

World 871

Chapter 871: Ghost Form

When Jack left the palace, it was close to the evening. Before leaving, Jack asked Jeanny if he had heard anything from Grace. She replied that she hadn't heard from Grace since she left with Jack for the Republic of Palgrost. Jack felt worried hearing that. He had also asked Tip when he was at Heavenly Citadel, Tip also hadn't heard any news.

Jeanny noticed Jack's worry and said that she would put the notice for members to pay attention to Grace if they saw her. Jack said to just keep it down for now. They needed to focus on this war at the moment. She was a big girl. She could take care of herself. He would go look for her once this war was over.

Jack informed John and Jeanny about Paytowin and the items that Callan had granted their guild. John sent Tip an instruction to have the blacksmiths focused on crafting the Brave Golems, while Jeanny sent messages to some capable members to form a group to start raiding the Ancient Battleground legacy. She also sent them instructions on how to properly gain the points in that legacy dungeon. Since the guild now had a guaranteed steady source of mana cores, she won't be saving the mana cores in her hand anymore. She would use them all to copy items that could strengthen the core members for the coming war.

Jack gave Jeanny the Mana Gathering Stone and asked if she could copy it. This was the only item from Callan's gift that was worth copying. They only need one for the other two. Getting another one Brave Golem blueprint or Ancient Battleground Legacy won't make a difference for their guild.

When Jeanny used her divine skill to try copying the stone, she was startled to find the number of mana cores needed.

"How many mana cores?" Jack asked.

"One... One hundred thousand...," Jeanny answered.

The two were speechless. Even collecting two thousand six hundred mana cores to copy Domon's King of Beast bloodline, which was a super rare grade, already took a long time. Even with the help from Ancient Battleground, the two could still not imagine how long before they could get the amount to copy this legendary item.

"So... Do you want to wait until we get enough mana core to copy this item?" Jeanny asked.

"No. I'm going to use it now for the Time Chamber. I have a need for it. Never mind then, no need to copy this item," Jack said.

Jack then sent a message informing Domon of the enhanced Time Chamber. Once the war was over, Domon could organize core members with the best affinity in mana sense to use the chamber. With the enhanced mana environment inside the chamber, these members should improve faster.

Jack left the noble district and headed to the Order of Magi's hut. Janus, as usual, was sitting behind his desk in the empty white room.

"Mister Storm Wind, you finally grace us with your presence," Janus greeted. "Allow me to express the congratulations on winning the civil war."

"Thanks, mate. But you should have heard by now that another war is coming. Any aid you can provide us this time?"

"Forgive me, Mister Storm Wind. We are an impartial organization. We stay out of conflicts between nations."

"Um... Not even something under the table?" Jack whispered.

Janus whispered back, despite no one there to eavesdrop on them, "Last time it is to punish the side who had harmed our benefactor. This time, we don't have such an excuse. Both Verremor and Themisphere treated us with equal respect. We can't play favorites here."

Jack shrugged. Worth a try, he thought. He then said, "I got the Eye of Illios."

"You do? Already? Are you certain?"

"The heck... Dude. Why do you sound like that is so hard to believe? Did you give me the quest with the belief that I can't complete it?"

"Haha, please forgive me, Mister Storm Wind. Don't be offended. I just didn't expect you to complete it so early. At least, I thought you will only bring us the news of its whereabouts and not the eye itself. Wait... You do mean you have the Eye of Illios and not just its whereabouts, right...?"

Jack felt annoyed by Janus' skepticism. He took out the glass cube that contained the Eye of Illios.

"By the Gods! You truly have it," Janus exclaimed.

"Here," Jack shoved the cube to Janus.

"Impressive, you are not even tempted to keep the legendary artifact to yourself?"

"If you change your mind about your faction hunting me all over the world for keeping it, then I might."

Janus chuckled. "I like you, Mister Storm Wind. You can bring the eye inside and hand it to my associate." The void door that usually took him to the challenge plaza appeared at the end of the room.

"By associate, I assume you mean another you," Jack said and walk to the door.

"Hold, Mister Storm Wind. Do you forget something?" Janus called before Jack stepped into the void door.

Jack was lost for a second but then realized what Janus was referring to. "You people and your rule, even when you already know it's me..." Jack muttered and changed into Unrivalled Arcaner.

"Hey, your class...?" Janus spoke after Jack's transformation, but Jack didn't notice it. He had walked into the void door.

Jack came out of the door finding himself in a different place than the previous times he stepped through the void door. It was an empty hall with dark walls and little lighting. He sensed someone on his right. He turned and found another Janus staring at him, from up close.

"Holy jeez...!" He jumped away from the consternation. "Dude! Do you have to stand so close?"

"Your Archmage class... It has been upgraded," This Janus said.

"My class...? Yes, I have gotten an awesome special class," Jack said proudly.

"You don't say. Where did you get this Time Sage class?"

"So, you know about this class?" Jack then remembered Greed's words. Greed had indicated that Majus, the previous Time Sage, was the one who had founded the Order of Magi.

He asked Janus, "Is it true the one who built your faction is named Majus?"

Janus looked at Jack with a complicated expression. "Did Majus tell you that?"

'Not exactly,' Jack said in his mind. He wondered if he should tell Janus that it was the God of Greed who gave him this information.

"Well, I guess since you get his class, you should know him as well. So, how is he?" Janus asked.

"I only met his lingering spirit, who told me his real self is no longer alive," Jack answered.

"That's not strange. Even though he held dominion over time, he is not immortal. I'm surprised he let you have his class. He was rather picky about whom to inherit it."

"Really?" Jack thought about how the ghostly Majus was grumbling that Jack had to pass the trial or no one else could take the trial anymore. Jack figured at that point anyone would have been fine.

"Yeah, to tell you the truth. I'm still bitter that he didn't pass that class to me," Janus said.

"Oh? Uh... um... Sorry to hear that... So, are we still good...?" Jack asked.

"I'm not that petty," Janus said and clapped Jack's shoulder. "Maybe in my younger days, I would have blown you to bits when I learned of this, but I've grown past that. I'm glad you are the one who carries his mantle. Come!"

Janus gestured for Jack to follow him.

"And to answer your question. Yes, Majus was the one who built this faction. And he was also my mentor. He left me in charge of this place when he got bored of it. An eccentric man that mentor of mine."

'Tell me about it,' Jack said in his mind.

They passed a pedestal and went to a hallway that connected that dark hall.

"I originally wanted to ask you to place the Eye of Illios there," Janus said and pointed at the pedestal they have just passed. "But after finding out about your Time Sage class. I'm interested in meeting you directly."

"Oh...? Do you mean..."

"You asked me before if you ever met my true self, right? You are about to."

They walked past a series of dark corridors. Jack wondered why the glum atmosphere. It was also so lonely. They didn't encounter anyone else in this place. As they were walking, Janus suddenly made a turn onto a fenced wall. He cast a five-runes spell and his body turned intangible, making him look as if an apparition. He then walked past the fence as if air. He turned tangible again after crossing.

"... You know I can't do that, right?" Jack uttered.

Janus chuckled. "There is an opening further down there."

Jack walked around the fence wall and entered through the opening Janus mentioned.

"Show off," he said after reuniting with Janus again.

"The spell is called Ghost Form," Peniel informed. "You can pass through anything while in the form. You also can't be attacked. But at the same time, you also can't attack, use other skills or use any item while the spell is active."

"That is an accurate description," Janus confirmed. He then asked Jack, "What do you think of the spell?"

"I think it is a useful spell. Not only to pass through obstacles but it can also be used if you want to hide from a powerfully destructive spell."

"Then you like it?"

"Why does it matter if I like it? Hey! Are you offering me that spell?" Jack asked.

"It will be one of the rewards for delivering us that Eye of Illios," Janus replied.

"Cool! But I will still get the knowledge points you promised me, right?"

"Don't worry," Janus said.

They came out into another large hall but with an equally dark and glum ambiance. A figure stood at the center of the hall with his back to them. Even from the back, Jack could tell that this was another Janus, but with some notable difference. This one's posture was taller. His long purple hair also carried some traces of white.

When Jack turned to ask the Janus who accompanied him if the one standing there was his real self, he found out that Janus had vanished.

The person at the center turned around and faced Jack. The face was indeed the Janus he knew, only a bit older. This Janus could be said to be between the young ones who usually received him when he came to this faction and the old one who watched over the Mage Academy.

Chapter 872: Honorary Magi

"Greetings, Mister Storm Wind. We finally meet face to face," the real Janus greeted. He then extended an open palm at Jack. "Now, if you don't mind."

It took Jack a second to understand the gesture. "Oh, here." He said and took out the glass cube with the Eye of Illios.

"Much appreciated," Janus said.

Jack heard a notification informing him that his quest, Search for the Eye of Illios, had been completed. He received 4,000,000 exp, 80 gold coins, and 6000 knowledge points.

Jack was elated by the generous knowledge points awarded. He would have no problem buying the Glide spell and then some.

The exp points pushed his Brave Swordsmaster to level 56. He received another notification for that which included his attributes increase.

*

HP +200

Stamina +180

Strength +12

Dexterity +18

Intelligence +2

Endurance +10

Reflex +15

Wisdom +5

3 free attribute points

3 free skill points

*

Generally, the total attributes increase was not as high as the Time Sage, but it was still significant compared to the Blade Dancer elite class. One who had gotten a special class and one who had not, their rift would become greater as they leveled up. He was glad that he had gotten the Brave Swordsmaster before he leveled up too far. Now, all that was left was his Beastmaster class.

