

Endless Leveling Done Right!

Chapter 16 - This Is A Dangerous Place

Dim Dim's danger detection had a decent range, so Alex effortlessly evaded monsters as he made his way to the northwest region of the forest.

That said, it crossed the young man's mind that he needed to stop being overly reliant on the Dim Sum God as it might dull his sense of danger.

He couldn't be sure that the Dim Dim would never be separated from him and, in case that happened, he feared being at a loss for what to do after getting used to being practically spoon-fed warnings.

With that in mind, he requested that Dim Dim only warn him if their lives were truly in danger.

The Dim Sum God agreed, and the young man resumed his journey. However, this time, he made sure to pay closer attention to his surroundings, slowing his progress.

Alex was fine with that.

It was better to develop his own danger sense than to completely rely on outside forces.

With determined effort, the young man expanded his senses to his limit.

The rustle of the trees, the chirping of the birds, as well as the smell in the air. He made sure to use his sense of sight, smell, and hearing to get a better understanding of his surroundings.

Suddenly, he heard a crunching sound in the distance, which made him immediately crouch down and stop moving.

As someone who had experience hunting in the forest, the sound he heard was likely someone or something stepping on dried leaves, twigs, and gravel.

Although he could be wrong, Alex decided to trust his hunting experience.

He gazed in the direction from which he had heard the crunching sound earlier and took out a sword from his storage ring.

A faint smile appeared on Dim Dim's lips because he was quite satisfied with Alex's caution.

The Floating Forest was a place teeming with wild beasts and monsters, so a single mistake could cause serious injuries or worse, death.

It didn't take long for Alex to register the sound of footsteps, which was getting louder by the second.

Whatever or whoever made those sounds didn't bother putting any effort into hiding their presence in the slightest.

'Could it be goblins?' Alex thought as he gripped the sword in his hand tightly.

While he might consider fighting against a goblin in a one-on-one or a two-on-one battle, he would never attempt to attack a group of them together.

He had seen how a group of goblins fared against a Rank 2 Brown Bear, and that alone was enough to tell him that fighting a hunting party was a very bad idea.

Half a minute later, a group of three people emerged from the cover of the trees.

Alex felt relief internally, but didn't make any move to make his presence known.

Sometimes, humans were more dangerous than beasts or monsters, as one could never be sure whether they were friend or foe.

The young man paid extra attention to the equipment of the group.

All of them were men, and a single glance was enough for Alex to tell that they weren't a bunch of newbies.

One of them was walking with his hand gripping the handle of his sheathed sword, ready to draw it out from its scabbard at a moment's notice.

The swordsman's gaze scanned the surroundings for danger, and he was clearly in a vigilant state.

Standing behind him was a man wearing a white robe with a staff in his hand. He wore a silver medallion, a dead giveaway of his profession.

He was a Cleric who belonged to the Order of the High Priestess.

There were twenty-two Deities in the world of Arcana, with some of them having their own churches.

Others had cults like the Deathsworn Brotherhood and the Devil's Covenant, who worshipped the Deities representing Death and the Devil.

The symbol of the High Priestess was a crescent moon, and those who belonged to her church wore its pendant as a means to represent their identity.

The last person in the group of three was a person holding a bow and an arrow. He could be an Archer, a Hunter, or even a Ranger.

Just like the swordsman, his hawkish eyes scanned the surroundings before landing on Alex's hiding spot.

"Child, what are you doing this deep in the forest on your own?" the Archer asked. "It's no use hiding from me. You better show yourself before I treat you as an enemy."

When Alex saw the man looking in his direction, he stood up from his hiding place to prevent any misunderstandings.

"Sir, I am a newly registered Adventurer," Alex replied. "I came here looking for Redcap Mushrooms and Thornberries for the mission I accepted in the Adventurer's Guild."

"This is a dangerous place," the Cleric stated. "The Hobgoblins and the Orcs are currently active in these parts. You should return to the outskirts of the forest. It's safer there."

"As for Thornberries, I saw a patch of them when we were passing in the direction where we came from," the Swordsman commented. "It's just a hundred meters away in that direction. Pick them up and leave this place as soon as you can."

"Thank you, Sir!" Alex replied, but made no immediate move to go to the location where the swordsman pointed.

This made the Cleric nod in satisfaction, pleased with how the young man acted cautiously with strangers.

