

BloodLine 891

Chapter 891: Part 1: Hunting the Red Nosed Monkey Monster

From MC's Perspective:

Time passed.

As evening approached, I emerged from the essence chamber feeling somewhat tense.

I hadn't sensed the barrier yet.

I knew it might take time, but a sudden sense of urgency crept in.

Dismissing these thoughts, I returned to my room and showered.

After twenty minutes, I changed into casual clothes and settled on the couch to scan the online news.

I was eager to see what was happening in the inner post region.

Various headlines flashed across the news feed as I scrolled through page after page.

Most articles were about everyday events.

There were reports about events organized by a prominent organization and a minor competition among the Bloodline Families.

However, this wasn't the news I sought.

I was looking for signs of any major incidents.

Minutes passed, and my expression darkened.

None of the major news outlets reported threats or monster outbreaks.

It was all routine news.

Yet, a growing sense of unease lingered.

I closed the screen and decided to take a nap.

If I continued to think about it, my mood would worsen further.

So I went to sleep.

The Following Day

After getting ready, I reached the lobby.

I considered taking on a mission today.

Fighting is one way to break through faster.

I'd already spent all day in the essence chamber practicing, but it hadn't worked.

I hoped this plan would.

The staff was surprised to see me.

I approached the desk and explained my request.

They displayed a list of SS-ELITE Rank missions on the screen.

I chose the mission to hunt Class-7 Red Nosed Monkeys.

The mission required the cores of five of these monsters.

It wasn't just the fact that it involved a Class-7 monster; the location was also the Delta City Boundary, where I'd been before.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

This time, however, I'd need to venture deeper into the inner area.

After selecting the mission, I left the building and headed towards the teleportation platform.

As I walked, I noticed a lack of enthusiasm among the staff.

There had to be a reason for this.

Shaking my head, I continued on.

Soon, I reached the teleportation platform.

Nodding to the guards, I stepped inside.

After activating the server, I watched as the platform activated and I vanished.

Swoosh!

I opened my eyes to find myself on the Delta City platform.

Greeting the guards, I levitated into the air and began moving towards the boundary.

Only the fight against monsters could clear my mind of other distractions.

I flew across the sky and reached the boundary a few minutes later.

Thud!

I landed abruptly on the ground in front of the barrier.

I took the token from my storage ring and held it out.

Then I walked through the barrier and emerged on the other side.

The same lavish green outer area stretched before me, but my mission target wasn't here.

I needed to delve deeper into the woods of the inner area.

I activated my perceptual ability and began moving forward.

I expected to encounter other warriors on a mission here.

Time passed, and I covered several miles before reaching the edge of the inner area.

Surprisingly, I hadn't seen any other warriors.

“Is the Delta City border less popular than I thought?” I wondered aloud.

Shaking my head, I continued flying forward.

A few hours later, I finally saw people.

A group of warriors was approaching me.

I could clearly see their movements.

Hesitation flickered in my eyes.

Should I avoid them, or should I ignore their presence?

After a moment’s thought, I assessed their strength.

The group consisted of four people: two SSS-ELITE Warriors and two SS-ELITE Rank.

They wore Federation uniforms and matching headbands – all four men sported the same red band with a distinctive pattern.

A realization dawned on me.

They were probably warriors from the same family.

Their strength posed no threat to me.

Soon, our paths converged.

The warriors noticed me approaching.

As they drew closer, they recognized me.

“Zack Lockwood!”

“He’s Zack Lockwood, the one trending online!”

“What’s he doing here?”

“Maybe he’s here for a mission.”

“Let’s greet him.”

The four warriors exchanged quick comments.

I saw the warriors standing before me.

Their expressions were neutral, and I sensed no hostility.

Reassured, I decided to speak.

“Hi, I’m Zack Lockwood,” I said.

“We are Federation members from a medium-sized warrior family,” the SSS-ELITE Rank Warrior introduced himself.

The others followed with their introductions.

After exchanging pleasantries, we parted ways.

I continued my flight toward the inner area.

A few hours later, I reached the inner area.

The greenery was denser, and I could spot several monsters with my perception.

I began flying above the forest, aware of the aerial threats.

Thanks to the mission description, I already knew the monster's location, saving time.

As I flew, a bird-like monster appeared.

Instead of fleeing, it advanced towards me.

Realizing its strength was Class-8, my expression turned serious.

I decisively landed on the ground as the monster passed overhead.

Thud!

I started walking towards the western side of the forest, the home of the Red Nosed Monkeys.

These monsters were known for their ferocity, bloodthirst, and frequent infighting.

An hour later, I reached the edge of the western forest.

Slowing down, I searched for the Red Nosed Monkeys.

A rustling sound caught my attention.

Through my perception, I detected the presence of other warriors.

They must have heard about the mission.

My eyes turned cold.

If they were friendly, it would be fine.

But if they were troublemakers, a fight could break out.

I decided to assess their strength first.

As they drew closer within my perception range, I noted their capabilities.

There were several SSS-ELITE Rank Warriors among them, but one in particular stood out.

He exuded a sense of danger.

“What should I do?” I mused.

A fight would be troublesome, and I didn’t want to face the monsters with injuries.

Yet, confrontation seemed inevitable.

My eyes turned cold.

I have decided to confront them.

Chapter 892: Part 2: Hunting the Red Nosed Monkey Monster

From MC's Perspective:

I spotted four SSS-Elite Rank Warriors and a Commander Rank Warrior.

Maintaining my position, I observed as they reacted to my presence.

"Wow!"

"What do we have here?"

"Isn't that Zack Lockwood?"

"Yeah, it's him."

"What's he doing here?"

"Maybe he's on a mission."

The Warriors exchanged hushed comments, while their Commander remained silent.

Expecting them to avoid me, I was surprised when they approached.

"Zack Lockwood, what are you doing here?" one of the SSS-Elite Rank Warriors demanded.

"Sightseeing," I replied calmly.

I turned to leave, but their expressions darkened.

They knew my background – my teacher is a renowned Silver Mark Warrior.

However, their leader had a different agenda.

Greed flashed in his eyes.

He believed I must be carrying valuable treasures.

The fact that I was alone on a mission made me an irresistible target.

He assessed me as an SSS-Elite Rank Warrior, a challenge they could overcome.

“Stop!” The leader of the group uttered in a low tone.

Hearing that, my eyes flashed with icy fury.

“I knew it,” I cursed under my breath.

The leader, Simon, had a malicious glint in his eyes.

There was no doubt in my mind that he planned to attack me.

Instead of drawing my sword, I decided to channel my blood energy.

The team members were surprised by Simon’s sudden aggression, and they all looked at him with confusion.

“Simon, are you out of your mind?” a sensible warrior spoke up.

“Let him go.

Don’t you forget who he is?”

Hearing this, the other warriors quickly understood the situation.

They had only come to investigate the noise and had stumbled upon me entirely by coincidence.

There was no point in making an enemy out of me, especially someone with my reputation.

“Leader, what are you doing?” one warrior asked cautiously.

“Yeah, let’s just go!” another urged.

But Simon’s eyes remained fixed on me, a ruthless glint hardening his features.

“Hand over your treasures,” he demanded, his voice cold and menacing.

“And I’ll let you leave in one piece.”

The faces of the other warriors fell in dismay.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

They clearly disagreed with Simon’s actions.

Meanwhile, I had begun channeling the blood method internally.

I could feel the power coursing through my veins, ready to be unleashed at any moment.

I looked at him, a crazy plan forming in my mind.

“Lightning Phantom Technique!”

The next moment, I activated the movement technique, and lightning bolts enveloped my legs.

Disappearing in a flash, I plunged deep into the woods.

Swoosh!

Simon was enraged.

In a blur of motion, he vanished from the spot, giving chase.

The remaining Warriors were stunned.

They realized they were going to pay dearly for their leader’s recklessness.

“It’s over,” one of the SSS-Elite Rank Warriors said grimly.

“If he informs his teacher, we’re all doomed.”

“Simon has gone mad!”

“He was thinking of looting him?”

Is he stupid?

Don't you think he might have powerful defensive items?" the sensible warrior added.

Their expressions darkened.

"We have to kill him," a short, black-haired warrior declared.

"We won't survive if Simon gets caught."

"Yes, his family won't let us go.