'Peniel, is there a way to tell if Master had gotten a special class when we last fought him?' Jack asked in his mind.

'He didn't use any skill from a special class, so I think he had not? But it's possible he might have been hiding it,' Peniel replied.

'Or I didn't push him hard enough to make him reveal it,' Jack thought.

After accepting the glass cube, Janus opened it. He cast a rapid six-runes spell and the Eye of Illios floated out from the cube.

'Telekinesis,' Jack thought within. He had seen the Herald of Greed cast the spell before.

Janus guided the Eye of Illios towards a long rod that was sticking out at the center of the hall. The eye slowly lowered itself to the top of the rod. While Janus was doing it, Jack took the chance to use his Inspect.

*

Janus (Mythical Human, Head Minister), level 90

HP: 1,850,000

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This time he managed to read the information. Probably because this time it was the real person. It seemed that even though someone was past level 75, touching the Eye of Illios directly was still not safe. That's why Janus used the telekinesis spell.

When the Eye of Illios touched the top of the rod, the rod reshaped itself to hold the eye. Rune diagrams on the floor around the rod flickered to life. Janus made a few incantations and energy seemed to drift into the Eye of Illios from the rod. Not long after, the eye seemed to come alive. It became... a real eye.

On top of the rod was now a large glowing eye, and the eye was alive. Its pupil darted around the room as if trying to take in the situation. When the pupil landed on Jack, Jack felt as if something bored into his mind and soul. He felt like an open book, naked, his secrets laid bare. It took some effort before he successfully looked away and cut the connection with the eye.

"Forgive me, I should have warned you to not look directly into its eye," Janus said. "Now, let's test its capability, shall we?"

Janus made another series of incantations. The eye at the center of the room looked upward. A large projection appeared above. Inside this projection was a mass of soldiers. It took Jack a moment to register that the mass of soldiers was not human. They were ethereals.

The image then zoomed out and show the mass to be more than it initially showed. Much more. The army of ethereals was on a field. Neatly arranged in a formation. They were tense, as if ready to receive an attack. The image then panned in the direction of where the ethereal army was facing.

There, another army was shown, but it was a different race. While the ethereal army mostly wore dark and glum armor, this other army wore bright color armor. The image zoomed closer to this other army. Upon closer inspection, Jack could see it was an army of elves. This elven army was advancing towards the ethereal army.

"This... Does it show what happens in Liguritutum?" Jack asked, and then added, "Is it real-time?"

"Yes, and yes," Janus answered.

The two were back to being silent as they watched the elven army continue marching.

When the two armies were close enough, the ethereal army started charging forward as well. Magic and ranged projectiles were being tossed. The front-most soldiers used their defensive skills and spells as they clashed with the enemies. Both armies fought fiercely.

Janus noticed some commotion from the side so he controlled the eye to look in that direction. In the image was shown another army coming from the side and flanking the ethereal army. The new army was formed by ethereals as well. The ethereals were fighting their own kind on the side while they were being pushed by the elves from the front.

"Those must be the rebel prince's army," Jack said.

"You are quite up to date with other country's situations," Janus remarked.

"I have friends there," Jack answered.

Janus waved his hand and the entire image disappeared.

"It takes large energy to use the eye's ability," Janus said when he saw Jack's disappointed expression.

"Do you ask for this item so you can know about the war in Liguritutum?" Jack asked.

"No, we are an independent organization that supports no country. Whoever wins the war matters not to us," Janus replied. He gave Jack a complicated glance before saying, "I originally look for this eye to find out where my mentor, Majus, hid his legacy."

"Oh..."

"But now that I think of it, I think it was a fool's errand. Majus would have had a barrier that prevented even the Eye of Illios from finding his legacy's whereabouts," Janus made a sad mocking laugh.

When Jack didn't say anything, Janus added, "Don't get me wrong. Although I feel it's a pity that the Time Sage legacy is not mine, I don't hold any grudge against you. I think it is fate that the legacy is passed down to an outworlder, and I'm glad it's you instead of another outworlder. Just don't do anything that tarnishes my mentor's name, will you?"

"I will try my best," Jack answered.

Janus nodded. He looked at the inert Eye of Illios. It was now back to its original form. "Well, not that everything is a waste. There is still one other thing I wish to search using this eye."

"Perhaps I can help?" Jack asked. Probably this was why Janus brought him here? To give him another quest? After receiving the 6000 knowledge points, Jack was eager for another quest reward that granted such a sum.

"No, I will look for the item myself this time," Janus said. "As for you, here is the extra reward my other self mentioned on your way here."

A technique book appeared in his hand, which he gave to Jack.

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Technique Book: Ghost Form (Unique Consumable)

Grant the skill: Ghost Form

Restriction: Archmage, minimum level 50

*

"Aside from that, considering you carry the legacy of our founder, I'm going to give you this title."

Jack heard a notification that he had received a title, Honorary Magi.

"If you use this title when you are in this faction, you no longer need to spend any challenge points when taking the challenges," Janus explained. "Aside from that, during the challenge rounds, you will receive a buff of +10% to damage dealt and damage reduction, +100% MP regeneration speed, and the cooldown of all your spells will be reduced by 30%."

Jack blinked a few times after hearing it. The benefit of no longer needing to use any challenge point already saved him from a lengthy grinding process. Currently, his Order of Magi badge had 384 challenge points. He was ready to go a few rounds in the challenge arena after handing in the Eye of Illios quest. Now, he didn't need to worry about accumulating these points anymore, he could challenge the next stage anytime he wanted with this new title. Additionally, this title even made him stronger during the challenges.

"Tha—Thank you!" Jack stammered after being silent for a while.

Janus smiled. "It is the least I can do for our founder's successor," he said. "Do you want to continue your challenges now? You have become stronger to attempt the next stage, haven't you?"

"I do," Jack answered.

Janus nodded. He pointed to one side of the hall. Jack looked over and found a common-looking wooden door there.

'Was that door there before?' Jack thought.

"That door will take you to the challenge plaza. I wish you luck," Janus said. His attention returned to the Eye of Illios.

"Thank you again, Sir Janus," Jack said. Janus nodded without looking back.

Chapter 873: New Spells

When Jack walked out of the door, he found himself in the familiar plaza with the challenge obelisks.

"Ready to take on the next challenge stages?" He heard a voice from the side. He turned and found a smiling young Janus there.

Now that he saw this friendly beaming face again, he realized that the real Janus never smiled during their conversation. The man appeared somber and overly serious. Probably almost like the stoic old version who was in the Mage Academy. Jack wondered if the old Janus was what the real one would turn into when he became older. But why made copies that were different from his real age?

Jack decided to not bother about this question. He had many other things to worry about.

"Yes, I would like to take on challenge stage 59," he answered the smiling young Janus.

"This way, please," Janus took Jack to the obelisk with the floating number 59 on it.

While walking, Jack equipped the newly gained title, Honorary Magi. He then took out the Ghost Form technique book and learned it.

*

Ghost Form, level 1/20 (Active spell, requires magic weapon)

Become intangible. Cannot attack or be attacked. Cannot use any item or skill during activation.

Reduce speed by 50% during activation.

Duration: 10 seconds

Cooldown: 1 hour

Mana: 120

*

'This will now be my life-saving skill aside from Peniel's Invulnerability,' Jack thought.

"Good luck," Janus said. They had arrived before the obelisk containing challenge stage 59.

Jack thanked him and used his Order of Magi badge and activated the obelisk. The obelisk detected his Honorary Magi title and didn't absorb any challenge points from the badge. He was then pulled into the challenge stage. Inside, he faced two level 48 rare elites, fifteen level 49 special elites, and thirteen level 50 elites.

"Okay, let's settle this fast," Jack uttered. Each challenge stage used its own spell cooldown counter, it wasn't counted to his actual spells' cooldown. Let's say his Acceleration's cooldown was twenty minutes before he entered the stage. When he was inside, his Acceleration spell would not be on cooldown but was instead ready to be used right from the start. When he came out of the stage, the cooldown would be back to twenty minutes again, the same as before he entered the stage.

Therefore, he didn't need to worry about saving spells for the next stage. Because all his spells would be available again when he entered the other stages. This included his inherent skill which he had proven in the past to be available inside these challenge stages.

Hence, once he saw the thirty monsters coming at him, he didn't hesitate to cast Acceleration, Magic Field, and Myriad Venomous Vipers.

If the magic field triggered a double cast, the thirty vipers would pull all thirty monsters together. Otherwise, he would have half of them still roaming around. He had the vipers prioritize stronger monsters first. He then cast Perpetual Lightning Judgement. If the spell was cast twice, he would most likely kill every enemy except the rare elite. Then, he followed up with Lightning God Barrage. His Orb of Raijin increased all lightning damage, further amplifying the damage output.

With this method, he completed stage by stage at a dazzling speed. Even young Janus expressed that he was impressed.

He started to have difficulty after reaching stage 65. Inside, he faced four level 52 rare elites, eighteen level 54 special elites, and eight level 56 elites.

He continued to persevere and completed the stage at a much slower pace. Then he tried the next stage. It took him much effort to complete level 69. When he was done, he proceeded to try stage 70 and failed. Inside stage 70 was five level 55 rare elites, twenty level 57 special elites, and five level 60 elites.

He had fought more rare elites at a time when he was doing the endless-wave portal in Greed's sanctum. But in that portal, he was allowed to use all his skills, not only limited to magic spells. Hence, it was much more difficult achieving the same feat in these challenge stages.

