

World 951

Chapter 951: Laying Eyes on the Dragon Turtle

Above the Grey Jewel, John was sitting while sorting the items Bowler had shopped for him. The other players were either practicing martial arts, training game skills, or in the water grinding for exp.

The aquatic monsters in the water nearby the ship were around level 35 to 45 basic or elite grades. Though these monsters were at higher levels compared to the monster near Thepuergua's port, they were considered weak already by the current players. But they kept on spawning so they still supplied a decent number of exp points.

John formed a party with one of the groups grinding beside the ship, so he received exp points despite doing nothing on the ship. No one dared to complain about his abuse of authority. But he did send his avatar and summoned creatures to go down into the water to help the group, so people could not complain that he was entirely idle.

"I have been wondering, why do you need this item?" Bowler asked. He also stayed on the ship instead of going down into the water.

John was holding the item Bowler was asking about. It was called Underwater Communication Potion. It allowed the consumer to talk underwater as if they were talking on land. Bowler was asking because this potion seemed unneeded since players could just communicate underwater using their messaging systems.

"This is not for us to talk to each other," John replied.

"Huh? Who else would we be talking to down there? Or do you want to try talking with the Dragon Turtle? Excuse me, Mom turtle, can you please let us tame your offspring and take it away?"

"This is not something you need to worry about," John said and shooed Bowler away.

John then checked the next item. It was magic scrolls. All contained the same spell, Underwater Propeller. The spell gave the user high mobility over water just like its real-life counterpart. But upon using this scroll, the user would slightly lose maneuverability. They would continuously be pushed to travel in one direction at a fast speed. The best they could do is just changed direction a little bit while being propelled. These scrolls were to be used when they needed to reach a destination fast while underwater. The spell lasted for ten minutes.

For Underwater Vision Potions and Underwater Propeller Scrolls, he had more than enough for all one hundred members for several days' usage. As for the Underwater Communication Potions, he didn't stock many. Only five bottles for his personal use.

After finishing sorting the items, he went into meditation. A portion of his mind practiced mana sense and mana manipulation while the other portion paid attention to his minion's battle underwater.

It was almost night before Hideout came back to the ship. He informed John about the terrain he had seen and roughly drew the information on a large piece of paper that had been prepared by John.

He hadn't covered all the ground. The place was too large and he was not exactly free to roam around as he wished down there. Like Life Runner, he still had to avoid monsters otherwise his Hide skill would be deactivated. Unlike Life Runner, he didn't wear a God-eye monocle, so he moved more cautiously.

He got as close as possible to the Merfolk's territory but not too close. He could already see some of them swimming about, patrolling their territory. Their colony was composed of lots of giant shells scattered around complicated rock formations on the sea bed. He figured these giant shells were these merfolk's houses.

He didn't try to go into the colony because John warned him not to. Peniel had informed John that a minor race's settlement despite having no wall like the main race's cities, might still have enchantments that warned the dwellers of trespassers. The invisibility from Hideout's Hide skill might even get dispelled.

"Only such a small portion?" John asked.

"It's not exactly easy moving down there," Hideout explained.

"At this rate, we might need four to five days to plot out the full outline of Merfolk's border facing this rock," John said.

"I will try to hasten the pace tomorrow," Hideout said apologetically.

"No. Prioritize safety," John said. "It will push our timetable back even more if you get killed and we have to go back to fetch you again. We will start our operation once we have a clearer picture of what was down there."

An hour later, Life Runner also returned to the ship. He informed John about his findings. The most likely entrance into the Dragon Turtle's Lair was the huge cave he found, but he had not explored that cave yet. He decided to do that tomorrow. He continued circling all the caves around the underwater mountain, he didn't enter all of them though. After finishing making the round, only one cave with a large enough opening for the Dragon Turtle monster.

John commended both Life Runner and hideout for doing a good job. He asked them to take a rest and went back into the water again at first light tomorrow. He also gave each of them another bottle of Underwater Vision Potion.

*

The next day, everything proceeded the same as the day before.

Life Runner returned earlier than Hideout this time, and he informed John that he had laid eyes on the Dragon Turtle. He was lucky that he had the God-eye monocle. Otherwise, he might have gotten close to the creature without realizing it.

When he entered the giant cave, he noticed several red dots inside. But since the tunnel inside that cave was very large, he had no problem staying away from those monsters and maintained his Hide skill.

Once he went a bit deeper, a large dark red dot appeared on his radar. That's when he knew he was in the right direction. The cave split several times in different paths, but with the large red dot on his radar

as a reference point, he had a general idea of which path to take. He didn't forget to carve a sign on the wall or the floor to mark his way back.

After a long venture into the bowel of the mountain, he finally came near the large red dot. He was at the entrance to an immensely large underwater cave hall. At the center of the hall was a large rock surrounded by a huge lava pool. He was amazed seeing that lava pool, no wonder the water felt much warmer inside here compared to outside. He was not even sure if such a phenomenon was possible in the real world.

Life Runner stayed at the entrance to the cave hall. He was afraid if he went inside, the Dragon Turtle might notice his presence. He looked at his radar and noticed that the position of the lava pool was where the large red dot was. He looked above at the ceiling, half expecting the dragon turtle to stick to the ceiling like a gecko, but there were only stalactites there. Nothing that looked remotely like a turtle.

He looked at the lava pool again. 'The turtle can't be swimming inside that lava pool, can it?' He thought.

As he paid attention to the lava pool, the large rock at the center of the lava pool fidgeted.

Life Runner's sight was glued to the rock, trying to make sure that it was not his imagination. But after taking a better look, he realized the rock at the center of the lava pool was not actually a rock. It was a shell! At first glance, the shell appeared to look like an irregular-shaped rock with many sharp protrusions. Now after knowing it was a shell, he could see that the sharp protrusions were large scales shaped into dorsal ridges. Nine such dorsal ridges lined the shell.

Life Runner stayed still and watched in fascination. He didn't know how long he stared at the shell. He was awake again when the shell rose from the lava pool. He then realized the shell he had seen was only half of the entire shell.

As the large shell rose, the large head of the creature came out of the lava pool. Its head resembled a cross between a turtle and a dragon. It had a flat curved-down beak like a common turtle. At the top of its head were four straight horns pointing backward, two large ones on top and two smaller ones on the sides.

It had a thick and long neck that it used to survey its surrounding.

'Did it sense me?' Life Runner thought anxiously. The distance between him and the dragon turtle was outside the normal monster's field of perception, but maybe this turtle had a larger area of perception. Life Runner was struggling with the decision of whether to bolt or continued staying still.

Even though Life Runner saw the turtle turn its head around to survey its surrounding, its sight never went in his direction, so he decided to continue staying still. After a while, the dragon turtle stopped inspecting its surroundings. It lifted one of its massive legs from the lava pool and then pulled its remaining body up.

After coming out of the lava pool, it started swimming around the cave hall. Its large webbed feet had four large claws. Its tail was thick and long and ended with fins. His swimming was rather fast for its large body.

After swimming for a bit, it finally landed at the opposite end from where Life Runner was. Once the dragon turtle stopped there, he noticed that there were other beings inside that hall aside from the large turtle.

It was a much smaller version of the dragon turtle. Its offspring, their target! But that was not the only thing there. Near the small dragon turtle, there were several orbs of gel-like liquid. Inside these orbs were merfolk who seemed to be unable to move freely.

Chapter 952: Visiting the Merfolk

"Trapped merfolk? Are you sure?" John asked after hearing Life Runner's report.

"Yeah. I got the Ancient Eagle Spirit bloodline as well. I used the Eagle Eye skill to zoom in on them," Life Runner answered. "Well, I kind of regretted it after, because I saw something disturbing."

"What thing?"

"The dragon turtle plucked a merfolk from one of those gel orbs and then feed it to its kid."

"Feed...?"

"Not the chomping kind of feeding, mind you. I was thankful for that. It seemed more like the small dragon turtle was absorbing the merfolk. The merfolk was enveloped by a shroud of light before he turned into a particle of light and went into the dragon turtle's mouth. Probably the game mechanic to make it less gory. But still disturbing, nevertheless, because the merfolk was just a kid."

"A kid?"

"Yeah. Actually, all those merfolk trapped inside those orbs are kids except for one who is a male adult and dressed like a warrior."

"Hm..."

"I'm thinking. While we go to capture that small dragon turtle, can we also free those... Why are you grinning?" Life Runner asked after seeing John's expression.

"Because this is better than I expected," John answered.

"How is this better?" Life Runner asked, confused.

"Because in my original plan, I want to pit that adult dragon turtle against the merfolk. But doing this has the drawback of earning their ire. It will cut off all relationships that our guild might have with that minor race in the future. But now, we can still pit them with the dragon turtle. But instead of earning their ire, it will be gratitude instead."

"How do we do that?"

"You just leave that to me. Do you manage to get the level and grade of the adult dragon turtle?"

"I managed to do it when it was swimming slightly close to me. I thought for a second there that it might sense me despite my invisibility. Luckily, it didn't," Life Runner informed. "As for the Dragon Turtle, it is a level 80 Mythical monster."

'Hm, a bit higher level than I expect,' John thought. He said to Life Runner, "Tomorrow, you go down again and continue your scouting."

"Scout for what? Ain't I already find the lair and our target?" Life Runner asked.

"You mentioned that there are some smaller caves, right? One of them might be a side door into that cave hall with the dragon turtle. Do you see any other entrances into that cave hall?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe? I didn't dare to go inside the cave hall to check, the dragon turtle might notice me."