"Well, then. Go back as soon as you can." The Cleric nodded at his companions. "We still have some business to do here, so we will be leaving first."

After their discussion, the three people headed deeper into the forest.

Alex waited until they were no longer in his sight before carefully walking in the direction from which they had come earlier.

Since his mission was to look for Redcap Mushrooms and Thornberries, it wouldn't hurt to check if the Swordsman was telling the truth.

Fortunately, the man hadn't lied to him, and he found several shrubs of Thornberries ripe for picking.

Alex collected forty Thornberries, leaving the unripe ones behind.

He then opened his map and zoomed in on his location. After that, he went to the plant tab and looked for a symbol of a berry.

The young man decided to mark this spot, so he could return to gather more berries in the future.

Although the three people had warned him to go back to the outskirts, Alex decided to continue his journey towards the Fairy Lake and see if he could get the Rare Shoes he wished to acquire.

Along the way, he found Redcap Mushrooms, which completed his quota. With his two missions down, he was naturally pleased.

He then hesitated, wondering whether he should continue heading to the lake or return to the town to collect his rewards.

'It's still noon, so I have plenty of time to go to the lake,' Alex thought. 'I'll just travel as far as I can for now. If there is danger, I will just retreat and come back another day.'

After making up his mind, the young man resumed his journey, heading northwest.

Half an hour later, he heard a scream that stiffened his body.

The scream didn't belong to a monster but to a human.

Alex hesitated whether he should go and see what was happening or flee in the opposite direction.

He was deep inside the forest, and the chances of encountering a strong monster were very high.

While he was contemplating what to do, another bloodcurdling scream reached his ears. This time, it wasn't only a single person screaming but two of them.

"Dim Dim!"

The Dim Sum God's shout broke Alex out of his daze. It was also then that he heard the sound of something or someone running in his direction.

"Run, Alex! Run!"

That was what Dim Dim had told him, so the teenage boy no longer hesitated and ran away without looking back.

He was afraid that if he glanced at what was behind him, he might get paralyzed by fear, preventing him from running away to safety.

His legs went into overdrive, fueled by his adrenaline. Despite his unprecedented speed, he could still hear the desperate and fearful screams behind him.

Half a minute later, the screaming completely faded.

Two Dire Wolves feasted on the flesh of the human who had stumbled upon their hunting group.

His white robe was stained with blood, and the crescent moon medallion he wore around his neck earlier now lay on the ground a meter away from his body.

The Cleric screamed no more, for he was already dead.

Only the sound of flesh being torn and bones being crushed echoed silently within the forest.

His lifeless eyes stared at his killer, who opened its jaws to bite down on his head.

Several minutes later, only the shredded and blood-stained robes remained of the Cleric who had advised Alex to return to the outskirts of the forest, where it was safer, to complete his mission.

Chapter 17 - Return To The Adventurer's Guild

Alex panted for breath as he leaned against a tree.

He didn't know how long he had been running, only that he stopped when his legs gave way.

The young man waited for his breathing to stabilize before taking out his waterskin from his storage ring and drinking a mouthful of water.

Dim Dim then offered him a barbecued pork bun to help him recover his stamina, which had been depleted after all that running.

The young man gratefully accepted the Dim Sum God's food and ate while trying to calm his wildly beating heart.

Now that he was able to think more clearly, he realized that the voices he had heard earlier sounded familiar.

'Could it be them?' Alex wondered. 'But they looked strong and competent. Their party is also pretty balanced. It couldn't be them, right?'

The young man tried to deny the possibility that the strangers he had met and who even helped him were the source of the fearful and desperate screams he had heard earlier.

But Alex wasn't someone who turned a blind eye to reality.

'I just hope at least one of them survived.' Alex sighed. 'I was too reckless. Perhaps if those three hadn't delayed my journey, I might have been the one who encountered whatever monsters they faced.'

The mere thought of facing monsters that even a well-rounded party of three was unable to deal with made the young man shudder.

'It's no use thinking about these things,' Alex thought. 'I guess I won't be getting the Silent Striders anytime soon.'

His life was more important than a Rare Item, so the young man shelved his plans of going to the Fairy Lake for the time being.

After recovering some of his stamina, Alex decisively left the forest to return to the Town of Thaloria.

As much as he didn't want to admit it, he was still shaken from the gruesome incident earlier.