Even so, he was glad about his achievement. After completing stage 60, his rank in the Order of Magi had increased to Adept. If only he had managed to clear stage 70 as well, his rank would have gone up another rank.

He remembered Gruff told him that in the League of Champions, he could challenge the same stage five times in a day to collect points, he asked Janus if it was the same here. Janus confirmed it was the same. Additionally, with the Honorary Magi title equipped, the limit was even doubled. So, he could challenge the same stage a limit of ten times a day. Thus, he went and did stage 69 another nine times.

After he was done, he collected 1,325 knowledge points from the stages. Added with the remaining knowledge points in his badge and from Janus' quest reward, he had a total of 7,436 knowledge points.

He happily asked to be shown the exchange list. With his new Adept rank, he had even more items that could be exchanged.

He spent 2,200 knowledge points to get the Glide spell and the Dispel spell he had seen on the list under the Apprentice rank previously. After that, he took a look at the Adept rank list. After a quick look, his attention was immediately occupied by one technique book on the list. Peniel agreed with the choice. Jack used 3,000 knowledge points and get the Teleportation spell technique book.

Although there were more interesting items available there, like magical equipment, ingredients, materials, summoning stones, more spells, etc. He didn't have that many knowledge points to spend. Under Peniel's suggestion, he finally took one more item from the Adept rank, a rune diagram.

*

Rune Diagram: Offensive Formula (Rare diagram, for guild purpose)

Application on guild's offensive structures or mechanical units: Increases damage dealt by the structures or units

Application in Scrollmaking Workshop: Allow the creation of magic scroll: Enhance Damage

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This rune diagram cost 1,200 knowledge points, slightly more expensive than the previous Protective Framework rune diagram that they got. Peniel informed Jack that this rune diagram could be said to give an opposite function from the protective framework. But one advantage of this Offensive Formula was the rune diagram could be applied to their mechanical units, such as the Ice Cannon Tanks and the Brave Golems, increasing those units' firepower. Of course, those units would have increased mana upkeep as well after applying the rune diagram.

"We have solved our gold upkeep problem, but now it seemed there was a mana upkeep problem to consider about," Jack said. "Is there a way to increase our guild's mana output other than Mana Cell, stealing others' resources, and mana cores donation?"

"There is a special facility that gives a better mana output compared to Mana Cell, but you will need a blueprint for that," Peniel answered.

"Do you know of a way to get one?" Jack asked.

Peniel shook her head. "Probably this faction might have its blueprint if you climb to a higher rank."

"Never mind then. If we get it, then we get it," Jack said. He swiped the exchange list back to the Apprentice rank again.

"You aren't done?" Peniel asked.

"I'm thinking about testing a theory," Jack said and pointed to a technique book on the list.

"Lightning Strike?" Peniel asked.

Jack nodded. "Compared to Elementalist, Archmage's offensive spells are rather limited. Maybe I can learn this Elementalist spell the way I learn the Perpetual Lightning Judgement."

"If you fail to learn it, you will have wasted 600 knowledge points for nothing," Peniel said.

"It's the cheapest lightning offensive spell on the list," Jack said.

Peniel shrugged. "It's your knowledge points," she said. "You can squander it as you like."

After a brief thought, Jack decided to get the spell. He spent the required points. His Order of Magi badge had only 436 knowledge points left.

After finishing with the exchanges, Jack proceeded to learn the three technique books he had first exchanged.

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Dispel, level: 1/20 (Active spell, required magic weapon)

Remove enhancement or spell buff from a target.

The chance of removal depends on spell level, caster's intelligence stat, and the number of runes used.

Range: 50 meters

Cooldown: 3 minutes

Mana: 140

*

Glide, level: 1/20 (Active spell, requires magic weapon)

Glide in any direction.

Altitude decreases at 0.5 meters each second.

Duration: 3 minutes

Cooldown: 10 minutes

Mana: 100

*

Teleportation, level: 1/20 (Active spell, requires magic weapon)

Instantly move to a distant position.

Range: 50 meters

Cooldown: 2 minutes

Mana: 160

*

As Peniel had informed before when they were solving the puzzle diagram that led to Greed's sanctum, the Dispel spell was unique as it could be cast with the option of either three, four, five, or six runes. The more runes it was cast with, the higher the chance for the dispel to be successful.

As for the Glide and Teleportation spell, they required four and five runes respectively.

Afterward, Jack took out the Lightning Strike technique book. When he tried to interact with the book, an interface appeared, asking if he wanted to learn the spell.

"My theory is right. I can truly learn it!" Jack exclaimed excitedly. He proceeded to do so without delay.

*

Lightning Strike, level 1/20 (Active spell, range, requires magic weapons)

Mark an area. Lightning will strike from the sky above, dealing 400% lightning damage.

30% chance to inflict Paralyze.

Range: 60 meters

Cooldown: 3 minutes

Mana: 100

Chapter 874: Fusing Spells

When Jack came out of the Order of Magi, it was midnight already. It was a bit late to go to Amy's bakery, he didn't want to disturb their sleep. So, he teleported back to Heavenly Citadel. He installed the Mana Gathering Stone in the Time Chamber before calling it a day and rest.

In the morning, everyone was gearing up to join the army outside the capital. John and Jeanny had left early, they were joining the army right from the start. John had planned for another march full of formation training. Since the number of outworlder army was much more than during the civil war, it would take much more effort in organizing. Luckily, most of the top guilds who were with them during the civil war already knew the drills. So, John spread them out among the outworlder army to help oversee the drills.

Some guilds that were on the opposite side during the civil war, like Corporate United, Jackal Crews, Warriors of Solidarity, and Death Associates, were joining their side this time. After all, there was only one side to join. They either joined or stayed out of the war, but staying out meant letting go of the glory and possible rewards.

Since Jack gave John the freedom to organize the turtle army as he saw fit, he arranged so that these four were positioned within the army as far away from each other as possible. Giving them less chance to group up and hence, less chance for them to get any idea and defy his orders.

It would take the three armies almost two weeks to arrive in the areas where the orc armies would be waiting. During that time, Jack planned to prepare as best as he could to improve himself.

Jack had given the Offensive Formula rune diagram to Tip and informed him of its function. Once this rune diagram was registered in the guild, the scrollmakers in the guild could apply it to their Ice Battle Tanks or the Ice and lightning towers defending the headquarters. Jack advised him to prioritize using it on the tanks first. Or better, the Brave Golems if they managed to produce any before the war engagement. The defensive towers were not usable in the war, so it's better to prioritize combat units first.

Afterward, Jack teleported back to Thereath. He first went to his bakery and restaurant to pick up the one-month revenue. He collected 270 gold coins. Amy expressed her concern when she saw Jack. If the orcs won, the orc army would invade the cities, the capital wouldn't be spared. Their civilian lives here would be affected.

Jack told her that he would do all he could to make sure that that didn't happen.

Amy stared at Jack as if she had just seen him the first time. The fact that Jack was appointed the leader of the third army was no secret. She expressed her amazement that she had never expected the outworlder she befriended a long time ago would one day be the big shot in the army.

Jack laughed and told her the feeling was mutual.

After leaving the bakery, Jack walked around the capital to scrounge up any ores and common equipment he could buy. He spent even more coins this time, totaling almost 200 gold coins just to fill up his stock.

Done with the shopping spree, he went to the mage academy. The old Janus was as usual sitting alone and reading a tome in the empty hall. The old mage put down his tome and looked at Jack but otherwise said nothing.

"I want to use the magic furnace facility," Jack said.

Old Janus nodded and said, "You know the way." He then resumed reading his book.

After getting permission, Jack went to the hallway that took him to the basement where the room with the magic furnace was located. Inside the room, he used a magic stone to activate the furnace. Then, he uttered, "Fuse function."

A different interface appeared before the furnace, showing a list of spells.

Peniel had mentioned that while two magic users could cast their different spells and combine them into an enhanced version, one magic user also had the option to fuse their library of spells using this magic furnace facility.

On the list in front of him were four spells. Float, Glide, Dispel, and Lightning Strike. Peniel had mentioned that the furnace would show only the spells that could be fused.

"Only four?" Jack asked. He was rather disappointed. He thought that he already had an extensive collection of spells.

"You might have a large number of spells, but many are standard spells. Only non-standard spells can be fused," Peniel explained. "Oh, and spells that have already been improved using seeds can no longer be fused. If your Mana Detonation has not been transformed into Ice Ring, it should come up on this list as well."

"So, this feature is only meant for people who had collected a large library of non-standard spells," Jack commented.

"Yes, now go and fuse that Float and Glide spell already," Peniel urged.

Jack picked the spells. While doing so, he asked, "What spells do I need to fuse for this Dispel and Lightning Strike?"

"Interrupt for the Dispel, Lightning Mine for Lightning Strike," Peniel answered.

"What do they do?" Jack asked out of curiosity. Peniel had informed him beforehand that once he fused the spells, the old spells were gone. So, after he fused the Float and Glide spells, those two spells would be lost, being replaced by one new spell.

When Jack first heard it, he was concerned because he had spent 19 skill points and max-level the Float spell to 20. If the new spell restarted from level 1, wouldn't the 19 skill points be wasted?

Peniel told him not to worry. The level and star upgrade would carry over.

Jack asked then what happened if he max-leveled both spells to 20? Would the fused spell become level 39?

Peniel said no, a spell's max level was level 20. A spell could only pass level 20 if it was a buff granted by equipment or other temporary means. For the fused spell, if the total level passes level 20, the excess level would have the skill points refunded. However, the star upgrade won't have any refund. If the fused spells both had ten stars, the fused spell would be the same at ten stars without any refund. In this case, the excess stars were wasted.