"Then try to enter those small caves and check. We need to have as many options as possible before we take action."

"There are monsters inside some of those caves. I'm not confident I can take care of them."

"I will send a small squad following you starting tomorrow. From the information you gathered, there shouldn't be any troublesome monsters down there except for the Dragon Turtle. They will take care of the monsters in the smaller caves."

"When will we take action?" Life Runner asked. He was thinking about the merfolk kids trapped in the gel orbs. The adult dragon turtle had gone back to rest in the lava pool after feeding its kid one time. So, the rest should be fine for some time. But if they took too long, those merfolk kids might be gone already by the time they took action.

"Once I got a full picture from yours and Hideout's scouting," John replied. When he saw that Life Runner was slightly unsatisfied with the answer, he added, "I estimate another two or three days top."

Life Runner nodded. He guessed this was the best he could get.

Not long after, Hideout came out of the water. He added more drawings to the map, showing more of the terrain down there around this place until the merfolk's territory. The largely blank map was slowly getting filled up.

*

In the next two days, they continued the same activities. With the exception where a small squad of players followed Life Runner into the water. Since the group was not invisible, they were easy to be spotted by monsters. It was not a problem to take out those monsters, though. It just took longer time to reach the bottom than Life Runner used to do in previous days.

After arriving at the bottom of the gulf, Life Runner guided them to one of the smaller caves which were infested by monsters according to the God-eye monocle he wore. The group went inside and exterminate the monsters. The monsters were not at higher levels than the monsters they encountered outside the caves.

After checking that there were no more red dots further in, Life Runner asked the others to wait while he activated his Hide and went in to investigate.

After two days of searching, Life Runner had found three alternative entrances from the smaller caves. One of them even brought them close to the back of the cave hall where the baby dragon turtle and the captive merfolk were located.

When Life Runner peeked out from that entrance, he found that two more young merfolk were missing compared to two days ago. He assumed this meant the baby dragon turtle was fed the merfolk once a day. He felt bad about those young merfolk but he couldn't do anything by himself. He could only wait until John decided to act.

By the end of the fourth day after they arrived at Demon Tooth Rock, the map showing the terrain underneath their location was mostly completed. Life Runner had also surveyed most of the small caves. John decided the scouting part was enough.

He called Hideout and formed a team with him and several other players. Will, Billy, and Rough Criminal were on the team as well. He wanted to go down into the water now.

"Now?" Hideout asked. He had just come back and completed the map. The sky was starting to get dark already. "Why not wait until tomorrow?" He asked.

"Yeah. If we can do it tomorrow, why do we have to do it today?" Will asked. Everyone ignored his nonsensical wisdom.

"If we do this now, we should be able to carry out our capture operation tomorrow," John answered Hideout. "Let's go! We are burning daylight!"

"Uh... The daylight has gone already...", Everyone complained, but they still followed John's instructions.

The team consisted of ten players, with Jet and Bowler also joining. The ten soon jumped into the water. Hideout led the way as they fought monsters that came their way.

"Have you ever interacted with the merfolk?" John asked Will, Billy, and Rough Criminal via messages.

"No. We avoided them after receiving news about players getting killed for trespassing their territory," Billy answered.

"I have. I got chased away," Will said. "They are not exactly friendly."

After some swimming, they finally saw signs of civilization under the water. They all drank the Underwater Vision Potions. But even without the potions, they should have no problem seeing the merfolk territory, because there was sufficient lighting around the underwater town.

The lights came from the head of some tall plants scattered throughout the town which as Hideout described were filled with many giant seashells. The heads of the tall plants emitted lighting. They resembled large fluorescent bulbs. The light turned the entire place alive. The giant seashells had variations of colors. With coral reefs and plants all over the place, the colorful landscape was extremely beautiful.

Everyone marveled at the sight. Even Hideout who had seen the place numerous times still found the view amazing. While they gazed at the beautiful view, three merfolk swam toward them. With such a group and without invisibility, they were easily spotted.

These three merfolk were mermen who carried tridents and wore thin mail armor on their upper bodies. Their exposed body was covered in blue scales. They had webbed hands and fish's tails for legs. A large fin was spotted on their backs with smaller fins on their elbows and the two opposite sides of their waists. Gills slits could be seen along their necks. Frills of fins covered the back of their heads, replacing hairs.

The three mermen watched the players with hostile stares. John and the others hadn't stepped into their territory but they were close. The stares were to warn these surface dwellers to not go any further.

"Okay, stay back. Leave everything to me," John messaged the others and swam forward. The mermen were agitated when they saw John ignore their stares. Their tridents were lifted.

"I come in peace!" John exclaimed. He had drunk a bottle of Underwater Communication Potion. His voice could now travel magically underwater. Water also didn't go into his mouth when he talked. Everyone there heard his words as if they were on the surface.

"What is your intention?!" One of the mermen asked after hearing that John could communicate underwater. They themselves had a natural ability to speak underwater. Their voices carried a slight echo. "We don't welcome you, surface dwellers. Begone or face our wrath!"

"Don't be so unfriendly," John said with a smile. "Can you please call your leader? I wish to speak to him or her. I come with a proposition to help your kind."

"We don't need your help, surface dwellers!"

"Don't dismiss me so quickly. What if I tell you I can help you deal with the problem of your missing children?"

Chapter 953: Ransom

"How do you know about our problem?!" One of the mermen asked.

"Do you know where those children are?!" Another added.

The third one was more antagonistic. "Are you the one responsible for them missing...?!" He uttered. His trident came closer to John.

"Now, now. Please calm down," John said. "Please call your leader out. Of course, if you don't consider those missing children as important, we will leave. It's your choice."

The mermen gave John a hard stare. With the way John acted, they were convinced that John's group was the kidnapper. Maybe this group now came to demand ransom for the kidnapped children.

"Hmph! Go call the sea mother," one of the mermen ordered his comrade. That merman left and swam at high speed toward their town. The remaining two remained on guard with their tridents pointing at John.

John stayed still and whistled as he waited. The whistling annoyed the two mermen, but John didn't stop.

"Is all this provocation necessary?" Bowler asked John via message.

"No, but it's entertaining watching their annoyed faces while waiting. What else should I be doing while waiting?" John replied. Bowler had no idea how to respond to that.

After more than ten minutes, a large group of merfolk came. Some of them rode large red sharks. The leading was an elderly mermaid wearing an intricate ceremonial garb. Her garb was decorated with jewelry and multiple ornaments made of tiny shells.

John used his Inspect on the leading mermaid and found her to be a level 70 Mythical merfolk. Her name was Ama Marak. John also scanned the others, but they were all lower level and lower grades compared to Ama.

The two merman guards, who waited with John, turned to Ama and bowed deferentially when she arrived. "Sea mother," they greeted her.

"This is the outworlder who has the knowledge about our missing children?" Ama asked.

While she was speaking, the merfolk that came with her surrounded the players. Bowler and the others looked at them worriedly.

"Sea mother, we bear you no ill will. There is no need for such a show of hostility," John said.

"Silence, outworlder!" A merman scolded. "Sea mother has not spoken to you, and do not address sea mother with such casualness, or else we will skewer you and feed you to our sharks!"

"I'm just saying, if you made us your enemies, you can forget about finding those missing children," John said, not at all intimidated by the threat.

The sea mother waved a hand. Everyone moved back and stood behind her. She then said to John, "Tell me. Are you the one responsible for our children's disappearance?"

"No," John answered flatly.

"But you know where they are?"

"I do."

"Liar! You are certainly responsible! You have taken them out of this gulf so we can't find them, have you? And now you come to ask for ransom!" One of the merfolk behind shouted.

Ama turned to him with a stern look. He moved back with an apologetic bow, "Forgive me, sea mother."

"Well, I'm not the one responsible for your children's disappearance," John said. "He is wrong about the children's location. They are still in this gulf. But he is not wrong about me coming here asking for ransom."

The merfolk behind immediately shot him hostile looks. Bowler felt like throwing something at John. He sent him a message, "Can you please stop being you for a minute?!"

"Don't disturb me, please," John replied to Bowler. His eyes never left the sea mother, who in turn also stared back at him intently.

"Explain yourself, outworlder," Ama demanded.

"Your children have been captured by another being. Not us. But we have coincidentally found out about this. That's why we come to you. To offer you our help in getting your children back, because we are the benevolent kind of outworlders."

"Didn't you just say that you also ask for ransom?"

"Even benevolent outworlders have needs," John shrugged.

"Tell me the price for your information," Ama said.

"I want you to grant me the blessing as the top-tier summoner from your race," John replied with a grin.

Ama frowned. "You want a special class from us?"

"Not just any, but your best one," John confirmed, still grinning.

Peniel had informed that special class was acquired through luck, but building a good relationship with a faction can also trigger the faction to grant one. A minor race could be considered a faction as well, a minor kingdom faction. So, they should have some special classes available. In theory, if John built a good relationship with the race, he should be able to secure one if the leader of the race deemed him worthy. However, he didn't have the patience to play the long game of building relationships. Since an opportunity had arisen, he decided to exploit it.

Ama was obviously displeased by John's request. Their race did possess special classes. But like every other faction, it's not like they could give out special classes as they like. There was a limit to the ones they possessed, especially the top-tier ones. There was only one for each class category. So, giving one out meant they lose possession of that class until the owner of that special class died and lost the class.

"Let me tell you this information for free. When we found out about your kidnapped children, there were still many that survived, but some of them didn't make it. The longer we delay, the more children you will lose," John said. He didn't let the sea mother ponder for long.