A few hours later...

"Are you okay?" the pretty receptionist, Dahlia, asked the young man, whose face looked a little pale.

"Yes," Alex replied as he handed the Red Cap Mushrooms and the Thornberries he had gathered from the forest.

Dahlia inspected them to make sure that they were in good condition as per the client's wishes.

After checking that there was nothing wrong with the items, she asked for Alex's Guild Card.

Dahlia then updated his information and stamped the two quests he had claimed as completed.

At the same time, the young man heard a notification inside his head.

And just like always, a blue window screen popped up in front of him.

Mission: Gathering Red Cap Mushrooms Completed!

Reward: 10 Arcana Points

Mission: Gathering Thornberries Completed!

Reward: 10 Arcana Points

The rewards he received from the system for completing the two missions were separate from the rewards he would receive from the Adventurer's Guild.

Every mission that Alex took would give him some Arcana Points, which he could use to buy items from the Arcana Shop.

Unfortunately, the cheapest item in the store cost a hundred Arcana Points, and the young man only had thirty of them at the moment.

Alex felt a bit better after gaining some AP from his first adventure in the Floating Forest.

"Since you gathered forty Thornberries, you will receive eight additional bronze coins for your trouble." Dahlia smiled as she placed the two silver coins and eight bronze coins on the money tray. "Please confirm that you have received the proper amount for your quests."

Herb hunting was not a high-paying job, but it was one of the most common jobs that a novice Adventurer got when starting out.

Although the pay wasn't that high, completing five of these missions would allow them to increase their Adventurer Rank.

Now that Alex had completed two of them, he just needed to complete three more quests, and he would become a Rank E Adventurer.

"I would also like to exchange goblin ears," Alex stated as he took out a pouch that contained the ten goblin ears.

Dahlia wasn't too surprised at the sight of goblin ears because it was common for Adventurers on herb-gathering missions to encounter these creatures in the forest.

"Did you kill them by yourself?" Dahlia asked in curiosity.

"No," Alex replied honestly. "They fought against a Rank 2 Brown Bear. I just took the spoils from their dead bodies."

"And what happened to the Brown Bear?"

"It died from its injuries. I also have it with me. Can I have it appraised and dismantled by the Guild?"

"The dismantling fee will be twenty percent of the Beast's value. Will that be acceptable to you?" Dahlia inquired.

"Yes, please," Alex answered.

Right now, he didn't have any dismantling skills, so it would be best to leave the Brown Bear to a professional.

The goblin ears he handed over were worth four silver coins and one bronze coin.

'Six silver coins and nine bronze coins,' Alex thought. 'This could cover ten more days of rent in the inn. I hope the Brown Bear is worth more.'

Alex then followed Dahlia to the dismantling facility, where he took out the bear from his Beast Pouch.

The Dismantler gave the bear an appraising look, not minding the arrows that stuck out of its body.

"It's quite unfortunate that the fur is badly damaged, so it cannot be used as a bear rug," the Dismantler pointed out. "Bear meat is also not popular, so we can't give you a high price for it. But the claws and teeth can be used as materials for weapons, so it's not that bad."

After some calculations, the Dismantler said that the Guild could give Alex five gold coins for the bear, which surprised him.

They had already excluded their own share, so the young man would be getting the five gold coins without any deduction.

Seeing his surprised expression, the Dismantler chuckled and explained why the price was a little higher than Alex expected.

"The bear hide can still be used to craft leather armor and equipment," the Dismantler explained. "Although it's damaged in some places, there's still a good chunk of it that can be used."

"The claws of the bear can be used in weapon crafting, while its teeth can be used to craft enchanted necklaces. Some tribes like to buy bear teeth because they consider bears one of their Spirit Beasts, which adds to their value."

The young man happily accepted the five gold coins, which were equivalent to ten silver coins each.

He now had a total of five gold coins, twelve silver coins, and nine bronze coins, which was more than the starting funds he had received after arriving in Arcana.

With this, Alex felt more comfortable about his expenditure in the Town of Thalloria.

As he headed towards the Cat Tail's Inn, the young man saw Cairo headed the same way.

"Cairo!" Alex called out to the Catkin Swordsman, which made the latter look in his direction.

"Alex," Cairo greeted with a smile. "It's been a while. How are you?"