Simon is a rising star.

He's already a Commander and will soon be a General," another warrior agreed.

They exchanged worried glances.

No matter what they did, they were in trouble.

"Let's catch him.

Zack Lockwood is just an SS-Elite Rank Warrior.

We can dispose of him without anyone finding out," another warrior suggested.

Without hesitation, they all sprang into action, following the trail.

Meanwhile, I was fleeing at full speed, but I could still sense his presence.

Boom!

Simon grinned before launching fireballs at me.

The fireballs were thick and red, radiating intense heat, a signature of a high-rank warrior.

I used my speed to evade, but one landed near my feet.

Boom!

The fireball exploded, sending fiery sparks flying.

This was the elemental attack of a Commander Rank Warrior.

The shockwave hit me hard, destabilizing me.

I stumbled and fell.

Swoosh!

Simon appeared before me with a wide grin.

Instead of drawing a weapon, he clenched his fist to strike.

Using my perception, I saw the incoming punch and rolled to my right to avoid it.

Boom!

Simon's punch shattered the ground, creating a deep crater.

The shockwave spread outward.

Surprise flashed across Simon's face.

He hadn't expected someone weaker than him to evade his attack.

After all, Zack

was only an SS-Elite Rank Warrior.

I quickly got to my feet and activated the Lightning Phantom Technique again, fleeing into the distance.

Swoosh!

I felt like I was nearing the Red Nosed Monkey Monsters' base.

Simon watched me go, his expression darkening.

Swoosh!

Simon vanished from the spot, launching into a full-speed chase.

His demeanor had shifted to deadly seriousness.

In the blink of an eye, he was behind me.

With brute force, he struck my back.

Boom!

The impact was devastating.

I realized too late that I couldn't dodge.

My body was sent flying, crashing into a nearby tree.

Pfff!

Blood gushed from my mouth.

My back felt like it was tearing apart.

Thankfully, my bones were strong.

An ordinary person's spine would have been shattered.

I wiped the blood from my lips.

Swoosh!

Using the Lightning Movement Technique, I fled the scene, blood dripping from my back as I raced through the forest.

Meanwhile, the warriors had caught up with Simon's trail.

Before they could contact him, they saw him disappear into the woods.

“What is he doing?”

“I thought he would have killed him already.”

“Why is he taking so long?”

“He’s enjoying tormenting him.”

“This idiot doesn’t realize that the more time he takes, the more time Zack gets.”

The warriors exchanged confused and worried glances.

Simon’s actions were baffling.

Not far away, a group of Red Nosed Monkey Monsters lived.

Several were Class-6 and Class-7, with a Class-8 monster as their leader.

Meanwhile, I kept my perception focused on Simon.

He was still close, but unlike before, he wasn’t rushing to attack.

It seemed he was enjoying the thrill of the hunt.

Chapter 893: Cheeky Escape

From MC’s Perspective:

A searing pain erupted across my entire body, every nerve screaming in agony.

Blood trickled warmly down my skin, a stark contrast to the icy fear that gripped me.

I was running, fleeing for my life, when a sudden, overwhelming sense of danger washed over me.

Boom!

Before I could react, a crushing force slammed into my back.

It felt like being hit by a cannonball.

My body was propelled forward, careening through the dense undergrowth.

The world spun into a blur of green and brown as I crashed into a cluster of trees.

A guttural groan escaped my lips.

The pain was excruciating, a level of suffering I hadn't experienced in what felt like lifetimes.

Simon's laughter echoed through the forest, a cruel and mocking sound.

His exhilaration was palpable, the sadistic pleasure of hunting down a wounded prey.

"It's a shame I can't record this," he muttered to himself, his voice dripping with contempt.

The thought of sharing this moment with others was clearly intoxicating to him.

But if he tried to capture it, he'd be making a fatal mistake.

My mind raced as I lay on the forest floor, every breath a painful effort.

My back throbbed with a sickening intensity, and I feared my spine might be broken.

I couldn't allow this humiliation to continue.

A desperate plan formed in my mind.

I needed to lure Simon into the territory of the Red Nosed Monkey Monsters.

I was certain I had stumbled upon their domain earlier, but there was no sign of them now.

Where could they be?

Simon's triumphant grin widened as he approached my fallen form.

The hunter was about to become the hunted.

This was no longer a game for him.

As the leader of the hunting team, he knew it was time to finish the job.

Meanwhile, the warriors burst through the undergrowth, their eyes scanning the area frantically.

There, in a macabre tableau, they found Simon standing over the prone figure of Zack Lockwood.

A collective sigh of relief escaped their lips as they confirmed Simon's capture.

Yet, their relief was short-lived.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

Their gaze fell upon Lockwood, his body a grotesque canvas of crimson.

Shock, disbelief, and a tinge of fear mingled in their expressions.

“Is that really Zack Lockwood?” one warrior whispered, their voice trembling.

“Didn’t he have those life-saving items?” another questioned, confusion etched on their face.

“This is too risky,” a third declared, their voice filled with urgency.

“Finish him off and let’s get out of here.”

A flurry of hushed conversations erupted among the warriors as they scrambled to reach Simon’s side.

Their focus was razor-sharp, their bodies tense with anticipation.

Simon stood over Lockwood, a sinister grin plastered across his face.

His eyes gleamed with a predatory satisfaction as he surveyed his handiwork.

“Zack Lockwood,” he hissed, his voice dripping with venom, “your end is nigh.” With a swift movement, he raised his fist, ready to deliver the final blow.

A flicker of a smile tugged at my lips as a surge of adrenaline coursed through me.

In the depths of my mind, I could see them – a horde of monstrous creatures, their forms growing larger with each passing second.

They were coming, and they were coming fast.

The warriors converged on Simon, their bodies tensed and ready for action.

His fist, mere inches from Zack Lockwood's skull, hovered in midair.

Then, as abruptly as it had risen, his hand dropped.

A look of shock and terror replaced the triumphant smirk on his face.

"Simon, what's wrong?" one of the warriors demanded, confusion etched on their face.

"A horde of monsters is charging towards us," Simon gasped, his voice barely audible.

"There are multiple Class-7 monsters and I sense a Class-8 lurking among them.

We need to leave immediately."

A wave of panic swept through the group.

Their faces paled as the gravity of the situation sank in.

A Class-8 monster was no ordinary threat; it was a harbinger of doom.

Simon's gaze fell back to Zack, a flicker of regret passing through his eyes.

It was a fleeting moment, quickly replaced by a cold, hard determination.

“I suppose you’re destined to become monster fodder,” he said flatly.

One of the warriors, their greed momentarily overcoming their fear, suggested, “Can we loot his storage ring?”

Simon shook his head vehemently.

“No chance.

That would draw unwanted attention.

Besides, we don’t know if it’s tracked.

We simply don’t have time for that.”

With a final glance at the horrific scene before them, the group turned and fled, their hearts pounding in their chests.

The forest, once a place of hunting, had transformed into a deadly arena.

A wave of relief washed over me.

Engaging a Commander-rank warrior in my current state was tantamount to suicide.

But my respite was short-lived.

The ground beneath me began to tremble with increasing intensity.

The reality of my predicament crashed down upon me.

Ignoring the throbbing pain in my body, I focused on my options.

A desperate plan formed in my mind.

I reached for the Destruction Bead, a gift from my teacher.

Its aura pulsed with an otherworldly energy, a promise of both immense power and unpredictable consequences.

It was a gamble, but it might be my only chance.

With trembling hands, I lowered myself to the ground, the bead clutched tightly in my palm.

The earth shuddered once more, and then, in an instant, the world before me transformed.

The verdant bushes vanished, replaced by a terrifying spectacle – a monstrous horde bearing down upon me.

My eyes widened in astonishment as the monstrous horde materialized before me.

It was not the chaotic mob of monsters I had anticipated but a disciplined army of Red Nosed Monkey Monsters, flanked by other, lesser ape-like species.

A wave of realization washed over me.

I was deep within the Red Nosed Monkey Monsters' territory, and their aggressive charge was a direct response to the intrusion of Simon and his group.

In the blink of an eye, the vanguard of Red Nosed Monkey Monsters was upon me.

Yet, just as swiftly, they halted, their bodies rigid with tension.