The other merfolk behind were getting more agitated after hearing John's words, but they stayed silent as they didn't want to receive the sea mother's rebuke again.

"If you help us bring back our surviving children, then all right. I'll grant you our best special class for a summoner," Ama finally agreed.

At the same time Ama conceded to John's demand, John heard a quest notification. The quest was to help the merfolk return their missing children. It was an SS-grade quest. The rewards were the standard exp points, gold coins, mana cores, and a first-rate special class for the Summoner class.

John's grin became even wider after hearing it.

"You outworlders are a detestable lot, aren't you?" Ama said with disgust.

"No, sea mother. It is only me," John said without shame.

"Now, tell us where our children are!" The sea mother demanded.

"First of all, please know that the being that kidnapped your children is not something that I nor you can deal with alone. We need to work together on this."

Hearing this, Ama frowned again. "Not something we can handle? Wait... You are not talking about the ancient dragon turtle, are you?"

The merfolk could be considered the de-facto ruler in this gulf. Even countries would take care when they traveled through the water above this gulf, much less down here in the sea. The number of creatures they had to be careful about in this gulf could be counted on one hand. The dragon turtle was at the top of the list.

John hadn't mentioned anything about the one holding the children being something that the merfolk couldn't handle precisely to not let Ama guess it was the dragon turtle. Only after the formal quest notification was heard that he let out this hint. The merfolk was already bound by the world system, so they had no choice but to grant him the rewards as long as the quest objective was fulfilled.

"Impossible!" One of the merfolk behind could finally not stay silent any longer. "The dragon turtle had co-existed with us for centuries. No way it now chooses to provoke us!"

"What if I tell you that it just gave birth to an offspring not long ago?" John said.

"What..?!" The merfolk behind were taken aback.

Ama also seemed to not expect this. "If that ancient dragon turtle had an offspring, it is not out of the question. Our race was the best sustenance to be found nearby for its young offspring...", she muttered.

"Could it be that Nogg was right?" One of the merfolk behind said.

"Nogg?" John asked.

"Nogg Drowner, one of our best warriors. But a bit rebellious and unorthodox, hence his words rarely carry weight," Ama informed. "He had been rambling about the dragon turtle possibly being the one responsible for our missing children. We have dismissed his words. He left four days ago, saying that he is going to investigate further. We haven't heard from him since."

"We considered him to have angered the dragon turtle for trespassing its territory and was eaten," One of the merfolk behind said.

"Well, you are probably half correct about that," John said, remembering Life Runner's report about one adult in captivity.

"If it is the dragon turtle, my folk will be at a disadvantage," Ama said. "It had a skill that could practically turn most of us powerless. We won't be able to do much against it..."

"I know," John said, grinning again. "But I have a counter for that."

Chapter 954: The Plan Against the Dragon Turtle

"The skill that you are worried about is the Dual-World Domain, isn't it?" John asked.

"How do you know about the dragon turtle?" Ama asked, surprised.

"I have my source," John replied. He had asked Peniel as much information about the dragon turtle and the merfolk as he could think of before departing.

Though every monster especially the high-grade ones had their own skills or spells, making them unique even among their species, they still had some skills that all same kinds of monsters possessed. As for the dragon turtle, they are sure to possess a skill called Dual-World Domain. This was also their most troublesome skill. For an amphibian creature that lived in two worlds, this skill gave the dragon turtle an ultimate edge.

When the dragon turtle was on land, if it used the skill, it would create a temporary world filled with water in a large area around him. Against land-based combatants, the dragon turtle would immediately have the terrain advantage as it could move easily inside water.

If the dragon turtle was in the water, the reverse would happen when it used the skill. A temporary world devoid of water would be created around it. All water-based creatures would instantly lose their mobilities once that happened, while the dragon turtle could still move just fine on land, even though with less maneuverability than it did in the water.

This was the reason why the merfolk feared the dragon turtle and avoided provoking it. Like any other fish creatures, they couldn't move once they lose the water.

"We have some warriors that have the amphibian ability, but not many. If the dragon turtle uses its Dual-World Domain skill, those few warriors won't be able to do much. We will be powerless," Ama said.

John knew about the merfolk's amphibian ability. Merfolk with this ability could go to the land. This ability turned their lower-half fish's tail into two legs to walk on land.

"Hm... Tell me, is this Nogg that you mentioned before have the amphibian ability?" John asked.

"He has. Why? Why do you ask about him?" Ama asked back.

"Nothing in particular," John replied, smiling.

"You said something about a counter to the dragon turtle's Dual-World Domain skill. As I explained before, we can't do anything to the dragon turtle once it used that skill."

"Hehe, yes. I have a tool that can make it so that the dragon turtle cannot use that Dual-World Domain skill, or any skills to speak of. But at the same time, none of you in the area can also use any skill or spell."

"Hm... If both us and the dragon turtle cannot use any skill or spell, it should be manageable. It is still formidably strong and its defense is crazily tough, but we have more numbers. It won't be able to block attacks that come from all sides. We can also alternate to get our wounded out of the front line while fresh fighters take over. All right, show us to the dragon turtle's lair and use your tool!" Ama declared. The dragon turtle had changed lairs several times during the centuries living in this gulf. So, she didn't know which one it was dwelling in now. It could even be inside a new lair that she didn't know about.

"No, we can't go to its lair," John said.

"Why not?" Ama asked.

"Because we will put the children in danger. In its anger, it might just decide to kill the children first. It will be difficult for us to prevent that if we fought inside its lair," John explained. "We need to lure it out and keep it within an area, preventing it from going back to the lair while I and my people secure the children."

Although John said it was for the safety of the children, it was actually because he didn't want the merfolk to disturb their taming process on the young dragon turtle. If they saw the young beast, they might decide to kill it to prevent it from becoming their next contender in this gulf.

Ama frowned while pondering. She preferred to have her people do the rescuing, but since she had given the word to this outworlder to have him help in getting the surviving children back and also promised him a special class reward, she thought she should just leave the task to him.

"Okay. How do you propose we lure it out and keep it in place?" Ama asked.

"I have another tool that can lure the dragon turtle away," John said. "But once we enter the lair. The young dragon turtle will no doubt send a mental warning to its parent. At that time, the adult dragon turtle will do its best to rush back. We need to keep it away from the lair for as long as possible. That's where you come in."

Ama shook her head. "Even if we are many and even if the dragon turtle can't use its skills, we still can't compete with it in terms of raw strength. None of us will be able to block it if it wants to forcefully flee."

"That's why we need to take advantage of the terrain," John said. "Can you please follow me?"

"Where to?" One of the merfolk behind asked. They still didn't trust John enough to blindly follow him away from their territory.

"I'm going to show you the place where we can trap the dragon turtle," John answered. "It won't go near your town. It knew this place is protected by a protector God. If we try to lure it to your territory, it will just ignore my bait and swim back."

"You know about our protector God?" Ama asked.

Despite the dragon turtle being the bane of the merfolk, they still had no worries about it living so near their town. The dragon turtle would never dare to cause trouble there because their territory was protected by a protector God. But outside their territory, the dragon turtle was the true ruler of the gulf.

John just shrugged at Ama's question. He had learned from Peniel that every minor race had a protector God watching over their territory.

When John saw the merfolk was still hesitating, he said, "Look, if you are suspicious of me, I will be the only one going with the sea mother and any of you to show you the place. You can hold my friends here as hostages in case I do something unsavory."

"Say what...?!" Bowler immediately exclaimed. The others also gave him an 'I can't believe you just did that' look.

"See? From their surprised expressions, you know this is not a ploy," John said. "No way I will sacrifice my friends just to cause harm to you, will I?"

'Ugh. If they know you, they will know that it is entirely possible,' Bowler said in his mind.

"Fine," Ama said. She then whistled. All of a sudden, a squad of merfolk appeared from above.

The players' attention had always been on the merfolk in front of them and their town. They didn't notice another group of merfolk had been silently approaching from above.

"Watch over this lot!" Ama ordered this newly arrived squad. "If we are not back in half an hour, execute them all!"

"Um... Maybe give them one hour? I might need time to explain my plan when we reach there. The place is also not exactly close to here," John said.

"Half an hour," Ama repeated.

"All right then," John said. He turned to Bowler and the others. "Well, your contribution will be noted."

"What the... Hey! What do you mean by that?" Bowler asked anxiously.

"Didn't you need me for the taming?!" Jet also asked, equally anxious.

"Luckily, I brought another high-level Beastmaster. I always have a contingency plan," John replied. He then gestured at Ama to follow him. Ama followed with the original group she brought.

Bowler and Jet tried to follow as well but the merfolk around them blocked their path. "The sea mother asked you to stay. So, stay. Or else, we will have to use force," a merman warned.

The merfolk that surrounded them were around level 50 to 55 elites and special elites. The players could take them on one on one, but the merfolk's number was more than theirs. Not to mention they were underwater, which was the merfolk's natural terrain. Additionally, several level 50 special elite red sharks swam around them as extra guards.

"A standup leader your guild has," Rough Criminal ridiculed. He then turned to Billy, "You still want to join?"

Billy could only sigh.

*

"Which way?" Ama asked John who was leading them. John answered by pointing in a direction.

"Jaflig!" She called.

One of the merfolk suddenly grabbed John and pulled him forward at high speed. The other merfolk also kept pace by increasing their swimming speed. John was amazed by their swimming speed. At this rate, he thought half an hour should be enough to lay out his plan and return to Bowler and the others.

After a few minutes of swimming, John pointed. "There! Over there. See that large opening? Go in there."

