to dodge his attacks.

"You have learned mana sense. Impressive!" Jack uttered. "You start later than the others but it seems the level of your mana sense is already better than the others who started learning it earlier."

"It's all thanks to the environment inside the Village of Peace. Otherwise, I won't have improved so much," Grace said. "Many of my battle skills also had high proficiencies now. The highest ones were at seven stars while the lowest ones were at four stars. Still, it is my auxiliary skills that have improved the most, my Diplomacy skill especially. The villagers were very chatty. My Diplomacy is at Basic Master now."

"Wow! Basic Master? That's two levels more than mine. Heh, and I thought mine is the highest. Anyway, I'm glad to hear that," Jack said. "How is Oswald? You didn't bring him here?"

"When we have to leave the village, Chief Meratis opened a portal that brought us outside of the Lost Forest. Oswald stayed in the woods there. It was still not safe for him to roam around. He will focus on leveling up there. I can call him using my companion token when needed."

"Good."

"His mana sense doesn't lose to me," Grace added.

"What? Really? He managed to learn it that fast as well?" Jack asked.

"Yeah. He trained very hard. I know I made the right choice when I ask him to be my companion."

"You always have a good eye."

"I didn't bring him with me when I returned, but I bring someone else back with me to Heavenly Citadel."

"Oh? Who?" Jack asked.

"Captain Whitebeard," Grace answered.

"What? The rat? Why? I thought it is not allowed to leave the village?"

"He begged chief Meratis for it. He is truly curious about the outside world. Meratis told him that it was a dangerous world outside. I told the chief that we have a guild headquarters. He should be safe if he is willing to stay inside there."

"He? So, you are not calling the rat, it, anymore? You have come a long way from a girl who goes screaming when you see a rat. Still, I don't see how being cooped up inside a guild headquarters is any better than being cooped up in a village."

Grace shrugged. "Perhaps he just wants to meet new people. I told Meratis I can take him back whenever he wants to return."

"So, he is in Heavenly Citadel now?"

"Yeah, I asked Tip to take care of him. He is hanging out inside our Guild Hall. Tip has been introducing him to the members there, to make sure that they didn't consider him as a vermin and chase him out. Or worse, attack him. Once this war is over, I wish to introduce him formally to everyone."

"Well, I guess our guild had a mascot now. Wait! How do you bring him to Heavenly Citadel? He can't use Guild Return scroll, right?"

"Chief Meratis gave him a Recall Plate. Whitebeard set it so one can use the plate to consciously summon him. He then gave the plate to me. I used the plate to summon him when I returned to Heavenly Citadel."

They continued to chat for a bit. Red Death, who was not far away, felt annoyed listening to them. She couldn't focus on her training. She was just about to scold them to go chat somewhere else when she felt something coming her way fast. She ducked and found a knife struck a rock not far away.

"Who!" She yelled. She turned in the direction the knife had come from but didn't see anyone.

Jack and Grace hurriedly come over after hearing her yell.

"What's wrong?" Jack asked.

Red Death didn't answer, she was still searching for the mystery attacker.

"Look," Grace pointed to the knife that was still embedded in the rock. The knife had something tied to it.

Grace went and removed the knife from the rock. It was a piece of paper that was tied to the knife. She removed the tie.

"It is a message," Grace said. There were writings on the paper. She handed the paper to Red Death. It was clear that the message was intended for Red Death.

Red Death looked at the spot where the knife had struck the rock. It was away from her initial position. Even if she didn't duck, the knife won't hit her. It was not an attack. Additionally, the knife didn't disappear, the throw was not done using a skill.

Red Death started reading the paper. Her eyes went wide.

"Cleo, what is it?" Jack asked after seeing her reaction.

Red Death gave the paper to Jack. "You better assemble the army leaders and let them know about this."

Jack was more curious after hearing Red Death's words. He started reading the paper. Grace was beside him reading it as well. Their eyes were also enlarged.

The paper was information about an incoming legion that is bringing siege weapons for Therribus' army. There were details about the route this legion takes as well as the expected time for this legion to arrive. It was two days from today.

"You should let the commanders know immediately," Grace said.

"But, how can we know this message can be trusted?" Jack asked. "Cleo, can you not hazard who could have sent this message to you?"

"I have no idea," Red Death answered flatly.

"It can be a trap," Peniel offered her opinion.

"But if it is true...", Grace said.

"This can be why the crown prince's army is so patient in their wait. They are not only waiting for the supplies inside the fort to run out but also for these siege weapons," Jack said. "I will bring this to the commander's attention. He will decide what to do about it."

Jack sent a message to John, telling him to gather inside the commander's camp. He then summoned Pandora and rode towards the camp. Red Death and Grace looked at one another before going their separate ways without any word.

Chapter 794: Intercepting Force

"Does anyone know of the existence of a spy inside Prince Therribus' army?" Ahab asked.

Everyone had gathered inside the commander's tent after Jack brought the paper regarding the siege weapons to Commander Armstrong. The lord commander had summoned everyone for another meeting. The war table was projecting the 3D map that showed the route described in the paper.

Everyone shook their heads at Ahab's question.

"I have sent a message to our friend inside the fort to ask Prince Alonzo and Commander Quintus. They also had no idea of such a spy," John said.

"And you didn't see who was the one that left this paper?" Ahab asked Jack.

"No. He must have used some kind of an invisibility ability," Jack answered.

"Then this is a trap," Ahab said. "Why would someone unknown send us such vital information without letting his or herself known? What is that person's purpose? If he had asked for a reward for exchange of this information, I will be more inclined to believe it."

"Mm...", Commander Armstrong pondered about Ahab's viewpoint. He then asked Jack, "What do you think?"

Instead of answering the question, Jack turned in another direction and asked John, "What do you think?"

John rolled his eyes at Jack. He then said, "Well, from the way I see it, there are two possibilities. The information is real, or the information is fake."

"Duh!" Jack exclaimed at John's self-evident remark.

John ignored Jack's mocking. He continued, "What if the information is fake? Then we have evaded a trap. Everything is good then. But, what if it is real? Then we have a shit ton of problems ahead of us. That fortress won't stand for long with the siege from both Prince Therribus' army and the siege weapons. Our existence also won't help much. The crown prince no longer needs to wait for the supplies inside the fort to run out. We will pretty much lose the war."

"Then... Do you mean it's better if we still treat this information as real even with the risk that it is a trap?" Armstrong asked.

"It's better to treat this information as both real and a trap at the same time," John said.

"Can you please stop talking in riddles? Not everyone has the patience to try guessing your intention," Jack said. He noticed Ahab's scowl already. It's better if he was the one that scolded John.

"It's not a riddle. It is exactly as I said," John returned. "We should definitely check out this delivery with a force that is ready to intercept it. But we have to also do it discreetly, with a scouting party. In the case that this is a trap, we will only lose this scouting party."

Hearing the suggestion, Armstrong nodded. "I can agree with such a course of action."

"We still have a problem, though," John said.

Everyone gave him questioning looks.

"We need to send the intercepting troops without alerting Prince Therribus' army," John said. "If they saw a large portion of us depart in direction of the siege weapons' delivery route. If the information is real, then our intention will already be known. They are sure to send troops to counter us."

