

World 861

Chapter 861: Successors to the Council of Virtus

With the divine ancestor blocking the way, it will take some time before this temple was breached. Jack unsummoned Arlcard and Therras before following Mihos and Paytowin into the temple.

The temple was empty, everyone was fighting outside. Mihos took them past several corridors before passing a vast courtyard and entering a large hall with a podium. An altar was on the podium with a background wall that had a carving similar to the giant statue of the God of Courage outside.

Callan was seen kneeling before the altar. He was no doubt praying.

Mihos came before him and knelt as well, and so did Paytowin. Jack ended up following their example because he felt weird being the only one who didn't kneel.

They stayed silent like this for some time, which made Jack feel uneasy. 'Do you people aware that there is a battle raging outside?'

He kept on glancing to Paytowin, Mihos, Callan, and back again to Paytowin. The three seemed utterly devout in their expressions.

To Jack's relief, Callan finally lifted his head and stood up. Callan let out a long sigh. "I still can't hear the voice of our God. Perhaps he truly had abandoned us... The time of turmoil is indeed at hand."

There was a deep sadness in his voice.

"Your Holiness, I have brought Paytowin as you requested," Mihos said as he rose.

"Good," Callan said and turned to them. Jack saw the divine priest had a tired expression. Jack didn't blame him. He even thought the priest was especially calm considering his house was burning.

"I'm sorry, your Holiness. The defensive mechanism failed to repel the invaders," Paytowin said with regret.

Callan sighed. "Although it is a pity, it is not your fault. You have carried out your duty when the Brave Statues were awoken. We just never expected that the enemy already has a contingency against them."

"Your Holiness. Now that my task is done, I ask for your permission to go back out there and rejoin the fight," Mihos said. His steely face showed his eagerness to resume the fight outside.

"Permission denied. Your part in this battle is over. You have a new role ahead of you," Callan said.

"But... Your Holiness, many of our comrades are still fighting outside. I need to lend them my aid!"

Callan waved his hand over the altar, and a large 3D projection appeared above them, showing the map of Daminos Square Garden. Many red dots spread around the map, with a number of blue dots. Everyone knew that the red dots represent the enemies.

"As hard as I am to admit it, we are losing," Callan said.

"Then we fight to the last! I won't stay back and cower!" Mihos declared.

"You are not wrong. As followers of the God of Courage, that is indeed what we should do. However, if we lost everything here, we won't be able to face our God in the afterlife. Someone needs to carry on His teachings. Someone needs to survive this disaster. You, young Mihos, are our brightest young generation. You and Paytowin will carry our hope and represent our future from now on."

"Me?" Paytowin said with a surprised expression.

Callan nodded. "You might be an outworlder, but you are a part of our Council of Virtus. You might be weak for now, but we saw great potential in you. You have an unyielding spirit and the courage to brave the uncertainties, that's why Myson invited you to our faction. Despite our apparent disregard, we actually have our eyes on you. You are hardworking, faithful, and devoted. You possessed all the virtues of our faction. Hence, after much consideration, I want you to be the one to safekeep the legacy of our faction."

"M—Me...? But... Shouldn't Mihos be the one..."

"He will carry our name in the open," Callan said and turned to Mihos. "After this place fall. Not all of us fall with it. We have many others who are out there. Including the elite team that is currently in Liguritutum. I want you to carry our banners and reassemble them. Once you do, I want you to rebuild our faction. Not necessarily at this place. Our new faction can be anywhere. The most important thing is that you guide the others to continue to uphold our values."

Mihos was silent. He didn't know how to respond. This was a big responsibility. He preferred to just go out there and fight with his brothers and sisters. Even if he fell, he fell honorably. This task that the divine priest asked of him, it carried great weight. He was afraid that he was unable to meet the divine priest's expectations and let him down.

Callan seemed to understand Mihos' struggle. He placed a comforting hand on the champion's shoulder and said soothingly, "Do not worry about what you can or can't do. As long as you have courage in your heart, nothing is impossible."

"I... I won't let you down!" Mihos uttered. His expression showed conviction.

Callan nodded. He patted Mihos encouragingly on the shoulder. He then turned to Paytowin. "As for you," he said. "I was serious about you being someone of worth, but I will honestly tell you the reason I pick you to safekeep our legacy is because you are an outworlder."

Paytowin gave Callan a questioning expression.

Callan smiled and took out a golden orb. Both Jack and Paytowin remembered the golden orb to be the one Callan used to take out the reward items for the winners during Outworlder World Tournament.

"Inside this orb was the collection of items the Council of Virtus had gathered throughout its existence. The one thing that can be called our faction's legacy aside from our teachings, is this orb. I want you to safekeep this orb. You, outworlders, have the magical storage that kept your belongings safe from the risk of being taken. Mihos will venture out to carry out his duty. In his journey, he will meet many dangers. Letting him carry this orb will just invite unnecessary danger. I hope you can help him keep this legacy orb safe, at least until he is strong enough to receive the burden of safeguarding our legacy."

Jack's ears perked up hearing it. Did Callan just offer a trove of treasure to a player? That was either blind trust or inconceivable optimism.

Paytowin, on the other hand, was having a solemn face. He was like Mihos. He saw Callan's request as one heavy burden. Jack saw his friend's seriousness and understood that Paytowin had already considered this place as his home. Paytowin never coveted the treasures inside the golden orb.

While Paytowin was contemplating, the temple shook. The battle outside must have become fiercer. Most likely Odvah's light dome that was protecting this temple must have become weaker for the temple to undergo such shaking.

The shaking reminded Paytowin of the precariousness of the situation. He didn't have the luxury of being hesitant.

"Your Holiness, it is an honor that you regard me so high. I know my power is limited, but I swear to you. As long as there is still breath in me, I will keep our faction's legacy safe!"

Jack looked at Paytowin, wondering if Paytowin picked that line from some movies?

"It eases my heart for hearing that," Callan said.

The golden orb floated from his hand and slowly glided over to where Paytowin was. Paytowin bowed respectfully when he received the golden orb. When the golden orb touched his hand, an interface appeared. The orb was called Legacy of courage. The interface asked if he wanted to accept the legacy and establish a link. He accepted.

The golden orb glowed and tendrils of light came out and wrapped around Paytowin's body. The process was short. The tendrils soon evaporated and the glow died down. The orb sat on Paytowin's hand like a normal item. Paytowin stored the golden orb in his inventory.

Callan nodded after seeing Paytowin finish the process. "There is one other thing I need from the two of you," he said to both Paytowin and Mihos.

"We heed your words," the two answered.

"You two are the ones I entrust my hopes on. Hence, you two have to work together. Paytowin will need protection, while Mihos, you need to grow faster. With our faction in tatters, you need strength more than ever. Only by gaining the outworlder's ability of fast-leveling can you fulfill your duty."

Mihos looked at Paytowin, who was looking back.

Although Mihos respected Paytowin as a fellow faction member, he never thought of Paytowin as strong. Hence, he was hesitant. What he truly respected was strength. If only it was Jack instead of Paytowin, then it would have been easier for him to accept. Still, Callan had spoken, and this might be his last request. Mihos wasn't going to let the person down.

"Paytowin, do you accept me as your companion?" Mihos uttered.

"I do," Paytowin replied.

Mihos took out his companion token and the two went along with the process. Soon, the binding was completed. The companion token glowed in Paytowin's hand. He stored it in his inventory.

"With you two carrying my wish and hope, I will be able to face my fate with relief," Callan said. He then went to the altar and touched it. A rune diagram appeared. Callan worked on it. Not long after, a yellow portal appeared next to the altar.

"Go. This portal will take you all away from here. Promise me that you two will not go looking for revenge until you are strong enough."

Chapter 862: Divine Heritage

Jack was eager to go through the portal, but he was polite enough to stay behind and wait for either Mihos or Paytowin's lead. The two just stared at the open portal silently.

"What's wrong? Hurry up and leave!" Callan uttered. Another tremor shook the temple again.

"They are about to break through. Ancestor Odvah won't be able to hold for long. You all must leave now!" Callan urged with a stern expression.

Paytowin turned and said, "Your Holiness, leave with us!"

"No, my role is here. I live and die with this temple," Callan replied.

"But..."

Callan sighed. His countenance softened. He placed his two hands on Paytowin's shoulder. "I know you meant well, but each of us has our own roles to see through. Mine ends here. Yours do not. That's why you will forgive me."

"Forgive you? Your Holiness, what's there to forgiveeeee....!!!"

Paytowin's words trailed off as his body was picked up and flung into the portal by Callan.

'Holy shit! That's one way to urge someone to leave,' Jack uttered in his mind.

"Mihos, take care of him and take care of yourself. Do not be reckless," Callan said.

Mihos just nodded silently. He then walked towards the portal. He stopped before entering, as if struggling about something. In the end, he didn't turn back or say anything. He stepped into the portal and disappeared.

Another tremor. This time it was bigger. Jack was looking around the room when the tremor happened. After it stopped, Jack realized Callan was staring at him. His face was amiable. His two hands came to Jack's shoulder.

Jack immediately moved to the portal. "I can leave by myself," Jack said.

When he almost went through, he stopped. He turned back and said, "Your Holiness, there is something I need to tell you. Your God didn't abandon you."

"Hm...?" Callan lifted his eyebrows upon Jack's words.

"Your God didn't abandon you," Jack repeated. "He was simply unable to answer you because... because he no longer exists."

Callan stared at Jack silently. His expression didn't show anger or indignity upon Jack's words.

He sighed again. "I have suspected so, but how are you so sure about it?"

"Because I know it as a fact. Besides your God, the Goddess of Joy had also been erased. And the person that was responsible for it is the same person that has goaded Fear's cult to attack this place. He is an outworlder that goes by the name Master and he is outside trying to get inside here."

"Preposterous! How can an outworlder defeat a being as powerful as our God?" Callan uttered.