"Interrupt is a spell that can interrupt the enemy while the enemy was casting a spell," Peniel said, answering Jack's question. "As opposed to Dispel which dispel a buff from a spell that is already cast. After the two spells are fused, they will become a new spell called Cancel Magic. They can be used the same as Dispel and Interrupt, but at the same time, they can also nullify magic cast by the enemy, not just buff. I think the effect will be similar to when Mihos was canceling Selena's Flame Turbulence when you people were fighting him."

"As for Lightning Mine, after being cast, it will mark a very large area. If an enemy came into this area, the lightning orb at the center of the area will keep on assaulting that enemy with continuous electrical discharges."

Jack remembered the lightning orbs that Garland tossed around during his fight with Duke Alfredo, were those Lightning mines?

"If this Lightning Mine is fused with Lightning Strike, it will become Lightning Pursuit. The weakness of Lightning Strike is that it takes almost a second between when the ground is marked and the lightning striking the marked area. The marked area is not large, opponents with good awareness can easily leave this area even if they are not speedy type. Lightning Pursuit erased this weakness. The area the fused spell marked will be very large. The lightning strikes released will automatically chase after the opponents inside this area. Unless the opponents have a speed faster than the speed of lightning, no one will be able to dodge the lightning as long as they are within the area. Additionally, you have the enhanced projectile speed from Time Sage, so the speed of your lightning is three times that of normal. I can't imagine anyone fast enough to dodge that."

"Wow, both fused spells are good. I will have to look for those Interrupt and Lightning Mine spells," Jack remarked. "Do you think the Order of Magi's exchange list of the higher rank has those spells?"

"Can't tell for sure. I think they should," Peniel answered.

Jack was motivated to improve his rank further. But for that, he needed to become stronger.

After inputting the Float and Glide spell, the interface asked if he confirmed the fusing. The process couldn't be reversed afterward. He also couldn't relearn the Float and Glide spell even if he received another technique book of those spells.

Jack clicked confirm.

He saw some visual displays from the magic furnace. The display soon died down and a notification told him that his two spells had been successfully fused. Jack opened his spell list and looked at the new spell.

*

Soar (Active spell, requires a magic weapon)

Fly at a maximum speed of 2 meters/second + dexterity modifier.

Maximum height: 1,000 meters.

Duration: 5 minutes

Cooldown: 20 minutes

Mana: 100

*

"Soar? Not Fly?" Jack asked.

"Fly is another spell. It is only learnable when you are at least level 65," Peniel said. "You can see this as the weak version of the fly spell."

"Two meters per second was indeed weak. Heck! I can run much faster than that," Jack mocked.

"The speed will increase based on your dexterity stat and also when you level it up," Peniel said. "You didn't see Master fly at high speed when you fought him, did you?"

"You are saying Master was using this Soar spell as well?"

"Most likely. He is not yet level 65 to learn the Fly spell. Considering his knowledge, he should know about this fusing method as well."

Chapter 875: Improved Damage and Defense

Coming out of the Mage Academy, Jack went outside the capital and summoned Pandora. Most of the army had left by now, but their residue could still be felt. Jack couldn't imagine the sight of more than two million people gathering. It must have been glorious. He should have taken the time to take a look yesterday.

Some regiments were still around in the distance. These must have been the remains that were still making the last preparation before they chase after the marching army.

Jack rode Pandora and went to the back of Mount Thenias behind the capital. He soon arrived at the base of Blacksmith Circle. He came into the hall and called. He didn't just go in because he remembered they had traps along the entrance hallway. Plus, it would be rude to go in unannounced.

A human came out and asked what's his business. Jack announced his identity and said he wanted to meet with either Grenmir or Haestus.

The human said that Haestus wasn't at the base. He would inform Grenmir. He asked Jack to wait before disappearing back inside. Not long after, he came out with a familiar dwarf.

"Hey, impolite human, what brings you here?" Grenmir greeted.

"Good tidings, sir Grenmir," Jack replied, not baited by Grenmir's greeting. "I have a favor to ask."

"I see your diplomacy skill has improved since the last," Grenmir remarked with a grin. "So, what favor do you want to ask?"

"I believe you have a blacksmith facility equipped with unique-grade tools, correct? Do you mind if I use it? I can pay for rent if needed," Jack said.

"Hm... That facility is reserved for only members and paid with faction points," Grenmir said.

"Can't you make an exception, please...? I don't mind paying a large number of coins," Jack said. "I need to improve all my equipment before going to the frontline."

"Yeah, we heard about the incoming war, but we are impartial. We can't show ourselves to be in favor of any side."

"A favor to me then? Considering we are friends?" Jack said with a grin.

"What friends? You only spent a few days the last time you are here. We didn't even interact that much. Hm... But considering our faction had been doing good business with your guild, as well as your guild has been treating Kirsi well. All right, I will let you use the facility for 100 gold coins."

"So expensive?" Jack asked with surprise.

"Didn't you say you will be willing to pay a large number of coins?" Grenmir asked back.

"I didn't expect you are going to be that vicious..." Jack muttered.

"If you are not willing then forget it! Others will not even get the chance even if they offered me double the coins."

"I'm willing! I'm willing! Here are the coins, good Sir Grenmir," Jack took out one hundred gold coins.

Grenmir didn't immediately receive them. He lifted one of his brows while giving Jack a look before saying, "Sigh... Can't blame me for being someone who can't abandon a friend in need. I will accept these coins with a heavy heart. These coins are far from enough but I will explain to the higher-ups later why I have to go against the policy and let a non-member use one of our high-level facilities."

'Damn it! Didn't you deny that we are friends a moment ago?' Jack wanted to complain, but he maintained his smiling face and showed an appreciative expression. "Thank you, good Sir Grenmir. You are the best friend one can ask."

"You are not wrong," Grenmir said, laughing heartily. He pocketed the coins and invited Jack to follow him.

Without being instructed, Jack followed in his footsteps to avoid the traps.

"Oh, so you remember?" Grenmir asked.

"And I see you forgot to mention this from the start like before," Jack said back.

"I'm just testing your memory," Grenmir said.

Grenmir took Jack through the factory floor in the large cave hall before they arrived at one of the carved-out rooms. Grenmir gestured for Jack to enter. The cavern-like room only had one furnace,

unlike the room Jack used when he was attending Grenmir's lecture here. Jack used his Inspect and found out the blacksmith tools provided here were indeed of the unique grade.

"One hour. If you need this room longer, then it will be another one hundred gold coins every hour," Grenmir said.

"What? You never said it is only for one hour," Jack complained.

"Well, I forgot to mention it. Unfortunately, no refund," Grenmir said.

Jack, "*@\$#."

"Okay, I will leave you to it. I will come back again in one hour. You have better leave then or prepare another hundred gold coins. Oh, the tools here are bound. Don't you have any idea about taking them!"

"Do you think I'm that kind of person?"

"How can I know? I hardly know you to even call you a friend."

"*@\$#."

"All right, I will leave you to your work," Grenmir said and shut the door.

Since he only had one hour, Jack didn't waste time and immediately went to work. He had a large number of ores with him. He had also taken a large stock from the guild warehouse before he went to sleep last night. He went into the time chamber and fuse the warehouse's stock of ores into high-level ores. With the high-level ores from yesterday's fusing and the low-level ores he bought today, he had enough stock to attempt many level-ups for his equipment.

Even so, he preferred to reduce the failure chance further. He could use these ores to level up the guild's core member's equipment as well, after all. Hence, he tried his luck with the Blacksmith Circle here. The other place he knew that had unique-grade tools was the workshop inside the Village of Peace but he couldn't use the facility there anymore.

After working for a full hour, he leveled up his equipment to the highest level he could wear, which was level 66. He sacrificed a super rare one-handed sword for his Storm Breaker. At level 66, his Storm Breaker's base damage was 570. His level 66 unique-grade Mana Leech Staff enhanced by the Orb of Raijin had damage of 736. His level 66 Sword Fiend's Gear set improved his physical defense to 2127 while his magical defense was 1947.

After level 65, every level-up attempt needed nine iron ores, five steel ores, three copper ores, three silver ores, one gold ore, and one black iron ore. Gold ore and black iron ore were considered rare materials that normally only had a chance to be gained from mining rare-grade ore deposits. The chance was even slim, depending on the player's mining level.

The success chance of upgrading from level 65 to 66, even with Jack's basic master blacksmith and the unique-grade blacksmith tool, was only 15%. But luckily, Jack also had a super rare grade Runestone of Probability, added with his intermediate expert Runecraft skill, he could add around 50% to the success chance.

After he was done, he still had around half his stock of ores. He should be able to upgrade his friends' equipment by a few levels with this stock.

He thought about the expense of leveling up the equipment. Just by renting this room and buying the ores, he had burnt his one-month profit from the restaurant and bakery. The cost of leveling up the equipment was truly expensive.

However, he was considered lucky to be able to level up his equipment. Other players weren't able to even if they had more coins. Because the high-level ores were very hard to come by. From John's information network, he knew most of the higher-ups of the top guilds still had equipment below level 50, with most around level 40. Only Heavenly Citadel's core members had equipment over level 50 due to Jack's Transformation Prism.

He was glad he had followed Peniel's advice and use the Upgrade Cell to upgrade the Transformation Cube into Transformation Prism. Otherwise, he would have the same predicament as the other players.