"Which means... We will have to maintain the façade that all our forces are still stationed here?" Armstrong said.

"I am sure regular scouts are checking our army's situation from time to time, but it is unlikely for them to check our inner or rear part," John said. "The best option for this intercepting party is outworlders force. Since we can use the town return scroll from inside the camp and teleport to another nearby town before heading out to intercept these siege weapons. This way, we won't be found out. But we can't send all outworlders. Outworlders comprised half this army, sending all of us means this army is reduced to half in an instant. It will be difficult to maintain the same façade even if we tried to crowd all the native army by the edge."

"So, how many do you think we should send?" Ahab asked.

"The most we can spare is half of the outworlders," John said. "However, the information said the troops delivering the siege weapons numbered 20,000. If we try to fight this number with 15,000

outworlders, we won't achieve much. We might end up destroyed completely even if this is not a trap. We need at least another 5,000 native troops. It's better if you can spare for this mission the ones that have higher average levels. These troops can sneak away from this camp's rear during the night."

"5,000 natives and 15,000 outworlders against 20,000 natives. I still don't see a decent chance for us," Ahab said. "Not to mention that you are still unable to call your guild armies yet, are you?"

"It is not a good chance, but it is the only chance we have," John said. "Sending more troops will increase the risk of getting found out. This arrangement might be a problem if we are to vanquish the troops guarding the siege weapons. However, if we utilize the surprise factor and only target the siege weapons, it should still be doable."

The camp was silent as everyone pondered the suggestion.

Commander Armstrong turned to Ahab, "What do you think?"

Commander Ahab took a deep breath. "I think it is risky. But since I can't think of a better plan, I say we go with this suggestion."

Armstrong nodded. "Then we will decide it that way."

He then turned to Jack. "The three of us are very prominent within this camp," he said, referencing himself, Ahab, and Duke Alfredo. "If anyone of us missing, it will raise a question mark. Our enemies might find out. So, I will have you lead the sneak army. I will select 5,000 elite troops and put them under your command. You can lead them and sneak out tonight."

"Then I will make arrangements for the outworlders force," John said. "We will teleport to Thehemburgh. I will select only those that possessed rare steeds and we will use group haste scrolls. We should be able to reach here before tomorrow morning if we start riding before noon. This will be our rendezvous point, we will meet you here."

John was pointing at a spot on the 3D map that was close to the siege weapons delivery route from the information.

"All right," Jack nodded.

"Then let us go prepare," Armstrong said. Everyone dispersed and did their appointed tasks.

Regarding the rendezvous point, the city of Theneward was closer. But that city had lots of players who followed the war situation, even if only as spectators. If suddenly so many players teleported there, the news could easily reach those guilds who supported Prince Therribus. Then the news might reach the crown prince as well.

Thehemburgh was another main city second closest to the rendezvous point. If the players departed from there, it should be less conspicuous. The local players might simply take it as some large guilds going on a guild quest. Even so, John still took precautions. He divided the players who teleported to that city into groups at intervals. So that the number wasn't so big at one time. Before noon, the last group had left Thehemburgh.

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At night, Jack left with the 5,000 native troops under the cover of night. Miller and Bailey were with him, and so were Captain Salem, Lucia, Nicholas, and high priest Laurent. Captain Salem was also amongst those that were chosen by Prince Alonzo to receive the Council of Virtus' blessing and training. His elite grade had upgraded to Special Elite. His level had increased even more than the others who received the blessing. His level was 65 now. He was at the same level and grade as Miller.

With so many high-level special elites in his command, Jack felt more confident. Aside from that, the commander also placed in his command one of his top officers, a knight commander named Uvira. She was a level 60 rare elite. Jack was pleasantly surprised when Commander Armstrong brought her to join him. It seemed that the lord commander understood the seriousness of these siege weapons if they proved to be true. Jack made a silent pledge that he would not let the lord commander down.

Grace and Red Death were also by his side. Jack originally asked them to follow the outworlder group who departed from Thehemburgh, but Grace was adamant about staying at Jack's side. Jack had no choice but to accept. Red Death came and demanded to follow him as well. Jack also could not say no to her. But he didn't form a party with them. He told them that he needed to monopolize the exp points gathered by his army due to his triple classes and divine treasure. They said they had no interest in leeching Jack's exp gain.

While he was on the way, he received a message from his grandfather, "Afei. We have arrived in Theneward. Where should we go?"

"About time! What took you so long?" Jack replied.

"That trial Haon took for his beast form turned out rather complicated. We are here now. Where are you?"

"Go to this place. We need every hand on deck. Come as soon as possible!" Jack sent Domon the coordinates where they would be hitting the siege weapons convoy.

Chapter 795: Intercepting the Siege Weapons Delivery

Jack's regiment arrived first at the rendezvous point, which was an area with woods overlooking a large road. The convoy escorting the siege weapons was supposed to come via this road. The woods allowed Jack's 5,000 soldiers to hide within. He had the troops kill all the monsters inside the woods, preparing for the arrival of the player force as well as gathering exp for him.

Before dawn, the first group of players arrived. John was among them. He brought with him a bunch of transportation caravans.

"What is inside them?" Jack asked.

"They're empty," John answered.

"Then what are those empty caravans for?"

"For something."

Annoyed, Jack asked another question, "Where do you get them from?"

"From our pal, Dylan," John answered.

"Ain't he in the middle of transporting those war fires?"

The war fires had been completed four days ago, but since these war fires couldn't be put inside the player's storage bag. John had requested Dylan to use the Trade Association's service to arrange the transport, complete with native bodyguards service. Of course, they also sent players for extra security as well.

Dylan was originally following the transport caravans. He didn't have to, but he received points for any completed transportation. After John's insistence, he reluctantly returned and again used the service of the Trade Association in Thehemburgh to rent transportation caravans for independent usage for one week. John could use these caravans however he liked during this one week.

Dylan was grumbling when he rented the caravans as they cost a lot of points. This independent rental service was also only available for members who had achieved a high position in the faction. Luckily, Dylan was such a member.

The players who had arrived first all rested while waiting for the others to arrive. The siege weapons convoy was supposed to pass by around late afternoon. John went around checking the surrounding landscapes while he sent Life Runner to find the supposed incoming convoy.

Life Runner used the Haste magic scroll and then activated his Hide skill before he ran following the road. John had given him a large number of Haste scrolls. Of course, he had to go into hiding first to renew his Haste effect because his Hide skill was deactivated when he used the scroll.

Before noon, every player had arrived. The small woods were too cramped for their full size. John gathered the leaders to have a discussion. John had chosen players with the highest level for this mission. He, however, didn't inform them about the nature of the mission. Just in case there were spies. The players were sent in groups. So even if there were spies, they wouldn't see the number as an alarming issue to warrant reporting. Only now that everyone had gathered that everyone knew that something big was going on. But even if there were spies and the enemy players were informed, by the time they got here, it should have already past the time from when they clashed with the convoy.

John informed the leaders of the nature of the mission. Everyone then understood the importance of the mission.

"But there is a chance this is a trap?" Prideful Josh asked.

"Yes," John didn't refute.