The merfolk followed his instruction. They swam inside and found themselves in a very large naturally-occurred enclosed space. It was a long tunnel with thick rock walls and ceilings. It was not exactly a totally enclosed space as there were many gaps in the walls and ceilings which they could slip through. However, those gaps were too small for a creature as big as the dragon turtle. John had known about this place from Hideout's scouting.

They continued swimming through the tunnel until they hit a dead end.

"I see. You want to lure the dragon turtle here," Ama said.

"Yes, these rock walls should be strong enough to resist its physical strength," John nodded.

"It has that huge hole we came in from, remember? How are we going to prevent it from running out that way?" One of the merfolk asked.

"Easy. We plug that hole," John replied.

Chapter 955: Luring the Dragon Turtle

"Plug it? With what?" Jaflig, the merman who had carried John here, asked.

"With rocks, of course," John replied. "You go cut large rocks somewhere else and bring them here. I believe you merfolk had no problem swimming while carrying rocks larger than yourself, don't you? Once you bring them here, place them above the opening. Wait until the dragon turtle was lured in before you push all those rocks to seal the opening. Those rocks won't be as sturdy as the thick natural rock walls here, but they will still hinder the dragon turtle from escaping. With you harassing it inside here, it will be even harder for the turtle to force its way out."

Ama was pondering John's proposal. This enclosed tunnel was large. There was enough space for them to maneuver while facing the dragon turtle. That, of course, considering the dragon turtle didn't use any of its skills on them.

"Do you truly have a tool that can prevent the dragon turtle from using its skills?" Ama asked.

"Of course," John answered.

"Show it to me!" Ama demanded.

John snickered. "As you wish," he said. A strange contraption appeared beside him. It was half his height. The main body of the contraption was a large tube. It had five legs that supported its footing. The top part was a thin rod with an end that held a large emerald-like stone.

"What is that?" Jaflig asked.

"The Hex of Power Restraint," Ama informed. She recognized the item. "It's an artifact that can stop everyone in its vicinity from using skills, spells, tools, or any other items. I'm surprised an outworlder possesses such an artifact."

John's hand never left the artifact. If any of the merfolk tried anything, he could easily store the artifact back into his inventory.

"So, do you believe me now?" John asked.

"... It will take time to collect the rocks to seal this tunnel, as well as organize the manpower to deal with the dragon turtle," Ama said.

"I understand. We can start this operation tomorrow morning. I believe one night should be enough for you to arrange all that, shouldn't it?" John asked, then added, "If we delay longer, I'm afraid there will be fewer children whom I can save."

Ama frowned hearing the possibility of losing the children. If possible, she wanted to demand this outworlder show her the dragon turtle's lair right now and went there to save the children immediately. But thinking further, she thought the outworlder's argument was sound. She might just endanger the children if she just rushed over blindly. Luring the dragon turtle out would be the best option.

"Fine. We will make it happen by the morning," Ama said. She then gave John a hard stare while saying, "Outworlder, you better deliver on what you promise. Otherwise, don't ever think about coming underwater again."

"Don't worry, you won't regret this cooperation," John replied.

They swam back to the merfolk's town. Bowler and the others were greatly relieved when they saw John and the others returned. It was almost the half-hour limit that the sea mother gave.

Ama left the players to go back and organize for tomorrow's operation. John led the others back to Grey Jewel.

Back on the ship, John described to everyone the plan for tomorrow. He asked everyone to take a good rest. He would need everyone at their best tomorrow.

*

Tomorrow morning, all one hundred players dove into the water after drinking the Underwater Vision Potions. John also gave each one of them at least one Underwater Propeller Scroll.

For Bowler, John gave him an Underwater Communication Potion. They would separate into two teams down there. One would go and aid the merfolk in dealing with the adult dragon turtle. The other was led by John to tame the young dragon turtle and release the merfolk's children. Bowler would be leading the one who aided the merfolk, thus the need for the Underwater Communication Potion so he could talk with the merfolk.

Once they reached the sea bed, they separated as planned. Only ten players followed John. The rest went with Bowler. Among the players that John brought were Will, Life Runner, Jet, and two other Beastmasters for a contingency in case something happened to Jet.

They swam to the main entrance of the dragon turtle's lair, which was the largest cave in the mountain.

"You know what to do," John said via the party chat and handed Will a small item.

"I don't mind dangerous tasks, but ever since meeting you, you just keep on taking me to the most dangerous places," Will said.

"So, are you telling me that you are no longer willing to join my guild and prefer to pay your debt with interest?" John asked.

"No. I'm saying that I wish I have met you long ago," Will replied.

"My man!" John exclaimed and clapped his shoulder.

Jet and Life Runner looked at one another. Their look said, 'Those two are practically made for each other.'

With the item given by John in hand, Will swam into the large cave. "Wish me luck!" He uttered in the chat.

"Good hunting!" Jet said to him.

"More like he will be the one that gets hunted," Life Runner commented in a private message to Jet.

The two laughed, causing water to enter their mouth.

John didn't know what they were laughing at. "Let's go," he said to them. "We will enter the side entrance through one of the small caves."

On the way, Life Runner sent John a private message, "That thing you gave Will is the bait to lure the dragon turtle out?"

"Yes," John replied.

"You said your original plan was also to use the merfolk against the dragon turtle. I understand how you lured the dragon turtle, but how are you luring the merfolk? The dragon turtle won't go near the merfolk town even with the lure, will it?"

"No, it won't. Luring the merfolk is actually easier. We just need to attack them and draw them out. Or simply do what the dragon turtle had done, kidnap their kids and force them to come at us. But like I said, using my original plan will earn us their ire. Luckily, the dragon turtle had done the job for us."

"Damn, dude... You are truly vicious. If Jeanny or Jack is here, they wouldn't have gone with your original plan."

"Well, they aren't here, are they? And Jack also did a similar thing in the past with that Grim Sand Drake. Now, stop speaking hypothetical and focused on the task at hand!"

Life Runner sighed. He had heard about Jack's past story from the others. He wanted to point out that the incident John referred to was pitting a monster against another monster, not against natives. But he decided John would just dismiss him.

Life Runner brought them to one of the small caves that linked to the dragon turtle's lair. They went inside then.

*

The item in Will's hand was something that John had bought from one of the shops in the noble district. It was from a shop that sold cosmetic goods and entertainment products for the natives. Not a shop that provided a product beneficial to players.

To lure the dragon turtle out, he had two options. Giving the dragon turtle a feeling of menace, so it would chase after this menace to protect its offspring, or tempt it with an irresistible bait.

From Peniel's information, John learned about what could be a menace and what could be bait for a dragon turtle. Aside from actual dragons, the dragon turtle's natural enemy was a monster called the Deep Sea Behemoth Serpent. This giant sea serpent enjoyed preying on young dragon turtles. Hence, it could be a perfect thing to agitate the dragon turtle when it had offspring in its care. However, John couldn't find anything that could mimic this serpent.

So, he went with the second option, giving it irresistible bait. Peniel informed John that the dragon turtle's preferred diet was the giant glacier seal. This seal was not categorized as a monster but as an animal. It was usually found in colder water at the poles, which was also the natural habitat for dragon turtles. Peniel was rather surprised when she heard from John that a dragon turtle was living in Themisphere gulf.

As for this giant glacier seal, John found something in those entertainment shops. It was a stone that had the recording of the seal's voice. The seal had a unique voice that gave people a soothing feeling when hearing it, thus the stone was quite a popular luxury item for rich natives.

Unlike Jack, John made it a habit to learn more about this world, even for mundane stuff that had no game features. That's why he frequented all the shops in the capital even if the things they sold are mostly useless to players. But due to this, he knew the existence of this voice item.

When activated, the stone would produce a loud sound that mimicked the seal's voice. Will didn't activate it yet. He needed to get into the range where the dragon turtle could hear him. Life Runner had given him a tour yesterday so he knew his way inside the cave.

Once he was close. He took out another thing from his bag. It was the second thing John gave him for the mission. It was a large white cloak, made of the fur of the giant glacier seal. This was another cosmetic item with no game feature that John had bought. Will equipped the cloak and approached the mouth of the cave hall.

He saw the dragon turtle resting in the lava pool. Aside from catching merfolk's children and feeding its offspring, it mostly spent its time in the lava pool.

Will took a deep breath. He took out the Underwater Propeller Scroll and had it ready in hand. He then activated the stone with the giant grey seal's voice.

Chapter 956: Racing with the Dragon Turtle

Will was ready to bolt once he activated the stone. But when he saw no movement from the dragon turtle's shell, which was half-submerged in the lava pool, he stopped himself.

'Huh? Is it not working?' He wondered. But he did hear the voice of the seal, which was similar to the seal from the real world but oddly melodious and much more soothing.

'Is it because I'm not close enough?' He thought.

He looked back at the exit and then again at the shell in the lava pool. He gulped and stepped forward. He enjoyed braving dangers. He was an extreme sports enthusiast in real life, doing lots of crazy stunts himself, but this didn't mean he was devoid of fear. Fear was instead what drove him to do those crazy stunts. He enjoyed the feeling of conquering those fear. Experiencing a brush with death let him feel much more alive than anything. But now, with every step he took, he felt like he was heading to a certain death instead of just a brush.

'Damn it! Get ahold of yourself!!' Will slapped his cheeks with his two hands to give him motivation.

One of his hands was holding the Underwater Propeller Scroll, the other one was holding the stone that emit the giant glacier seal's voice. When he slapped his face, it also caused an impact on the stone he was holding. As a result, the seal's voice suddenly became louder.