"I just returned from completing my first missions in the Adventurer's Guild," Alex answered. "Are you headed to the Cat Tail's Inn?"

"Yes," Cairo replied. "I need a drink. Life has been so hard as of late."

"Perfect! How about I treat you to another jug of Stardancer's Delight?"

Cairo hesitated, but since Alex seemed really sincere, he decided to accept the young man's offer.

When they arrived at the inn, Alex ordered food and drinks for the three of them.

While waiting for their food to come, Cairo asked what kind of mission he had accepted from the guild.

The young man then told the Catkin Swordsman about his experience in the Floating Forest, including the incident still fresh on his mind.

Chapter 18 - Do You Want Me To Teach You How To Use A Sword?

"You did the right thing," Cairo said after listening to Alex's story. "As an Adventurer, you must be prepared and vigilant all the time while you're on a mission. Alex, you're still too weak right now. The only one you can afford to save is yourself."

"Maybe when you're stronger, you can try to save others. But for now, you don't have the qualifications."

Dim Dim silently ate the cheese on its platter as it listened to Cairo's statement.

The Dim Sum God also agreed that Alex was still too weak to save anyone—at least for now.

Had he hesitated and stayed for even just a couple of seconds longer back in the forest, he might have already perished then and there.

Alex had nothing to say against the Catkin's comments. Although he was confident about defeating a goblin in a one-on-one battle, he wasn't as strong as the veterans he had encountered today.

Not to mention, there were three of them, yet they were still defeated. Helping them would have done nothing but add one more carcass for the wolves to collect.

Seeing the young man quieten down, the swordsman scratched his head before sighing.

"I have to handle business for my tribe in two days, but I'll be here in Thaloria until then," Cairo said. "Do you want me to teach you how to use a sword?"

Alex didn't register the Catkin's words right away. He even thought he had misheard him.

But seeing the serious look on Cairo's handsome face, he knew that the other party truly intended to teach him the ways of the sword.

"Please!" Alex replied. "Teach me how to use the sword."

"Good." Cairo nodded. "I know you train every day by running around the town, so meet me here tomorrow at nine in the morning. If you're late, I will leave. Do I make myself clear?"

"Loud and clear!" Alex answered.

Cairo was the future Heaven's Sword of the Catkin Tribe. By common sense, being taught by him meant Alex would learn sword skills faster and solidly.

His main goal was to be a Shield Savant, but that didn't mean he had no use for sword skills.

The world of Arcana revolved around the concept of endless possibilities.

In other words, one's profession didn't matter, and anything could be learned.

Of course, learning a new skill within the same profession was easier since the fundamentals were similar and the foundation required was identical.

The concept was the same with casting spells without Magic Affinity.

Absorbing Magic Crystals could unlock the Magic Stat, but since it didn't come naturally, one would always be at a disadvantage compared to those born with the ability to wield magic.

After discussing the important matters, the two ate and drank.

They no longer talked about what had happened in the forest because what was done was done.

The young man returned to his room after parting with Cairo.

He took off his clothes and put them in the laundry basket before heading to the shower, washing away the dirt and sweat from his body.

While the young man was taking a shower, Dim Dim jumped on the window and greeted a little angel holding a bow in his hand.

"How are you doing, Dim Dim?" Cupid asked his friend.

"Dim Dim~" Dim Dim replied.

"That's good to hear." Cupid smiled. "So, what do you think of Alex?"

"Dim~"

"Well, Eriol chose him for a reason. Did you know? Lily and I have to kidnap—errr invite him politely to come here to Arcana. I'm glad that the two of you are getting along."

"Dim Dim~"

The two friends chatted before the angel sensed that Alex was about to return to the room.

He then gave Dim Dim a pouch of candies before turning into particles of light, returning to the celestial realm.

The Dim Sum God then took out a candy from the pouch and ate it happily.

"Were you talking to someone earlier, Dim Dim?" Alex asked as he got out of the bathroom, wiping his hair with a towel as he walked.

Dim Dim shook its head. "Dim."

"I see." Alex blinked. "I might have just been hearing things then."

After making sure he had properly dried himself, the young man took out some clothes from his storage ring.

'Maybe I should buy more clothes,' Alex thought.

He only had two sets of clothes right now. If it hadn't been for Dim Dim's ability to magically clean his clothes with its powers, Alex would have bought more clothes as laundry was a hassle.