Their beady eyes, filled with primal intelligence, were fixed on the Destruction Bead clutched in my hand.

A flicker of fear, an almost human-like emotion, darted across their faces.

The Class-7 monsters behind them, sensing the hesitation of their leaders, also ground to a halt, creating a ripple effect that halted the entire horde.

A triumphant grin spread across my face as I witnessed the horde's reaction to the Destruction Bead.

This was my chance.

I swiftly retrieved a healing potion from my storage ring and downed it in one gulp.

My body was already channeling healing essence to staunch the bleeding, and this potion would accelerate the recovery process.

Meanwhile, a colossal figure emerged from the depths of the forest.

A Class-8 Red Nosed Monkey Monster, towering at an imposing fifteen feet, resembled a small mountain brought to life.

Its crimson nose and jagged teeth were as fearsome as the legends foretold.

The creature's gaze locked onto me, the injured intruder, before shifting to the ominous orb in my hand.

A flicker of intelligence, mixed with a tinge of fear, danced in its eyes as it recognized the object's deadly potential.

Torn between its primal instinct to eliminate threats and its survival instinct, the monstrous ape hesitated.

The scent of fear from the fleeing humans still lingered in the air, yet the allure of a final kill was undeniable.

The monstrous ape hesitated, its mind grappling with the unknown power emanating from the Destruction Bead.

In the end, prudence prevailed over its predatory instincts.

With a thunderous roar, a reluctant retreat was ordered.

The horde responded with a chorus of echoing roars, their eyes filled with a mix of fear and frustration as they disappeared back into the dense undergrowth.

A sigh of relief escaped my lips as the last of the monsters vanished.

Leaning back against the sturdy trunk of a nearby tree, I carefully returned the Destruction Bead to my storage ring.

Today had been a harrowing ordeal, far beyond anything I had anticipated.

To think that someone would dare provoke a Silver Mark Warrior was sheer madness.

Yet, here I stood, alive and relatively unscathed.

A flicker of determination ignited in my eyes as I thought about Simon.

This was far from over.

The seeds of vengeance had been sown, and I would ensure they bore fruit.

Time crept by as I concentrated on my recovery.

The pain was still intense, but the healing essence was gradually knitting my wounds.

I was incredibly fortunate that Simon hadn't resorted to his elemental abilities.

If he had, the outcome could have been catastrophic.

As darkness began to envelop the forest, I assessed my condition.

Most of my external injuries had healed, but the fractures in my body were still a cause for concern.

It was clear that I needed to return to the headquarters for proper medical attention.

Chapter 894: Completing the mission (Red Nosed Monkey Monsters)

From MC's Perspective:

The sky was a thick, inky canvas, but my perception pierced through the gloom.

A flicker of movement caught my attention, something stirring in the undergrowth not far off.

Intrigue and caution warred within me.

I was on my way back to HQ, but this anomaly demanded investigation.

Rising to my feet, I cautiously approached the disturbance.

An unknown factor was always a threat, especially in this world.

If it was a monster beyond my capabilities, the Destruction Bead would be my last resort.

The area was cloaked in a verdant curtain of bushes.

My physical vision was obscured, but my perception painted a clear picture of a hidden presence.

It was time to reveal the unseen.

With a focused thought, I unleashed a “Lightning Finger.” A jagged bolt of electricity erupted from my index finger, tearing through the air towards the concealed entity.

The impact was a blinding flash followed by a deafening screech.

The bushes erupted with furious movement.

A horde of red-nosed monkey-like monsters, their eyes burning with rage, emerged from the undergrowth.

It was a hostile encounter from the start.

“So they hadn’t abandoned this area completely,” I mused internally.

A mere eight Class-7 monsters, a formidable force to be sure, were lurking somewhere nearby, their actions dictated by orders from their unseen leader.

Yet, their presence was a fortuitous development.

I'd been grappling with the challenge of reporting back on my mission.

Now, with these powerful monsters at my disposal, I could potentially craft a more compelling and impactful report.

A Class-7 monster was the equivalent of an SSS-Elite rank being, a realm of power I had yet to fully attain.

While many perceived me as on the cusp of that SS-ELITE pinnacle, the reality was that I still had a significant gap to bridge.

To leap directly from my current level to SSS-Elite would be an extraordinary feat, almost unheard of.

However, I was determined.

Persistent combat and ample resources were the keys to grow faster.

"Lightning Finger!" I commanded, channeling a surge of energy.

This time, instead of a mere spark, a thick, pulsating bolt of lightning erupted from my index finger.

With a thunderous crack, it arced towards the heart of the monster cluster.

I didn't wait for the full impact.

My grip tightened around the hilt of my black sword as I launched myself into the fray.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

The lightning bolt found its mark with explosive force, striking one of the red-nosed monsters directly in the face.

Its eyes, exposed to the raw power of the attack, erupted in agony.

A blood-curdling screech echoed through the undergrowth as its companions surged forward in a frenzy of rage.

The first to reach me was a hulking brute.

Its claws, tipped with sharp, menacing talons, aimed for my vulnerable throat.

But I was ready.

With a swift movement, I parried the attack, the black sword meeting the monsters's claws with a clang that resonated through the battlefield.

As the second attacker closed in, I knew I needed a more decisive strike.

With a concentrated thought, I activated the "Lightning Wheel" technique.

Instantly, a swirling vortex of purple lightning materialized around me, a protective barrier imbued with destructive power.

The oncoming monster collided with the electric barrier, triggering a cataclysmic explosion.

Lightning bolts rained down upon the entire group, their bodies convulsing under the intense assault.

The two monsters at the forefront bore the brunt of the attack, their howls of pain a stark contrast to the silent efficiency of my lightning magic.

The first two monsters were writhing in agony, their bodies convulsing under the relentless assault of lightning.

Seizing the opportunity, I shifted my grip, transferring the black sword to my right hand.

With a powerful leap, I closed the distance between myself and the injured monster.

My body tensed as I channeled the Blood Fist technique.

A crimson energy, thick and pulsating, began to course through my veins, gathering in my left fist like a molten core.

As the energy reached its peak, my fist became a crimson blur, a weapon of pure, unbridled force.

With a thunderous impact, my blood-infused fist connected with the monster's skull.

The monster let out a deafening roar, its head snapping back from the force of the blow.

Blood gushed from the gaping wound, staining the monster's face.

A few more strikes like this, and I could shatter its skull like an eggshell.

But the battle was far from over.

Another of the red-nosed monsters launched itself at me, its claws extended in a deadly arc.

I met the attack with a swift and precise swing of my black sword, the metal ringing out as it deflected the monster's assault.

Realizing the growing threat, I once more activated the "Lightning Wheel" technique.

A crackling, purple vortex of energy erupted around me, forming a formidable shield of lightning.

As the enraged monsters lunged, they collided with the electric barrier, triggering another explosive discharge.

The impact sent shockwaves through the undergrowth as bolts of lightning arced out in every direction.

Three of the monsters were visibly injured, their bodies scorched and trembling.

Capitalizing on their weakened state, I maintained the Lightning Wheel, using it as a constant source of damage and disruption.

The electric barrier hummed with energy, a deadly cage that trapped the monsters in a whirlwind of pain.

However, I knew that prolonged exposure to lightning might not be enough to finish them off.

To expedite matters, I began to weave the Blood Fist technique into the chaos.

Between the intervals of the Lightning Wheel, I would find an opening to unleash a devastating blow to a monster's skull.

The crimson energy crackled and surged through my arm, each strike a testament to the raw power I was capable of.

Twenty grueling minutes passed, a blur of lightning, blood, and fury.

Finally, with a sickening crunch, my Blood Fist shattered the skull of the first monster.

Its lifeless body slumped to the ground, its vitality extinguished.

Four opponents remained, each bearing the scars of our brutal encounter.

One was on the brink of collapse, but the others were still dangerous.

It was clear that the Blood Fist was proving to be a more efficient and terrifying weapon in this brutal confrontation.

The pattern of Lightning Wheel and Blood Fist proved devastatingly effective.

The red-nosed monsters were no match for the relentless assault.

One by one, their bodies succumbed to the combined might of lightning and brute force.

An hour later, the battlefield was strewn with their lifeless forms.

Before I could turn my attention to the remaining survivors, they had already fled into the dense undergrowth, their courage shattered.