Jack felt the air around him turn heavy. This was the first time Jack saw this divine priest lose his cool. There was also another tremor again. Jack couldn't tell if the tremor was because of the outside's attacks or because of the priest.

"There is something about this world that you are unaware of," Jack said. "Something that most of you who inhabit this world are unaware of. You might think that you need to die here to uphold your virtues. But the fact is, you don't have to follow any rules. You are free to do what you think is right. Come with us! I will tell you all about the secret of this world. Even about your God. You might not like what you hear, but it will be the truth!"

"He is telling the truth, your holiness," Peniel reinforced Jack's words.

Callan stared into Jack's eyes. Jack saw turmoil inside those orcish eyes, but the turmoil only lasted for a short moment. Clarity and calmness soon returned.

Callan was just about to speak but at that time, Jack saw three people entering the hall. Callan also sensed them. It was Master, Spring Crown, and Arlstraxx. Callan whirled and cast a rapid spell. A thick beam of pure light shot at the three.

Both Master and Arlstraxx also cast a spell upon seeing Callan take action. Master cast Ice Wall while Arlstraxx cast Bone Wall. The two walls were erected before Callan's beam arrive. But once the beam touched the walls, they were completely shattered. However, the brief pause on the beam allowed them to move to the side and out of the beam's path. While for Spring Crown, he was already out of the way before the beam was even fired.

"I will help you!" Jack uttered.

"No, leave!" Callan shouted. His palm shoved Jack's body. Jack felt a strong wave push him away. He was helpless as his body was carried by an invisible force. He plunged into the open portal. Once he did, Callan waved his hand and the portal disappeared.

Callan then turned back to the three trespassers and yelled, "Transgressors who have deviled our holy temple, prepare to face my wrath...!!"

A flash of light and a long golden staff appeared in his hands. He made a rapid eight-runes spell while thrusting the staff into the ground. A wall of light radiated outward. With the wall of light came a horde of beings made of light. Each of them had wings and carried flaming swords.

"Heaven's Army," Master said after recognizing the spell.

But before the wall of heavenly beings was upon them, a wall of thick dark fog blocked the light's advance. The two opposite elements resisted one another. Neither gave way.

An ethereal came into the hall.

"Lord Strah," Arlstraxx greeted the ethereal deferentially.

Strah didn't spare Arlstraxx a glance. His eyes were on Callan. His mouthless face formed a mocking smile. "It has been decades since we meet, Callan. You never expect our next meeting will be like this, don't you?"

While he was talking, the dark fog wall he had conjured enlarged and covered the outer part of the entire room while half of the inner part was dominated by Callan's Heaven's Army spell.

"Spare me your mocking, fiend! I will take you down with me if I have to!" Callan uttered. His body started to shine with an intense glow.

"He is not kidding...," Master said after seeing the scene. "He intends to sacrifice his divine force. The resulting explosion can obliterate everything here. We must stop him!"

"Quit your yapping, outworlder. He won't have the chance to," Strah responded.

He lifted his two arms. He didn't use a magic staff. Instead, he wore a pair of skeletal gloves. At the center of these gloves' palm sections were embedded a ruby-like stone. These stones emitted an ominous light.

He cast a spell and several shadow needles formed from the dark fog wall and pierced through Callan's wall of light as well as the light creatures it hosted. The needles extended a long way and headed towards Callan, but a bubble appeared around the divine priest that stopped the needles. The needles tried to puncture through but they couldn't

None except Strah was aware that one of the shadow needles was wider than the others. This wider shadow needle came behind Callan. While this large shadow needle was also unable to puncture Callan's protective bubble, a lump appeared near the tip. This lump continued to bulge until it became as big as a person's size.

When Callan noticed something was wrong, the lump had turned into a human woman that carried a knife as dark as the deepest abyss in the depth of the ocean. This knife was thrust just as Callan tried to turn. His bubble was unable to stop the knife. It penetrated the bubble like it was a piece of paper and plunged into Callan's back.

"Arrgghhh...!" Callan cried in pain as tendrils of dark energy sprouted from the wound and spread around his body.

"Lady Korku!" Arlstraxx called after seeing the woman that had sneaked onto Callan's back.

Callan's spells collapsed after suffering from Korku's stab. Without heaven's army spell blocking his dark fog, Strah rushed forward and joined Korku in assaulting Callan. Both Strah and Korku were Mythical-

grade and had similar levels to Callan. Against these two opponents, a wounded Callan was unable to resist much.

Callan soon fell weakly onto the floor. His HP at critical. Korku's knife had caused a wound that negated mythical-grade's innate HP recovery ability.

"Finish me, fiends! Do not humiliate me by prolonging this!" Callan uttered.

"Hmph, Callan. That's the problem with you fools who follow the ones you called good Gods. If you learn to fight dirty as we did, then you won't have suffered this fate," Strah said mockingly.

"Pah! Don't you lump me together with you dishonorable villains. I would rather die than act cowardly!"

"You can't die yet, because this altar will self-destruct when the divine priest it's linked to is dead," Master said and walked towards the altar.

"You... How do you know that, outworlder?!" Callan asked.

"How do I know? Because I know all there is to know about this world, including this place. About its protective barrier, about its defensive Brave statues, about the absence of your God, and your faction's ludicrous stubbornness of refusing to ask for help even in the face of destruction. Why do you think I chose this place as a target?"

"You..."

"Yes, among all the divine factions. You might not be the weakest one, but you are the easiest to raze." Master placed his hands on the altar and a complex rune diagram appeared. "And I need the divine heritage concealed inside this altar."

Chapter 863: The Luck Stat

"Divine Heritage...?" Callan said. His tone carried confusion.

Master was working on the rune diagram. He continued to speak without stopping. "So, even you are unaware of this? I suppose it's not strange. Only your God knows about this. He conceals this fact from you all."

"Don't you talk as if you know our God...!!!" Callan yelled. He tried to rise out of anger, but Korku applied more pressure and he was pressed onto the ground again. With her corrupted knife still lodged inside him, he was unable to gather strength. He could only helplessly watch Master unraveling the rune diagram a little bit at a time.

"You... How do you know the method to solve the diagram so fluently...?" Callan asked with disbelief.

"As I have said, I know all there is to know about this world," Master replied. His concentration was not disturbed despite talking.

Although Master knew of the method, the rune diagram was still extremely complex. It took him almost an hour before he completed the process.

Once it did, the altar broke apart into a few block pieces. On the floor where the altar used to be, was a hole. A glow was shining from that hole. The glow became stronger as something floated out from the hole.

"That... It can't be..." Callan muttered.

"Yes..." Master said as the glowing floating thing came to the height of his eyes.

Master touched the thing and it split into two parts. One was a mechanical sphere while the other was a small glowing core. Master held both things in his hands.

"Give it," Strah was standing beside him with a hand stretched out.

Master turned to him. There was a pause before Master handed the glowing core to him.

"I will be keeping the container," Master said.

"So be it. We do not need that," Strah replied and turned away. He came to Callan.

"Any last words?" He asked the divine priest.

"Your cult and your God will get what's coming to you!" Callan said.

"Duly noted," Strah's hand one finger aimed at Callan's head.

"Hold! Let me be the one to kill him," Master uttered.

Strah turned at him with a frown.

"You lowly outworlder are not worthy to kill a being like him," Korku, who was still holding Callan down, said.

"It doesn't matter to you if you kill him, but it will be a great boon for me. God Fear had given me his blessing to get stronger, giving me this killing blow will give me that. If I am stronger, I will be more of a help to your cult. Just as how I've proven now by giving your cult that divine heritage. If not for me and my tools, just with your cult alone, do you truly think you can take down this Council of Virtus?"

"How dare you look down on us, outworlder!" Arlstraxx hissed.

"I am simply stating the truth," Master replied calmly. "God Fear can't land his feet in this place. If he does, the other Gods and Goddesses will interfere. With just your cult alone, you won't be able to win. Even with the element of surprise, the warriors here are still generally stronger than your cultists. You won't even be able to get that element of surprise since it was me who deactivated their protective barrier. I don't think I even need to mention the defensive Brave Statues, do I?"

"Hmph! Giving you his life is still too good for you," Arlstraxx didn't back down.

"Let him," Strah said.

"Lord Strah?" Arlstraxx didn't have a good feeling about Master. He would prefer that Master didn't get any more benefits. He even had an uneasy feeling that Master was actually using them, that what Master truly after was the container that housed the divine heritage just now.

Strah didn't respond to Arlstraxx, he simply instructed Korku. "Keep him still while that outworlder deals the killing blow." He then turned into a shadow and vanished.

Korku was also displeased for being reduced to Master's aide, but she didn't defy Strah's order. She kept Callan bound while giving Master an unfriendly stare.

Master didn't pay the hostility from the two natives any mind, as long as he got what he wanted.

"Yo, mind sharing the exp?" Spring Crown said.

"No," Master replied flatly.

"So cold. Like what you said to them, ain't I getting stronger will help me in better completing the task you give me?"

"No," Master repeated. "That person has reached level 55. I can't let him get too far ahead..."

"That person? Who?"

Master didn't answer. Instead, he cast a spell. Twenty spears of light burst out from the ground, piercing through Callan. It was his non-standard Lurking Spear spell. When he previously used this spell on Jack, it only produced fifteen spears. He had max-leveled this spell since then. It now produced twenty spears.

These twenty spears normally caused high damage, but Callan was a level 85 Mythical grade native. Even when bound and weakened, the spears only generated minuscule damage.

"Can you please hurry up? It is embarrassing watching your attempt," Korku mocked.

Master wasn't offended, he had expected this considering the wide gap in level difference. He continued throwing one offensive spell after another. He didn't even concern himself with hitting Korku as well. His damage was too insignificant to endanger her. She was annoyed though for those attacks that hit her.