"I think it shouldn't be," Life Runner said. He had come back from his scouting. "There is indeed a large army on the way, transporting many large objects."

"Do you see what these objects are?" Josh asked.

Life Runner shook his head, "They are covered with tarps."

"Then inside could be packed full of soldiers for all we know," Josh argued.

"I won't dismiss the possibility," John said. "But we will have to make sure. If they are indeed siege weapons, then our chance of winning this war will drastically go down."

"Can't we use those war fires that we talked about before on these siege weapons?" Selena asked.

"The war fires are already in transportation," Lustful Elly informed. "But they still need at least three days to arrive. If those things are truly siege weapons. I don't think the fortress can last that long."

"War fires are static weapons. They are too large to be thrown," Josh said. "The enemies won't just stay still and let us bring these war fires to the siege weapons."

"I have other use for those war fires. Forget about using them for these siege weapons," John said.

Everyone was pondering silently before Josh asked again, "So, how do you suggest we proceed?"

John used a small tree branch and started drawing on the dirt ground. "This is the woods we are in. This is the road that the convoy will be passing. A bit down the road from here is smaller woods. The difference is the opposite of these woods is a small hill. We will make our assault there."

"So, you want us to divide our force into two and sandwich the convoy in between?" Josh said while observing John's drawing.

"Yes. One will attack from the hill while another from the woods," John said. "It is important that we caught them unaware for the first strike. We will let them pass until the middle of their convoy. Life Runner had checked that these large objects that they were transporting were situated at the back half of the convoy. Our primary objectives will be these objects, not the soldiers guarding them."

"And what if the objects behind the tarps are more enemy soldiers?" Josh asked.

"Then we run like hell. No need to wait for an order," John said. "I believe all of us should be good at that, right? Some will die, but everyone wears the amulet of rebirth. We will regroup back at the reinforcement army camp. The native regiment commanded by Storm will only join after we confirm the existence of the siege weapons."

The leaders looked at each other before saying, "All right, let's go with that."

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A few hours passed. An army was seen in the distance walking down the large road. No one was using mounts. They were all on foot, following the pace of the large objects on wheels at the back half of their formation.

As they walked, the lead officer at the front gave a sign for everyone to stop. This officer had seen something coming from the opposite direction of the road. As that something approached, he found it to be a convoy of caravans. At the frontmost caravan, someone in merchant attire greeted him.

"Sir, I'm sorry. Do you mind giving us some road?" The merchant said while showing his badge. "We need to deliver these transports and this is the only road around here."

The lead officer used Inspect on the merchant. "An outworlder?" He muttered. He had no love for outworlders. However, this outworlder in front of him was just a low-level one and also carried the badge of the Trade Association. The outworlder looked like a legitimate merchant.

The officer gave another sign. The army formation started shifting to the side to allow a small path for the caravans to pass through at the edge of the road.

"Thank you, sir! Thank you very much. Have a good day," The merchant said and resumed his journey.

The army stayed as they waited for this caravan convoy to pass through. It was a very long convoy. Probably thirty caravans in a line. The caravans themselves were large-size ones, able to transport lots of goods. The officer who saw the procession was rather amazed that this outworlder could amass the wealth to fill up these thirty large caravans. He wondered what was inside them.

He soon lost interest and gave the signal for the army to start moving again. The army walked forward while the caravans that moved by their side went in the opposite direction.

The thirty caravans continued to pass beside the army. When the hindmost caravan was halfway through the army formation, they suddenly stopped. The soldiers nearest to the caravans turned and watched the stopped convoy in bewilderment. Then they caught sight of the merchant, who was at the frontmost caravan, had jumped down to the ground. That merchant then ran a distance away from the caravans before unfurling a scroll. He then disappeared.

What's the merchant doing leaving his caravans? They thought with growing confusion.

Then all of a sudden, all the caravans' doors opened at the same time. A large number of people rushed out from each caravan. These people immediately attacked without warning.

Before the soldiers could register what had happened, a large number of people appeared on top of the hill opposite the caravans and started shooting. To add to the surprise, they heard loud yells. Another large group rushed out from the woods from behind the caravans. Magic and ranged attacks also shot out from inside those woods.

Before they knew it. They had been besieged from two sides. The attacks had been so sudden that they didn't react properly.

When the magic and ranged attacks hit, they realized that all those ranged attacks were not meant for them. The tarps covering the objects they were transporting were torn apart by the attacks, revealing all kinds of siege machinery. Ballistae, trebuchets, catapults, battering rams, and even archer towers that were laid down for transport.

Chapter 796: Destroying the Siege Weapons

The merchant, who was at the caravan's head, was Dylan. John had asked him to follow along after renting the caravans because they needed an authentic merchant for their disguise. Dylan had been grumbling non-stop after John explained what those caravans were going to be used for after seeing players entering them.

He was sure by the end of the days, these caravans would be full of scrapes if they were not fully broken. Any damages inflicted upon the caravans would incur a penalty when it was time for him to return it. John had assured him that the guild would help pay for the penalty.

He grumbled that it was not just about the monetary penalty, his reputation in the faction would suffer as well. John lectured him about the need for one to sacrifice for the good of many. Jack joined in and lectured him about the importance of their current mission. How they would need to win this war if players were still to have their freedom in this country.

Dylan decided to just shut up rather than let himself become even more upset by arguing with the two.

After successfully approaching the army and receiving John's cue, Dylan immediately jumped off the caravan and ran a few distances away before using the Town Return Scroll. He was not a fighter. He didn't wish to get entangled in the fighting once it started.

As soon as Dylan fled, John sent a message to the ones inside the caravans. The caravans that Dylan had rented were the largest in size. Many players could fit inside as long as they didn't mind getting cramped. John had forced as many as possible into the caravans. Each caravan held thirty players. Once they received John's cue, they happily rushed out. They felt like chickens cooped up on a crowded farm. They would rather face horrible monsters than continued inside there.

All the players inside the caravan were melee classes with high HP. They would be the first ones to make direct contact with the enemy and they needed to last as long as possible and disrupt the enemies from assuming any defensive formation.

While they caused disruption with their ambush, the hidden ranged players took action. Gunners and Elite Marksmen were stationed on the hill, taking advantage of their high position. While magic users and middle-ranged class like the Hidden Weapon Specialists hid in the woods. The remaining melee players also hid in the woods and rushed out once they saw their comrades burst out of the caravans.

When the tarps were destroyed and the existence of the siege weapons revealed, John who stood on the hills shouted, "The information is real! Charge...!!!"

Jack, who was waiting behind the hill, gave his command once he heard John's shout. His regiment rushed out with their mounts. The ranged players parted way to let them pass. They rode at high speed down the hill.

Due to the elongated form of the army escorting the siege weapons, Jack spread his regiment into five battalions so they could hit more targets. Jack placed Captain Salem, Miller, Bailey, and Uvira to lead the other four battalions.

With the convoyed army still dazed by the ambush, Jack's regiment punched through and went directly to the siege weapons in the center and started hacking them. The siege weapons had HP bars and their HPs were rather high. It took a lot of punishment to destroy one machine.