With a sense of grim satisfaction, I began the grim task of harvesting the monster cores.

The process was meticulous and time-consuming, requiring precision and a steady hand.

Twenty minutes later, I had extracted the valuable cores and was ready to depart.

A growing sense of unease prompted me to leave the scene of carnage undisturbed.

I had a premonition that this battle was far from over.

The leader of this pack would undoubtedly return, and I didn't want to be caught off guard.

My intuition proved correct.

Not long after I vanished into the undergrowth, a horde of red-nosed monsters emerged from the dense foliage.

At their forefront was a colossal monster, easily twice the size of its brethren.

Its red nose glowed with a sinister intensity, and its eyes burned with a primal rage.

As the monstrous horde surveyed the carnage, their howls of anger echoed through the forest.

Some of the smaller monsters began to search the area, their senses straining to pick up any trace of their enemy.

The leader, however, was focused on a different scent.

It was a faint but unmistakable trace of the injured human, a lingering echo of the previous battle.

A cold fury ignited within the beast.

It had lost its underlings, and now it knew the identity of its enemy.

A vow of vengeance formed in its monstrous mind.

It would find the intruder, and when it did, the payback would be tenfold.

Meanwhile, I propelled myself through the darkening forest, my movements a blur of speed and lightning thanks to the “Lightning Phantom” technique.

Night had enveloped the world, casting long, eerie shadows.

I wondered if any hunting teams would still be active under the cloak of darkness.

Even if they were, I had no desire for an encounter

The bitter taste of jealousy and envy, born from the actions of a rival named Simon, still lingered.

His teammates, though seemingly reasonable, had ultimately sided with his madness.

Shaking off these distracting thoughts, I focused on the task at hand.

The rhythmic pounding of my feet against the forest floor provided a steady beat as I pushed my body to its limits.

An hour later, I emerged from the dense woodland into a more open terrain.

The familiar landmarks of the outer area were visible in the fading twilight.

A few more minutes of exertion, and I would reach the protective barrier.

Soon, I stood at the edge of the barrier, a shimmering, invisible wall separating the safety of the human world from the perilous wilderness.

I pulled the token from my inventory, a small, unassuming object that held the key to passage.

With a touch of the token to the barrier, I stepped through, leaving the dangers of the forest behind.

Chapter 895: SS-Elite Peak Stage (Essence Breakthrough)

From MC's Perspective:

With a heavy sigh, I turned my back on the dense, ominous forest that had been the battleground for the past hour.

The crisp autumn air carried the faint scent of decay and iron, a stark reminder of the carnage I had just witnessed.

The trek back to the HQ was a silent affair, my mind replaying the brutal encounter.

Eighteen minutes later, I stepped back into the familiar confines of the HQ building.

The warmth that greeted me was a stark contrast to the chilling atmosphere of the forest.

I approached the mission counter, my hands trembling slightly as I handed over the mission document.

The staff, their faces etched with the usual blend of boredom and curiosity, efficiently collected the monster cores from my bag, their eyes scanning the items with practiced indifference.

With a final stamp of approval, the mission was officially completed.

I retreated to my room, the weight of the day finally catching up with me.

Today's experience has been a stark reminder of the brutal reality of this world.

Relying on the Destruction Bead was a risky gamble.

I needed to devise a more sustainable strategy.

A hot bath seemed like the perfect antidote to the grime and exhaustion.

Twenty minutes later, I emerged from the bathroom, wrapped in a soft, fluffy robe.

The world outside the bathroom door seemed distant and muffled.

With a final shake of my head to clear my thoughts, I slipped into bed, the soft mattress enveloping me like a comforting embrace.

The following morning, a sense of anticipation stirred within me as I awoke.

A premonition of a breakthrough hung heavy in the air, a tantalizing promise of progress.

After a swift and efficient morning routine, I stepped out of my room and into the familiar, sterile environment of the essence chamber.

Today was different.

Today felt like a turning point.

With a determined stride, I approached the central console and initiated the activation sequence.

The chamber hummed to life, its walls glowing with an ethereal blue light.

As the world energy began to flood the chamber, filling the space with a palpable sense of vitality, I stepped onto the elevated platform at the center of the room.

Assuming the lotus position, I closed my eyes, immersing myself in the familiar rhythm of the lightning scripture.

A serene calm washed over me as I began to circulate the energy within my body.

The white mist, a byproduct of the energy conversion process, enveloped me like a comforting cocoon.

Slowly but surely, the first tendrils of purple energy began to seep into my body, a subtle yet exhilarating sensation.

With meticulous focus, I guided the energy through intricate pathways, following the precise patterns dictated by the scripture.

Time passed,

I continued the rhythmic dance of energy, my mind a serene expanse.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

With each circulation, I felt a growing pressure within my dantian, a sensation akin to inflating a balloon to its maximum capacity.

Then, it happened.

A subtle shift, a resistance, a tangible barrier.

It was as if I had reached the edge of a precipice, looking down into an abyss of untapped potential.

A thrill of excitement coursed through me.

This was it.

The moment I had been preparing for.

My focus sharpened, my breath deepening.

The time for contemplation was over.

It was time to push forward, to break through the barrier and ascend to a new level of power.

A surge of determination ignited within me, propelling me forward into the unknown.

Pulse by pulse, the purple energy coursed through my veins, igniting a fiery warmth that spread throughout my body.

As the circulation reached its crescendo, the energy converged at my dantian, a swirling vortex of power taking shape.

With each repetition, the vortex grew stronger, promising a breakthrough that was imminent.

Click!

With a resounding click, the formidable barrier that had stood as an impenetrable fortress shattered into oblivion.

A surge of raw, unbridled energy erupted within me, a cosmic explosion igniting every fiber of my being.

My body became a conduit for this torrential force, as it coursed through my veins with electrifying intensity.

The confines of my dantian expanded exponentially, morphing into a vast, ethereal chamber.

The once vibrant purple essence thickened, its hue deepening into an almost indigo shade, pulsating with raw power.

I had achieved the SS-ELITE Peak Stage (Essence).

The transformation was profound.

It was not merely an increase in energy reserves; it was a refinement of my entire being.

My physical form underwent a subtle yet significant metamorphosis.

Veins, once mere conduits, transformed into shimmering rivers of energy.

Bones, once rigid and inflexible, now possessed a newfound resilience.

Tendons and ligaments, enhanced by the influx of vital energy, became taut and elastic.

Even my internal organs experienced a rejuvenation, their efficiency and capacity elevated to unprecedented levels.

A breakthrough in essence cultivation was more than just an accumulation of energy.

It was a holistic enhancement of the entire body.

While I had previously masked my true strength, giving the illusion of a Peak Stage cultivator, the reality was far different.

Now, I stood at the precipice of true mastery, my foundation solidified for the arduous journey to the next realm, the coveted SSS-ELITE.

This breakthrough was a crucial step, a bridge to a future of unparalleled power.

A few hours later, the tumultuous energy within me finally settled into a calm, steady flow.

My eyes snapped open, the world coming into sharp focus.

An acrid stench assaulted my nostrils, a stark contrast to the serene atmosphere I had cultivated during the breakthrough.

As my senses adjusted, I realized my body was coated in a thick, viscous layer of black sludge.

This was a familiar occurrence, a natural byproduct of the purification process that accompanied every breakthrough.

However, the intensity of the impurities was unusual.

The pills I had consumed, gifts from my teacher and the academy head, were renowned for their purity.

Yet, here I was, covered in a layer of grime.

A frown tugged at my lips.

It was a clear indication that I needed to pay closer attention to my diet.

With a sigh, I rose from the platform and moved towards the control console.

The chamber, once brimming with life-giving energy, began to rapidly deplete its reserves as I initiated the shutdown sequence.

A few moments later, the chamber returned to its dormant state.

I retreated to my room, the urgent need for a cleansing bath overriding all other considerations.

The process of removing the stubborn sludge was a time-consuming ordeal, but I persisted until my skin was rid of the last trace of impurity.

Finally clean and refreshed, I pulled on a fresh set of casual clothes.

The weight of the world seemed to lift from my shoulders.

The breakthrough had brought me a significant step closer to my ultimate goal.

Yet, I knew that the journey was far from over.

While the world placed an undue emphasis on realm breakthroughs, I understood the importance of a solid foundation.