Now that he had some extra funds, he decided to buy some clothes meant for travel, as well as clothes meant for going on adventures in places like the Floating Forest.

"Do you want to go with me to buy clothes, Dim Dim?"

"Dim Dim~"

The Dim Sum God then offered Alex a candy, which the latter gratefully accepted.

The little one then jumped on top of Alex's head, landing softly like a feather.

It proceeded to take another candy from its pouch before munching on it with a satisfied look on its innocent face.

After locking his room, Alex left the inn to go to the clothes store.

"Welcome! Oh, my~ What a handsome young man you are," the saleslady said with a smile. "Are you here to look for some clothes that will fit your good looks?"

Alex smiled faintly, understanding that the saleslady was merely flattering him to beguile him into buying more clothes from her store.

The store was meant for the commoners, so the prices of the clothes weren't as expensive as shops that made clothes for nobles.

But since he needed a few sets, he asked the saleslady to recommend some resilient clothes meant for traveling.

He had earned quite an amount from his first two missions, but his funds were still limited. With that in mind, he chose the cheapest clothes, making the saleslady giggle.

The cheapest clothes in her shop cost two silver coins a piece. The ones meant for traveling were a tad bit more expensive, costing three silvers a piece.

Two pairs of underwear could be bought for a silver coin, which Alex deemed fair considering the quality.

After careful consideration, he decided to buy three traveling clothes, three casual clothes, and four underwear. Thinking he might also need hooded capes, he bought two of them as well

"Thank you for the purchase!" the saleslady said. "Come again next time!"

Alex placed his purchases inside his storage ring after paying for them.

All in all, he spent three gold coins and six silver coins on his clothes.

The young man felt his wallet ache. He had spent so much time and sweat to earn his funds, yet most of them vanished so quickly in just a single shopping expedition.

He was now down to two gold coins and nine bronze coins.

'Maybe I shouldn't have splurged during lunch.' Alex sighed. 'Well, I still gained something priceless.'

The value of being Cairo's student far surpassed everything he had spent to treat the Catkin so far. In light of everything, Alex considered it a giant profit.

Now that he was done shopping, Alex decided to head to the library to read before nightfall.

He wished to gain as much knowledge as he could about alchemy so he could start collecting herbs and plants inside the Floating Forest for his own personal use.

Chapter 19 - Cairo's Sword Training

The next day...

"Before we start, I want to know your current fighting style." Cairo lifted the wooden sword with ease, settling into a loose stance. "Attack me. No need to hold back."

After adjusting his grip on the wooden sword's handle, Alex charged at the Catkin. Once he was in range, he didn't hesitate to slash from the side, targeting the Catkin's waist.

Cairo easily blocked his attack, but the young man wasn't done yet.

He unleashed a series of sword strikes, while the Catkin blocked, dodged, and deflected all of his attacks.

The spar lasted for ten whole minutes before Alex stopped and panted for breath.

Cairo didn't attack him even once during their exchange, so he went all out and unleashed everything he got.

Only when he completely exhausted himself did he stop his attacks, kneeling on the ground as he struggled to catch his breath.

"As expected," Cairo declared. "You suck big time."

Dim Dim giggled after hearing the Catkin's comment, while Alex only sighed helplessly.

"But don't worry." Cairo patted the young man's shoulder. "I'm sure that after I'm done with you, you'll be able to memorize the basics. Stand up. We're gonna start."

Alex nodded and accepted the Catkin's hand, which pulled him up.

"The first thing you need to learn is the stances of swordsmanship," Cairo said. "This is the basics of basics, and although swordmasters add their own unique twists on it, most of them follow the same base."

The Catkin tightened his grip on the wooden sword and leveled the blade in front of him. It hovered just above his waist, angled slightly forward.

He stepped forward with his right foot, his stance solid. The left foot was behind, giving him balance and control without sacrificing mobility.

"This is called the Middle Guard," Cairo explained. "It's a balanced stance that can keep your opponents at bay. From here, you can strike or defend depending on the situation."

"The foot you set in front must be the same as your dominant hand. If you're ambidextrous, just choose whichever is more comfortable."

Cairo paused, allowing Alex to digest the words he had just said.

"Make sure to hold your sword firmly, so your opponent wouldn't be able to knock it away," Cairo continued.