'What the... This stone has a function like this?' Will thought in consternation.

At the same time, he heard rumbles from the front. He looked forward and saw the giant shell emerge from the lava pool. A large head with horns appeared. The dragon turtle's two eyes, two large blue orbs, stared straight at Will, who was now frozen in place.

The two just stayed still and stared at each other for a beat. Will was the one who acted first. He turned and used the magic scroll in his hand. He felt the water around him push him forward. He shot at high speed towards the exit. The cloak made of the giant glacier seal's fur flapped behind him. The cloak was large enough that it covered his entire body if seen from the back.

The dragon turtle continued to stare at the strange creature that was now moving further away. It was confused at first. The voice that the creature emitted was its favorite prey, the tasty and nutritious giant glacier seal. But the creature looked nothing like the seal. However, now that the creature was moving away, it did resemble the seal.

The dragon turtle burst out from the lava pool. If it could catch this giant glacier seal, it would help its offspring to grow faster. This prey was not available around this water. It didn't know why this one appeared here, but it would not let this prey go now that it saw one.

The powerful tail of the dragon turtle swung with great force. The force of the swinging propelled the dragon turtle forward. It was now chasing Will who was swimming away with all his might.

John and the others were watching from one of the small holes in the wall. They had seen Will lure the turtle away. They remained still even after the dragon turtle vacated this cave hall. They were going to wait until they received a signal from Bowler's team before taking action.

*

'F*ck! F*ck! F*ck!' Will wanted to curse out loud but couldn't. He regretted not having asked for the Underwater Communication Potion from John, even if it was only so he could hear himself curse underwater.

He looked back. The dragon turtle was on his tail. Because the dragon turtle was swimming at top speed, it had trouble controlling its direction. Its huge body sometimes scraped the tunnel wall. The

speed granted by the Underwater Propeller Scroll allowed Will to keep his distance from the dragon turtle. They were roughly swimming at the same speed.

Because Will was still looking back, he noticed the dragon turtle open its mouth, and water started swirling around that opened mouth.

'Shit! F*ck...!' Will cursed inside and looked back to the front. He found that he was already at the cavemouth. He immediately banked to the right. He couldn't make a sharp turn due to being under the effect of the Underwater Propeller Scroll, but the turn was enough for him to escape as a torrent of steaming gas passed his side.

The steaming gas column went on for quite a distance. He saw the gas column come after him, but it disappeared before hitting him. He looked back and saw that the steaming gas breath had been blocked by the wall of the cave. The dragon turtle had shifted its steam breath to follow Will who swam to the side. But since it was still inside the cave, its breath hit the cave wall instead.

The dragon turtle soon burst out of the cave as well. It looked to the side where Will had disappeared and its sight at once locked onto the glaring white cloak that Will was wearing.

Will knew he couldn't hide. It would defeat the whole purpose of luring the dragon turtle. Not to mention the stone in his hand was still blaring loudly with the glacier seal's voice. He just tried his best to steer his propelling state toward the destination that John had shown him.

All the regular monsters in the vicinity ran away once they spotted the dragon turtle, so Will did not worry about other monsters attacking him.

He looked back again, fearing the dragon turtle would use its steaming breath again. It did not. Looked like that breath was like any other skill in this world, it had a cooldown time.

However, another thing happened. He saw the water around the dragon turtle start shimmering. Four watery orbs appeared around the turtle. Gel-like tentacles shot out from those four orbs. It extended a very long distance, almost reaching him.

'Shit! Shit!' He cursed anxiously. The tips of the tentacles were slashing just a few feet behind his legs, and they seemed to be closing in the distance! The dragon turtle's swimming speed was apparently slightly faster than Will's propelling state, even though it was just barely.

Will knew he had to do something. If the tentacles touched him, he was sure it was game over for him.

He took a sharp dive. The tentacles chased after him. The ground on the sea bed was not flat. There were many coral reefs, rocks, plants, and valleys. He slipped into one of these valleys just as the tentacles were about to reach him. The tentacles slapped the rocky ground instead.

Will swam irregularly, making a slight zig-zag as he went in and out of the plants that filled the sea bed. He tried his best to use any large rock for covers. This caused the dragon turtle to have difficulty aiming its watery tentacles to catch him.

Will also played his music as he swam. He was a bard, and his music coincidentally have the effect that increase his overall speed, which included his movement speed. His propelling motion became even

faster once the music was played. He was grateful that this game world system allowed his music to still be magically playable underwater.

With the increased speed, he slowly distanced himself from the dragon turtle again.

The dragon turtle roared furiously. He didn't appreciate his prey escaping him. Not when it was a rare prey that was not normally acquirable around this water.

'A little bit more!' Will thought hopefully. John had brought him to see the place on their way back to the ship yesterday, to familiarize himself with the place. He could see the large opening in the distance now.

Something hit and shattered the rock nearby him. With surprise, he looked back and saw the dragon turtle conjuring lots of water pellets that were now speeding toward him.

'Poseidon's arse...!' He cursed and made a turn. The area around him was soon battered by uncountable water pellets.

Due to turning, he had moved away from the direct path to his destination, but he had no choice. The water pellets were still coming, it continued to rain in the area he passed through. A small rock hill was nearby, he immediately swam to its back to take cover. The remaining water pellets pummel the rock hill and produced many holes in it.

Will had made a sideways detour. If he wanted to swim back toward the destination, it would shorten the distance between him and the dragon turtle that was still approaching.

He couldn't stop and hide behind the hill because he was still under the effect of getting propelled forward. Not that hiding would do any good anyway. Also, this propeller effect didn't last forever, only around three minutes left from its ten minutes duration. He still had a second scroll but he was not keen on playing cat and mouse with this dragon turtle for another ten minutes.

So, he continued to let himself get propelled forward and came out from the other side of the rock hill. He saw the dragon turtle now, its distance from him was now only half compared to when it started chasing him. Will didn't let this frighten him too much, he headed straight for the large opening that was nearby.

The dragon turtle which was speeding at the rock hill immediately turned direction once Will came into view again. But because it was at top speed and it was too heavy, it couldn't immediately turn. Its body slammed into the rock hill instead, causing it to crumble and make a loud noise.

Will looked back due to the sound and saw the dragon turtle oddly have its four limbs retracted into its shell. Those four limbs then recoiled back out at a blinding speed, at the same time, a shockwave reverberated from the dragon turtle. This shockwave sped toward him at an incredible speed.

Chapter 957: Trapping the Dragon Turtle

The shockwave discharged by the dragon turtle shaped like a water sphere that enlarged at a fast rate. Will knew he couldn't outrun this shockwave. He used his non-standard bard skill, Sound Shield. It created a protective shell around him. This defensive skill had a chance to deflect incoming range

attacks. Any attack that it failed to deflect would have its damage reduced. The skill also protected him from any movement restriction resulting from the skill or spell that hit him.

The shockwave was an AOE attack, so the Sound Shield couldn't deflect it. It hit Will and sent him tumbling. Luckily, his Sound Shield reduced the damage he received, allowing him to survive. The push from the shockwave instead helped him widen his distance from the dragon turtle. The tunnel's large opening was now right in front of him. He quickly adjusted his direction and entered the tunnel.

Will looked back from time to time as he swam, the dragon turtle was furiously chasing him. It was angered because its last attack failed to incapacitate its prey. Fortunately for Will, it didn't use any more skill. It seemed that it had exhausted all its ranged skills.

Will continued to speed along the tunnel. He needed to draw the dragon turtle deeper.

As he swam further into the tunnel, the merfolk who had hidden near the large opening lifted large rocks that they had prepared. There were hundreds of them. Each one lifted a sizable rock much bigger than themselves.

The players were amazed by the feat. One of the berserkers in their group tried to lift one of the rocks, but it wouldn't budge. While merfolk with a similar level could do it with ease. It showed how the merfolk excelled in their physical stats.

The merfolk start dropping the large rocks by the entrance to the tunnel. It continued to pile until the whole opening was blocked. They continued adding rocks to the pile, just to reinforce it further.

The dragon turtle was oblivious to its escape path being blocked. Its attention remained solely on the glacier seal that was fleeing in front of it.

Bowler sent Will a message once the exit was sealed. He was not like John who put someone in danger just to get the maximum outcome. John would have waited until Will reached the other end of the tunnel before informing him, so that the dragon turtle took a longer time to swim back.

Will looked around for the nearest gap within the tunnel wall for an exit. As he did, he also looked back at the dragon turtle. Its powerful jaw was opened and Will saw that familiar water swirling motion.

'Shit! Its breath attack is off cooldown already...?!' Will thought with dismay. The nearest gap on the wall was still a distance away and there was no big enough cover nearby to hide from that breath attack!

When Will was still lamenting his inevitable demise, the water swirling in front of the dragon turtle's mouth suddenly fizzled out. The dragon turtle was visibly confused by what had happened, which slowed its speed by a little.

Will used this chance to put more distance. The dragon turtle won't be able to use any more of its skill. The Hex of Power Restraint had been activated.

The hex required one hour of static preparation to power up, which they had started an hour before. Bowler immediately activated it once he saw Will's predicament through the gaps in the walls and ceiling.

The dragon turtle didn't let this confusion halt it for long. It continued to chase after the odd glacier seal. It had come this far. It would be a waste to turn back now.

Will also lost the underwater propeller scroll's effect once the Hex of Power Restraint was activated. Luckily, he managed to swim to the wall when the dragon turtle was still confused. He immediately ditched the stone that emitted the glacier seal's voice and replaced his cloak. He then swam out through one of the gaps in the wall.