A breakthrough in body cultivation would amplify my strength exponentially, but such advancements were shrouded in secrecy.

I would continue to cultivate in silence, the silver ring on my finger a constant guardian of my secrets.

It keeps me safe from prying eyes.

Nobody knows about my current breakthrough.

A few minutes later, the gnawing hunger that had been building since the breakthrough intensified.

I decided to order a meal.

Given the energy expended, I opted for a hearty platter of monster meat.

The rich, protein-packed meal would provide the fuel my body craved.

As I devoured the food, the satisfaction of replenishing my depleted energy reserves was palpable.

The meat, cooked to perfection, was a feast for both my taste buds and my body.

Thirty minutes later, with my appetite satiated, I settled onto the sofa, my gaze drifting towards the digital screen.

The latest news cycle unfolded before me, a constant stream of information vying for my attention.

Meanwhile, in the bustling metropolis of Alpha City, a group of young adventurers, led by the charismatic Simon, were immersed in a world of their own.

Their current mission demanded their full focus, but a nagging doubt persisted at the back of their minds.

Their enemy, Zack Lockwood, was dead.

The events of the previous day had left them with a growing sense of unease.

They were convinced that Zack was no longer among the living, yet the absence of any concrete news was perplexing.

Simon's voice, laced with a mix of worry and accusation, cut through the tense silence in the room.

"Do you think the Federation is intentionally withholding information about Zack?" His eyes scanned the faces of his companions, searching for any clues or shared anxieties.

The question hung heavy in the air, each member of the group lost in their own thoughts.

Finally, the most level-headed of them, a seasoned warrior

broke the silence.

"It's possible they're searching for his body," he suggested, his voice tinged with uncertainty.

"We have to hope we didn't leave any traces behind."

His words were a stark reminder of the dangers they faced, the possibility of retribution looming over them.

A collective shiver ran down the spines of the group.

The thought of the Federation's formidable forces hunting them down was a terrifying prospect.

Fear, cold and insidious, crept into their hearts.

They were no longer just adventurers seeking fortune and glory; they were potential targets, their lives hanging by a thread.

Chapter 896: Continuous training

Alpha City

A contemplative silence fell over the group as they processed the grim reality of Zack Lockwood's potential demise.

Simon, however, seemed to be wrestling with a thought.

Finally, a glimmer of hope appeared in his eyes.

"There might be a way to confirm whether he's alive or not," he began, his voice low and deliberate.

Intrigue sparked in the eyes of his companions, and they leaned in, eager to hear his plan.

"We can return to Delta City," Simon continued.

"The guards stationed at the teleportation platform might have seen or heard something that could confirm Zack's fate." A collective nod indicated understanding.

Their mission in Alpha City was paramount, but verifying Zack's status was a pressing concern that couldn't be ignored.

With renewed determination, the group prepared to dive back into the heart of their mission.

Once their task in Alpha City was complete, they would return to Delta City to seek answers.

...

From the MC's Perspective:

As the sun began its descent, casting the world in hues of orange and purple, I emerged from the confines of the puppet training chamber.

My body ached with a familiar, satisfying soreness.

Hours of intense practice had been dedicated to mastering the intricacies of lightning techniques, a necessary step to fully harness my newfound power.

It was a daunting task, one that would undoubtedly require days, perhaps even weeks, to perfect.

Returning to my room, I sought solace in the warmth of a long bath.

The hot water soothed my weary muscles, and for a brief moment, I allowed myself to relax.

Wrapped in a soft robe, I sank into the comfort of the sofa, my attention drawn to the flickering screen of my device.

A world of information lay at my fingertips, and I delved into the endless stream of news articles.

Thirty minutes passed in a blur of scrolling and skimming.

Headline after headline, yet nothing out of the ordinary.

No mention of any disturbances, no signs of impending danger.

A pang of disappointment washed over me.

Teacher was nowhere to be found.

If he had returned, surely Jonathan would have contacted me by now.

Shaking my head to clear the unwelcome thoughts, I reminded myself of the path ahead.

Mastering my techniques and breaking through the physique barrier were the immediate priorities.

The Following Day

The morning sun painted the room in warm hues as I completed my routine.

A sense of purpose filled me as I stepped out and made my way towards the Gravity Training Chamber.

The heavy door slid shut behind me, isolating me from the world.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

Approaching the central console, I initiated the training program.

With a deep breath, I ascended the platform and assumed a cross-legged posture.

The chamber rumbled to life, a low hum filling the air.

Initially, the increased gravity was barely perceptible, a gentle push against my body.

It was as if the world had grown slightly heavier, a subtle challenge to be overcome.

However, this initial ease was deceptive.

Gradually, the pressure intensified, transforming the comfortable into the uncomfortable.

My muscles tensed, resisting the invisible force that sought to crush me.

Yet, I persevered.

Closing my eyes, I focused on the sensations within my body.

The subtle shifts and adjustments required to counteract the growing pressure were a form of meditation.

Each fiber of my being was engaged in a silent battle against the relentless gravity.

As time wore on, the pressure reached a critical point.

My muscles throbbed, and my skin felt as if it were being stretched to its limits.

A tingling sensation spread through my body as the gravity chamber entered the fifth stage.

This was a level of pressure typically endured by Super Elite Warriors.

I gritted my teeth, determined to push my limits further.

Meanwhile

The first rays of dawn painted the sky in hues of pink and gold as Simon and his team emerged from their temporary lodgings.

Their mission in Alpha City had been a success, but their minds remained preoccupied with the fate of their missing comrade, Zack Lockwood.

The urgency to confirm his demise was palpable, and they were determined to resolve the matter as swiftly as possible.

“Simon, what do we do if he’s alive?” The question hung in the air, a silent acknowledgment of the grim possibility.

The speaker’s voice was laced with uncertainty.

Simon’s response was swift and chilling.

His eyes, usually filled with a calm determination, hardened into glacial pools.

His gaze swept across the group, meeting each member’s eyes.

He saw the unspoken question in their minds, the fear that dared not speak its name.

A moment of tense silence passed before the group averted their gaze, their unspoken agreement to bury their doubts.

With a curt nod, Simon turned and began to walk.

The team followed in silent compliance, their footsteps echoing in the morning stillness.

The journey to the teleportation platform was brief, but it felt like an eternity.

The guards stationed there cast indifferent glances at the group before returning to their monotonous routine.

Without hesitation, the team stepped onto the platform and initiated the teleportation process.

A blinding light enveloped them, and in an instant, they were transported to the bustling metropolis of Delta City, their quest for answers about to begin.

Two guards materialized before them, their figures etched against the backdrop of the teleportation platform.

The men were familiar faces, their weathered features bearing the marks of countless encounters with warriors from all walks of life.

Yet, amidst the blur of ordinary faces, Simon's stood out, a beacon of recognition.

"Simon, is it?

What brings you here?" one guard greeted, a hint of surprise in his voice.

The other guard's eyes scanned the group, his query unspoken but clear: another mission?

Simon nodded, his expression a mask of controlled composure.

"Indeed, there is a mission.

But before we proceed, I have a query." He gestured for the group to step away from the platform, a silent request for privacy.

The guards exchanged a curious glance before following.

"What is it?" one of them asked, his voice filled with anticipation.

Simon's voice was steady, but his eyes held a growing intensity.

"I need information about Zack Lockwood.

When was the last time he was here?"

The guards exchanged another look, this time tinged with gravity.

Zack Lockwood was a name that carried weight, a reminder of the dangerous world they inhabited.

“Probably a day ago,” one of them replied, his tone confirming Simon’s worst fears.

“He returned to headquarters after completing a mission.”

Simon’s world seemed to tilt on its axis.

Disbelief and a cold fury ignited within him.

The fear that had haunted their minds had materialized into a chilling reality.

His team members, standing behind him, felt the tremors of his despair.

Their worst nightmare had become a stark, unforgiving truth.

“Impossible!”

The words hung heavy in the air, a stark denial of the reality they now faced.

One of the team members, his voice trembling with disbelief, echoed the sentiment of them all.

The news of Zack Lockwood’s survival was akin to a death sentence.

Their identities were known to him, a ticking time bomb of exposure.

It was only a matter of time before they were hunted down and brought to justice.

A cold dread settled over the group as they realized the perilous situation they were in.