Callan, whose HP was just a hairbreadth left, didn't show agony. He smiled instead. "Outworlder, you coward who uses dirty tricks and schemes to get what you want. You will also get what's coming to you. The small flame our inheritors carry will make sure that they won't forget what happens here. Courage will prevail...!!"

"Hmph, what a load of bull," Master uttered and sent his final blow.

Callan succumbed and his body became still. A few things clattered on the floor. At the same time, Master heard level-up notifications. All his five classes leveled up two times, bringing them to level 54.

'It's still not enough to catch up to him. How did he increase his levels so fast?' Master lamented. He decided to forget about the matter and checked Callan's drops.

As he did, Korku left without any words. Arlstraxx stood still as he watched Master. After a while, he said, "the other outworlder said that you lied to our God about that access to the real world you promised."

"And you believe the enemy?" Master asked back.

"No, but I don't believe you as well. I never do."

"Well, your God does. That's all that matters."

"Hmph! We will see about that," Arlstraxx uttered and walked out.

Master glanced at Arlstraxx as the native walked out. He might need to prepare a convincing argument when Fear next visited him. He did not need to guess who the outworlder Arlstraxx was referring to. The question was how Jack knew about his deal with Fear? He didn't let this issue continue to bother him, he returned his attention to the loots.

One of the loots was a magic staff. Master picked the staff first.

"Anything for me?" Spring Crown came and looked at the loots as well.

"This is a unique-grade magic staff," Master said, ignoring Spring Crown's question.

Spring Crown was not bothered, he was used to the cold treatment. "Congratulations then. Considering this is a mythical being you killed, it is not strange. You should be the first one to get a unique-grade staff."

"Not really, that lightning thief has a unique-grade staff as well," Master said.

"Storm Wind? How do you know his staff is a unique grade?"

"I know the looks of all weapons of unique grade and above."

"Hm... It will help me if you impart that knowledge to me as well," Spring Crown said. "But that Storm Wind is incredibly lucky. Even you have to kill a level 85 mythic native to get one."

"That's right. That indeed needs an incredible high luck stat. You see, a unique grade usually only has a decent chance to appear when you kill a mythic grade being. A rare elite provides a small chance when it is a being of level 80 or above. Below that, you need an incredible number of luck stat. I doubt that Storm Wind has killed any of those two versions. Unless..."

"Unless?"

"Unless he has the runestone of luck..."

Spring Crown understood the runestone mechanics. "Well, from its name, I think it's safe for me to guess that its function is to increase the luck stat."

"Yes... However, when I study this game program, I always think that runestone of luck is an anomaly."

"Why is that?"

"Because one needs to have at least 10 points of luck stat for a chance of it to drop."

"You need luck to get luck. Heh, that's hilarious! I must say, the designer of this game does have a sense of irony."

Master nodded. "Under normal circumstances, it is impossible to get 10 points of luck. My luck stat is 6. That is because I have 5 points from my five classes and then another point from my equipment. However, equipment that adds luck points is extremely rare, and this equipment usually doesn't have

good function for battle purposes. For normal players who only have one class, it can be said to be impossible to get the 10 base points needed."

"I see. That's why you said the runestone is an anomaly... Why did the game designer make this item then?"

Master was silent. There was indeed some hidden data he couldn't access when he studied the game. If he forced the access any further, it would damage the program indeed. He didn't want to risk it. He had asked several of the game developers who came to his side, but none of them was aware of those hidden data. He also never found the trace of Wilted accessing those data, so it should be safe to say that she was also unaware. The only person that had access was the lead designer. But since that guy no longer exists, he did not worry that these unknown codes could be used against him. Hence, he never truly troubled about this unknown factor, until now.

"Well, perhaps Storm Wind got his unique-grade staff from an avenue other than kill-drops," Spring Crown said.

"Perhaps," Master responded.

"Now that you have that container, should we refocus our target?"

"Not yet. It still needs to be fused with other items before it can do what I want it to do. Additionally, we don't know where the other two treasures are yet. We need all of them in one place so that I don't waste this container. The chance of destroying a second divine faction is close to zero, it is unlikely I can get another one of these containers. So, we only have one chance. With the extractor machine heavily damaged by that blasted dragon's breath, this container is now my only chance of getting my prize."

Master equipped the new staff and picked a few more items from the loots. Afterward, he said, "The rests are yours."

Chapter 864: Council of Virtus' Legacy

Jack landed on his butt after getting shoved through the portal. The portal immediately vanished after he passed through.

"What happened?" Paytowin asked. "We didn't see you come out from that portal for quite some time. Mihos tried to go back to check what was wrong, but he couldn't get through. That portal was a one-way passage."

Jack didn't answer. He just shook his head. He was still thinking about Callan's expression just before the enemies came into the chancel. Was the divine priest about to agree to go with him? Or did Callan steel himself to stay on his hara-kiri path? Jack guessed he would never know now.

Jack stood up. "Where are we?" He asked.

"Near the capital of Hydrudond, Messephyria," Mihos answered. "If you go in that direction, you will arrive at the capital soon."

"You will not be coming with us?" Jack asked.

"No. The divine priest had given me the task of gathering my fellow members, I intend to carry it out." Mihos then turned to Paytowin. "I can't bring you with me. My path is too dangerous to bring you as a burden."

Paytowin didn't feel offended by Mihos' blunt words. He was indeed weak compared to the native. He nodded and said, "I will keep our faction's legacy safe."

"I will hold your words to it. It is our leader's last request, after all. I won't forgive you if you fail the task. Call me whenever you find yourself in danger."

Paytowin nodded again.

Mihos then turned to Jack. "Thank you for having come to our aid. Even though in the end we are still defeated, your courage is appreciated."

"Don't mention it," Jack replied. He then added, "Sir Mihos, we have the same enemies. Please don't take the burden of defeating them all by yourself. We are working to build a strong enough force to take the fight to them. When that time comes, I hope we can do it together. As divine priest Callan said, please do not be careless. Do not attempt on a revenge path before we are both strong enough."

"Don't worry, I'm not stupid. After fighting them, I know how strong our enemies are," Mihos said. "You both take care of yourself."

"You too," both Jack and Paytowin replied.

Mihos took a whistle and blew. A horse with wings appeared.

'A Pegasus?' Jack said in his mind.

'That is a unique-grade steed. The same grade as Pandora,' Peniel informed Jack.

Mihos climbed onto the Pegasus. The winged horse started by running before slowly taking up into the sky and flew away with incredible speed.

"In terms of mobility, his steed beats mine since it can fly through obstacles," Jack remarked.

"But Pandora has the nightmare aura that drives most monsters away, Pegasus does not," Peniel responded.

"Well, if it can fly, there is no need for a fear aura, isn't it? It can just fly past all the monsters on the land."

"On the land. There are flying monsters in the sky too."

"Hm... Well, I guess they have their own strong aspect that sets them apart. Hey, I've been meaning to ask before, you seem to recognize Master's bloodline. Demon bloodline you called it, what grade is that bloodline?"

"I can't tell by just seeing him use the first skill. Same as your Gold Dragon bloodline and Divine Gold Dragon Bloodline. The two are different grades but their sets of active skills are the same, the legendary grade just has more skills and better passive effects."

"Then the skill is between unique and legendary grade?"

"For that demon bloodline, there is also the super rare version."

"Knowing Master, I doubt he will settle for anything other than legendary," Jack said, remembering Master's attempt in drawing Syndrillis' essence for creating a legendary-grade bloodline. He turned to Paytowin. "What are you going to do now?"

"I... I seriously have no idea...", Paytowin said. "What's certain is, I have to keep this legacy safe."

"In that case, join my guild," Jack offered.

"Huh?"

"You will be safe inside our Guild Headquarters. We also have many facilities that allow you to improve without heading out into the wilderness. If you need to go to the cities, you can teleport directly there. You won't be safer anywhere else."

"I..."

"Grace has also joined. What are you being hesitant about? Oh... talking about the girl, she must be worried sick. I need to send her some words first to let her know I'm fine. Hm...?"

Jack had just sent a message to Grace but he received a notification that Grace was unable to accept any messages.

'Where is she? Did she go into a place that blocks communication?' Jack wondered. At the same time, he saw many unread messages from Jeanny and the others from the past few days. He was out of contact for a long period, so it was not strange to find all these in his inbox. He had been notified about these messages when he was pulled out of Greed's sanctum by Paytowin's recall plate, but he had no time to read them because the situation then was not exactly ideal. He decided to check them out later after his talk with Paytowin.

"So, what do you say?" Jack asked Paytowin again.

Paytowin had been pondering deeply about this. He would prefer to be independent as he always was, but it was different now. He had a responsibility. He couldn't be sure if he was able to keep Callan's legacy of courage safe all by himself. For all he knew, the World Maker and Fear's cult might have invaded the Council of Virtus for this legacy. If they found out this thing was with him, he would need protection more than ever. Jack was right, he needed a place to lay down, at least until he was strong enough.

"All right, I will join. But I can't be afforded to be given tasks that sent me out into dangerous places. My first priority is to my quest."

"Your quest?" Jack asked.

"Yeah. When Callan asked me to safeguard this faction's legacy, I received a quest notification. The quest is to help restore the Council of Virtus. It is classified as an SSS-difficulty quest."

"SSS-difficulty? Wow! So, you get one too."

"Too? You have one as well?"

Jack told him about his SSS-difficulty kingdom faction chain quest.

"I see. Well, as I said. My priority will be to keep this legacy safe. I can't be bothered by guild matters, and once Mihos has gathered all the faction's members, I will go with them to help them out."

"Fine by me," Jack replied. "I will make you a core member of our guild. No one will give you any tasks for anything, don't worry about it. You can just stay at our headquarters and use its facility. I will share my guild contribution points with you. I have so many of them I don't know what to do with them. I never truly use the guild facilities anyway."