The dragon turtle was bewildered by its prey's sudden transformation. It looked at the stone that was still emitting the sound and then at Will who no longer resembled a glacier seal. It knew then it had been tricked. It roared with fury, but Will had already slipped into one of the gaps.

In its blind fury, the dragon turtle slammed into the wall, causing the whole place to shake. Its powerful jaw repeatedly bit on the rock wall where Will had slipped through.

The bites chipped the rock wall bit by bit. If they allowed it to continue doing this unhindered, it could probably create a hole large enough to go through. Hence, they didn't let it do this for long. The merfolk who had been preparing outside slipped in through other gaps. They headed to the dragon turtle once they were inside.

Every merfolk carried a long weapon like tridents, spears, or other pole weapons. They stabbed the dragon turtle from behind. The dragon turtle who was already furious was enraged by these backstabs. It hurled back and slapped several merfolk who were too slow to dodge. These merfolk were sent tumbling to the other side of the tunnel while suffering high damage.

The other merfolk didn't stop their assault, they stabbed at the dragon turtle while swimming around it. Their top speed at swimming might not be faster than the dragon turtle, but their maneuverability was better. Their cooperation with each other was also good. They circled the dragon turtle, confusing it with their numbers and movements, and stabbed its rear whenever they could. They targeted the limbs and avoided stabbing the shell part because the shell was too tough. The resulting damage was too low.

However, the merfolk didn't have an easy time. The dragon turtle's powerful four legs and tail flailed around wildly, hitting the merfolk once in a while. Those that were hit lose a large percentage of HP. But since they had the number, their rank was easily replaced by other merfolk who were on standby. As long as the dragon turtle didn't use any skill, they could wear it down without any casualties.

Or so they thought, until one moment, the dragon turtle's head suddenly shot out with unbelievable speed. Its powerful jaws snatched one of the merfolk who was swimming past its front. The jaws then bit down with crazy strength. The caught merfolk screamed and lost a third of its HP from that single bite. But the jaws didn't let the merfolk go, it bit down again a second time and the third. The merfolk's body was severed.

This kill took the merfolk aback. Even without the ability to use skill, the dragon turtle was still deadly.

Seeing her merfolk were rattled, the sea mother entered the tunnel and motivated them.

"Fight, my warriors! Teach this beast the true ruler of this gulf! Let it know what happened to those who steal our children...!" Ama rushed forward. She was carrying a golden trident that was one and a half times longer than the others.

The golden trident struck the dragon turtle's neck, causing critical damage. The dragon turtle's jaws came for retaliation, but it bit only water. Ama's swimming speed was faster than the normal merfolk.

The other merfolk cheered from their sea mother's display. Their fighting spirit was ignited and they redoubled their effort in fighting the dragon turtle.

All of a sudden, the dragon turtle showed a shocked expression. Its head turned in the direction of its lair. It ignored the merfolk who were still stabbing it and started barging its way toward the exit. Smacking any merfolk that stood in its way.

*

Back in the dragon turtle's lair, John had received a message from Bowler that the adult dragon turtle was now trapped in the enclosed tunnel. John and the others immediately came into the cave hall from the small holes they had been hiding in.

The baby dragon turtle saw the intruders. It immediately sent a signal to its parent.

"Get it!" John commanded. All of them swam directly to the baby dragon turtle. They needed to reduce its HP to below 30% before they could use the Giant Capturing Cage and the Tame Aquatic Guardian scroll on it.

Their target was still a newborn, so it had virtually no combat ability. The baby dragon turtle retreated into its shell. Even the holes where the limbs, head, and tail retracted into were covered by some sort of translucent layer.

Those who had ranged attacks fired their attacks on the baby dragon turtle.

"Holy crap!" They uttered when they saw the damage numbers. The damage produced was only one-tenth of the normal output. "Its defense stat is way off the chart in that state!"

"Don't stop! Just keep attacking. It can't counterattack, so do as you wish! Use all your available skills!" John commanded.

He had heard from Peniel about this. Another skill that every dragon turtle had was what this baby dragon turtle used now, Total Defense. The dragon turtle couldn't attack or move in this state, but its defense stat skyrocketed. It also gained increased HP recovery. That's why John asked them not to stop their attacks. If they do, the damage they inflicted would be offset by the recovery. The others also saw the HP recovery number appear above the baby dragon turtle and its HP bar was refilled again.

"F*ck!!" All of them cursed. They then sent their attacks in a frenzy.

"Hurry!" John urged. "We need to tame it before its parent broke through the blockage."

All the while, the merfolk in captivity watched them from their water prisons. They were both confused and anxious about these trespassing land dwellers.

Chapter 958: Coercion on a Captive

Without any retaliation, the ten attacked the baby dragon turtle non-stop. Even so, the dragon turtle's HP went down significantly slowly. The dragon turtle's skill, total defense, was indeed tough to crack.

Luckily, John brought one player who was a dragoon. His name was Hemale, one of The Man's lieutenants. Dragoon class had many ignore-defense skills. Also, Hemale had learned Drilling Stab, A similar skill to Jack's non-standard skill, drilling thrust. While Drilling thrust could only be learned by classes branching from the Warrior class, Drilling Stab was for classes branching from the Knight class. Both skills reduced the enemy's defense by 30% for 30 seconds at their first levels.

Hemale had upgraded this skill to the max. At level 20, Drilling Stab reduced the target's defense by 70%. Although the duration was a short 30 seconds, the skill's cooldown was also a short 1 minute. Hence, he could use this skill often. The others synchronized their attacks to hit the dragon turtle with heavy attacks during that 30-seconds window.

Also luckily, they were dealing with a newborn dragon turtle. It was a rare elite grade but was only level 32. So, its HP wasn't too high. With it staying still like a punching bag, the continuous attacks wore down its HP steadily. Getting the dragon turtle's HP down to 30% was a certainty, it was just a matter of time.

But John knew that they couldn't afford to relax. It was not certain how long the other side could hold the adult dragon turtle. If that dragon turtle managed to break through and returned here, then everything would be ruined. Despite this newborn's low level, its HP and defense were a whole league above other creatures of the same level. Adding the turtle's total defense skill, they still needed some time to reduce its HP.

"Hurry up, you people!" John urged. He had summoned all his minions who were now also attacking the dragon turtle frenziedly to increase the damage output. Aside from all his standard summons, there was a non-standard summon spell he had learned from a technique book.

The spell was Summon Water Elemental. The spell summoned a serpent-like being made of water. It could dish out melee attacks as well as shoot water pellets. The water pellets were considered standard attacks so there was no cooldown. The water elemental was highly resistant to physical attacks but weak against magical attacks. This summon had an extra advantage when it is in or near a water environment. It could absorb the nearby water to heal itself, so it gained a passive recovery ability whenever there was water nearby.

"Move aside! I will use my ultimate move!" Jet shouted.

The others were skeptical, but they still made space. The melee moved back, only the ranged players kept on attacking. Jet first activated Strength of the Wild. With increased strength, he forcefully flipped the dragon turtle. Its domed shell was now touching the ground while its plastron was upward.

He then accumulated mana to his two fists and started hitting the dragon turtle at specific spots on its plastron.

What Jet was executing was his Seven Injuries Fists. The dragon turtle's physiology was not the same as humans, so Jet didn't use this martial art from the start. He had to use his mana sense and previous attacks to detect the dragon turtle's weak spots first. Now, he had identified those weak spots to be on the turtle's underside. It was time to impress the others with his martial art.

Jet hit the weak spots one after another. The spot that was hit had a lingering glow. When a second spot was hit, a thin light linked the second spot with the first spot, and so on.

"Taste the might of my Seven Injuries Fists...!" Jet yelled while landing the seventh strike.

The dragon turtle's HP was around 60% after their relentless assaults. Once Jet completed his Seven Injuries Fists, an impressive explosive display was seen on the dragon turtle. Its HP shrank down a large chunk. All the players watched with awe as the dragon turtle's HP bar reduced rapidly. Jet was visibly satisfied as he wore a proud expression.

However, everyone's expression went from awe to worry when they saw the HP bar continue to go down rapidly even after passing the 30% mark. They all wondered if Jet's art could end up killing the dragon turtle? If it was so, all their efforts would become a waste.

Fortunately, the HP bar stopped when it reached around 5%.

"Damn, friend! You should learn to recognize how much damage you inflict with that art of yours. If this dragon turtle dies because of your attack, you won't be able to explain to everyone," John chided.

Jet was also having a cold sweat. But no one could blame him. Although he knew his Seven Injuries Fists inflicted massive damage, he rarely managed to pull it off. He could only perfectly pull this art off on very slow monsters, after all. When he saw this dragon turtle was not moving at all, he considered it a golden opportunity to impress the others.

John threw the Giant Capturing Cage on the ground below the near-death dragon turtle. The cage appeared and confined the newborn dragon turtle within.

"You know what to do," John said to Jet. He had already given Jet several Tame Aquatic Guardian scrolls before they departed. Jack had also given Jet pointers on how to use it. Jet used the scroll and started the mini-game

The newborn turtle's head and limbs had come out once it sensed itself getting tamed. Even though it had no offensive capability, it still banged on the cage, reducing the cage's HP slowly.

While Jet was taming the dragon turtle, John went to one of the watery orbs that imprisoned the merfolk children. One adult merfolk was there. When the adult merfolk saw John approach the children, he became agitated. He shouted at John and hit the water orb that imprisoned him, which was of course, a futile effort.