Most of the melee players went and jammed the middle section of the army. The siege weapons were positioned at the back half of the army while the first half was all soldiers. The army expected an attack to come from the front, little did they expect they would be ambushed like this. With the melee players blocking the middle section, the front half had a difficult time going to the rescue.

However, the players knew this was only temporary. They lost in terms of firepower. Once the enemy troops regained their composure, the situation could turn around abruptly.

Jack summoned Arlcard and the Ice Demon Fiend. He sent these two rare elites to aid the melee players in the middle section to hold the native troops while they wreaked havoc on the back half. He also summoned his wolves, Therras, and Spirit Weapon to aid him in destroying the siege weapons.

Jack understood the urgency of time. They needed to destroy all the siege weapons before the front half of this army convoy broke through the players' blockage. So, he went all out immediately.

He activated Storm Breaker's Overlimit and used Lightning God Barrage. The siege weapon was too large and spaced a distance from one another, so he just concentrated all twenty lightning balls onto the nearest siege weapon. After the lightning explosion dissipated, Jack found that his divine skill didn't take out even twenty percent of the siege weapon's HP.

"Shit!" He uttered. 'This is going to be a problem.'

The siege weapons had very high defense and HP. Luckily, its big size allowed many melees to land their attacks at the same time. Still, it took a while to destroy one. There were ten ballistae, five trebuchets, seven catapults, three battering rams, and two archer towers. Jack shuddered when he thought about what could happen if all these siege weapons were delivered to Therribus' army. Fort Garadhor might not even last a day.

After almost four minutes, they managed to destroy the five siege weapons they first targeted, which were three ballistae and two catapults. They hurriedly went over to the next ones.

However, things were not as easy as before anymore. The enemy soldiers had protectively crowded around the siege weapons. The element of surprise was gone already. Although the ranged players still pelted the siege weapons from afar, the soldiers used protection ability on the siege weapons as well as shield spells to block the range attacks. The amount that managed to get through was not enough to provide any meaningful damage. To make it worse, there were soldiers with mechanic abilities. These mechanics could repair the siege weapons and recover their HPs. Sort of like healers to the siege weapons.

Luckily, each of Jack's battalions was filled with capable natives. The enemy soldiers here were slightly weaker than the ones that formed Therribus' besieging army around fort Garadhor. This allowed them to still overpower the enemy and clear a path to the next batch of siege weapons. They hurriedly worked on destroying these machines while fighting off the surrounding enemy soldiers.

"Jack!" Jack heard his name called. He turned and saw it was Grace.

"There are weak points to the machine!" Grace yelled. "I saw an arrow hit the sling. The damage it caused is higher compared to when an arrow hit its main body."

"Really?" Jack uttered as he looked at the siege weapons before him. It was a trebuchet. The sling Grace mentioned was positioned slightly higher.

Jack used his supreme dragon transformation and flew up. He then hit the sling and the beam that the sling was tied to. The damage was indeed different between the sling and the beam despite him using the same standard attacks.

He immediately shouted instructions for those with nimbler moves to climb up and hit multiple different parts, trying to find if there were any other weak points. Red Death was the first to jump up and started stabbing at multiple different parts. Jack then relayed the information about these weak points to the players who he positioned near his battalions' leaders. These players informed those leaders of the weak points. This shortened the time it took them to destroy the siege weapons by a bit.

When they were on the way to the third batch of the siege weapons, he sent a mental command for Therras to activate its supersonic mode. With this mode, Therras charged into the enemy ranks and wreaked havoc. His spirit weapon rushed behind. With Therras aid, the spirit weapon managed to arrive at the next siege weapon before the others. Jack then commanded it to use its finishing mode.

While the energy core of the spirit weapon was ready to explode, Jack used the soul breath of his supreme dragon form. Therras ran away with supersonic speed before the combined explosion happened. The combined explosion only managed to take out around one-sixth of the siege weapon's HP, but the explosion was very large. Thus, the defending soldiers around it were cleared out. This allowed Jack's battalion to encircle this next siege weapon with ease.

Yet, they received more and more resistance. As more siege weapons were destroyed. The defending soldiers who initially guarded the destroyed machines now joined the defenders of the remaining machines. Thus, the pressure on Jack's regiment became more. Their advance slowed.

"Traitors to the crown prince, face your punishment!" Jack suddenly heard a yell and saw an officer with a mage garb floating in the air. He was holding a staff that was crackling with lightning as spell formation formed. Lightning shot out from his staff and hit several of Jack's soldiers.

It was the Chain Lightning spell. The damage was very high. Jack used Inspect and found this mage officer to be a level 63 rare elite. When Jack saw this officer's eyes turn to him, he immediately cast Magic Wall. The magic wall formed just as a spear of thick lightning shot out from the officer's staff. Jack's magic wall was destroyed in one hit, the residual energy continued and struck Jack.

Jack felt his body convulse as he slammed to the ground due to the impact. He lost around 30% of his life. Even with the increased HP and defense of supreme dragon form, added by his high lightning resistance, he still lost so much HP. This mage officer was no joke.

He then saw this mage officer's staff crackled with lightning again as another spell formation was formed.

Chapter 797: Growing Resistance

The native soldiers under his command immediately placed themselves in front of Jack who was still lying on the ground, shielding him from further attack. Jack was rather touched by their actions. But he immediately got up, he was not going to just cower behind. He cast Barrier.

The mage officer completed his spell. It was the Lightning Strike spell. The lightning struck from above, rendering the protection from the soldiers who put themselves in front of Jack useless. The thickness of this lightning pillar looked smaller than Garland's but thicker than Blackhole's one. Either way, Jack knew he won't escape unscathed.

But before the lightning pillar hit, the earth around Jack churned up. It formed a protective shell above Jack. The lightning strike hit this earth shell. The might of the lightning couldn't penetrate this shell.

While Jack was both confused and glad for the save, he heard loud stomping. He turned and saw a gigantic earth golem approaching. The golem looked like the giant version of the summoner's dirt golem. On this golem's shoulder was a slender woman holding a staff. She was Uvira, the level 60 rare elite tasked by Commander Armstrong to assist Jack in this mission.

Uvira gave Jack a brief glance before returning her attention to the enemy mage officer. Jack interpreted the glance as she saying that she would deal with this high-level enemy and for him to focus on the mission objective. Jack gave the command to the soldiers protecting him to return to their effort in destroying the siege machinery.

Jack also did the same, he flew back up and resumed his clawing, with one attention on the battle between the two rare elite officers.

The enemy mage officer cast his next spell and multiple lightning bolts shot out. Uvira was casting a spell herself. Jack observed that her spell formation wouldn't be completed before the lightning bolts hit. However, before they did, the earth golem's two hands flailed around, swatting the lightning bolts before they hit its master.

Uvira completed her spell and a gigantic earth hand materialized near the enemy officer. Jack found the spell to be similar to Master's spell but this earth hand floated in the sky while Master's one was fixed to the ground. This earth hand attempted to grab the officer, but a lightning shell formed around him. The earth hand crashed onto this lightning shell. Sparks were ignited as it attempted to crush the shell without success.