"Thank you, brother...," Paytowin said. He was sincerely grateful for Jack's help.

"Come on, man. I know you will do the same to me if our situations are reversed." Jack sent him a guild invitation, to which Paytowin accepted.

"Now... How about we deal with the truly important thing here," Jack said.

"What truly important thing?" Paytowin asked with a confused expression.

"That golden orb Callan has given you. Aren't you curious about what's in it? Callan said it contains items that his faction had collected throughout the ages since the founding of their factions. There should be many cool things inside. There might probably even be some legendary equipment!"

"Considering they are the Council of Virtus, I say there are sure to be some," Peniel commented.

"Hear that?" Jack said.

"Dude! That is something for me to safe keep!" Paytowin uttered.

"I know. I ain't asking you to take them and give them out, man. Just a peek. Hey, if there is legendary equipment, what's wrong with you wearing them? Just consider it borrowing. You can put them back into the orb whenever you want. They will keep you safer than your current gears, then you can better carry out your duty in keeping the legacy safe, right?"

"You truly know how to make an excuse for this kind of thing," Paytowin rolled his eyes at Jack.

"But I ain't wrong, am I? Come on, I'm curious," Jack urged.

"All right, just a peek... But don't you try to persuade me to give you something from this golden orb!" Paytowin warned.

"Do you think I'm that kind of person?" Jack gave a hurt expression, but he soon added, "Not even a super rare tool? How about one evolve seed?"

Paytowin gave him a sideways glance without saying anything. He had Callan's golden orb in his hands. He tried to access it mentally to see its content.

"Huh?" He uttered.

"Something's wrong?" Jack asked.

"It said I need permission."

"Permission? Hasn't Callan already transferred the possession of this orb to you? You should be its owner already, why should you need permission?"

Before Paytowin could answer, an apparition suddenly appeared before the two of them. This took them by surprise. Paytowin even fell to the ground. Jack almost did as well but he had a better body balance due to his martial art training so he managed to stop himself midway.

The apparition before them was the ghost version of the divine priest. Callan was staring at them with a stern gaze.

Chapter 865: Callan's Gifts

"Your... Your Holiness!" Paytowin uttered.

Jack was surprised by the sudden appearance. Seeing Callan's stern gaze and remembering what he had just spoken, he quickly said, "Your Holiness! I'm just joking about asking for anything from inside your legacy orb. Please don't take it seriously."

"Hm?" Callan's ghostly apparition seemed to only now be aware of the two before him. His stern expression softened. "It's you two. I'm sorry. My mind was elsewhere. What were you saying just now?"

"Oh? Nothing! Nothing! I'm just saying that we are glad to find that you are still alive and well, haha...", Jack gave an awkward laugh. Paytowin rolled his eyes at Jack while standing back up.

"Alive? Sigh... Unfortunately, it is not so. I am lost in thought just now because I have sensed my real body's demise."

"Real body?"

Callan nodded sadly. "I'm just a residual consciousness left behind by my real self to oversee the legacy. My real body was still at Daminos Square Garden, and he just met his end a moment ago."

"Your Holiness...", Paytowin and Jack felt their hearts sink. When Callan decided to stay behind, they knew this was the most likely outcome. Yet, hearing about the confirmation of his death still brought them great sadness.

"There is no need to pity my death. I've carried out the duty to my God. My purpose in this world is done. Now all I have to do is help you in rebuilding our faction. For that, Paytowin, you need strength. I noticed that you tried to access our legacy orb just now."

"I... I'm just checking to make sure its contents are safe! I never meant to take anything out," Paytowin said apologetically.

'Dude, do you have to act like a busted thief?' Jack mocked in his mind. Peniel, who heard him, mocked him back, 'Who was it just now that said he was just joking about asking for anything from inside the legacy orb?'

'You stay out of this!' Jack talked back in his mind.

Callan chuckled. He then replied to Paytowin, "That's okay. I understand the temptation is indeed great. However, although I wish very much to give you many things to strengthen yourself, there are rules and regulations that even I must follow. I can't just give everything as I like. I'm going to give you a series of tasks. Whenever you complete them, I will grant you rewards to help you become stronger."

"I will follow your instructions," Paytowin said obediently.

"That being said, I am entitled to give you a little something to help you carry out your duty in safeguarding the legacy. Paytowin, I hereby announce and appoint you as one of the divine warriors of the Council of Virtus, a Brave Techno Warrior!"

A shining light fell upon Paytowin. It lasted only briefly. When it subsided, there was no apparent change to Paytowin, but Jack's mana sense told him otherwise.

"Do you just..."

"I... I was given a special class," Paytowin uttered. He then said to Callan, "Thank you, Your Holiness! I will do my utmost to not let you down."

Callan nodded with a warm smile. "That is good," he said. He then turned to Jack. "As for you, mister Storm Wind. You have been a good friend to Paytowin and to our faction. You came to our aid without concern for your own well-being. Your bravery makes you one of us even though you are not a formal member of our faction."

Jack smiled wryly. He was not truly aware of the situation when he was called, so he couldn't really accept the credit.

"I know that you will continue to help Paytowin, so I will also help you. I am aware of your three classes. But I sense that your archmage's special class is more profound than anything I can offer. So, which special class would you like from me? The Blade Dancer or the Beastmaster?"

"Um... Can I choose both?" Jack asked.

He was immediately smacked by Peniel on the head. "Can you be any more shameless?" She uttered.

"You are lucky she did that. Otherwise, I would have been the one to do so," Paytowin added.

"Ahaha, I'm just joking. Don't take it seriously, Your Holiness. I'm already glad that you are willing to offer me one," Jack said to Callan with a laugh. Peniel and Paytowin rolled their eyes. They both knew Jack enough to know that he was actually not joking. The guy was trying his luck.

"In that case, I choose the Blade Dancer's one," Jack made his choice.

Callan nodded. A similar light landed on Jack as well. He heard a notification, "Congratulations to have been granted a special class. Your Blade Dancer class has been upgraded to the special class, Brave Swordsmaster."

'Peniel, what special class classification is this Brave Swordsmaster?' Jack asked in his mind.

'First-class,' Peniel replied.

Jack remembered Peniel had explained that there were four classifications to the special class. The highest one was the pinnacle class that belonged to the Council of Twenty-four, such as his Time Sage. The next after that was the first-class. This meant he had gained the best special class there was unless someone got the Blade Dancer special class from the Council of Twenty-four.

"Thank you, Your Holiness!" Jack uttered sincerely. "I am truly grateful!"

Callan nodded. "I'm not done," he said.

"Eh?" Both Jack and Paytowin looked at the divine priest's apparition.

"I see you are in a guild now?" Callan said.

"Yes, but it is only temporarily until Mihos gathered enough of our brothers and sisters," Paytowin explained.

"No need to worry, I don't blame you. It's fine for you to be in an outworlder's guild while still a member of our faction. You have made the right choice. I will also have proposed you join a guild if you haven't. You will be in danger if you are alone. Do you trust this guild?"

Paytowin glanced at Jack briefly before replying, "I do."

"All right, in that case. I will also grant that guild something to improve themselves." Three items floated out from the golden orb in Paytowin's hands.

Jack and Paytowin used Inspect on the three items.

*

Mana Gathering Stone (Legendary Consumable, for guild purpose)

Increase the mana density in a guild structure.

*

Ancient Battleground Legacy (Legendary Legacy, for guild purpose)

Activate Ancient Battleground legacy dungeon

*

Brave Golem Blueprint (Unique blueprint, for guild purpose only)

Allow blacksmith workshop to construct Brave Golem

*

"Le—Legendary...," Paytowin uttered with disbelief. Two of the three items were legendary.

"An—Ancient Battleground Legacy...?" Jack was also trying to make sure that he didn't read wrong. "Your Holiness. This ancient battleground legacy, is it the same one as the one we used during the world tournament?"

"The usage is a bit different, but the content is generally the same," Callan replied. "You will have to try it out to make sure."

'Yes!' Jack exclaimed within. If this ancient battleground was the same as the one they had used previously, it would provide an excellent source of income for mana cores. Jeanny would flip when she learned of this. She would be able to copy even more items.

"Well, that's all I can spare for now," Callan said.

"These are already more than enough, Your Holiness," Jack replied.

Callan turned to paytowin, "I will be watching. If either you or your guild act in a manner that befits our courageous principles, I will bestow more rewards. Likewise, if you or your guild do cowardly acts, I will hold back from giving you any more assistance."

"I will uphold our faction's disciplines," Paytowin said.

Callan nodded. His image slowly turned transparent before vanishing altogether. Paytowin stored the golden orb. He then gave the mana gathering stone, ancient battleground legacy, and brave golem blueprint to Jack, who received them with gratitude.

"Should we go to the headquarters now to use those items?" Paytowin asked. Jack gave him a Guild Return Scroll, now that he was a member, the scroll would bring him to Heavenly Citadel when used.

"In due time, first thing first," Jack said.

"What first thing first?" Paytowin asked.

"Duh, our special classes, of course! Aren't you curious about it? Peniel told me these special classes were first-class ones."

Paytowin was not familiar with first-class special classes, so Peniel explained to him the special class classification. Jack, in the meantime, opened his class status page to check his new class.

Similar to Time Sage, this Brave Swordsman also gave him several passive skills as well as one active skill. Peniel mentioned before that special class gave a new skill every ten levels. Jack was now checking its passive abilities.

*

Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Reflex +10%.

Damage, critical chance, critical damage of all sword-type weapons +10%.

All allies within a 30-meter radius increase their attributes by 20%.

5% chance to reduce received damage by 50%.

*

"Hehe," Jack grinned after seeing the upgrade. "Hey, Peniel. I am wondering. I got these passive abilities now but my old passive abilities from advanced class and elite class are also still in effect. What if later I

find that Blade Dancer special class from the Council of Twenty-four? If I change into that special class, will I still have the passive abilities from Brave Swordsmaster?"