With the improved damage and defense, he was ready for the next phase of his plan. He thanked Grenmir, who seemed to be rather disappointed that Jack didn't prolong the usage of the workshop by another hour. He used the Town Portal scroll and returned to Thereath.

Jack looked at the sky, it was near evening then.

'Looks like it is going to be midnight again by the time I am done,' Jack thought. He hailed a carriage and had it take him to the League of Champions' building.

He had not taken any challenge in this faction since before the challenge tournament. He now had 949 challenge points in his badge, he wanted to break through to a higher rank today and see what he could exchange from the list. He still had 1,735 glory points that could be exchanged.

First, he asked if Gruff was available. He hadn't met the old warrior after the civil war. He guessed he owed the guy an apology for Miller's demise. The receptionist said that Gruff was not in the building, but Gruff had instructed for someone to contact him if Jack came. The receptionist asked Jack to stay in the building until Gruff arrived.

'He is looking for me as well? Maybe want to berate me about Miller,' Jack thought.

He didn't plan to leave anytime soon. So, he told the receptionist to ask Gruff to come to find him at the challenge hall. He would be there taking the challenges.

Jack then went to the challenge hall. Without delay, he went to the wall with the roman numeral of fifty-one.

Chapter 876: Bonus Challenge Points

The setup of the League of Champion's challenge stages was the same as the Order of Magi. So, Jack already knew what to expect from the stages. Even though the monsters were different, the quantity and the grade of the monsters were the same.

Considering Jack was more accustomed to melee fights, he barreled through the stages with more ease. Additionally, his equipment had increased in level compared to yesterday, so the speed he completed each stage was also faster.

Before he knew it, he had burnt through 936 of his challenge points. When he came out of stage 66, he had only 13 challenge points left. He was confident he could complete higher stages, but he had no more challenge points to do it.

His rank was now Primus after passing stage 60. Since he didn't have any more challenge points to proceed, he figured he should just take a look at the exchange list to see what his 2671 glory points could get him.

As he turned and was about to leave this colosseum hall, he saw Gruff coming in from the entrance. The guy looked around before seeing Jack and coming over. Gruff was wearing a serious expression that Jack seldom saw on the old warrior's face.

'Uh... Maybe I should have visited and apologized about Miller right after the civil war,' Jack thought after seeing Gruff's expression.

When Gruff was near, Jack hurriedly spoke first before Gruff said anything. "I'm sorry! I know I should have come earlier to say something about Miller. You have sent him to assist me but I instead let him fall."

Gruff paused when he heard Jack. He then said, "His passing was very unfortunate indeed, but soldiers know that they can lose their lives any time on the battlefield. Miller was fully aware of this when he joined the military. It was nice of you to say what you said."

"Oh...," Jack said. He thought Gruff's grumpy look was about Miller. He was slightly lost now.

"Still, I have to give Bailey many benefits to appease her for her brother's downfall. If you feel so bad, maybe you can contribute some coins as well."

"Sure. How much do you... Hey, wait a minute... You are not swindling me for my coins, are you?"

The two stared at one another for a while, before Gruff finally said, "Well..."

"I'm not giving you a single coin!" Jack uttered.

Gruff laughed, but his expression abruptly turned serious again, as if remembering something. He said, "Look, I know you are heading to the frontline, right? Speaking of which, aren't you leading the third army? Why are you still here?"

"I will join them midway."

"What the heck kind of general are you?"

"The kind that can do whatever the hell I want."

"I seriously pity your troops. Well, anyway. I know the third army is heading to reclaim the Thesewal's region, right?"

The plan was to defend the area so the enemy didn't penetrate any deeper, but the end goal was still to drive out the Verremor army and free Theseval. So, Jack guessed Gruff was not wrong.

"What about it?" Jack asked.

"You remember Guss, don't you? The acting mayor of Theseval. I lost any contact with him after the occupation. I have no idea if he made it out or not. If you are heading there, I believe the remnant of Theseval's army will join you. Can you please keep an eye out for him and make sure he was all right?"

'So, he is worried about his brother,' Jack thought.

"Not a problem, I will keep an eye out for him," Jack said.

Gruff nodded with gratitude. He then looked at the wall where Jack had come from. "Stage 66? That's rather fast."

"I can still beat a higher stage. Hey! Speaking of which, can you give me a benefit where I can challenge the stage without needing challenge points? Like a title or something?"

"The hell are you talking about?"

Jack told him about his Honorary Magi title and the benefit of the title.

"Holy... You are messing with me, aren't you?" Gruff asked.

Jack equipped the title, removed his cloak, and ask Gruff to use inspect on him.

"My goodness! You are a Brave Swordsmaster?" Gruff uttered when he saw Jack's class while reading Jack's title. "You might have become the champion in their tournament, but I don't know you are that close to the Council of Virtus to be granted their special class. Since you are, you should have known about their fate, right?"

"Yes. I was there yesterday when Daminos Square Garden was destroyed. That's how I get this special class. I'm surprised the news traveled so fast."

"The base of a divine faction was destroyed, it will be strange if no one talks. Are you truly on site, kid? Tell me all about what happened!"

Jack recounted the incident.

"Fear's cult? The World Maker...?" Gruff mumbled.

"So? Anything like this Honorary Magi title that this faction can grant me?" Jack asked again.

Gruff looked at Jack's title description again before asking, "How do you get them to give you that title anyway?"

Jack told Gruff about his special class and how it was related to the order of Magi.

"I remember it was mentioned that the founder of the Order of Magi and League of Champions were brothers. Is the League of Champions' leader also one from the Council of Twenty-four?"

"The founder was, the current leader is not. Damn, kid, I just can't stop being amazed by you. Time Sage? I'm honestly speechless."

"So, from which elite class was the pinnacle special class that this faction's founder possessed?" Jack asked.

"The pinnacle class from Weapon Master, Weapon God," Gruff answered.

"Awesome! Do you know where the founder left his legacy?" If his grandfather could get this special class, then it would be perfect.

Gruff eyed Jack like he was looking at an idiot. "If I know, don't you think I will have gone and got the class for myself already?"

"I suppose that's true," Jack said, remembering Janus who had also expressed an interest in getting the Time Sage.

"Like his brother, our founder had hidden his legacy somewhere unknown. You are tremendously lucky to be able to get one of them."

"Luck is my middle name."

"Storm Luck Wind? that's one terrible name."

"Do you really have to take it so literally? Whatever, circling back to my request. Any way I can get leniency in attempting the challenges without using challenge points? I have run out of them already."

"Unless you get the Weapon God title, I doubt our leader will grant you the same privilege," Gruff said. "Though maybe you can try your luck with the Brave Swordmaster class... Our leader has a close relationship with the Council of Virtus. That's how we get the news so fast."

"Great. Take me to the leader then," Jack asked.

"You wish. Do you think anyone can meet our leader just like that?"

"Man... Then why do you bring up the relationship between the leader and the Council of Virtus? Just tell me I have no chance then."

"There is no chance you will get the benefit from our leader, but perhaps I can give you my personal help," Gruff said.

"You can? How?"

"By giving you my challenge points. Bring out your badge."

"You are willing? Wow! Thank you!" Jack said and took out his badge. But then he thought of something and retracted his hand. "Hey... What's in it for you? Are you going to ask me to do something fishy in return?"

"You have agreed to help look out for Guss. This is the least I can do. Glory points are precious to me, but I do not need so many challenge points. I am too lazy to repeat the same challenge stage just to get glory points, I can get the points some other way."

"Like betting or swindling others?" Jack teased.

Gruff rolled his eyes. "What I'm saying is, I have no problem sharing the challenge points. Seeing how impressive you are, I think getting your favor is a good investment. Just remember to help me back in the future."

"No worries. Despite your dubious nature, I consider you my friend. As long as I am able, I will always help my friend."

"What dubious nature. Seriously, kid," Gruff grumbled. "Hand me that badge."

Jack put his badge forward. Gruff touched his badge to Jack's. A stream of light flowed from his badge to Jack's. After the process was done, Jack found that his badge had 2,000 challenge points added.

"Wow, thank you!" Jack exclaimed.

"Go continue the stage. I am curious to see how far you can go with your current ability," Gruff said.

Jack nodded. He turned around and headed to the wall that had the roman numeral of sixty-seven carved on it.

After Jack disappeared into the wall, Gruff turned to look at stage 70 which was only three stages away. If Jack managed to beat that stage, Jack would be in the same rank as him, an Angusticlavian.

Chapter 877: Becoming Angusticlavian

Jack beat the stage one by one while Gruff waited outside. Jack was surprised that the old warrior didn't use his old trick and invited others for a bet. Without realizing it, Jack had come out of stage 69 and was standing before stage 70. He failed when challenging this stage in Order of Magi, but he had a feeling he could conquer the stage here.

Before he entered, he looked back at Gruff and asked, "You aren't going to invite your friends to bet whether I can pass this stage?"

"I did. Doesn't work anymore. They know you will most likely pass since I propose the bet, even if they have difficulty believing it."

"Oh...", Was Jack's only remark. He returned his attention to the stage wall and interacted with it. He disappeared soon.

Inside the stage, although the type of monster was different. The grade and quantity were the same as in the Order of Magi. Five level 55 rare elites, twenty level 57 special elites, and five level 60 elites. He felt some difficulties but they were still manageable. After some struggle, he completed the stage and came back out.

'Damn! The kid is now truly the same rank as me in this faction,' Gruff thought. He couldn't believe he had helped Jack enter this faction not that long ago. He would look for Dormu after this and brag about it.