“Let’s go back,” Simon ordered, his voice firm, cutting through the chaos of their minds.

There was no safety in Delta City, not with Zack Lockwood alive and potentially seeking revenge.

They turned and strode towards the teleportation platform, their steps filled with a sense of urgency.

Fear was etched on their faces, a stark contrast to their usual composed exteriors.

The guards watched the group’s abrupt departure with growing confusion.

There was an undercurrent of panic in their demeanor that was impossible to ignore.

Had they misheard the conversation?

The guards exchanged puzzled glances, their minds racing to find a plausible explanation.

With a final, desperate glance at the guards, Simon and his team stepped onto the platform and initiated the teleportation sequence.

A blinding flash of light engulfed them, and in an instant, they were gone, leaving behind a trail of unanswered questions.

A sense of unease settled over the two guards as they watched Simon and his group vanish into the teleportation portal.

Something about their demeanor, their urgency, had struck a discordant note.

“We should inform Sir Jonathan about this,” one guard suggested, his voice low and filled with concern.

The other guard nodded in agreement.

Their familiarity with Simon did not blind them to the unusual circumstances.

The mention of Zack Lockwood’s name, in particular, had piqued their interest.

It was an unusual inquiry, one that demanded further investigation.

Without hesitation, one of the guards activated a communication device and sent a message to Jonathan.

The message was brief but urgent, outlining the strange behavior of Simon and his group, and the mention of Zack Lockwood.

As they waited for a response, a growing sense of anticipation filled the air.

Something was amiss, and they were determined to uncover the truth.

Chapter 897: Part 1: Drage Family

Alpha City:

The air hung heavy with tension as Simon and his team stepped back into the familiar yet alien environment of Alpha City.

The exhilaration of their mission had long since dissipated, replaced by a growing sense of dread.

A hushed conversation began to circulate among the group – a return to their respective families.

"I told you this would happen," a grizzled veteran, his face etched with lines of experience, interjected, his voice cutting through the murmur.

"You shouldn't have touched him.

Not only have you failed to eliminate Zack Lockwood, but now we're all entangled in your mess." His tone was a stark contrast to the earlier camaraderie.

The dam of suppressed emotions burst forth.

Accusations flew thick and fast, each member eager to voice their growing discontent.

"This is your fault, Simon," one shouted, their voice trembling with anger.

Another, their face pale with fear, murmured, "We're screwed." The once tight-knit group was fracturing before their eyes.

Simon's mind was a maelstrom of conflicting emotions.

A surge of anger coursed through him, but it was quickly eclipsed by a cold dread.

In his pursuit of glory, he had overlooked the potential consequences.

Now, with the realization that Zack Lockwood was still alive, he understood the gravity of their situation.

The rising star, backed by a powerful mentor, would undoubtedly seek vengeance.

"What are we going to do?" The question hung in the air, unspoken yet understood by all.

Simon's thoughts raced.

Zack Lockwood was a legend in their world, a name whispered with both respect and fear.

His influence was vast, extending even to the highest echelons of power.

Simon doubted his family's Great Elder, though a formidable Silver Mark Warrior, could withstand the pressure from the Federation Head if the matter escalated.

A flicker of hope ignited within him.

Perhaps, just perhaps, they could contain the damage.

If they could rally the support of multiple Silver Mark Warriors, their collective influence might deter Lockwood and his allies.

It was a long shot, but it was their only chance.

He turned to his team, his voice steady despite the turmoil within.

"We need to contact our families and seek the protection of our elders.

If we can secure the backing of more than one Silver Mark Warrior, we might be able to weather this storm."

A collective sigh of relief washed over the group.

Simon's plan offered a glimmer of hope.

Offending a Silver Mark Warrior was akin to challenging a behemoth, a risk no one was willing to take.

While they knew their families would likely face repercussions, they were prepared to accept the consequences.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

With renewed determination, the group exchanged solemn glances.

The road ahead was fraught with peril, but they were resolved to face it together.

Their immediate focus was clear: convince their elders of the gravity of the situation and secure their support.

...

Lowell Castle

The imposing silhouette of Lowell Castle stood as a sentinel against the twilight sky.

Within its fortified walls, Jonathan, a man of quiet efficiency, occupied his time with a patience that belied the growing unease within.

His master's absence stretched into days, and with each passing hour, the situation at the boundaries seemed to deepen in complexity.

Yet, a flicker of hope remained.

The unexpected presence of the Federation Head suggested a level of control over the volatile situation.

Perhaps, Jonathan thought, a resolution was imminent.

But even as this optimistic thought took root, another concern gnawed at him.

Zack Lockwood, the enigmatic figure at the heart of the recent turmoil, remained an unknown quantity.

Jonathan had his sources.

He knew Lockwood had retreated into the confines of his headquarters upon returning from his mission.

A calculated move, perhaps, or simply a need for recuperation.

Jonathan had half-expected a desperate attempt to extract information, a confrontation born of desperation.

But those expectations had remained unfulfilled.

Lockwood, it seemed, was playing his cards close to his chest.

A sigh escaped Jonathan's lips as he leaned back in his chair, the weight of the world, or at least a significant portion of it, pressing down on him.

His reverie was abruptly interrupted by the shrill ring of his communicator.

The caller ID displayed a name that sent a jolt through him.

It was one of the Alpha City Teleportation Platform's security guards.

A cold sense of anticipation crept over him as he answered.

What could possibly be so urgent that it required a direct call from security?

Jonathan's mind raced as he brought the communicator to his ear.

"Soros," he began, his voice low and controlled.

A brief pause as he gathered his thoughts, then, "What is it?"

The guard's voice, laced with urgency, broke through the line.

"Sir Jonathan, we've encountered a situation.

It's...it's suspicious." A tense silence followed as the guard relayed the details of the encounter with Simon and his group.

Jonathan listened impassively, his face a mask of tranquility.

But beneath the calm exterior, a storm was brewing.

His eyes, usually so steady, flickered with a growing intensity.

The guard's narrative painted a picture of a reckless attack, a blatant disregard for authority.

When the guard finally fell silent, Jonathan rose slowly from his chair, his movements deliberate.

A cold fury ignited within him.

"So, the young master was injured," he murmured, his voice carrying a chilling undertone.

His mind flashed to Zack Lockwood, a man he had come to respect, a young warrior with an extraordinary talent.

To think that such a man had been subjected to such a cowardly attack was a personal affront.

As the guardian of Lowell Castle, he was the ultimate protector.

With Lowell absent, that responsibility fell squarely on his shoulders.

To allow harm to come to the young master was an unforgivable failure.

A lethal determination hardened his gaze.

“Soros, thank you for bringing this to my attention.

I will handle this.” With that, he terminated the call, the weight of the world, once again, resting on his shoulders.

A few minutes later,

A Shadow Moves

The imposing silhouette of Lowell Castle faded into the distance as Jonathan stepped into the cold embrace of the night.

The city, cloaked in a shroud of artificial light, hummed with nocturnal energy.

Yet, for Jonathan, there was a chilling purpose to his movement.

The arrogant hunting team that had dared to injure his master's student had ignited a fire within him, a cold, calculating fury that demanded retribution.

But this was no simple act of vengeance.

The underbelly of the city was a complex web of power and influence.

Every shadow held a secret, every corner concealed a potential threat.

Most hunting teams, even those of modest repute, were backed by formidable figures – Black Mark Warriors, individuals of unparalleled combat prowess.

The elite, the true power brokers, were shielded by the even rarer Silver Mark Warriors, legends in their own right.

And then there were the hidden families, those who operated in the shadows, their influence solidified by the mythical Gold Mark Warriors.

Jonathan was a master of shadows himself, a silent predator in a world teeming with prey.

He understood the delicate balance of power, the intricate dance of alliances.

To act without knowledge was to invite disaster.

He needed information, a comprehensive dossier on the hunting team, their patrons, and the depth of their connections.

Only then could he strike with precision, a venomous serpent delivering a fatal bite.

With each step, his resolve hardened.

The night was young, and the hunt was on.

Meanwhile,

Simon emerged from the city's bustling heart and into the familiar embrace of the Drage Family compound.

The imposing architecture, a blend of ancient tradition and modern efficiency, was a testament to the family's enduring power.