"You are rather confident to think you can find another special class from the Council of Twenty-four," Peniel said with a mocking tone. "To answer your question. No, if you change special class, the previous one disappears with all the passive abilities and skills it grants. You can't have two special classes from the same branch in effect."

Chapter 866: Invasions

"The skills will be gone as well? I'd better not level up the skills then. If I find a better special class later and change, won't the skill points I spent on the previous class' skills be wasted?"

"Again, you are unbelievably confident... About the skill points, don't worry about spending. It will carry over. Let's say you level up this special class' level 60 skill to level 10. When you change to another special class, its level 60 skill will also be level 10."

"Oh, I see. Good to know, then I don't need to hold back in investing skills then."

Peniel didn't comment anymore. Jack was talking as if it was a sure thing that he would get a better special class later.

Jack was now checking the starting skill from this new special class.

*

Brave Slash, level 1/20 (Active skill, melee, requires sword)

Increases the sword's reach by 300%, deals 1000% light damage, and reduces the target's defense by 30%.

+30% critical chance and +100% critical damage.

High chance to wound the opponent.

Cooldown: 3 minutes

Stamina: 200

*

'Even its level 1 already dealt 1000%?' Jack thought after seeing the description. Although this skill only hit a single target, its high damage, high critical, and short cooldown made it very practical. He was not sure though, what it meant by high chance to wound the opponent.

Jack immediately gave the skill a test run. When he used the skill, the storm breaker in his hand was enveloped by golden light. The light extended to three times the weapon's length. Jack sent the slash to a nearby rock. Damage number of over 12,000 appeared and the rock was sliced clean in two.

That damage was without the critical hit. If the critical chance was scored, the damage could shoot up to more than 30,000. He could kill Master with one critical hit. Well, that was assuming if he could actually score the hit and if Master didn't use any defensive technique to block the slash.

"Awesome," Paytowin said after seeing Jack demonstrate his new skill.

"What about yours?" Jack asked.

"The active skill I got from my special skill is called Brave Techno Suit," Paytowin replied.

"Sounds cool. How about a demonstration?"

"All right."

Once Paytowin finished speaking. Several shining things suddenly materialized around his body. These things then slapped onto his body, covering most parts and interlocking with each other. As more of these things glued to Paytowin's body, Jack realized these things were components of a suit!

When the process was over, Paytowin looked like a humanoid cyborg, covered with a golden-white metallic exoskeleton. His head was also covered with a helmet, leaving only half of his lower face visible from the nose down. His eyes were covered by a golden visor.

"Coo... F*cking coollll...!!!" Jack yelled. "Damn it, man! Your technocraft class is truly full of coolness. That techno golem and now this. I think technocraft is the coolest class among the others. I am now again regretting for didn't choose this class. How does it feel? Do you feel clunky moving around in that?"

Paytowin tried moving his arms around. He also opened and clenched his fingers. All his fingers were also covered in metallic shells. "I don't feel any problem moving," he said. "I even feel lighter instead. The description said my attributes increased to 300% when I'm wearing this suit. All damage is decreased by 30%, I also have a shield that absorbs damage to as much as 100% of my HP. If I don't receive any damage in ten seconds, the shield will regenerate."

Jack slashed Paytowin with his sword. A golden shell appeared around Paytowin stopping his assault. A golden bar was shown under Paytowin's HP bar. The golden bar was reduced while the red HP bar was intact, indicating the damage from the slash had been absorbed by the shell.

"Dude!" Paytowin complained.

"Just testing. It's just a normal slash," Jack shrugged.

"Your normal slash is not normal!" Paytowin uttered.

"How long is the duration?" Jack asked.

"Ten minutes," Paytowin replied.

"That is for level 1," Peniel informed. "If you max level it, you can stay in that form for thirty minutes."

"Wow! That's a long time," Jack said.

"You will also get additional skills that are only available during that form. You have one already now, haven't you?" Peniel asked.

"Yes, it's called overdrive mode," Paytowin answered.

"Oh... Overdrive mode. Sounds cool. Use it!" Jack said.

Paytowin obliged. When he activated the skill, several parts of his suit opened up and released jets of vapor. It's like multiple boiling kettles were inside the suit. It even produced the high-pitched sound that kettles made.

"All your speed is increased by an additional 100% in this mode, try moving around," Peniel said.

Paytowin did and ran one round around them. He did feel the increase in speed.

"Your response time is also increased. So, all the ones around you will appear as if twice slower."

"Oh... No wonder. I was wondering why you started to speak slower. I thought you slow your speech to allow me to better understand."

"This mode lasted one minute. You will get another skill exclusive to this form after you level up the techno suit to level 10 and level 20."

"You know what? Once you are in Heavenly Citadel, you have to take up my gramps' martial art course," Jack said. "That suit is wasted if you only use it to run around. How cool is it if you fight close range in that suit."

"That suit is for universal purpose, you brute!" Peniel chided. She wanted to smack Jack's head again but Jack moved away. She then said to Paytowin, "Try shooting using your gun."

Paytowin nodded and equipped his gun and aimed.

"Hey, there is a reticle!" Paytowin uttered.

"Yeah, the suit helped you with a visual aim. That should increase your accuracy. If you have monster books or hunter books in your inventory, the suit can access the known monster data in that book and give you suggestions during your fight with the particular monster. Additionally, the suit can also detect hidden danger and see invisible enemies or traps."

"I'm jealous," Jack said.

"How about we trade? Your three classes for this suit?" Paytowin asked.

"Sure, let's trade."

"Let's."

Peniel rolled her eyes and ignored the two's meaningless exchanges.

"George, do me a favor, will you? The next time before you don that suit, do this!"

Jack made a series of non-sensical moves before at the end of the moves he yelled, "Transform!"

"You retard! Do you think we are in the seventies kids' show? No way I'm going to do that!" Paytowin uttered.

Jack was disappointed to hear Paytowin's refusal.

"If you want to do it so much, do it on your own before you transform into your dragon form," Paytowin added.

"Oh?" Jack looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

"Don't go and give him stupid ideas!" Peniel scolded.

"Okay, it's time to go back," Jack said. "But before that, give me some time to send a message to my friend in Liguritutum. I need to inform her about what World Maker had done. All of Fear's grunts are atop Mount Audacias, Probably they can use this chance to push their position against the rebel army."

Jack sent his message to Wilted, describing the situation about Master invading the Council of Virtus.

"He is there? No wonder the Council of Virtus' elite force suddenly up and left without any explanation. We are rather confused by their actions. A few used the zone portal, but the majority have to travel back on foot. The teleportation feature is too expensive for the natives, after all," Wilted responded.

"The battle will be long over by the time those who don't use the zone portal arrive. Heck, it should already end now. The divine priest has died, which meant they have breached the main temple."

"Considering their principles, they will still head back to make sure. We can't count on them anymore in our war. Is this why Master invade them? To pull Council of Virtus' elite force away?"

"I don't think it's that shallow."

"Then why does he spend the manpower to do that?"

"Hey, I'm hoping that you can tell me," Jack replied.

"It must involve some of the alterations he has made to the program," Wilted said. "There must be something inside the divine faction that he goes after."

"Why does he need to do the alteration deep inside an untouchable divine faction? Well, not so untouchable now that he managed to take one down."

"Probably the things he altered need to be already powerful from the start. Many limits are restricting him from doing changes. He can't risk doing too many changes without the risk of damaging the program or getting found out by others."

"Anyway, now you should tell the Liguritutum ruler to push ahead. You still have the pipe and the potions from Goddess Serenity, right? This moment is your best chance while Fear's goons are away."

"I very much like to do so, but the situation has turned to the worst since yesterday."

"What happens yesterday?"

"The elf country, the Aurebor Dynasty, has joined forces with Liguritutum's rebel prince. The elfen forces crossed the border yesterday and were ready to mount an assault on our border towns."

"What? Why would the elves do that?"

"I don't know. I'm still sending people to investigate, but the words are that the invasion command came directly from the elf queen herself. We designed her personality as someone aloof and look down on all other races. She would rather not be in contact with other countries. I don't understand why she has chosen to ally with the Liguritidum's rebel prince."

"I bet Master must have something to do with this. The timing is too impeccable."

"Now that I heard your news, I think so too."

"All right, tell you what. I will try to talk with Prince Alonzo to send help," Jack said. In his mind, he thought, 'Alonzo might even be crowned king already during my absence.'

"Well, at this point, any help is appreciated," Wilted replied.

Jack ended his message with Wilted and open another one with Jeanny.

"Where the hell have you been?! We have been trying to contact you for some time!" Jeanny quickly replied after receiving Jack's message.

"I am here now. Anyway, I have important news. Is prince Alonzo back in the capital already? I need you to ask him something."

"You can talk to him yourself. We are gathering in the capital. You hurry and come here. Something big has happened."

"What something big?"

"The orc nation, Verremor, has begun an invasion into Themisphere!"

Chapter 867: General of the Third Army

At the top of the city wall in Thesewal, a border city near the Fulgur region where Jack had visited during their expedition to the Temple of the Divine Squall, stood two figures. However, these figures were not the usual human soldiers. Instead, they were the green hulking humanoids better known as orcs. The two orcs were the father and son of the Raretooth tribe, Abdu and Abasi Raretooth.

They were the ones who led one of the three expeditionary forces that crossed into the Themisphere kingdom and drew the first blood. They were the vanguard army tasked to seize a solid foothold to serve as the main base for the rest of their army which was still on the way. Thesewal had been one of the towns chosen for these footholds.

The defending army in Thesewal didn't have enough men to defend against the large force Abdu brought. Their scouts had spotted Abdu's approaching army two days before that army arrived in Thesewal, but those two short days were not enough for reinforcement to come to their aid. They fought valiantly. The battle lasted for a few days. But ultimately Guss, the acting mayor and the highest-ranking officer in Thesewal, saw that it was impossible to hold the town. So, he sounded the retreat to reduce casualties.