Jack looked at the next stage, thought for a bit, and said, "I can still go on."

He went over and disappeared into the wall with stage 71. Gruff just looked in silence.

After some time, Jack reappeared again. Like before, he turned to the next stage and appeared to be contemplating. After a few seconds, Jack walked over and disappeared into stage 72.

"Damn," Gruff uttered.

Inside stage 72 were six level 56 rare elites, twenty level 59 special elites, and four level 64 elites. If Jack could access his magic class spells as well, this fight would be easier. One lucky thing was, he could summon his spirit weapon here. Spirit weapon was considered a skill from the Warrior branch, so it was allowed here despite it was not a skill from his original class.

The spirit weapon had been what allowed him to fare much better than when he was challenging the stages in the Order of Magi. Having one helper to take off the edge and drew the attention of multiple enemies did make the fight easier compared to when he fought completely alone.

Still, the battle was extremely taxing. There were times when he thought he would have failed. But with perseverance, he finally completed the stage. He felt completely exhausted when he came out of the stage.

Gruff was looking at stage 73, wondering if this lunatic would try it as well.

Jack didn't do so. He almost failed stage 72, trying stage 73 would just be wasting time. Gruff was slightly disappointed when Jack didn't proceed.

"I'm impressed, kid. So, are you done?" Gruff asked.

"Not yet. We are allowed five times to do the same stage in a day, aren't we?" Jack asked back.

"Yeah. You want to repeat stage 72?"

"No, the fight in that stage is too difficult. If I fail, I will have wasted my time. I will repeat stage 71."

"Well, in that case. I will leave you here. Don't forget what I said before!"

"Don't worry, I will look for Guss. Thanks again for the challenge points."

Gruff nodded and left.

Jack went and challenged stage 71 again. He did it another four times, using the allowable challenge limit. He still had plenty of challenge points after coming out. He thought about doing stage 70 another four times as well but decided against it. He figured it was rather late already. He was tired.

He checked his League of Champions Badge. He was now an Angusticlavian, the same rank as Gruff.

'Ah... he has left. Should have made fun of him about this when he was still around,' Jack thought.

In his badge, he still had 1,312 challenge points and the exchangeable glory points were 3,372. Jack went over to the exchange station and looked at the exchangeable list.

He got a list from two new ranks that could be exchanged, Primus and Angusticlavian. Multiple skills were shown there. The items from the Angusticlavian list were mostly 4,000 points and above, outside of his current available glory points, so he just skimmed through them. There were some summoning

crystals usable in a war for summoning a level 70 rare elite. The Twilight Champion Insignia that Gruff had given him. There was also a companion token for a level 60 special elite melee warrior.

Jack also saw the rare-grade exp pill that gave one million exp points. This pill cost 1,500 glory points. An affordable cost for him but he didn't exchange them. Jeanny had copied a few of these pills from the one he had gotten from Ice Throne Legacy Dungeon. Seeing this pill reminded him that Jeanny mentioned she had left a few for him in the headquarters. He needed to ask Tip when he got back to Heavenly Citadel.

He then looked at the Primus list. There was also an exp pill here, but the uncommon grade. Some summoning crystals were also available here, they summoned level 60 special elite. Jack didn't take them, though. He didn't think this would make any special impact on the war. It would just waste his glory points. Furthermore, Jeanny said that their guild and the allied guilds had secured a few summoning crystals that can be used during the war. Nothing as impressive as the Water Serpent Summoning Crystal that Jack got last time, but enough to go by.

So, Jack focused on his personal development. He ignored the weapons and materials on the list and looked only at the battle skills. But as he was browsing the skills, another item attracted his attention.

"Hey, a weapon orb!" Jack uttered.

*

Orb of Eurus (Rare-grade Weapon orb)

Increase weapon base damage by 10%.

Four wind energies constantly swirled around the weapon. Whenever the weapon made a contact, the wind energies will lash out and deal 50% wind damage.

*

It was two grades lower than the Orb of Raijin, but it was still the only other weapon orb he had encountered until now. He decided to just get the orb. Peniel didn't argue otherwise. The orb cost 2,500 glory points.

After getting the orb, he immediately installed it into the socket of Storm Breaker which he had etched beforehand. His sword's damage now increased to 627. Jack saw the green wind energies that were now swirling his Storm Breaker. These wind energies will react upon contact, meaning that even if opponents blocked or parried his attack, they would still be assaulted by these wind energies.

He didn't have many glory points left, so he decided to exit the place. When he came out, it was indeed past midnight already. He again teleported back to Heavenly Citadel to have a rest. He decided to spend another few days in the headquarters before chasing after the marching army. There was still something he needed to work on.

*

The next morning, he first dove into the Ice Throne Legacy dungeon and the Ancient Battleground Legacy dungeon.

In terms of exp, the Ice throne legacy dungeon provided a better income compared to the Ancient Battleground. Additionally, the Ice Throne Legacy dungeon also dropped souls while the Ancient Battleground didn't. The main draw from the Ancient Battleground was the mana cores earning, the rewards from its exchangeable list, and its extremely dense mana environment.

Jeanny had left a few core members to harvest the mana cores from the Ancient Battleground. This legacy dungeon had a longer cooldown compared to the Ice Throne Legacy dungeon. The easy mode of the Ancient Battleground was twelve hours. The medium mode was two days and the Hard mode was five days. The hard mode was too difficult for them so they didn't attempt it. Peniel estimated that for the hard mode, they needed a full group with an average level of 75 and fully decked out in super rare grade equipment to even have a chance of scoring decent scores.

Jack joined the group that did the medium mode of the two dungeons. He didn't waste his time with the Easy mode. From the Ancient Battleground, he kept the portion of the mana cores he received, while the other members' portions would be donated to the guild. He needed mana cores to summon his Ice Fiend Demon.

The exchangeable list from the medium mode Ancient Battleground was not as luxurious compared to when Jack did the ancient battleground in Council of Virtus. The best equipment exchangeable was only super rare grade. He guessed they would need to do the Hard mode to exchange for the unique grade equipment.

Since the scores couldn't be saved, Jack just exchanged them for a random super rare grade equipment.

For the rest of the day, he spent them inside the Time Chamber.

Chapter 878: Third Phase

Jack had sensed his Formless Flowing Sword style nearing its third phase for some time, but he just couldn't break through the barrier and enter this third phase. There was no flaw for him to correct. His execution had been flawless. But after countless attempts, he finally realized what was missing. It was mana manipulation.

The third phase was a martial art that required mana manipulation to perform, just as the proper one-word slash sword art. Jack never once skipped his daily training in mana manipulation. Although he was still not yet at the level of freely using it in a real fight, he had never stopped improving. He had brought down his margin of error when using mana manipulation in his standard weapon attack to around twenty to thirty percent. This meant every ten slashes, only two or three failed to have their damage boosted by mana manipulation.

Additionally, his mana manipulation was still weak if compared to masters like his grandfather or Wong. When those two hit an opponent with a standard attack fueled by mana manipulation. The damage they produced could be four times the damage by normal players. When they used a proper martial art technique like One-word Slash, for example, they could produce damage around ten times. Making the technique not lose to a high-level game skill. For a more powerful martial art, the produced damage could be even higher.

The advantage of using a martial art compared to a game skill was that it had no cooldown time, so one could spam its usage. The drawback was it caused fatigue if used repeatedly.

Jack understood the advantage. If he could master this mana manipulation, he could alternate between using martial arts and game skills. This could help him cover his weakness when his powerful game skills were on cooldown.

But at the moment, he was still training to reduce the failure rate of mana manipulation on standard attacks. When he could perform it fluently, then he would focus on strengthening it, bringing his mana manipulation to a level where it could do substantial damage.

In terms of simple martial art, like the One-word Slash, he could already perform it well as long as he was allowed the time to focus on his mana manipulation. The third phase of the Formless Flowing Sword style, however, required better control.

After touching the barrier of the third phase for so long, Jack felt that he already knew what he should do to execute it. He just needed to practice it. Now that the Time Chamber had Mana Gathering Stone installed, the mana in this chamber had become denser even when compared to Daminos Square Garden. The density was close enough to the mana environment inside Ancient Battleground. Hence, learning mana manipulation inside the Time Chamber had become even easier.

Jack sensed that the key to the Formless Flowing Sword style's third phase was to explode his mana. Gathering the mana into his two swords before exploding them, using the explosion as a force to propel his swords into a burst of uncountable attacks.

This caused Jack to remember a quote from an old famous anime show, "Burn your cosmos and make your inner universe explode, then your attacks will hit with all the power of the meteor."

Jack smiled amusingly upon thinking about it. He thought perhaps he should rename the burst attack of his sword art into Pegasus Meteor Slash.

Since he already got a reference on how to perform the third phase, it allowed him to better imagine the execution.

Still, it was easier said than done. It took him quite a few seconds to gather the mana. Then when Jack tried to explode the gathered mana, it went off with a puff instead of a bang. The resulting force was hardly enough to supply any energy for a high-speed attack. But he knew he was on the right path, so he continued to practice.

During the next few days, aside from doing the Ice Throne legacy dungeon and Ancient Battleground legacy dungeon, Jack spent his remaining time inside the Time Chamber. He even slept inside the chamber. Considering the time inside the Time Chamber was ten times normal, he spent a considerable time practicing inside.

Normally, the usage of this time chamber was limited because only a number of players could enter the chamber at any one time. They needed to regulate its usage so every core member had the chance to use it. Mostly it was utilized when the martial arts tutorial was in session. But right now, most of the core members had already left with the army. So, no one could complain about Jack's abuse of the chamber.