His steps quickened as he made his way towards the main house, a sense of urgency propelling him forward.

The study, a sanctum of authority and knowledge, was where he found his father, Alnod Drage.

A man in the prime of life, Alnod exuded an aura of quiet command.

The Black Mark tattooed prominently on his forearm was a stark reminder of his formidable combat prowess.

As the head of the Drage Family, one of the preeminent powerhouses in the inner post region, his influence extended far and wide.

Yet, despite his imposing stature, his face softened into a warm smile as his son entered the room.

Simon, accustomed to the rigors of the battlefield, was an infrequent visitor to his father's study.

His presence was a deviation from the norm, a fact not lost on Alnod.

Curiosity flickered in Alnod's eyes as he gestured for his son to take a seat.

Simon stood before his father, his face etched with a gravity that was unusual for the young warrior.

Alnod, with his keen eye for detail, immediately sensed that something was amiss.

His son was not a man of many words, but he was also not one to conceal his emotions.

The solemn expression on Simon's face was a stark contrast to the typically confident demeanor of the young warrior.

A flicker of concern ignited in Alnod's eyes as he leaned forward, his posture subtly shifting to convey his readiness to listen.

Chapter 898: Part 2: Drage Family

Grage Family:

Alnod Grade's imposing figure sat at the head of the mahogany desk, his face etched with lines of concern.

"Tell me what happened," he demanded, his voice low and controlled.

The afternoon sunlight filtered through the grand office window, casting long shadows on the polished floor.

Hearing the weight of his father's words, Simon swallowed hard, his Adam's apple bobbing nervously.

A deep sigh escaped his lips before he began to recount the events.

His voice, usually confident, was now laced with apprehension.

Alnod's expression remained impassive as Simon spoke, his eyes fixed on his son.

The tranquility of the office was shattered when Simon uttered the name "Zack Lockwood." A flicker of recognition, then a storm of anger, swept across Alnod's face.

His hands clenched into fists, the veins in his neck throbbing visibly.

Ten minutes later, the silence in the room was heavy with tension.

Father and son were locked in a silent battle, their gazes meeting and clashing.

Alnod's anger was a palpable force, his eyes burning with fury like twin suns.

Simon's head hung low, his shoulders slumped in defeat.

The weight of his actions pressed down on him with crushing force.

Alnod's voice, when it finally broke the silence, was like thunder.

"What have you done?" he roared, his face flushed with rage.

The usually composed and authoritative figure was replaced by a man consumed by anger.

His words were like daggers, each one a sharp rebuke.

Simon's heart pounded in his chest.

He had anticipated his father's wrath, but the full extent of his transgression was only now becoming clear.

"I know, Father," he mumbled, his voice barely audible.

"I'm sorry."

Alnod's anger intensified.

"You have no idea what you've done," he spat.

His voice dropped to a menacing whisper.

"Zack Lockwood is not just any young man.

He's a rising star in the Federation, a protégé of Lowell, a man with immense influence.

It's rumored that even the Federation Head keeps a watchful eye on him."

Fear crept into Simon's eyes as the gravity of the situation dawned on him.

He had underestimated his opponent.

"I didn't mean for this to happen, Father," he pleaded, his voice trembling.

"I thought..." His voice trailed off, unable to find the words to justify his actions.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

Alnod closed his eyes, the weight of his son's actions settling heavily upon him.

He knew the damage was done, and berating Simon now would only exacerbate the situation.

A solution was needed, and quickly.

"Alright, you're grounded for the time being," Alnod said, his voice firm but measured.

"Don't go outside." He continued to stare at his son, assessing the extent of his remorse.

Simon understood the seriousness of the situation.

Leaving the house was out of the question.

"I'll stay inside," he replied, his voice subdued.

"Good," Alnod said.

"Now you can leave."

As Simon exited the room, Alnod fell into deep contemplation.

The issue was grave, but the timing couldn't have been worse.

With most of the Silver Mark Warriors deployed on emergency missions, including himself, the likelihood of Lowell McClain seeking immediate justice was significantly reduced.

They had a small window of opportunity to resolve the matter discreetly.

About twenty minutes later, a glimmer of hope dawned upon Alnod.

He had an idea, a form of compensation that might appease Lowell McClain.

He knew of Lowell's student, Zack Lockwood, and the region's buzz about his imminent breakthrough to the coveted SSS-ELITE Rank.

With the next SSS-ELITE Rank Top List competition just a few months away, the entire Inner Post region was watching to see if Zack could achieve this feat.

Breaking through to SSS-ELITE Rank within such a short time was no easy task, unless aided by external means.

Potent potions and rare treasures could accelerate a warrior's progress, but these were often expensive and didn't guarantee success.

Only the most valuable and costly items offered a 100% chance of breakthrough.

With this in mind, Alnod devised a plan.

He would offer a compensation package that included a rare treasure or potion capable of aiding Zack's advancement.

He knew this wouldn't fully quell Lowell's anger, but it was a start.

He also decided to impose a minor punishment on his son as a deterrent.

While this punishment might delay Simon's own progression, Alnod was willing to take that risk to protect his son's life and future.

With these two strategies in place, he believed even the Federation Head would find the resolution acceptable.

Meanwhile, Simon's friends had informed their families of the incident, setting off a wave of anger and concern.

Their parents, aware of the precarious situation the Black and Silver Mark Warriors faced, knew that internal strife was the last thing they needed.

Every Black Mark Warrior and above was a valuable asset, essential for protecting the Inner Post region.

The Federation's primary duty was to safeguard this territory, so as long as they could placate Lowell McClain, they faced no threat from the Federation Head.

To resolve the matter, all the families involved decided to contribute to a compensation package.

This collective effort demonstrated their commitment to making amends and ensuring the incident didn't escalate further.

A few hours later, Jonathan returned to Lowell Castle, his anger simmering.

He had previously gone to gather intelligence and learned of the arrogant brats' plan to have their families offer compensation to Zack.

Their audacity was astounding, as they seemed completely unconcerned about any potential repercussions.

They were likely emboldened by the ongoing crisis at the Inner Post region's borders.

"Cunning fellows," Jonathan muttered under his breath.

However, he was not going to let them get away with it.

Determined to expose their actions, Jonathan decided to write a report and send it to the Federation Head.

He believed the Head might have a plan in place to address such incidents.

After about fifteen minutes of careful deliberation, Jonathan completed the report.

He was unsure if Young Master Zack Lockwood had already informed anyone about the incident, but he felt it was his duty to bring it to the Federation Head's attention.

Chapter 899: Focusing on Body Cultivation

From MC's Perspective:

The following day, I awoke to the gentle caress of sunlight filtering through my curtains.

I realized I have only a few monster cores.

The realization spurred me into action.

It was time to accelerate my body's breakthrough as well.

With newfound determination, I began my morning routine.

Thirty minutes later, I decided to focus on the blood element method.

To enhance my progress, I knew I needed a few Class-6 or Class-7 monster cores.

Consulting the federation's online platform, I quickly found what I was looking for.

Without hesitation, I purchased ten Class-7 Monster Cores, using my hard-earned credit points.

Approximately ten minutes later, a delivery arrived at my floor.

A staff member from the first floor brought a box to my door.

I accepted the package and returned to my room.

As I placed the box on my table and opened it, I was met with a pleasant surprise.

All ten monster cores were from the Class-7 Wind Wolf Monster.

While I wasn't completely astonished, it made sense.

The Monster Regions surrounding the four cities were known for their large populations of wolf-type monsters.

So, it wasn't unexpected.

I carefully picked up the cores and stored them in my storage ring, eager to begin the next phase of my training.

I exited my room and entered the essence chamber.

The room was bathed in a soft, ethereal glow, the result of the world energy that filled it.

As I approached the console, I activated the settings, allowing the energy to intensify.

Taking a deep breath, I found a suitable spot in the center of the chamber and sat cross-legged on the ground.

From my storage ring, I withdrew two monster cores, one in each hand.

With a focused mind, I began to channel the blood element method.

The world energy, now amplified, spread throughout the room, enveloping me in its gentle embrace.

As I continued the method, the blood rune within my consciousness flickered to life.

The blood energy from the world energy began to permeate my body, guided by my will.

Simultaneously, I started to absorb the blood energy from the monster cores.

It was a delicate balance.