Before he left, Guss made sure to burn the supplies that they couldn't take with them. This was an order given by the newly appointed chief strategist for this war.

That was five days ago. At this time, the town was already completely under Abdu's control. The news Abdu had received mentioned that the other two expeditionary forces had also successfully occupied the other two border towns. Their entire army should complete their crossing in around one week. Then they could start organizing for the real battle. Because by now, the Themisphere kingdom should also be mobilizing their army.

In Abdu's opinion, Themisphere's act was rather swift. The intelligence they gathered said that at this time, Themisphere's army was already amassing outside their capital. Even though they had sent a war declaration to Themisphere a day before they hit Theseval, as was dictated by their custom, Themisphere's response was still considered fast.

While contemplating, Abdu watched the distant plains with a calm expression. Abasi, on the other hand, was somehow agitated.

"Something in your mind?" Abdu asked.

"I just feel it is a pity that it takes us this long to invade," Abasi answered. "Damn those cowardly Lord Chiefs. If they had agreed to our proposal to invade Themisphere sooner, we would have caught them when the human princes were fighting among themselves one month ago. It would have been easier to crush them then."

"If they have asked us to invade then, I would have proposed for us to delay."

"What? Why? Father, I don't understand."

Abdu smiled. "Because it reminds me of an old story. There was a chieftain in the past who was urged by his officers to attack a neighboring country. That particular country was embroiled in civil war at the time. However, instead of complying with the request, the chieftain invited his officers to the training square. He ordered some dogs brought to the square and then pitted the dogs to fight against one another. While the dogs were fighting, the chieftain brought a wolf in. When these dogs noticed the wolf, they ceased fighting and instead engaged the wolf. From this incident, the chieftain explained to his officers that however fierce a war inside a nation, it would stop when outsiders invade. The war participants would then redirect their aggression against the outsiders."

Abasi contemplated the tale. "Father... You mean if we have invaded then, the princes would have stopped their infighting and worked together against us."

"Working together is an unknown, but they will for sure stop fighting one another and come at us, even if separately."

"I see..."

"Now, instead, they have lost quite a lot of men in that civil war. As well as several talented officers. Most importantly, they have lost one of their three Lord Marshals."

"Arther Pendrake? I heard that he only quits the army, not dies. Won't he rejoin when his country is under threat?"

"Hehe. He won't. We have studied his personality. He is a hard-headed person who values his pride. If he joins again so soon after he announced his retirement, it will be like throwing mud at his own face. He won't do it, even for the sake of his country."

"That's great. With only two Lord Marshalls, they won't be able to stand against our three war chiefs."

"Still, don't underestimate our enemies, I've heard that Duchess Isabelle, the prior court sorceress, had regained her full strength. She had even fought Arther to a standstill during the civil war."

"What's to fear? We also brought our shaman king. We have four high-level mythical-grade combatants, they only have three."

"That's right. Our troops and outworlders are also more experienced in warfare. We should be at an advantage. Still, as I said. Do not underestimate our enemies. Such behavior is the downfall of any leader."

"Yes, father," Abasi said.

Abdu nodded and returned his calm gaze to the distance. Yet, if someone looked closely, they would see the fiery passion in his eyes. He was expectant for the coming conflict.

Jack sent a message to Wilted advising her of the situation, telling her that it was unlikely that Themisphere could send reinforcement at this time. Wilted pitied the situation but there was nothing they could do about it.

Jack and Paytowin used the guild return scroll and appeared in Heavenly Citadel. He first went and made preparation to settle Paytowin in their headquarters before handing the ancient battleground legacy and brave golem blueprint to Tip who was inside the Guild Hall. As for the Mana Gathering Stone, Jack kept it.

Tip's eyes were so wide that Jack worried they might fall out.

John and Jeanny were not there because Jeanny had informed Jack that they were at the palace. The high-ranking officers were being assembled and they would be briefed soon on the war plan that the prince and the others had been discussing in the past few days. Jeanny told Jack to come as soon as possible because Jack was also a part of the plan.

Jack planned to use the Mana Gathering Stone on their Time Chamber. The stone would increase the density of the mana inside the chamber, thus allowing one to better learn mana sense and mana manipulation. In addition to the compressed time within the chamber, they should be able to see many members' improvement in mana control in a short time. However, he wanted to let Jeanny copy it first so that they could use it on the other guild structures as well.

After leaving, Jack teleported to Thereath and headed directly to the palace. He saw Jeanny was waiting for him by the gate. She immediately led him inside. In the large courtyard, Jack saw many soldiers busying about. Jeanny told him that outside the capital, there were even more soldiers that had been called upon from all corners of the country to face this invasion. Jack didn't see them because he had teleported directly into the capital.

"So, John is already inside?" Jack asked.

"Yeah, he had been devising a plan with Prince Alonzo and the others these past few days. Today was the day where the big shots from the army arrived and they would be informing them of the war plan."

"Wow. He has truly come far, eh?"

"Yeah, after the last civil war, most had acknowledged his ability. Especially the prince and royal advisor Mason. With their backings, he had been appointed the chief strategist for the current war operation."

"Chief strategist...? Let me say again, wow! I guess he had moved even higher than me in this kingdom."

"Not really. The prince also wants to give you a major role in this war. The orcs had come invading from three different fronts, so our armies are also divided into three to face each of them. Two out of the three armies are being commanded by the two remaining Lord Marshalls of this country. The third one, the prince wanted you to lead them."

"What? Me...? Are you serious? Ain't there a more suitable candidate? For example, lord commander Armstrong?"

"Lord Commander Armstrong will serve as your right-hand man," Jeanny said with a smile.

"Hah? And he is okay with that arrangement?"

"He didn't show any objection when the prince discussed with him."

"Hm... I don't know... Sound like a heavy responsibility."

"Then you should learn to bear one already! In our guild, you are always a leader in name only. Time to act like one!"

"Uh, I think you are more suited to command this army, but yes, ma'am. I will try my best."

"Actually, it was John who pitched the idea. Prince Alonzo supported it. Royal advisor Mason didn't object, so it was decided that way. Of course, if you haven't shown up today, they will decide to have Armstrong replace you."

"Knowing John, I hazard he has a purpose of pitching me to be the third army general."

"Yeah. He said he needs someone on the ground that can maneuver following his every command. The two Lord Marshals will most likely be difficult."

"And he expects me to follow his every beck and call?"

Jeanny shrugged. She said, "Aside from that, the third army will also be the one that incorporates players into the army. The first and second armies led by the Lord Marshals will be fully filled with native soldiers. Same as during the civil war, the war summon quest has been announced a few days ago. After players learned of the last war, most are eager to join now. The kingdom has received a staggering number of volunteers from players all across Themisphere."

"How many is a staggering number?" Jack asked.

"Five hundred thousand," Jeanny replied.

Chapter 868: War Planning

"Five... Five hundred thousand?" Jack stammered. That was way more than the participants during the civil war.

"What about the native army that is heading to the front line? What's their number?" Jack asked.

"We have arrived. You will hear the details in the meeting," Jeanny said.

Two soldiers who guarded the large door to the throne room opened the door for them. Jack and Jeanny entered a hall full of people. Despite the stunning number of people, everyone lined up nicely. On the throne at the far side, Prince Alonzo was sitting there, and beside him were John, royal advisor Mason, and Duchess Isabelle.

"Is Alonzo crowned king already?" Jack asked Jeanny in a whisper.

"No. Originally, the coronation was supposed to be carried out this week, but Verremor's invasion has put the ceremony on hold. It will be carried out after the invasion is repelled," Jeanny answered. She took Jack to the front where John was waiting.

On his way, Jack saw many familiar faces. Armstrong, Ahab, Quintus, Alfredo, Salem, and the rests. But standing at the front facing Prince Alonzo were two persons Jack had never seen before. The aura from the two was a league above the others in this hall. Jack used his Inspect on them.

*

Emris (Mythical Human, Lord Marshall), level 85

HP: 1,980,000

*

Meryl (Mythical Human, Lord Marshall), level 80

HP: 1,850,000

*

Emris was an old man with a grey beard and mage attire. He held in his hand an intricate silver staff with a shining jewel on its tip. Jack could tell that this old man was a powerful magician with one glance. His level was even higher than Arther Pendrake, the Lord Marshall they had fought against during the civil war.

Meryl, on the other hand, was a woman warrior garbed in armor. Jack couldn't tell for sure what kind of warrior this woman was, because she carried all sorts of weapons. There were two swords hung by her waist, a shield slung on his back accompanied by a bow and a quiver of arrows. She might be a warrior that adjusted based on the situation.

The two gave Jack and Jeanny a glance as they walked up to the side where Lord Commander Amstrong and Duke Alfredo were standing. Jack exchanged greetings with them with simple nods.

"All right, now that our third general has arrived, we can begin this briefing," John announced.

"Hold. You can't mean that outworlder is the third general?" Meryl asked while pointing at Jack.

"I mean exactly that," John replied.

"My prince, are you sure?" Emris also asked. "Although I have my reservations, I didn't object when you appointed this outworlder as our chief strategist. But to appoint one of them as the army general, he is too weak for that position."

"You are not wrong, old man. But the same as devising strategy, commanding an army doesn't strictly require personal strength," John said.

Emris flashed John an annoyed stare. He was speaking to the prince, why was it John the one who answered? And how dare this outworlder addressed him as an old man!

"I understand your concern, but know that the prince and the royal advisor have agreed to this arrangement," John added, completely unbothered by Emris' stare.

"It is as he said, Lord Marshall Emris," Prince Alonzo said.

John then added, "If it makes you feel any better, Lord commander Armstrong and Duchess Isabelle will be by the third general's sides, providing him with the required strength. Now then, let's leave this unimportant matter aside and discuss the urgent issues."