"In a sword fight, the moment you lose your weapon is the moment you lose your advantage. You'll be lucky to get away with serious injuries. If you're not, then you already know what will happen."

The Catkin made a gesture of slicing his neck with his thumb. Alex nodded in understanding.

Cairo then raised the sword over his head as he changed his stance.

"This is called the High Guard," Cairo said. "As you can see, this stance is meant for powerful downward strikes. It can be used to intimidate your opponents, but the downside is that it leaves your lower body open for attacks."

Cairo then lowered his sword and pointed it down to the ground, holding it firmly.

"This is called the Low Guard stance. It's meant for quick upward strikes and defensive movements," Cairo explained.

"This is also the most deceptive stance of all since it can bait your opponents into attacking you, allowing you to unleash a counterattack.

"The downside of this stance is that you'll have limited attack options aside from quick upwards strikes and stabs. You are also vulnerable from overhead strikes."

Once again, Cairo shifted into Middle Guard, the most balanced stance of the three and perfect for both quick attack and defense.

"You need to master these stances first so you can figure out which one to use in different situations," the Catkin went on. "Most people think sword fighting is just about swinging the blade. But that's only half of it."

He adjusted his grip slightly. "The right stance and footwork will make your attack more effective."

The Catkin then asked Alex to take the High Guard stance and practice doing a downward strike.

"When you do a downward strike, think of cutting your opponent in half from the head down to their waist," Cairo stated. "It has to be swift and deadly. If you're stronger, this strike will still throw your opponent off balance even if they manage to block it."

"Frankly, you lack strength. During our spar, it's clear that you're the kind to rely more on speed than power. It's not a bad thing per se, but you still need to master properly executing a downward strike."

"The more you practice it, the more effective it will be in battle. Remember, swift and deadly. Imagine cutting your enemy in half with each strike."

After making Alex swing his sword repeatedly for an hour, the Catkin asked him to stop and change to the Middle Guard.

"Now, we will practice blocking and deflecting sword strikes," Cairo stated. "Go and stab me."

After a quick nod, Alex thrust his sword toward the Catkin's chest.

Cairo easily deflected it with his sword, repeating the motion several times so that Alex could study the technique up close.

Once he was confident that Alex had at least grasped the basics, they switched roles with Cairo doing the stabbing and Alex doing the defending.

The swordsman slowed his strikes just enough to give Alex time to react, allowing the young man to adjust to his attacks.

"Good, you're a fast learner," Cairo praised after the young man managed to deflect a quarter of his sword strikes. "Alright, quick break. Once you've recovered a little, we'll go over how to properly block sword strikes."

Cairo had observed Alex closely. The latter's movements weren't aggressive, and he clearly seemed more like a defensive fighter. If anything, he fought like someone used to holding the line, not pushing it.

More than once, Cairo noticed Alex's left hand shifting unconsciously, as if ready to raise a shield.

The Catkin had sparred with knights who specialized in sword and shield, and he had to admit they could be quite troublesome as opponents.

'Maybe I should gift him a good shield when I come back from my mission,' Cairo thought. 'I'll ask Gramps to give me the shield hanging on the living room wall for display. It will be better to put the shield to good use than leaving it as decoration.'

A few minutes later, the two resumed their spar.

Little by little, Alex was starting to understand that he was truly a novice when it came to wielding the sword.

In the end, he decided to add sword training to his daily routine. That way, he would be able to master the basics faster.

While he didn't learn any special sword skills from Cairo, he now had a better understanding of how to fight against melee opponents, especially goblin warriors who specialized in close combat.

Chapter 20 - Better Safe Than Sorry

Just like Cairo promised, he gave Alex intensive training for two consecutive days.

Although this wasn't enough time to make the young man proficient in wielding the sword, Cairo believed that he would be able to master the basics if Alex kept practicing everyday.

Focusing to build a solid foundation was sometimes more important than training aimlessly.

"I'll be away for ten days," Cairo said. "When I return, we will have a spar. So, if I found out that you're slacking with your training, I will definitely give you a beating. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Master," Alex replied bowing respectfully. "I will practice everyday until your return."

Cairo nodded. "If I'm satisfied with your performance, I might just give you a gift in our next meeting."

After saying his goodbye, the Catkin finally boarded the flying ship that would take him to his hometown.

Although he didn't believe that he was proficient enough to accept a disciple, Alex's determination, and hard work impressed him.