When Uvira was readying another spell, an arrow struck her elbow. Jack looked in the direction where the arrow had come from and saw an enemy archer with energy wings on her back. Jack recognized the wings as a flying tool, similar to the ones used by Arther and the orc warlord, Abasi Raretooth. Jack used Inspect and found the archer to be a level 58 special elite.

This archer shot repetitive arrows at Uvira, interfering with her effort in casting a spell. Jack couldn't just stay still. He used Shooting Dash on the ground for a head start before shooting up into the air. He didn't fly directly to the archer but at an angle away from her. The archer saw Jack but didn't truly give him much attention because she was assuming he was targeting someone else behind her. She focused her shots on Uvira.

Then Jack suddenly changed direction using his dragon form's natural Wind Jet ability. The ability allowed him to approach the special elite archer in a heartbeat. The archer was surprised but not flustered. She swiveled her aim and the tip of her arrow was now aiming right at Jack.

When she released the arrow, Jack vanished. In exchange, sixteen shadows resembling Jack appeared around the archer. Before she could react, these sixteen shadows all hit multiple parts of the archer's body.

Although Jack's Hundred Shadow Strikes caused massive damage, it was not enough to one-shot a level 58 special elite native. Jack followed up by Flame Strike which sent the archer crashing back onto the ground before flying away.

Jack's interruption had allowed Uvira to resume her casting. Unfortunately, during the time she was disrupted, the enemy mage officer had also managed to destroy her earth hand spell. The two returned throwing spells at one another.

The archer was enraged by Jack's interruption and was now targeting Jack instead. Rains of arrows chase after Jack as Jack frantically fly away in a zig-zagging fashion at high speed.

While Jack fled back to the safety of his battalion, a soft light landed on Jack, Uvira, and all nearby friendly soldiers. High Priest Laurent approached by floating. He had cast his Area Bless. He also cast golden plates protection for Uvira, allowing her to be able to cast her spells freely without fear of interruption. With that protection, even if the archer returned to targeting Uvira, the archer won't be able to disrupt her as long as the golden plates remained on Uvira's body.

The progress on destroying the third batch of the siege weapons took longer than before despite they already knowing most of the machinery's weak points. This was due to the disruption of more enemy soldiers. When this third batch was destroyed, Jack heard a commotion from the back. He turned and saw the players' middle section blockage start failing. Several groups of enemy soldiers started pouring through.

When that blockage crumbled completely, they would get overrun.

But they couldn't call it quits. If these siege weapons were delivered to Therribus, it would be a disaster. Jack urged everyone to continue charging to the rear end of the enemies where the remaining siege weapons were. He used his Runestone of Marching to increase everyone's movement speed.

They pierced through the enemies, fighting only to create space to allow them to pass through. The ranged players by the hill and the woods followed their charge as they continued to provide support fire. While most of the melee players now rushed to the middle section to help hold the blockage to have it last as long as possible.

The fighting at the back half was pretty much a mess now. There was no longer any formation. Each of Jack's soldiers was trying to reach the next siege weapons while the defending soldiers tried their best to crowd around the siege machines, protecting them.

Jack's beast form had run out. Uvira was still busy dealing with the mage officer somewhere. Laurent should be nearby her providing support. Jack was not sure where everyone else was. He just know that they had to get to the next siege weapon, and that's the command he kept on shouting, "Charge! Charge...! Destroy the siege weapons...!!!"

After what felt like a long time, Jack finally saw the outline of the siege weapon ahead. It looked like one of the two gigantic arrow towers. He already missed the flying ability of his dragon form. It was easier to see the situation from a higher elevation. Down here, all he saw was a mess.

He urged the soldiers to press forward, overpowering the enemy soldiers guarding the arrow tower. Red Death and the other more nimble soldiers jumped into the arrow tower once it was in range. They started hacking the tower from the inside.

When the HP bar appeared, Jack observed it in relation to the damages dealt. "Shit! This arrow tower had a much higher HP than the others," he muttered. The size of this tower was indeed much larger than the other siege weapons, so he guessed it was to be expected.

But due to its large size, the enemy defenders also had trouble blocking the attacking soldiers. Once there was a gap, someone could jump inside and deal damage from within. Soon, more and more followed Red Death and jumped inside. The guarding soldiers had a hard time deciding if they should rush in to fight the attackers inside the tower or continue blocking the perimeter.

As time passed, Jack also managed to force his way inside.

"Hit the connecting parts between the pillars and the beams. Those are the weak points!" Red Death uttered when he saw Jack arrive.

Jack nodded. He relayed the instruction to the others before going to work himself. While he was slashing, he suddenly sensed something in Red Death's direction. He turned around and saw that Red Death sensed it as well. She used Roll before throwing her dagger in the direction where she was standing before.

A clang was heard and a soldier wearing a cloak was revealed.

"He is not alone!" Jack used Shredding Fang and Arcane Turbulence. The two area-of-effect skills covered a wide area. With the limitation of space inside the arrow tower, there was not much space to dodge. Another five soldiers were revealed.

Jack used Inspect and saw that the lead with the cloak was a level 60 special elite while the other five were level 56 special elites.

All six were at much higher levels than them. The native soldiers under Jack immediately rushed at the six once they were no longer invisible, but the soldiers' levels were also lower than those six.

The mission was more important. Jack told those soldiers to hold the six while the rest continued to deal damage to the arrow tower, including him. But the cloaked enemy lead was very agile. He slipped through and headed towards Red Death again.

Chapter 798: King of Beast

Red Death didn't back down. She activated her Trinity Assault, turning into three figures. These three figures then rotated, each one sending a torrent of slashes. Her twin daggers swirled and created uncountable images. The slashes came from all angles. Despite the cloaked soldier's faster speed, he was having difficulty receiving Red Death's attack. He received cuts on many parts.

That was a martial art. Jack was astounded, Red Death's copies could also perform such complex martial art. She must have trained this move a lot.

Unfortunately, the move didn't last indefinitely. The complex move drained Red Death's stamina. She could only sustain it for a few short seconds. Once her movement stopped, the cloaked soldier struck. His hands turned into a blur as a flurry of stabs jabbed all three Red Deaths. The two fake Red Deaths

received repeated stabs and vanished, while the real one parried a couple of stabs but was hit by the rests.

Jack sent Wind Slash which forced the soldier back and saved Red Death's life. Peniel hurriedly cast Fast Heal on her critical health.

When Jack wanted to engage the cloaked soldier, he heard a voice, "Let me!"

A bluish-purple energy wave rushed through from Jack's side heading to the cloaked soldier. The soldier parried using his dagger and was blasted away, large damage appeared above his head. Jack recognized this special move.

"What took you so long?" Jack asked.

"The coordinates you gave aren't exactly here," Domon said.

"We are in a battle. We can't exactly stay at the same spot now, can we?" Jack argued.

"You are destroying this tower, right? You do that. I will deal with him," Domon said and walked towards the cloaked soldier.

"Master, allow me!" Another voice uttered and a shadow rushed past both Domon and Jack. It was Leavemealone charging at the cloaked soldier.

'Crap, not even a greeting,' Jack thought.

As Leavemealone started clashing with the cloaked soldier, Domon turned to Red Death and said, "Cleo, that Soul Trapping Blades you executed was good, but you should just focus on doing it without the copies. Dividing your attention to your copies just increase the number of slashes but reduce their intensity. Feel the flow of the energy generated by your rotating body and let it guide your daggers."