Both Emris and Meryl were vexed. The concern they pointed out was called an unimportant matter. But since the Prince had confirmed John's words, there was no point to argue.

There was a platform in front of the throne that was similar to the one in their Guild Hall. John's hands moved around as he worked on the platform's interface. A huge 3D projection then appeared above them. It showed the border region where the Themisphere kingdom connected with the Fulgur Region. Many red triangles were seen crossing over from the Fulgur region.

"The enemy movements here are the information that our scouts have gathered one day ago. From these movements, I say the enemy's armies will finish assembling their forces in our border region in around one week."

"One week? It will take us more days to march there. They can push deeper and raze more of our towns," Meryl said.

"That is possible, but I suspect they won't do that," John said.

"Why is that?"

"They are in a foreign territory. It is not wise to penetrate deeper without knowing better the lay of the land. Not while the defending army was still intact and not inferior in number compared to them. They might get ambushed from an unknown angle while they are trying to occupy the next towns. They also need to build a stable network of supplies. If they just push deeper into our country, we will have a better chance of defeating them even if we lost a few more towns. But no, I don't think they will. I think they will set up base camps in this border region and study the land there while waiting for our armies to arrive. After defeating our army, then only will they push deeper."

"... Are you sure about this?"

"Of course not. I'm not a prophet," John replied. Meryl was visibly upset by John's crude remark. "What I do are deductive guesses. Let's say if I'm wrong. We have also instructed the towns near the area where the orcs had invaded to strengthen their garrisons and defenses. The civilians had been escorted to the next towns. So, if they were attacked, they just need to hold out as long as possible until we arrive."

"Considering if I'm right and they waited for our armies, the battle will be fought at these three different fronts," John continued while pointing at the projection above. "As you see, the orcs had come invading from three different areas. Each of these three armies had an estimated number of 800,000 natives and 200,000 outworlders. So in total, they have 2,400,000 native soldiers with 600,000 outworlders."

Jack saw grim expressions on everyone's faces after John mentioned the numbers.

"On our side, we have assembled a total of 2,200,000 native soldiers and 500,000 outworlders," John said. "The numbers aren't exactly far apart but considering the orcs were a warring race, each of their soldiers had better experiences in warfare. The levels of their average soldiers are also slightly higher due to the constant war in their country, so generally, we are at a disadvantage."

"We can assemble more soldiers but unfortunately, our kingdom covers more borders with neighboring countries. Aside from Verremor, our borders are also connected to the Sangrod Empire and Aurebor Dynasty. Even though we are on peaceful terms with these two, we can't pull every force from those borders, we still need to leave some just in case. As for Verremor, their borders are only to us and the Aurebor Dynasty. The rest of their borders were facing the sea, so they had one less threat to worry about. We also have to leave some troops to remain stationed in the cities and towns in case the enemies opt to break into smaller troops and play guerilla warfare and raid our cities."

"I think you are missing one important point, chief strategist," Meryl said. "Due to Arther's departure, we are one Lord Marshall less, while the enemy has three war chiefs, the equivalent of our Lord Marshalls."

"We have Duchess Isabelle to cover up the shortage," Commander Armstrong said. "We have seen her butted head with Arther, the duchess is no less powerful."

"That might be, but we receive the news that the reclusive Shaman King from Verremor had also been spotted in the enemy's army. We are short one high-level mythical-grade combatant."

"That's true, but war isn't won simply by strength alone," John said.

"So, how do you propose us to bridge this gap in strength?"

"By throwing more soldiers at them," John pointed at the map. "While each of Verremor's three armies is composed of the same number of soldiers, our scouts informed us that the left and the right armies were each commanded by one war chief. While the shaman king and the last war chief are in the central army. For that, we will bulk up our central army, designated here as the dragon army, with 1,200,000 natives and the majority of officers at level 70 and above. The dragon army will be headed by old man Emris here, the strongest Lord Marshall in our kingdom!"

Even though John gave him praise as the strongest Lord Marshall, Emris was still peeved at being called an old man. He was eager to teach this outworlder a lesson but he kept his cool.

"The dragon army will be the key to our victory. With more soldiers, we hope hero Emris can defeat the enemy. If the enemy's central army is routed, it will lower the enemy's morale and give our other two armies a better fighting chance."

Chapter 869: The Real Plan

"If we send all our best soldiers to the dragon army, won't our left and right armies be weakened? If we are defeated before the dragon army defeats the enemy, it will be our morale that is lowered instead," Meryl said.

"The left army, designated as the phoenix army, will lead 800,000 natives. Even if the enemy has 200,000 more outworlders, the outworlders' levels are still not far from the regular soldiers' levels. The phoenix army will be led by you, our beautiful and graceful hero, Meryl the manslayer. I believe you should have no problem surviving with this number, will you?"

The manslayer was what both Meryl's soldiers and the enemies had called her. She didn't mind the title. But everyone in the army knew that she hated being called either beautiful or graceful. She wondered if this outworlder was oblivious of that fact or if he knew it and intentionally said it to piss her off.

"I have no problem," Meryl answered. "But that will leave the right army, led by your friend here, with only 200,000 natives and 500,000 outworlders. How are you going to fight with that number?"

"Good question, my beautiful Meryl," John said, which earned him a stare from Meryl which he completely ignored. "The right army, designated here as the turtle army..."

Jack's head snapped to John upon the word. 'Man... Can't you give my army a better name?' He complained within.

"... will be in total defense mode. The area where the enemy's third army occupied, which is the Thesewal region, had a mountain range blocking large armies from entering further into our country." John had the map projection above to zoom in on the place he mentioned. "There are only two passes in this mountain range. One is a wide plain which provides the largest gap in this mountain range. This should be the most ideal pass for the enemy to cross, but there is a fort here, built specifically to defend this pass. Half of the turtle army will be stationed in this fort while the other half will defend this other pass, which is a much narrower gap in the mountain range here."

Jack saw the projection shown on the map. There was a name hovering above the place John had pointed, Themisphylae.

'Hey, isn't that...'

'Yes, it's the place where you have the simulated war when you entered the Ancient Battleground,' Peniel confirmed.

John never stopped his explanation, "With the turtle army watching over these two passes, the enemy won't be able to pass. Then we just need to wait for the dragon army to complete their task and then we can win the war."

"For the dragon and phoenix army, I might agree the enemy will wait to engage us in the area where they gathered. But for these two passes. I don't think the enemy will wait until we get into the forts before they mount their attack, will they?" Emris asked.

"That's why half the turtle army with the fastest mobility will rush to the two forts to reinforce them before the enemy arrived. The two forts are already manned. The expeditionary force the orcs had sent to occupy Theseval won't be able to take down either fort. They will need to wait for their main army. After that, they still need around three to four days of marching. Meaning we have one and a half weeks to get there before them. After that, they just need to defend until the rest of the turtle army arrives."

The hall was quiet as they contemplated John's strategy.

"Sounds rather simple this time," Jack whispered to Jeanny.

"I think simple is good, I never like his roundabout tricks," It was Peniel who responded to his remark. Jeanny just gave the two a 'please be silent' sign.

"Any objection to this plan?" John asked.

The two Lord Marshalls looked at one another. This plan put the turtle army at a disadvantage, but since the two were not in charge of that army, they didn't mind. If they could settle their portion of the opponents, then they could come to the other's aid.

The two expressed their agreement.

John nodded. "Please note that the objectives were to reoccupy the three border towns that the orcs had taken for their invasion bases. Once this was achieved, Verremor would lose their footholds and had no choice but to retreat."

"The army outside is being reorganized according to the arrangement discussed in this meeting as we speak. Of course, each of Lord Marshall's private forces is included in the respective army the two of you are commanding, so you will have your most trusted soldiers by your side. We also have here the rosters of which officers joining which army. Please report to the base camp of each army that had been set up outside the capital. We expect all three armies to depart by tomorrow. Everyone is dismissed... Except for the high officers of the Turtle army. Please stay, we have more to discuss."

The mass started to trickle out of the throne hall. The huge hall that was crowded before became rather empty, leaving only a handful of people, most of whom Jack recognized. These were the people with whom he had fought together in the civil war. John had organized the turtle army with personnel that had the experience of working together.

The door to the throne hall was closed again after the last people walked out. Once the large door was closed, John said, "Okay, now I'm going to describe the real plan."

"The real plan?" Jack asked.

"Of course. You don't think I will put my entire hope on that old man now, do you?" John said.

"That old man is one of the heroes of our country, outworlder," Ahab said.

"Forgive my words then, good Commander Ahab. You know I am never one with a good mouth. Now, with that being said, I can tell you that despite Lord Marshall Emris commanding more natives in his army than the opponent, he won't be having a good time."

"Because the opponent has two high-level mythical-grade enemies?"

"No. Our higher proportion of high-level officers in the dragon army should cover that gap. But if the intelligence we have gathered from Verremor is true, then the trouble will come from the outworlders."

"The outworlders? Aren't you giving your kind too much credit? The outworlders in Verremor can't be that higher level than yours here, can they?"

"No, our average levels are similar. What will cause the trouble is that the outworlders in Verremor have been joining the local wars for quite some time. They have somehow developed some forms of coordination between the natives and outworlders. They are not an army like the late Prince Therribus, where the native and the outworlder acted completely separately. They are more similar to us at the end of the civil war when we banded together. But since they had been doing this longer, their coordination is much better. If you factor in the outworlder's number into the orc's army, the number difference between the dragon army with the opponent is only twenty percent. Winning is possible, but it's not a certainty, and even if the dragon army can win, it won't be fast enough. By the time they actually win, the phoenix or the turtle army might already fall."

"Then you have another plan to win this war?" Armstrong asked.

"Of course!" John replied with a smile.

"See, I told you it was too simple," Jack said to Jeanny, to which Jeanny again gave him the quiet sign.