So when the young man proposed that he call Cairo his Master, the Catkin decided to accept him as his first disciple.

The funny thing was that Cairo was only two years older than Alex. Even so, the young man believed that calling the Catkin his Master wasn't a bad thing.

In fact, it would give him many benefits.

In ELO, players could interact with NPC's and choose some experts to become their Master.

This would allow them to learn exclusive techniques that couldn't be learned anywhere else in the game.

There was only one disadvantage of being a disciple to someone because the moment they accepted you as their disciple, you couldn't become anyone else's disciple.

That was the rule in ELO.

Of course, there would always be exceptions. The only time when you could get another Master was when your First Master agreed to it.

While he was still active in the game, he knew someone who was able to have three Masters.

That was the top 6 Player of ELO in the Global Rankings.

Alex had fought that player once when he was a Shield Savant, and their match ended in a draw.

"See you soon, Master!" Alex waved at Cairo, who was standing on the deck of the flying ship. "Safe journey!"

"Don't die out until I return." Cairo waved back.

When the flying ship finally departed, Alex headed to the Merchant Shop to buy a few things.

He planned to take quests from the Adventurer's Guild the next day, so he needed to stack up on some items that would give him a higher chance of survival.

Going to the Fairy Lake was not an option at the moment, so he would focus on Herb Gathering to gain funds.

Also, he would check if there was an opportunity if he could play fisherman once again, allowing him to bring more income during his expedition.

"Welcome to the shop!" the Merchant said with a smile. "How may I help you?"

"I'm looking for brittle vials," Alex replied.

"Certainly." The Merchant nodded. "That will be 1 bronze coin a piece."

"I'll get twenty please," Alex replied. "Also, do you have chili powders, and black pepper powders?"

"Oh dear, are you planning to store the chili, and black pepper powders in the brittle vials?" The Merchant inquired. "Do you plan to throw them at people who you hold a grudge with?"

"Not to people, but monsters," Alex answered honestly.

"Good." The Merchant smiled. "For a moment, I thought I was about to become your accomplice in crime. Both chili powder and black pepper powder cost one silver per kilo. How much will you be buying?"

Alex pondered a bit before giving his answer. "Two kilos each."

The Merchant chuckled faintly because it had been a while since he sold brittle vials to someone who planned to fill them up with chili powder, and black pepper.

Veteran adventurers didn't use such tactics because they were confident in their skills to defeat their enemies.

Even newbie adventurers rarely use such a tactic because they didn't have enough funds to use "home-made bombs" for their missions.

Alex didn't mind splurging because for him, his life was more important than money.

Not only did he plan to get Herb Gathering quests in the Adventurer's Guild, he also planned to collect herbs in the forest for his own personal use.

This meant that he would need to cover a wide area in order to find the herbs that he was looking for.

By doing so, the chances of him encountering groups of monsters was high.

"That will be six silver coins."

"Here you go."

Alex gave the Merchant a gold coin, and he received four silver coins in return.

His funds had dropped to one gold coin and four silver coins, so he needed to start taking quests to earn some money.

After getting his purchase, he returned to his room in the inn.

Dim Dim jumped onto the window of his room, and looked at the scenery of the town.

Since Alex was planning to mix chili powder and black pepper powder, the Dim Sum God didn't want anywhere near him because it might start sneezing.

Alex tied one of his spare clothes to cover his nose before he started mixing the chili powder, and the black pepper powder together.

Truth be told, even in the game of ELO, no one used this kind of method to attack monsters because there was no need to use such strategies.

Alex also knew that this method would only be effective if the vial shattered on the monster's face.

If they landed on other parts of the monster's body, its effect would decrease drastically.

However, he had the mindset that it was better to be prepared than having no preparation at all.

'Better safe than sorry,' Alex thought as he mixed the two powders together.

Several minutes later, Alex slowly scooped the mixed powder, and poured it on the piece of paper that he used to create a funnel.

This allowed him to easily fill up the vials with his potent mixture, which he would be using as bombs.

After filling all of the vials, Alex stored them safely inside his storage ring.

He then took a bath because despite the fact that he had covered his nose with a folded shirt, it still felt itchy, and his eyes were also watering due to the aftermath of his little experiment.

Still, the young man felt more confident, and was more determined to return to the Floating Forest, where he narrowly escaped an incident that almost cost him his life.