"Thank you for your insight, Master Domon. I've never been able to fully execute this martial art in our previous world. Only recently that I have managed to perform it. I know It is still far from perfect, I will practice hard to carry it to perfection."

"Hey, you two," Jack called out. He had been back to hacking the structures frantically. "Can you please do this discourse later? Like, when we are not in the middle of a war and being chased by time?"

One of the five level 56 special elites broke through Jack's soldiers. He came at Jack who was still hitting the tower's structures.

"Cleo, you help Jack break this tower. I'll protect you both," Domon said. He stood in the way of the incoming enemy soldier.

When the incoming soldier saw that the one blocking his way was a level 49 outworlder, who was seven levels below him, he sneered. "Die, lowly outworlder!" He yelled. He was carrying a curved short sword which created a flash of light when it stabbed.

When the stab was about to arrive, Domon roared. A roar that very much sounded like a lion's roar. His roar created a shockwave that stopped the soldier's assault. Not only that, but his hair also changed color to red. A thin reddish aura covered his body.

Although Jack was focusing on hacking the tower's structure, he still spared a couple of thoughts to watch Leavemealone's and Domon's fight, just in case they needed help. He was astonished by his grandfather's hair color change. Even Domon's beard was red.

"That is the first active skill from the King of Beast bloodline," Peniel explained. Jeanny had given back the bloodline to Domon after she copied it. Domon had fused with the bloodline before he left with Leavemealone. "That active skill is called Wrath of the Beast, it increases all his attributes and senses, as well as giving him an enhanced body recovery ability. The starting roar from that skill also has the chance to stun opponents."

The attacking soldier was unfortunate enough to receive the stun effect while attacking, his body was now motionless for a beat. Domon didn't waste this chance. His fist shot out and slammed the soldier squarely on the chest. A loud bang was heard and the opponent flew from the simple punch.

"Heart Exploding Punch!" Jack uttered when he recognized the move.

'Can this move also affect natives with high HP?' Jack wondered and looked at the soldier that had been flung away. The soldier's HP was zero. "Damn! So, there is an instant death effect?"

"There is... but it is usually caused by a very high-level spell or skill. I can't believe your grandfather can generate that effect so easily," Peniel said.

"It's not easy, miss," Domon said when he heard their talks. "If he didn't stop moving as he did, I won't have been able to successfully execute the move."

Another of the special elite enemies broke through again. A couple of Jack's soldiers who were holding them had died, so they could break away more easily. Domon again put himself on the enemy's path. He couldn't do the stunning roar anymore though, so he couldn't use the Heart Exploding Punch as before. He activated Ki Weapon to increase his glaive's damage output.

The enemy soldier slashed and stabbed repeatedly with his curved short sword. His speed was faster than Domon's even after Domon's attributes were enhanced by the Wrath of the Beast skill. But Domon easily swerved to dodge the slash and stab. His foot shifted a bit every time he dodged. Jack recognized it as the Eight Diagram Illusory Steps.

Domon was not only dodging. Every time he dodged, his glaive would counterattack from the enemy's blind spots. His glaive moved continuously without pause, striking and evading at the same time. Jack recognized the glaive's unceasing attacks as Domon's martial art, Soul Pursuit Hurricane, which he had briefly demonstrated during the tournament match against Spring Crown.

Domon's feet and hands were performing two different martial arts, but he did it with such grace that it looked as if they were one art. Jack was tranced by the display that he stopped hitting the structure. Only after Peniel woke him up with a slap to the head that he resumed attacking.

The enemy soldier was frustrated. He couldn't touch the outworlder but he was getting hit continuously by the opponent. His HP continued to go down. In his frustration, he used a skill that spun his body at high speed, cutting everything around him. Domon saw the attack's trajectory and ducked away accurately. His glaive then burst with energy as he thrust the weapon from under the enemy that was still spinning.

The bluish-purple burst of energy indicated Domon use mana manipulation in his Ki Strike. The energy burst engulfed the spinning soldier's body. The soldier was already low on health after Domon's multiple attacks, this last burst of attack consumed his remaining life.

After finishing his opponent, Domon went to aid Jack's soldiers who were still holding the other special elites.

On the other side, Leavemealone had been contending fiercely with the level 60 special elite cloaked soldier. Although Leavemealone was able to solo a special elite, the difference of eleven levels was still too large. Leavemealone was fully focused as he tried to read his opponent's movements and react before the attacks came. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to dodge. The enemy was just too fast.

Jack noticed that Leavemealone's hair had also changed color to red and his body was shrouded by a thin red aura. He then remembered after the Ancient Battleground, Leavemealone also chose the King of Beast bloodline following Domon.

But the boost provided by the bloodline's active skill was still not enough for Leavemealone to rival his opponent. Leavemealone could only dodge without much chance to counterattack. Jack saw that Leavemealone might need help. Jack stopped attacking the structure and was just about to head over.

Leavemealone probably saw Jack's attempt from the corner of his eyes. He shouted, "Do not approach! I alone am enough!"

"The hell, man! It will not be funny if you die just for trying to act tough," Jack uttered.

Leavemealone didn't say anything in response. Instead, a shockwave exploded from his body, staggering his opponent. Peniel informed Jack that was battle monk's non-standard skill, Ki Outburst. It damaged and knockback all enemies within a radius of five meters.

While his opponent was unbalanced, Leavemealone's body transformed. His body mass enlarged. White fur with black stripes grew all over his body, covering even his armor. His hands and feet turned into clawed limbs. His head became rounded. He grew whiskers and his mouth widened with sharp teeth. Long golden fur grew on top of his head, contrasting his overall white fur.

"It's... It's the White Tiger beast form," Peniel uttered.

"Not just white tiger," Carnelia had appeared and came beside Peniel while Leavemealone was fighting.

"It's the White Tiger Emperor beast form," she informed.

Chapter 799: Beast Emperor

"White Tiger Emperor?" Jack uttered. He looked at Leavemealone's tiger form's head. The golden fur on top of that head did resemble a crown.

"White Tiger Emperor form is an enhanced version from the standard White Tiger form," Peniel informed. "There is only one available in the world, much like your Supreme Dragon form."

"You have a Supreme Dragon form?" Carnelia asked in consternation.

After transforming, Leavemealone became faster. However, his larger body made for an easier target. Thus, his opponent managed to hit him more often. But Leavemealone's HP and defense were much higher in this form, so he could take a few hits. Additionally, he gained HP recovery ability with the beast form.

With this form, he could finally retaliate. His claws struck in counterattack whenever there was an opportunity.

The fight was more even then. Suddenly, Leavemealone's claws enlarged. So long and large that it was like each of his hands was holding three short swords instead of claws. When Leavemealone swung, it produced three trails of white flashes in the air.

When the cloaked soldier blocked Leavemealone's swing, his dagger was smashed away. The strength difference was now at Leavemealone's advantage. When the enlarged claws struck the cloaked soldier, the damage produced was also much higher than before.

"I suppose those oversized claws are the beast form's skill?" Jack asked.

"You are correct," Carnelia answered.