John ignored the adult merfolk. He paid attention to the watery prison in front of him. The merfolk child showed a frightened expression. John thought this watery prison was similar to his spell, Living Water Prison. But this was more like an enchantment rather than a spell, because it didn't expire.

After studying the watery prison, John went to the one that imprisoned the adult merfolk. This adult was still shouting incoherent words at him. This adult wore a thin green scale armor and carried a long green trident on his back. John used his Inspect.

*

Nogg Drowner (Rare elite merfolk, Sea warden), level 60

HP: 650,000

*

'As expected, this merfolk is the one mentioned by Ama. Their competent but rebellious warrior,' John thought.

This merfolk had gone by himself to search for the dragon turtle because he was suspicious it had something to do with their missing children. He found the dragon turtle and proved his theory was right but ended up captured by the turtle as well. The turtle had kept Nogg alive to be its offspring's prey once it came to maturity.

"Hi, warrior Nogg?" John greeted him.

"You... You can talk underwater...?" Nogg responded in surprise.

"Well, it's obvious since you can hear me, isn't it? Now, do you want me to free you from this bubble prison?" John asked.

Nogg felt like he couldn't believe his ears. Of course, he wished for that, but John's words and tones indicated that it was not a free offer.

"What do you want in return?" Nogg asked.

"I...," John's words stopped when he heard a commotion from behind. The cage that confined the dragon turtle had broken. The dragon turtle was back to full HP and everyone was back to hitting it again.

"For the love of... You failed to tame it?!" John shouted.

"Give me a break, will you? It's not exactly easy. I'm still getting used to it!" Jet responded.

"Excuse me for a minute," John said to Nogg and went over to help them hit the dragon turtle.

It didn't take as long as before this time. Since they knew Jet's Seven Injuries Fists could reduce half the turtle's HP instantly, they just hit it until it was around 80% HP and let Jet execute his special technique.

"Don't f*ck up this time!" John warned. "We don't exactly have unlimited cages and scrolls for taming. Jack tamed a youngling eight levels higher when his level was much lower than yours. You should be ashamed of yourself."

"Damn it, youngster! Is that how you talk to me? I'm still your elder!" Jet fired back.

"And I'm your leader!" John didn't bother to be courteous.

He returned to Nogg again, leaving Jet to do his things. "Now, where were we?" He asked Nogg. "Oh, yes! Do you want me to free you?"

"What do you want in return?" Nogg repeated his question.

"Hehe, I like smart people," John remarked. "My request is simple, be my companion."

"What?!"

John didn't repeat his words. He just stood there with folded arms waiting for Nogg's decision. The merman was noticeably pondering his options. He looked at the imprisoned children around him. If he was to help those children, he needed to get out first. He looked back at John again.

Life Runner, who was nearby, came after hearing John. He asked, "You want this merfolk for a companion? Will he be able to fight on land?"

"He is one of the few merfolk who had the amphibian ability," John answered.

"Amphibian?" Life Runner was not among the ones John had brought when he approached the merfolk's town yesterday, so Life Runner was not aware of this ability. John explained the ability to him.

John returned his attention to Nogg, he could see that the merman was close to relenting. He said, "It's not a bad deal for you. You will gain a fast-leveling ability which should help you serve your community better. For example, if you have been higher in level, you won't get imprisoned by the dragon turtle now, would you?"

"But I will have to heed your call every time you wish," Nogg countered.

"A small price to pay for the benefit and your freedom," John said. "Don't worry, I won't be bothering you too often. Only once in a while when I need a meat shield."

Life Runner shook his head. 'This guy didn't even bother to dress up his intention,' he thought.

Nogg finally sighed and said, "All right... I accept."

Chapter 959: A Valuable Find

"But I don't have a companion token. I don't exactly plan to be anybody's companion, after all," Nogg said.

"Don't worry. I have a binding stone here for you to use," John said. He tried pushing the stone through the watery orb. It passed through. The watery orb prevented the one inside from escaping but it didn't prevent things from going in.

John saw Nogg performing the ritual to turn that binding stone into a companion token. While he did, John turned to Jet, expecting the old dwarf to have failed again. But luckily, this time Jet didn't disappoint. The successfully tamed newborn dragon turtle was wrapped in light and then sent away to their headquarters.

"Nice, old man!" John complimented.

"Hmph! See if you dare to underestimate me again," Jet responded.

John received a message from Bowler then, "Hey, did you guys succeed? The dragon turtle here suddenly turns as if mad. It no longer tries to escape. It just frenziedly attacked anyone that comes near."

"Yeah, we have succeeded," John replied.

"So, can we leave now?" Bowler asked.

"Of course not! It's not every day you have the chance to kill a mythical monster," John replied. "With the merfolk taking on the dragon turtle directly, it is not an impossible task. Continue doing as before."

Now that the dragon turtle does not try to escape, you can take your time to wear it down. We will join you soon."

"Man... You are not here, so you don't know how dangerous this request you are asking. Even without using skills, this dragon turtle is crazily strong."

"Just imagine the loots we get once it died. Remember to send in sufficient damage to the turtle also. Even if it is killed by the merfolk, as long as we players land enough damage, loots will drop and we will still get a portion of the exp."

"Fine... Just come as soon as possible! Not that it matters anyway. We will do what we can."

John ended the message and saw that Nogg had finished creating his companion token. Nogg tried to push the token out but he couldn't. The watery orb blocked his attempt.

"You need to free me first if you want this companion token," Nogg said.

"Sure," John said.

"What's this?" Jet approached then.

"He requested this merman to be his companion before he frees them," Life Runner explained.

"Oh? Didn't we already agree to the sea mother's request?" Jet asked.

"Hehe, he didn't know that," John replied. John was the only one in the group here who used Underwater Communication Potion. Jet was communicating via chat, so Nogg didn't hear what he said.

"What a villain! I'm going to tell him by using sign language!" Jet performed some strange movements that neither John nor Life Runner could understand. Since the two of them didn't understand, the merfolk for sure didn't as well. Nogg just stared at Jet like the dwarf was a nutcase.

"Please take him away. He is embarrassing us," John said to Life Runner.

Life Runner looked at Jet and shrugged. "Please," he said as he motioned for Jet to follow him.

"Punkster! See if I will help you again the next time you need my help!" Jet complained and went away.

"What was that about?" Nogg asked from inside the watery orb.

"Nothing, just a senile old man," John replied. "Now, let's get you out of here, shall we?"

John started forming a spell formation. When the spell was completed, Dispel was cast. John had also joined the Order of Magi, and he had recently reached the Apprentice rank before going on this mission. The rank gave him access to the Dispel spell. Unlike Jack, he had given Jeanny the chance to copy it first before learning the spell.

The Dispel broke the watery orb that imprisoned Nogg. The merman was freed. He stretched his arms and flapped his tail to release the feeling of stiffness due to being confined in a limited space for a long time. This caused him to swim around haphazardly for a while.

After he was done, he noticed John's extended hand.

He paused for a beat before handing his companion token to John. A deal was a deal. He was a respected Sea Warden from the merfolk race. He was not going to go back on his words.

John received the token with glee and proceeded to seal the contract with the merman. Nogg, in the meanwhile, swam to one of the watery orbs that held the merfolk children captive. He unlatched the trident from his back and stabbed it into the orb. The merfolk child inside was terrified when he saw the trident's tips half-punctured inside.

"Don't be afraid," Nogg said soothingly to the child.

The child nodded. Even though he wasn't familiar with this merman, Nogg was still fellow merfolk. Additionally, he had seen this merman come barging into this cave and fight the dragon turtle. Even though in the end Nogg had lost, it was clear that Nogg fought with the intention to save them.

Nogg's green trident vibrated. The heavy liquid that formed the watery orb was slowly shrinking. It was as if the liquid was sucked by the trident. Soon, the watery orb dissolved and the child inside could swim freely.

"Wait here. I will save the others. Then we will go out together," Nogg said to the freed child. The child nodded compliantly.

Seeing that Nogg could free the merfolk children using his trident, John happily let him do so. His dispel had a three minutes cooldown. Once the cooldown time passed, John went and used it to free another child. With John and Nogg working together, all the merfolk children were soon freed.

"Okay, let's go. We will escort you back to the merfolk's town," John said to them. "My friends are currently fighting the adult dragon turtle together with the other merfolk. we will show you the way so you don't barge into the battlefield."

Nogg nodded. This outworlder had freed them. Even if John had done it at the price of his companion token, he thought he should be able to trust that John meant them no harm.

When they were on their way to the exit, John suddenly told them all to stop. Everyone looked at John questioningly. But instead of explaining, John swam to the lava pool and stayed above it while staring down. Those who were curious came to where he was as well.

When Jet approached, he noticed from his mana sense the reason for John's interest. At one edge of the lava pool was a large red crystal. It emitted dense mana. John had noticed it first due to the notification from his God-eye monocle when this red crystal came into the range of his perception.

"What is that?" Jet asked. He was having trouble identifying the crystal with his Inspect level.

"It's a mana site containing the fire element," John explained. His God-eye monocle had no trouble bypassing the Inspect restriction. "I've heard about this mana site from Jack and Peniel. Jack told me before that he encountered one during his kingdom faction initiation quest. This fire mana site must be why this lava pool existed here. No wonder the dragon turtle spent so much time inside this lair. This is a great find. If we transferred this mana site to our Sky Garden Peak, it should increase Penny's growth. Life Runner, use this and absorb the mana inside this mana site."