After three days, Jack had spent an equal of almost one month inside the chamber. He could already gather his mana in an instant. Yet, he was still having trouble exploding the gathered mana.

After so many failed attempts, Jack decided to stop and ponder. Perhaps he had been going at it wrongly. He had been willing the gathered mana to explode, but the force was never near enough. The created explosion was not truly what he could call an explosion. It was just the gathered mana spread out at a decently fast speed.

After pondering, he surmised that he shouldn't will the explosion to happen. Instead, he should cause the explosion to happen. For that, he went back to the physics of his old world. How did an explosion happen? There were three types of explosions. Nuclear, chemical, and physical. He was obviously not dealing with nuclear and chemical here. He was not even sure if an alchemical table existed in this world.

Hence, he focused on the physical explosion, which occurred when a content of a vessel was pressurized beyond its limit. The vessel will then burst and released a large amount of energy into a small volume of area in a short time.

Thinking about this concept, he had an idea of what he was supposed to do. He again gathered the mana into his two swords. This time, however, he didn't will the gathered mana to explode. Instead, he compressed them. He compressed them into as small an area as possible. He exerted all his willpower into compressing the mana. Sweat started to drop on his forehead as he did so.

He felt the mana fight back as they were forcefully pressured, but he continued to compress them. When he thought he couldn't compress the mana any further, he released the pressure. As he did, the compressed mana burst out.

The force was so strong it took him by surprise. He felt as if the air around his two hands had exploded. He was even knocked by the blasts and was disoriented by them. He wasn't ready for the energy outburst that he didn't swing his swords at all, much less perform his sword art.

"Damn!" He uttered. "This needs adjusting."

Despite the failure, Jack was hopeful because he thought he was on the right track. Thus, he repeated the process, trying to gauge the required level of explosion needed while applying the force to unleash his sword art's burst attack.

Another two days passed, which were weeks inside the chamber. At this time, he was standing still at the center of the vacant time chamber. He controlled his breathing and emptied his mind. He just let his senses do the work. After weeks of training, the sensation came to him naturally.

The gathered mana in his swords was squeezed and then at a point, Jack let go of his hold. Strong gusts of energy erupted from his two swords. As they happened, Jack's sword became a blur. Ninety-six sword lights crisscrossed around him.

The sword lights traveled at almost the speed of light. Furthermore, each of these sword lights carried power stronger than normal slashes. Mana followed these slashes. Jack was sure that if these slashes hit, the enemy won't just suffer standard damage. Added with the combo multiplier, this attack was devastating.

"You seem to be able to do it fluently now," Peniel commented.

Jack nodded. "Still, this move required a great control on mana. It is very exhausting. I can't do it too often."

"Your mana manipulation has also greatly improved from all this training."

"Yeah, I have a feeling the margin of error has now decreased to just one blank out of ten slashes with my swords. I think I can safely use it in a real fight now."

"So, do you want to leave now? The army should have been halfway to their destination by now," Peniel asked.

"Yes, it's about time I join them," Jack said.

Jack stepped out of the time chamber and went to the Guild Hall.

"Are you ready to leave now?" Tip asked when he saw Jack enter. "I heard from Jeanny that commander Armstrong and Commander Ahab will be separating with the main army. They will be rushing to the two forts. The scouts mentioned the orc army had also been mobilizing to head to the two forts."

"Yes, I will be leaving. I will leave the guild in your good hands," Jack said, then added when he noticed Captain Whitebeard, "and paws."

"Good luck!" Both Tip and Whitebeard said.

Chapter 879: Chasing the Marching Army

During the time Jack spent in Heavenly Citadel, the Ice Throne legacy dungeon and Ancient Battleground legacy dungeon had netted Jack decent exp points. Additionally, Tip had given Jack some exp pills which Jeanny had left behind. With the exp from those sources, Jack's every class had increased by one level. His Brave Swordsman was now level 57, while his Time Sage and Beastmaster were level 56.

After these level-ups, all his stats were above 1,000 points.

During Jack's foray into the Ice Throne legacy dungeon, he was lucky enough to get a drop of one bottle of Thousand-year Wine. Jeanny had made a few copies of the wine but she gave them to the other core members. The arrangement was every core member should get at least one bottle first before the same person could get a second one.

Jack had no problem with her arrangement. He thought Jeanny was already selfless enough to spread the wines instead of hoarding them herself. Additionally, his luck was high enough that he could get one if he continued to do the Ice Throne legacy dungeon.

On the day he left Heavenly Citadel, he originally still had two days before he gained another one-month age. After drinking the Thousand-year Wine, he gained a free half month and his age immediately increased to age 13.

His race skill, Limitless Potential, increased to rank 9. It now increased his HP by 2200, Stamina and MP by 250, and all attributes except luck were increased by 9 points.

His lowest attributes at the moment were Endurance and Wisdom. They were at 1013 and 1012 points respectively. He had 12 free attribute points from four level-ups. He decided to invest them into his Wisdom stat again. His armors already gave him good defense against physical damage. He wanted to balance it with sufficient Wisdom stat so he was not weak against magic damage.

As for his free skill points, he had 6, 3, and 13 for Brave Swordsmaster, Time Sage, and Beastmaster respectively.

He didn't have any new skills for the Beastmaster class yet, so the 13 free skill points were not usable. He was probably the only one to have excess free skill points without being able to spend them on available skills. He realized now that he probably shouldn't have used the souls from Container of Souls to increase any of the Beastmaster's skills in the past. But what's done was done, there was no use regretting it. At least now if he gained a Beastmaster's skill or Beastmaster's special class, he could immediately level it up substantially.

As for his container of souls, he hadn't used any of the souls since he departed to Valley of Tempus for the Time Sage's trial. He had saved up a good number of souls since then. Too bad the portals inside Greed's sanctum where he spent a large chunk of his time didn't provide any soul point. Many of the souls in his Container of Souls came from the time when he was present during the destruction of the Council of Virtus.

It was not comparable to the souls he gained during the civil war, however, because Jack mostly avoided the battle between the high-level individuals at that time. He needed to be within a certain range for the Container of Souls to absorb the souls of the departed.

Added with the time he spent inside the Ice Throne legacy dungeon, he had amassed 1,268,921 souls.

He first used 100,000 souls and 3 Time Sage's free skill points to max-level Acceleration spell. The spell could now affect five targets and its duration was now thirty seconds. If Jack used this spell on himself, the thirty seconds in the normal time flow would be two and a half minutes from Jack's perspective.

Jack then spent 6 of the Brave Swordsmaster's free skill points on Brave Slash, increasing it to level 7. Each level-up increased the produced damage by another 50%. At level 7, the slash dealt 1300% light damage.

As for the remaining soul points, he spent 1,100,000 souls to level up his Perpetual Lightning Judgement to level 12. The level-up increased the damage and the number of lightning produced by the spell. This spell didn't indicate the percentage of damage dealt because the damage was proportional to the lightning element absorbed from the environment.

Several of his skills had also upgraded their star proficiencies. When he was training his sword art inside the Time Chamber, he couldn't just train the Formless Flowing Sword style non-stop. Each attempt in the burst assault caused him to fatigue. Hence, he had to rest in between.

As he rested, he trained his game skills. The guild had a facility that helped in improving game skills proficiency, the First-rate Training Ground, the upgraded facility Jack had gotten from Greed's reward. This Training Ground increased the proficiency of each skill usage by four times.

Of course, for skills that had a short duration, it was still more effective to use the Time Chamber instead of the Training Ground. The Time Chamber allowed the time inside to be ten times the time outside. For example, if using a skill with ten seconds cooldown time, like Flash Step, for example. When Jack performed the skill for ten minutes inside the time chamber, he could do it sixty times, which was sixty proficiency points. This ten minutes inside the chamber was one minute outside the chamber.

Using the same skill in the First-rate Training Ground for one minute, allowed him to do it six times. Multiplying the proficiencies by four due to the training ground's special effect, gave the user twenty-four proficiency points. This was less than when one used the Time Chamber.

Even if so, the First-rate Training Ground was still useful because it was large and hence could accommodate a large number of members. As opposed to Time Chamber which had limited space hence it was only reserved for core members.

And Jack actually utilized both during his stay. For skills that had a long cooldown, for example, his Beast Form which had a six hours cooldown. Once these skills were off cooldown, he ran out from the Time Chamber and went into the Training Ground. Unleashed all those skills before running back and re-entering the Time Chamber.

This act confused the common members who were using the Training Ground. Jack just appeared every 36 minutes, spam his big skills, and then exited again.

From this clockwork activity, plenty of Jack's skills received star upgrades. Some that received their first star were Asura, Spirit Weapon, Hundred Shadow Strikes, Combination Assault, Tracing Beams, and Acceleration.

Asura's one star increased the damage boost during Asura state by 8%. All of his melee damage now got a 28% boost when he activated Asura. If Asura was fully upgraded to ten stars, the damage boost would be 100%.

One star on Spirit Weapon increased its power and HP by 10%, making it more durable.

Each star on Hundred Shadow Strikes increased its critical chance by 4% & cursed chance by 2%. A fully upgraded Hundred Shadow Strikes had a 50% chance for both critical and cursed chances.

Each star of Combination Assault increased the chance to inflict dizzy and fear by 2%, reduce the target's defense by an additional 2%, and increased the range by 1 meter.

The Tracing Beams' star upgrade increased the beams' knockback power and speed of the beams. Since his Time Sage's passive effect already increased the beams' speed, this star upgrade made the beams even faster.