"The white tiger form excels in melee engagement," Peniel said. "It is an ideal form complimenting his fighting style."

As if to support Peniel's statement, Leavemealone activated another of his form's abilities. Its tiger furs all stood up. It made him look like a feline porcupine. White aura also swirled around him. All his traits were further enhanced following this transformation. His attacks became more fierce. His opponents retreated from each impact until he was backed to a wall and could only defend helplessly while getting clawed relentlessly.

"That is White Tiger Rage ability, it enhances all melee damage and defense, as well as increases attack speed and recovery speed. No one sane will want to engage tiger form users in a melee when they are in that state."

The arrow tower was finally destroyed from the accumulated damage at the same time Leavemealone finished the cloaked soldier.

With the arrow tower crumbling, the chaotic armies fighting outside were visible again. Jack saw his soldiers were trying to reach the next siege weapons. Grace was leading one group of soldiers in that endeavor. She was now holding two mace weapons instead of her usual mace and shield.

This was due to the Phantom Beating Stick martial art that Jet had taught her. Her fighting style focused on the fast movement of her maces with minimal hand movements. Her wrists did most of the work. Her two maces hit hard and fast and kept the opponents dazed. But the technique shone the most on counterattacking. Her left mace struck the incoming weapons for defense while her right mace delivered an offensive blow to the opponent's weak points.

Grace had practiced hard on this martial art during her time inside Village of Peace, now that she could put her practice into a real fight, she felt excited. She had no problem dealing with special elite soldiers that were one or two levels above her. Even against three such soldiers ganging up on her, she could keep them at bay with her new fighting style.

Of course, she was not fighting alone. On her side, Oswald was mowing down enemy soldiers together with Jack's other soldiers. Grace had summoned him to help. With his newly gained mana sense ability, Oswald had no problem dealing with this chaotic fight. His usual fighting style was ambush and assassination. Direct combat was not his forte. But with mana sense, he had no problem detecting various attacks that came at him and reacted properly.

Aside from mana sense, Jet had also taught him martial art using knives, called Twin Moon Fangs. Same as mana sense, Oswald had diligently trained this martial art as well. With this martial art, his two daggers struck fiercely as if the two fangs of a wild beast. Each strike created a flash resembling a crescent moon. With this martial art, even after exhausting his skills, he could still deliver deadly attacks with only standard attacks.

The two led the soldiers to open the way to the next siege weapons. Jack and the others immediately rushed over to join them. Leavemealone who was in his tiger form was the fastest. He even ran with four feet. It was like seeing a large tiger running towards its prey. Once he reached the frontline, he charged into the enemy, barreling through enemy soldiers. An imaginary gigantic roaring tiger head followed his wake.

"That is obviously a skill, right?" Jack asked while trying to catch up. He wished his dragon form was off cooldown, so he didn't lose to that guy in showing off.

"Yeah, it's White Tiger Charge," Peniel answered.

Once Leavemealone was deep inside the enemy ranks, he uttered a deafening roar. The roar created a shockwave that radiated out, knocking the surrounding soldiers down and damaging them at the same time.

"White Tiger Roar," Peniel informed before Jack could ask.

With the opening created by Leavemealone, Jack's soldiers had an easier time breaking through. But Leavemealone was not done. His right hand emitted energy that was the characteristic of the Overlimit ability. Twenty large fireballs emerged in the air. He directed these twenty fireballs to the nearest siege weapon. They struck the machine together with the soldiers that protected it.

With the defensive perimeter in tatter, everyone crashed into the siege weapon following the beast emperor. Jack had sent Therras who had fast movement speed ahead to support Leavemealone.

"I must admit, that White Tiger Emperor form is indeed impressive," Jack said.

"Of course. White Tiger form is the best beast form for those who possessed a bloodline that absorbs essences from beast-type monsters," Peniel said.

"So, he can get that beast form because he has the King of Beast bloodline?"

"Yes, just like how you can get the dragon form because you have a high-level draconic bloodline. Carnelia had made a perfect choice for him."

Leavemealone had max-leveled his beast form using his saved free skill points, so he could last ten minutes in that form.

They continued to persevere in destroying the siege weapons. But after a while, the commotion at the back turned louder. Jack received a message from Jet, "Jack boy, we can't hold on anymore!"

Jack looked back and saw the middle section blockage had completely crumbled. The enemy soldiers were pouring forth.

"What about Arlcard?" Jack asked worriedly. Jack might need to forcefully unsummon the vampire back to where he came from if he was in danger. Jack opened his companion interface and saw that the vampire's HP bar was still around 70%, but if Arlcard got surrounded by enemy soldiers, then things could go ugly fast.

He is still fighting a level 62 rare elite together with your Ice Demon Fiend. They have drawn that rare elite away. I think they are in a stalemate.

"There is another high-level rare elite in this convoy army?" Jack muttered. The other high-level rare elite mage officer was still being kept busy by Uvira.

"In that case, we need to hurry," Jack said and then he yelled the command for everyone to pick up the pace. Everyone saw the incoming enemies from the back. They knew they didn't have much time. There were several siege weapons still intact.

The battle raged on.

In the end, the incoming enemy pushed back Jack's soldiers that were still hitting the siege weapons. They managed to save a few siege weapons while keeping Jack's soldiers at bay. Jack tried urging the assault but they couldn't get to the three machines that were being moved further away. They had lost a lot of players in the assault. The native soldiers under Jack were also not in a good shape.

John issued the order to cease the offensive. Jack wanted to continue, but after seeing the situation, he reluctantly stopped. They looked at the convoyed army bringing the remaining three siege weapons, two trebuchets and one arrow tower, further and further away.

Jack came to John who was standing at the hill. "Can we rush in a circle and ambush them again?" Jack asked.

"No," John said. "We have lost almost three-quarters of players. By my estimate, you have also lost around one thousand native soldiers. We didn't take down too many of their soldiers because we focused on the siege machines. I reckon they still have as many as fifteen thousand soldiers. If they don't have to protect the siege machines and instead focus on killing us, we won't stand a chance."

Jack looked at the enemy army that was going further. He was unwilling.

"Forget about going for them," John added. "I have received messages from players still inside the reinforcement army. Therribus had caught news of our ambush. He had sent a legion to come to escort the remaining siege machines. Armstrong tried to have the reinforcement army intercept this legion, but was attacked by Prince Therribus' main army instead. They had a brief clash not long ago. They only retreated after Armstrong stopped pursuing the legion. We won't have a chance to get to the three remaining siege machines anymore."

"There are only three siege weapons, Fort Garadhor should be fine, right?" Jack asked.

"I hope so...", John said, but Jack didn't sense John's usual confidence in his voice.

Chapter 800: War Fires Arrive

The ambushing army regrouped after the battle was over. Out of the 15,000 players that joined the ambush, only around 4,000 survived. Many of these players who died had also died during the first day of battle against Arther's army. These players had lost two levels and two Amulet of Rebirths, they decided to opt out of the war at this point. They were not even sure if the war contribution points they gained from these two battles were enough to cover those losses.

In the end, only 3,000 dead players returned. So they had lost another 8,000 players. The total remaining players in the reinforcement army had now reduced to 22,000.