The blood energy from the monster cores was raw and potent, capable of causing great harm if not controlled.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

In contrast, the blood energy from the world energy was more refined and gentle.

As the blood energy coursed through my body, a radiant red light appeared above the bloodstream, signaling the beginning of the conversion process.

Both the gentle and violent blood energies were transformed into a mysterious white energy.

This energy began to penetrate my bones, each pulse accompanied by a heart-wrenching pain.

Though the pain was intense, I had grown accustomed to it.

I remained focused on my cultivation, determined to push through.

As the white energy entered my skeleton, the red hue intensified.

If anyone were to examine my skeleton, they would be astonished.

Instead of the usual white, it was a deep red.

And as I continued my cultivation, it would darken further.

Time passed.

After several hours, the monster cores in my hands crumbled into dust, and I reached my daily limit.

However, to my surprise, I felt no breakthrough barrier.

Satisfied with my progress, I ended my cultivation and approached the console to deactivate the power.

The world's energy began to dissipate, gradually fading away.

When the chamber was completely devoid of energy, I left, eager to rest and prepare for the next day's training.

Meanwhile, within the top floor of the Federation headquarters, Head Ben was engrossed in a report from Jonathan.

Initially, the notification had caught him off guard.

He assumed it must be a personal matter related to Jonathan.

However, as he delved deeper into the report, his expression underwent a dramatic transformation.

The information presented was shocking, revealing a series of underhanded games played right beneath his nose.

He also reviewed Jonathan's intelligence briefing.

A look of understanding dawned on him.

These powerful families were all aware of the dire situation facing the federation.

Their confidence in his inaction stemmed from their belief that he wouldn't risk taking drastic measures in such a critical time.

A cold glint appeared in his eyes.

"These families are cunning," he muttered.

Not only had their descendants committed crimes, but they had also exploited the current situation in the inner post region to avoid severe punishment.

He sighed inwardly.

They were right.

In these circumstances, even a single Black Mark Warrior was a valuable asset, and Silver Mark Warriors were even more crucial.

If he were to take strict action now, these families might turn against the federation, sparking an internal conflict.

He couldn't afford such a disruption at this time.

While he wouldn't forgive their crimes, he knew he would have to postpone their punishment.

Once the threat at the boundaries was resolved, he would make life exceedingly difficult for these families.

For now, he believed it was best to accept their compensation offer.

He anticipated that someone from one of the families would soon contact him, seeking further details.

After carefully considering the matter, he drafted a reply to Jonathan, informing him that he would personally look into the situation.

He also warned Jonathan to avoid taking any personal actions, emphasizing the importance of the bigger picture-the safety of the inner post region.

Once the message was sent, he turned his attention to the daily activity report of Zack Lockwood.

The blue screen displayed the footage.

As he watched, he realized that Zack hadn't left the headquarters in quite some time.

"Seems like he's been diligently training in those chambers," Ben muttered to himself.

In one way, it was a positive development.

As long as Zack remained within the headquarters, he was less vulnerable to hidden attacks.

It would be best for him to resume his hunting activities once the situation returned to normalcy.

As the Federation Head had anticipated, the Drage Family and other influential families were preparing to send one of their elders to the Federation headquarters.

The families had their respective compensation lists ready, each meticulously crafted to appease the Federation Head.

If Ben was convinced, they could potentially escape the impending disaster.

The stakes were high, and the families were determined to salvage their reputations and power.

Chapter 900: Part 1: Compensation Negotiation

From MC's Perspective:

The next day, after going through my usual morning routine, I made up my mind to begin my body cultivation training.

It was something I'd been preparing for, and today felt like the right day to start.

However, before I could even begin, my plans were interrupted by an unexpected call-a summons from the Federation Head himself.

He demanded my presence in his office within half an hour.

My heart skipped a beat, the words echoing in my mind as a wave of anxiety washed over me.

I quickly agreed, ending the call, but a cold sweat broke out on my forehead.

“Why is he calling me?” I muttered under my breath, a feeling of dread creeping into my thoughts.

My mind immediately went to my Teacher.

Could something have happened to him?

The possibility gnawed at me, refusing to let go.

Trying to shake off the unease, I decided to take a bath first, hoping the warm water would help me clear my head.

The bath lasted for 15 minutes, but it felt longer, as my mind raced with all sorts of possibilities.

Emerging from the bathroom, I dressed in my federation uniform, taking an extra moment to ensure every detail was perfect.

The routine of getting ready helped calm me slightly, though the anxiety lingered just below the surface.

I gave myself one final glance in the mirror, trying to mask the tension in my expression, then left my room.

My steps were brisk as I made my way to the lift, pressing the button for the top floor with a certain heaviness in my hand.

The door closed, and the elevator began its ascent, the hum of the machinery doing little to drown out the swirling thoughts in my mind.

What could the Federation Head want with me?

Was it really about Teacher, or something else entirely?

I couldn't help but feel a sense of foreboding.

Soon enough, the elevator reached the top floor.

The doors slid open with a soft chime, revealing the hallway that led to the Head's office.

Steeling myself, I stepped out and walked forward, my footsteps echoing in the otherwise silent corridor.

The office door was already open, which was unusual and only added to my unease.

As I entered the room, I immediately noticed six other individuals seated opposite the Federation Head.

Their presence was unexpected, and confusion flashed through my mind as I quickly scanned the room, trying to gauge the situation.

Why were they here?

And what did this gathering mean for me?

Federation Head Ben's eyes immediately caught sight of me as I stepped into the room.

His expression, calm and composed, betrayed no emotion as he addressed me.

Follow new episodes on the "N0vel1st.c0m".

"Zack, come to my side and meet them."

His words carried a weight that left no room for hesitation.

I walked over to his side, standing just beside his desk, and turned my gaze towards the group seated in front of me.

As I observed them, it was clear that they were a mix of ages-some were old, others middle-aged, and among them were a few women.

Their presence here, in the Federation Head's office, piqued my curiosity.

For a brief moment, my thoughts drifted, trying to piece together the puzzle before me.

Ben, sensing my confusion, cleared his throat to bring me back to the present.

"Zack," he began, his voice steady, "they are here to see you."

"Me?" The word slipped from my lips, barely above a whisper.

As I studied the faces before me, I noticed a strange mix of emotions in their eyes-guilt, fear, and something else that I couldn't quite place.

Their gazes were heavy, as if burdened with the weight of something unspeakable.

It felt as though they had wronged me in some way, though I couldn't immediately understand how.

"What's going on?" I wondered silently, my mind racing for answers.

Ben's lips curled into a knowing smile, and he continued, "Do you remember Simon and his friends?"

At the mention of that name, a cold, murderous intent flashed in my eyes.

Simon.

The name alone brought back a flood of bitter memories.

Memories I had buried deep, ones I had not shared with anyone-not even Jonathan.

My mind whirled with questions.

How could the Federation Head possibly know about that incident?

I turned to Ben, my eyes narrowing as they met his.

He returned my gaze, still wearing that infuriatingly calm smile.

"I know what happened to you," Ben said, his tone steady and matter-of-fact.

"Simon assaulted you during your mission.

He and his team abandoned you, fully expecting you to die out there.

But somehow, against all odds, you survived and returned."

His words hung in the air, heavy with truth.

I could feel the anger simmering beneath the surface, but at the same time, the clarity of his statement began to dissolve the fog of confusion in my mind.

So, this is why they were here.

Ben continued, "Now, Simon and his team are terrified that you might seek revenge.

Their families, fearing the worst, have sent their elders here to resolve the matter.

They're willing to offer you compensation, hoping to put this dispute to rest."

As Ben spoke, the doubts in my mind started to fade away, replaced by a cold, calculating focus.

I could see it now-the desperation in their elders' eyes, the silent plea for mercy.

They had wronged me, left me for dead, and now they were afraid of the consequences.

And yet, here they were, trying to buy their way out of the justice they deserved.

My gaze swept across the gathered elders, their faces etched with a palpable sense of guilt.

Though the situation seemed genuine, an underlying unease gnawed at me.

It felt as if they'd anticipated this confrontation, their expressions carefully crafted to mask a deeper truth.

Federation Head Ben believed that the elders were well-prepared.

Their carefully chosen words and statements seemed to emanate directly from their Family Heads.