As for Acceleration, each star increased the target's speed by an additional 50%. Previously, the spell caused a target to be five times faster, now it was 550%. With full ten stars, the spell's targets would move at ten times their normal speed!

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Jack teleported to a small town closest to where the third army was. He had gotten the latest coordinates from Jeanny. With Pandora, it took him less than half a day to reach the marching army.

The sight of half a million army was indeed impressive. The field was simply blanketed by people. Jack took in the sight for a few moments before he rushed to the front of the troops.

The fire trail from Pandora was eye-catching. Everyone noticed his approach.

As Jack had Pandora galloped along the front side of the army, he soon saw someone waving. It was Jeanny. He immediately headed over. John and the others were there as well.

"Did you manage to complete what you needed to do?" Jeanny asked.

"Yeah," Jack said. He then looked at his grandfather who was there as well. He jumped from Pandora as he shouted, "Gramps, take a look at this!"

Ninety-six sword lights interweaved as he swung his two swords. The sword lights that hit the ground created deep gashes.

"Splendid! You have reached the third phase." Jack was expecting Domon's praise but instead, it was Jet who gave the compliment.

Domon simply gave an approving look and said, "Good job, but your slashes are all over the place. You should give it more control so you can better direct the slashes' paths."

Jack was dejected. Partly because the fatigue set in after he performed the third phase burst attack of his sword art, and the rest was because his grandfather still criticized him despite his improvement.

Chapter 880: Joining the Marching Army

"Can't you just be happy for his success?" Jet admonished Domon.

"I am happy," Domon said.

"Then you should learn to express it better," Jet said before turning to Jack. "Jack boy, where is Grace? I thought she was with you?"

"We got separated during our journey. I have been trying to contact her as well but am unable to," Jack replied.

"Damn it, Jack boy. You can't seriously lose your girlfriend on your first date, can you? What kind of boyfriend are you?"

"I have no time to entertain you. Jeanny, which direction did Armstrong and Ahab take?" Jack asked.

Jeanny pointed in a direction and said, "Will you be chasing after them?"

"Yeah. I heard Verremor has also sent a part of their force to rush to the forts. I want to use my Runestone of Marching to make sure Armstrong and Ahab arrived first."

"The army to strike the supply line will be breaking away soon. They need to take a very long roundabout route to avoid detection. Aren't you supposed to lead them?"

"John can take over for the moment. I will join after making sure the forts are okay. My steed can easily catch up."

"I swear... If only there is another candidate to choose for a general," John muttered.

"Stop whining," Jack chided. He then asked, "The sneaking to where the supply line is, will take more than a week, correct?"

"We will move slowly to avoid detection but once we enter the Fulgur region, we will go at full speed. It will be almost impossible to avoid detection by then. So, to answer your question, yes, it will most likely take more than one week."

"So, it will be enough time for the guild army summoning crystal to refresh its one-week cooldown, right?"

John eyed Jack with narrow eyes upon the question. "What do you want it for? I thought you prefer to be in the battle rather than commanding an army from behind?"

"The controlling is optional, isn't it? The army will attack by itself as long as there are hostiles nearby, won't it?"

"But you still need to stand near the commanding platform. If you move away, the platform will vanish and the guild army is unsummoned."

"I just need to stand next to it. I don't need to touch it or anything, do I?"

John had a realization. "Oh, I see what you are getting at. But why do you want it? Do you think you will get into a battle at the pass? Aren't you leaving the fort once you bring the army there?"

"Just for precaution. I heard the Verremor army is rushing to take the pass as well. Their force and ours might arrive at the same time."

"All right, here," John passed the crystal to Jack. "But don't you lose our troops! It's not easy training them."

"Don't worry, I know what to do," Jack replied.

"While you are at it. I have other things I need you to do." John transferred something to Jack's inventory. He then told Jack what to do with them.

After they were done, Jack said, "Okay, I'm off!"

"Wait! I will be going with you," Paytowin said.

"Don't you say you want to join the army that goes after the supply line? Do you change your mind?" Jack asked.

"No, I will also follow you to that army when you left the fort."

"You do know I won't slow down for you, don't you?"

"I know," Paytowin said and blew a whistle. A torrent of air converged and with it materialized a majestic horse with a pair of feathery wings.

"Holy shit...! A pegasus! You also have one?" Jack uttered. Pandora huffed when the winged horse appeared, as if displeased at the sight of a rival.

"Yeah, the divine priest... I mean, his residual spirit gave me this steed. To help me better traversed the world or flee if needed," Paytowin answered.

"Damn! I guess you are truly living up to your alias now, eh?" Jack remarked.

"Are you two pay-to-win characters about to leave? Just go already, you people are eyesores to everyone here," John said.

"You are the eyesore. Ok, George, let's go!" Jack said.

The two then galloped away, Jack left a blazing trail on the ground while Paytowin took to the sky. The Pegasus speed didn't fall behind the Nightmare. The others just look at the two who went away at a rapid speed, wondering when they would get a steed as cool as those two.

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With unique grade steeds, the two took only several hours before another mass of soldiers was seen in the distance. As the two approached, horns were sounded to let the leaders of this army aware of their approach. Jack went to the front of the army. He spotted Armstrong, Ahab, Salem, and Duchess Isabelle soon.

He came before them. As he did, Armstrong ordered a halt.

"Attention!" He shouted. Everyone gave a military salute.

Jack was taken aback. It took him a second before he remembered that he was supposed to be the general.

'Aren't you supposed to say something?' Paytowin sent Jack a silent message as he landed by Jack's side.

'I think so, but my mind is blank about what to say,' Jack replied. To which Paytowin rolled his eyes.

'Your mind is blank but you can still send me a reply?'

Jack recovered his poise. He then tried his best to assume a look that projected authority. He then spoke with a clear voice, "I came before you today, not as an outsider or an outworlder. I am here before you as part of this Themisphere kingdom. With a resolve to live and die amongst you all. To lay down for this kingdom. We will drive out the invading enemies from our kingdom. We will do so and we will not rest until every single enemy is expelled from this kingdom. For our freedom, for our honor, for Themisphere...!!"

"For Themisphere...!!!" Commander Armstrong shouted, followed by the other soldiers. Soon, a rallying war cry echoed throughout the army.

'Do you think those at the back of the army hear your speech? Or are they just going through the motions?' Paytowin sent Jack a message.

'Shut up,' Jack sent a reply.

Paytowin chuckled. 'Joke aside, I am impressed. Do you truly just think of that speech on the spot?'

'I don't know. I probably am saying something that I have heard or read in the past. I'm not sure. Didn't you say I have to say something?'

'Yeah, but my thought is something akin to a simple hello. But hey, yours is much better. You are starting to act like a real general, at least.'

'What do you mean at least? Not talking to you anymore.' Jack resumed addressing the army after the war cries died down. "Everyone, I am sure you have heard that a portion of the Verremor army had also been marching to the forts. The current soldiers manning the fort won't be enough to defend the forts. Hence, we have to proceed with haste."

Jack summoned his Runestone of March. "We will march with haste and we will not stop for anything. We will only spare four hours to sleep. The rest of the time we will march. We will not even stop for a meal. We will eat during our march. Now, everyone, forward...!!"

"Forward...!!" Armstrong again echoed the command. Jack was glad, the lord commander didn't seem to mind having him as a superior. He was even rather supportive in Jack's opinion.

The army resumed its march. Everyone could feel their movement speed was faster than before. It was all due to Jack's Runestone of Marching.

Jack didn't form vanguard troops and went ahead to clear obstacles anymore. If he did that, his runestone's effect would only affect the vanguard troops. The army needed to be together to be considered under his lead, hence Jack let go of the chance for another exp farming. Most of the monsters ran away after seeing such a large army come their way.

With the help of the runestone and minimal hours of rest, they covered a large distance in a short time. None of the soldiers complained. They all knew the importance of haste in this march. They were also very disciplined. The only one complaining was Paytowin, he was still sleepy when the army began their march again in the morning. He ended up falling asleep on the back of his steed. Luckily, outworlders riding their own steeds couldn't fall unless they consciously wanted to dismount.

Jack was grumbling when he saw Paytowin dozing off at the back of Pegasus. "He still dares to complain," Jack grumbled. Jack himself was sleepy, but unlike Paytowin, he couldn't sleep during the march. Firstly, he had to stay conscious to activate his Runestone of Marching. Secondly, it was unseemly for the general to sleep during the march while the others were awake. So, he forced himself to look spirited. He was the one who proposed the four-hour sleep rule, after all. It would be a shame if he was the one that looked to be struggling with the lack of sleep.

Enduring the tiring journey, they finally arrived at the edge of Slaughterer Plains after three days of march. There, Ahab and Salem went away with a part of the army to defend the Themisphylae pass. That pass was another half-day journey away, but it had a better defense. Even if Verremor troops arrived first, the pass won't fall easily.

Jack, Paytowin, Armstrong, and Duchess Isabelle marched deeper into the Slaughter Plains. After around one hour of march, the fortress came into view. It was much larger than Fort Garadhor. The wall was taller, it also looked more durable. Six towers were positioned around the wall. Each of these towers had a glowing orb on top of them.

"I assume those towers help with the defense, right?" Jack asked Peniel, to which the fairy confirmed.

"Those towers dealt magic damage to incoming enemies."

There was not yet the sign of an orc army. Jack heaved a relieved sigh. They had arrived earlier. All the suffering due to lack of sleep had paid off.