Therribus' army, on the other hand, had a new injection of 15,000 troops from the convoy that delivered the siege weapons. The protective legion sent by Therribus went at high speed and met the convoy midway. They joined Therribus' army the day after, bringing the three siege machines. The three siege machines were not in a good condition, so they were not deployed immediately. Soldiers with mechanics abilities were tasked to repair these machines.

The reinforcement army could only watch from afar.

Jack and the others rejoined the reinforcement army the same day when the siege weapons arrived at Therribus' camp. Everyone rested while they waited restlessly for the siege weapons to start operating.

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The next morning, they were woken up by a loud sound. The sound of a strong impact. Jack and the others came out of their tents and saw in the distance two trebuchets were up and running. One of these trebuchets swiveled its arms, a large rock was flung into the air. This rock traveled in an arc and crashed into the wall of Fort Garadhor. The loud sound that had woken them up was the sound of the rock hitting the fort's wall.

The rune diagram on the wall surface shone as they worked to repair the wall's damage. The wall's HP bar went down only a little bit, but when the next rock attack came from the second trebuchet, it was apparent that the wall's self-repair was not fast enough to offset the damage. It might take a long time, but sooner or later, the wall would fall if the two trebuchets were allowed to continue their assault.

Commander Quintus ordered his troops to aim their catapults inside the fort at the trebuchets. However, they lost in terms of firing range. Their attacks couldn't hit the faraway trebuchets.

Commander Quintus then had mage soldiers prepared on the wall that was hit. When the rocks from the trebuchets were in the air, these mage soldiers cast Magic Wall spells in layers. These magic walls were destroyed but they absorbed much of the damage, allowing the wall to only suffer a small portion of the damage.

With this, the wall self-repair should be enough to offset the damage. Commander Quintus immediately ordered more mage soldiers to come to the wall facing the trebuchets. But as they did, they saw the gigantic arrow tower moving closer. After being repaired, the tower had been pulled upright. When standing straight, its total height was even slightly taller than Fort Garadhor's wall.

It was moving slowly on wheels. Many foot soldiers were pushing the tower as well to increase its speed. A legion followed after the tower, providing protection. Therribus also had the encircling soldiers around the fortress moved closer, until just slightly outside the catapults' range, giving the defenders more pressure.

Since the arrow tower came near, Commander Quintus redirected their catapults and ballistae to aim at it. As their attacks came, multiple defensive spells were cast and protected the arrow tower. There were abundant mage soldiers inside the legion following the tower so that they could take turns casting the spell. Additionally, the arrow tower also had a self-repairing rune diagram that was activated once it was brought upright. This rune diagram easily repaired the splash damage from the catapults. Soldiers with mechanic ability were also on standby to provide additional repairs when needed.

Once the arrow tower came into range, the ranged soldiers started shooting at the soldiers on the wall. The tower consisted of several floors, each floor housed a large number of ranged attackers. The tower also provided enchantment that boosted the range of the soldiers inside. The defenders on top of Fort Garadhor's wall ended up busy defending against the assault from the arrow's tower, they weren't able to cast Magic Wall spells to defend against the trebuchet's attacks.

A few officers inside the fort who possessed flying spells or wings tool flew up to attack the arrow tower, but officers in the legion protecting the arrow tower did the same. The arrow tower was unapproachable. Unless the defenders let go of defense and came charging out, they won't be able to touch the tower.

Arther also stood on standby near the tower. If Duchess Isabelle took action, even for a defensive spell, he would act as well. Hence the two mythical figures stood still.

The assault continued in this way. In which the arrow tower kept the defenders occupied while the trebuchets' attacks landed unhindered on the fort's wall. The wall's HP went down at a steady rate.

A day passed, and the wall's HP was almost half.

*

"We can't just sit like this doing nothing! We have to attack now!" Ahab uttered. They were now assembling inside Commander Armstrong's tent again.

"Not now. Soon. Our war fires have arrived," John said.

"War fires? You have war fires? Why didn't you say so before? Where are they?" Ahab asked.

"They are being set up as we speak," John answered.

"Where?"

"Somewhere."

Ahab gave John an annoyed glare.

"Ahaha, please forgive him. He enjoys very much keeping people in the dark. I'm also unaware of his plan," Jack hurriedly said.

"Even if you have war fires, we can't bring them to the enemies' siege weapons. It's not like the enemies would just stay still and let us carry the war fires past them," Armstrong said.

"They are not for the siege weapons," John said. "We won't bring the war fires to the enemy, we will bring the enemy to the war fires."

"How do you propose we achieve that?" Ahab asked skeptically.

"By giving them a bait that they can't resist," John replied. He then outlined the basic layout of his plan.

"You are insane!" Ahab yelled after hearing. "If there is a mistake, all our effort will be in vain."

"Then we make sure there is no mistake," John said.

"No way the ones in fort Garadhor will agree to this crazy plan," Ahab said.

"I have talked to them. They are ready to act once we do our part."

"Are you sure?" Armstrong asked.

"I know you will doubt it, so I've asked Prince Alonzo inside the fort to send a message here."

As he spoke, a small wormhole appeared above a device on Commander Armstrong's desk. A roll of paper fell from this wormhole. This was the communication device the natives used to exchange messages with the fort since they didn't have the player's instant communication system.

"Speaking of the devil," John remarked.

Armstrong went to his desk and picked up the paper. He then read it. Ahab approached and asked, "What does the letter say?"

"It says to go ahead with that outworlder's plan," Armstrong replied.

"Are they sure? It's too risky. Is that letter authentic?" Ahab asked.

"It had the third prince's handwriting and also his seal," Armstrong said and gave the letter to Ahab for him to read it himself.

Armstrong came back to the war table. He then said to John, "All right. Let's do it as you proposed."

John nodded. "We still need time. Fortunately, they didn't have too many siege weapons. From the look of it, it will not be until tomorrow noon before the fort's wall crumbled. We will carry out the plan at midnight today. Have everyone take enough rest. Separate the army into two or three groups to take turns resting, but maintain our standby façade so our enemy wasn't aware. We need to be at full strength tonight."

"I will make the arrangements," Armstrong said. After some slight hesitation, he asked John, "How confident are you in this plan?"

"A hundred percent certainty," John replied without hesitation.

Jack rolled his eyes. He had known the guy long enough to know when John was blatantly lying.

Armstrong nodded. "Well, not like we have better plans anyway. All right. Let us give it our all tonight. Success or fail, this civil war ends tonight!"

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The day went on the same as yesterday. The arrow tower kept the defenders inside the tower busy while the two trebuchets continued to chip on the fort's wall.

Therribus looked at Fort Garadhor with a flat expression.

"Why didn't we just end this, my prince?" Claudius asked. "With our number and the siege weapons, we should be able to end it today."

"If all the siege weapons have arrived safely, that might have been the case. But with only three, if we throw everything now, we will still suffer many casualties. I have said before that I wish not for my subjects to die in this pointless war. My brother is the only life worth sacrificing for my ascension to go uncontested. As long as they don't try anything, we keep it like this. The wall will not last past tomorrow."

Therribus then looked back at where the reinforcement army was. He wondered why they still kept their calm.