John gave Life Runner a large indigo orb. That was an empty mana orb, similar to the one Alonzo had used to suck the ice mana site when he first met Jack. The one that Life Runner held was the highest-grade orb John bought in the magic association shop. It should have no problem containing all the fire energy from this fire mana site.

"You sure have a lot of fancy stuff," Jet commented, referring to John's binding stone as well, which was used to make the companion token.

"I believe in preparedness," John replied. He then said to the others, "Okay. All melee class, stay here and protect Life Runner while he sucked the fire mana site. You people are useless against the dragon turtle anyway."

"Must you say it in such a condescending way?" Jet complained.

"I'm just stating the truth, old man," John responded. "Except for you. You can come with us. That martial art you used before might prove useful against the adult dragon turtle."

"Hmph! So, you need my help again?" Jet asked with folded arms.

"Jack's guild needs your help. If you don't want to help, then so be it. You are probably just afraid to approach the adult turtle for a melee anyway."

"Hmph! How can I be afraid of a turtle?" Jet said haughtily. "I will do it for Jack. Not for you!"

"Good." John then turned to Nogg, who had been waiting by the side.

The merman was eyeing the fire mana site. For natives, mana sites were also valuable finds, but he was not going to contest this finding with the outworlders who had just freed them. Bringing the merfolk children safely back to town took priority.

"Let's go," John said to Nogg. He acted like he didn't notice Nogg's interest in the mana site.

The two, with the other non-melee players except for Jet, escorted the merfolk children out of the cave, leaving Life Runner and the others to harvest the fire mana site.

The players used Underwater Propeller Scrolls to increase their swimming speed. Their normal swimming speed was too slow compared to the merfolk, even for the merfolk children. John took the lead and guide them on a route that was away from the dragon turtle's battlefield.

They met a few sea monsters on the way, but nothing they couldn't handle. Nogg himself was enough to take care of those monsters. They were amazed by how deftly he maneuvered in the water. When he went on the offensive, his green trident was empowered by wind energy. With the players supporting him using ranged attacks, those monsters were easily routed.

They safely arrived at the merfolk town. The merfolk guards were joyful when they saw Nogg and the merfolk children.

John and the others left quickly once the children were safely delivered. Nogg followed by their side. The merman wasn't going to let go of the chance to give the dragon turtle a payback for imprisoning him.

Chapter 960: Identifying Weak Spots

When they were getting near to the place where the adult dragon turtle was trapped, they saw a large army of Merfolk idling there. The reason they were standing by was that the enclosed tunnel where they trapped the dragon turtle wasn't big enough to hold all of them. If all of them went in, there would be hardly any space to maneuver. They would become easy targets for the more physically powerful dragon turtle.

Hence, these merfolk took turns going inside. If one of the merfolk inside died, the one from outside would go through the gaps and take over the deceased one's place. The merfolk were using their own lives to wear the dragon turtle one.

When the merfolk children had been successfully rescued, John sent a message to Bowler to let him inform Ama. Of course, there was a chance that Ama decided to pull back after learning the children were safe. However, John didn't think the sea mother would do so.

This dragon turtle had always been a thorn in the merfolk's side. They couldn't be this gulf's true ruler as long as this turtle remained here. Additionally, they couldn't just let someone or something, who had so audaciously kidnapped and consumed their children, go unpunished like this. Now was the only chance for them to eliminate this turtle, with the Hex of Power Restraint preventing the dragon turtle from using its dual-world domain.

So, even though she lost quite a number of warriors, Ama continued to send her merfolk in. She herself was heatedly battling inside.

As for the players, around twenty were inside. The merfolk preferred to not let them in because their standard ranged attacks were weak. It was more advantageous to let their spots be given to Merfolk to increase the damage output. But since the Hex of Power Restraint belonged to the players, the merfolk agreed to let a few players enter.

This arrangement was agreed upon before between John and Ama. The reason was that John wanted their side to deliver sufficient enough damage to the dragon turtle so it dropped loots when it died and for the nearby players to receive exp points. The twenty who were inside were ranged players with the highest damage count. These ranged players were situated at the wall next to the gaps. If the turtle charged at them, they could easily slip out to take cover.

Once they arrived, Nogg didn't wait for his turn. He just rushed and slip through the gap. John was glad that he did. Since Nogg was his companion, whatever damage that Nogg inflicted would count as the player's portion as well.

"Ahoy!" Will came to them. He was among the players who waited outside because his standard ranged attacks were nothing to speak of. Billy and Rough Criminal were inside, though. Billy was a Hidden Weapon Specialist while Rough Criminal was a Gunner.

Bowler was also inside, using his healing spells to aid the merfolk survived. John communicated with him using messages. From Bowler's report, the dragon turtle had only lost around one-third of its life.

Almost one and a half hours had passed since they activated the Hex of Power Restraint. This meant it was already half of the artifact's active duration. At this rate, they wouldn't be able to deplete the dragon turtle's HP before the Hex's three-hour duration was over.

"Hm... This is not good. Although I prefer to watch the fires burning across the river, we might need to join the fight. Otherwise, we would all be in trouble once the Hex's duration is up," John said to Jet.

"What fires burning across the river? We are under the sea, Goddamnit! Can't you just speak in normal language?" Jet complained.

"Never mind that, do you think that Seven Injuries Fists of yours can affect this adult dragon turtle?" John asked.

The two of them had also been looking at the situation inside through one of the gaps. The battle inside was fierce. The dragon turtle had been in a frenzy ever since it sensed that its offspring was gone. It had now gone crazy and unleashed its wrath on these merfolk who had been trapping it.

"Theoretically, this adult turtle should have the same physiology as the small one. Its weakness should be at its underside as well. But I might need to get near to sense its mana to make sure the exact spots on its plastron to hit," Jet answered. "I think my art should work just fine with this turtle. The problem is whether I can hit all seven spots in the required time. This turtle had a much larger body, hence I'll need more time going from one spot to the other. Not to mention, it is unlike that small one who stayed still. This big one moved like a crazed nutcase. It will be much more difficult... Like a hundred folds!"

"I believe in you, old man," John said and clasped Jet's shoulder.

Jet grumbled at the comment. He was sure John was not truly confident in him. The guy was simply pushing him to go ahead with the risky endeavor.

Will, who had been listening to them, asked, "Are you two truly going in?"

"Yeah, we need to expedite this," John replied.

"How are you two going to do that? You are a summoner and he is a melee class."

"You will see," John didn't bother to explain.

He sent a message to two members inside to come out so he and Jet could take their places. The two entered as soon as the ones they replaced came out. The merfolk didn't bother them. As long as they kept their number as agreed and didn't cause trouble to the merfolk fighting inside, those merfolk just ignored them.

Once they went in, they saw a merman fly towards them. They hurriedly moved to the side and that merman slammed into the wall. John saw that that merman had zero HP already. Another victim to the ferocity of the dragon turtle.

"Shit! Are you asking me to go near that thing?!" Jet uttered. Watching the battle from the inside was completely different from the outside.

"Who not long ago said he isn't afraid of a turtle?" John mocked. He was already firing his standard ranged attacks at the turtle. He had a high-level unique-grade magic staff, so his standard attacks produced higher damage than the other ranged players.

"Damn punk! Don't try to trick me. There is no way I can get close to that thing!" Jet grumbled.

After the diving experience with Jack in the Village of Peace, Jet spent quite a lot of time swimming under the lake in their headquarters' territory. He was also very enthusiastic during John's underwater training session when preparing for this operation. So, his swimming and underwater fighting ability in this world had been honed. He was one of the few best underwater fighters in Everlasting Heavenly Legends.

Even so, the dragon turtle was indeed intimidating. Even the fast-swimming merfolk took extreme care to not get hit by the giant turtle. The turtle could strike in six directions using its head, four limbs, and tail. The only blind spots were the top of its shell and underneath. Luckily, one of those blind spots should be where the weak spots for his art were located.

"Try to approach as close as possible to sense its weak spots, but don't engage it first," John said. "After you confirm the spots, wait for my cue. I will create a window to allow you a short time to execute your art."

"Are you sure you can do that?" Jet asked skeptically.

"Leave that to me, just go identify the weak spots and prepare," John didn't bother to explain further.

Jet also didn't waste time asking more questions. He swam forward but maintain himself under the turtle so that it wasn't aware of him.

John continued to fire his standard attacks while monitoring the situation. Several merfolk stood out in the fight with the turtle. The sea mother, Ama, was the most impressive one. Her swimming speed was very fast and she could do sharp turns easily, allowing her to dodge the turtle countless times. Her very long golden trident was also very accurate, and John sensed a few of those attacks were empowered by the mana manipulation technique. Most of the damage suffered by the turtle came from her trident.

A few other rare elite merfolk was also remarkable. They were only one notch slower than the sea mother but faster than the regular merfolk. Nogg was one of them. They also contributed a lot to the damage count.

The rest mostly run interference, to prevent the dragon turtle from focusing on Ama and those rare elites. These merfolk were mostly the ones that got killed from time to time because of failing to dodge the turtle's attacks.

The battle continued for some time. Jet continued to stealthily keep within a sufficient distance from the dragon turtle. It was difficult because the turtle didn't exactly stay in one place. It lunged from time to time when it tried to catch a merfolk.

There was one time when it noticed Jet and was about to come at him. Jet was extremely panicked at the time. He couldn't swim as fast as the merfolk, after all. Luckily, Nogg came and struck the turtle's head, drawing its fury. It chased after Nogg instead.

After some time, Jet finally sent John a message. "I've identified all its weak spots."