"So, what is this secret plan to win this war?" Duke Alfredo asked.

"The same as the time when we fought with the orcs in the Fulgur region. Their supplies."

"Supplies?"

John nodded. "In any invasion scenario, supplies are critical. As the defending force fighting on our own turf, we can easily gain supplies from any nearby city. The invading army does not have this privilege. They can only rely on supply shipments from their home country. Otherwise, they have to pillage the supplies from the towns or cities they defeated, which is not only limited but also unreliable."

"That's why you told the defeated border towns to burn their supplies before they retreated," Royal advisor Mason remarked.

"That's right," John said.

"I am afraid it won't be as easy as the last time," Quintus said. "We are only dealing with a small-scale army during the conflict in the Fulgur region. This time it is a proper army. That's why they had taken our border towns and made them into their home bases. Trying to get to their supplies is the same as attacking those fortified towns."

"We won't be taking out the supplies themselves. It is the supply lines we are targeting."

"Supply lines?"

John nodded. "The supplies needed to maintain the orcs' massive army will be tremendous. They will need a constant supply. No doubt the Verremor built a series of depots along the route they had passed and the supplies are continuously being transported through this line. By occupying and cutting these supply lines, it will seriously impact the invading army's morale and ability to fight."

"These supply lines are most certainly being guarded as well."

"Of course, but with how large an area this supply line covers, it is impossible to cover the entire line. I say there might be only a few legions patrolling the line. With scouts spread out to spot any possible intruders so the real army can react if needed."

"And this plan only involves the turtle army?" Armstrong asked.

"Yeah," John confirmed.

"The turtle army already has the smallest number of natives that are to be divided amongst those two passes. Outworlders make up the bulk of our army. You can't be serious about dividing it further to form the shock army to go after this supply line?"

"Oh, that is exactly what I'm saying," John said with a grin.

Armstrong looked at the prince and the royal advisor. "Do Your Highness and Your Excellency agree to this plan?"

"Well, I...", Mason seemed undecided.

"I trust his plan," Prince Alonzo declared firmly.

Chapter 870: Arrangement of the Turtle Army

"Okay. Now, let's leave the discussion on the supply line for later. We will talk about these two passes the turtle army needs to defend first," John said.

"Out of the two passes, the Themisphylae pass will be the easier one to defend. First, because the pass is narrow. It requires only a small number of capable soldiers to block the pass. Even if the enemy has a large number, they won't be able to utilize it."

"Um... What about the secret passages that can circumvent the pass?" Jack asked.

Everyone turned to him, which made Jack feel uncomfortable. 'Did I say the wrong things?' He asked in his mind.

"Please forgive him, his understanding of this pass is still in the past," John said. He had gotten the report about the ancient battleground from Jeanny, so he knew how Jack was aware of this pass.

Prince Alonzo explained to Jack, "After we lost that pass to the army of Greed in the past, we have later worked to seal all those secret passages. They are all blocked now. No one can get a jump on the defending army using those passages."

"Not only that, they had even installed some extra upgrade to the pass," John added. "The narrow pass had completely been walled off into a fort. On this fort were two large flame towers. It will blast any enemies who try to approach. As long as the fort stands, we can just wait until these flame towers burn them to ashes."

"What about defense against siege weapons? I reckon the orcs brought some, don't they?" Jack asked.

"The reports did indicate so. But the Themisphylae fort is equipped with a stronger protective rune diagram than Fort Garadhor, so it can sustain more punishment. The fort is also equipped with three trebuchets with enhanced ranges. Additionally, an advanced master alchemist from the Alchemist Union is hired to craft the explosive ammo for these trebuchets. These trebuchets and their special ammo can be used to counter any enemy's siege weapons."

"We are proud of the defense we built at that pass, there is nothing to worry about," Ahab said to Jack.

"That's right. Because of the excellent defense of this pass, I will only spare 20,000 natives and 100,000 outworlders to defend this pass," John said. "Outworlders with a high blacksmith and alchemist level will be prioritized. So, they can help the local mechanics to repair the fort and its facilities when needed."

John then pointed to the second pass in the projection. The name that hovered over this part is called Slaughterer Plains. "This pass is a bit more troublesome because it covers a large plain. It can't be exactly called a pass since the opening was just too wide. What defend this pass is a large fort at the center of the plains."

"The fort is just a small piece at the center of the plains, won't the enemy just go around it to head deeper into the country?" Jack asked after seeing the map.

"They can, but without defeating this fort, they will be cut off behind enemy lines. They won't be getting any more supplies since the supplies had to pass by this fort as well. If they do that, we can simply send a part of our force to harass them and prevent them from capturing any more towns and cities, all the while waiting for them to break down due to running out of supplies."

"So, they will most likely try to take down this fort. Luckily, this fort is larger and better equipped than Fort Garadhor. It not only has a better protective rune diagram and is equipped with many long-range defensive weapons to counter siege weapons but there are also deep moats surrounding the fort. It won't be easy approaching this fort."

"Do they have the explosive ammo for their defensive weapons as well?" Jack asked.

"No, the advanced master alchemist in fort Themisphylae is under contract for only that fort. We are not allowed to move his creations to another fort," royal advisor Mason informed.

"So, how many from the turtle army will you stationed inside this fort?" Armstrong asked.

"100,000 natives and 250,000 outworlders will head toward this fort," John answered. "However, even if the fort here is larger than Garadhor, it still cannot hold those many troops. Only around one-third will be stationed inside the fort. The remaining will camp themselves on the low hills by the north of this fort. If the enemy tries to attack the troops stationed on these hills, they will put themselves in between the fort and our troops. They will be at a disadvantageous position."

"With this arrangement, it will leave 80,000 natives and 150,000 outworlders. I suppose this will be the shock army that goes after the supply line?"

"Yes," John confirmed.

"That number is still rather large, won't they be easy to be spotted by the enemy scouts?" Ahab asked.

"We will need some decent number to defend against the enemy from reestablishing the supply lines. We will most likely be spotted sooner or later once we approach the supply line. So, speed is key here. These shock troops will select only those who had rare-grade steeds. The ambush to destroy the depots will be the first step, but the key will be to form a blockage preventing further supplies from going through."

"Once this supply line is cut, the enemies will most likely throw a large force to reestablish the line. The shock army's job is to try to last for as long as possible. I ain't going to lie, this shock army will most likely be obliterated, but the longer they last, the more effects it will cause to the enemy's front line. This will allow both the Dragon army and the Phoenix army to achieve a decisive victory!"

"Only the braves will go with this shock army. I'm not going to point a finger at who should join. You can volunteer yourself."

Everyone had a thoughtful expression upon hearing it.

"Except, of course, for our brave general. He will have to join this shock army for sure," John added.

Jack, "%\$@*"

"Allow me to join this shock army then," Duchess Isabelle said. "With me around, we can defend the place better."

"No, you are the only high-level mythical grade in the turtle army. You will need to help defend one of the two passes. If the enemy's war chief is left unchecked, the forts will most likely fall," John said.

"Do we know where the position of the enemy's war chief is?" Jack asked. "I mean, which of the two passes that the Duchess will be defending?"

"The forts on the two passes have teleportation chamber. It is too expensive to teleport an army full of natives, but teleporting only one should not be a problem. The duchess can move between these two passes accordingly using those teleportation chambers," John answered.

"Well, since my wife can't go with this shock army, then I have to be the one who goes," Duke Alfredo declared.

Duchess Isabelle looked at her husband with a complicated look, but she didn't say anything.

Laurent, who was there as well, said after seeing Duchess Isabelle's expression, "Then I will follow as well, I will make sure to keep him alive."

"I have the highest military ranking in this turtle army, I won't leave the most dangerous operation to anyone else. I will go!" Armstrong uttered.

"This is exciting, count me in as well," Commander Quintus joined in.

"Me too!" Ahab and Captain Salem both said.

More and more offered themselves. In the end, almost everybody volunteered to go with the shock army.

"Uh... This is unexpected. You, people, are too patriotic," John sighed. "In the end, I guess I will still have to point fingers at who goes where. Can't have you all go with the shock army, can we? Who will defend the two passes then?"

So, John started distributing the people there. Armstrong and Jeanny would be in charge of the fort at Slaughterer Plains. Ahab and Captain Salem would defend the Themisphylae pass. Both commander Armstrong and Ahab would lead the troops with the fastest mobility to reach the forts first while Jeanny and Captain Salem would lead the rest of the troops. Duke Alfredo, Commander Quintus, Laurent, and Bailey would join Jack in the shock army.

What surprised Jack was John would be joining the shock army as well. John explained that they would need to summon the guild army to help bulk up the forces when the enemy came to recapture the supply route. He added that most of the guild leaders who possessed guild headquarters would be assigned to this shock army as well.

They continued to discuss further the details of the distribution. Afterward, John dismissed everyone. He said that he would be having a meeting with the guild leaders and influential independent players who had answered the war summon quest. He mentioned that one of their allied guilds had another war tool that they could use. He wanted to make sure that they could get that tool for this war. Jeanny went and joined him.

Before they left, Jack asked the two and Lord Commander Armstrong if they could take over leading the turtle army during the initial march. He promised he would join before the army arrived at the passes. There were several things he still needed to take care of.

Armstrong expressed that it was inappropriate for the general of the army to be absent. While John and Jeanny were already used to it. They believed Jack did this to prepare for the coming war, so they agreed to it. Armstrong reluctantly agreed as well.

When Jack was about to leave, Prince Alonzo came and thanked him. When Jack asked the prince what for, Alonzo said it was because Jack had asked Jeanny to warn him about the suspicion of Verremor. They had been keeping watch since. Although they still couldn't prevent Verremor's first strike on the border towns, they managed to act fast due to the early warning and gathered the army outside the capital at the current speed. Otherwise, they might still be waiting for the army to gather at this time.