

Endless Leveling Done Right! #Chapter 21: That's What All Adventurer's Say, You Know? - Read Endless Leveling Done Right! Chapter 21: That's What All Adventurer's Say, You Know?

Chapter 21 - That's What All Adventurer's Say, You Know?

"Redcap Mushrooms and Thornberries," Dahlia glanced at the quests that Alex had accepted from their Quest Board. "There had been sightings of Goblins in the outskirts of the Floating Forests as of late. So, be careful while you collect herbs out there, okay?"

"Yes, Ma'am," Alex replied with a smile.

"Good. I expect to see you later today. If you're not back within two days, I'll ask some friends to look for you in the forest. I will at least bury your corpse if they find it."

"Don't worry, Miss Dahlia. I'm not intending to kick the bucket anytime soon."

"That's what all Adventurer's say, you know?"

After that friendly banter in the Adventurer's Guild, Alex headed towards the Floating Forest.

Two days had passed since he last visited the place, and if possible, he wanted to retrace the spot where he found the Redcap Mushrooms, and the Thornberries, so that he could collect them faster.

"Dim Dim, if there are Rank 2 Monsters or higher in the surroundings, make sure to give me a warning."

"Dim Dim~".

Alex planned to rely on his own senses to detect danger in his surroundings. However, he had learned from the incident a few days ago that being too stubborn could cost him his life.

He could still deal with Rank 1 Monsters. But, Rank 2 Monsters and above could threaten his life.

In the end, he chose survivability over stubbornness.

As he stealthily headed to the Northwestern Area of the Forest, he immediately noticed a group of five Goblins.

'Are they perhaps hunting together?' Alex thought as he eyed the monsters who were awfully close to the outskirts of the forest. 'It seems that Dahlia is right. The outskirts are no longer safe.'

However, instead of feeling intimidated, Alex thought that this was a good opportunity.

If the Goblins fought against a strong monster like the Rank 2 Brown Bear, he might once again profit if an opportunity arose.

Because of this, he stealthily stalked the goblin group, while making sure to keep a good look at his surroundings for possible threats, as well as the herbs that he was looking for.

Half an hour later, the Goblin came across four Forest Wolves, who were also out hunting for food.

The Wolves and the Goblins were both Rank 1 Monsters, so the battle wasn't one-sided.

Even though it was a four versus five battle, the wolves were able to get the upper hand due to their superior speed, and teamwork.

They were able to eliminate one of the Goblin Warriors right away, while only suffering minor injuries.

After one of their comrades died in battle, the Goblins became more ferocious and fought with great intensity. The Goblin Archer, who had climbed a tree while raining down arrows at the wolves, hitting one of them on the back.

Since the wolves weren't really tree climbers, they had no choice but to ignore the Goblin Archer, and focus on their opponents on the ground.

The battle lasted for nearly fifteen minutes.

Four of the five goblins were dead, while only two wolves remained.

Both were feeling frustrated because they couldn't attack the Goblin Archer, who was on the tree, and prevented them from preying on the goblins that they killed.

"Dim Dim."

"He has only two more arrows? Good."

Alex, who had watched the battle from start to end, was also waiting for an opportunity to strike.

Once the Goblin Archer had used up all of its arrows, the young man would go in for the kill.

The standoff lasted for three more minutes as the Goblin Archer was forced to use its two remaining arrows.

One of the arrows hit the wolf on its eye, making the latter suffer serious injuries.

The second arrow missed, which meant that the Goblin no longer had any ammunition to use against its foes.

Using this as an opportunity, the wolf, who only suffered moderate injuries during the battle with the goblins, no longer hesitated and started to gorge on one of the Goblins that it had killed earlier.

The wolf, who had been struck in the eye, had ran away, which disappointed Alex.

Thinking that there was no longer any need to keep hiding, he lunged at the wolf who was still feasting on the fallen goblin and struck its neck with a downward strike using everything he had.

He did it as quickly, and as deadly as possible, staying true to his training.

The wolf, which had already been injured at the beginning, and had let down its guard, wasn't able to detect Alex's killing blow.

Its body staggered for a bit before collapsing on the ground. The surprise attack didn't kill it, but Alex's second sword strike got the job done.

He then shifted his attention to the Goblin, who was still on top of the tree, and glaring at Alex with bloodshot eyes.

"What are you looking at?" Alex asked as he stored his sword, and summoned a bow.

The moment the Goblin saw the boy, it immediately shrieked in fright and decided to jump off the tree branch in order to escape.

But Alex's arrow struck its body mid-jump, making it lose its balance.

The young man didn't hesitate to switch back to the sword and sliced off the fallen goblin's head to end its life.

He didn't want to cause any problems by letting it shout for help, so he killed it as fast as he could.

The young man understood that he couldn't stay long, so he stored the bodies of the dead wolves in his Beast Pouch, and started to cut the right ears of the Goblins.

Once that was done, he didn't hesitate to leave the place, and return to his Herb Gathering mission.

Half an hour later, he met with two teenagers, who were also gathering herbs like him.

One of them was a girl, and the other was a boy.

Alex had seen them in the Adventurer's Guild a few times, and the two also recognized him.

"Don't go further," the young lady warned. "The Dire Wolves are prowling that area. There are over a dozen of them, so we decided to leave."

Dim Dim nodded as if to affirm that the young lady was telling the truth. Because of this, Alex heeded her advice and also left the area.

"By the way, my name is Annie," the young lady said with a blush because Alex was quite good looking. "And this is my neighbor, Ronnie."

Ronnie wasn't too happy that his childhood friend seemed to have become smitten with the young man they just met. Because of this, he didn't bother to reply and simply grunted.

Annie was a Herbalist, while Ronnie was a Swordsman.

The teenage boy always accompanied the young lady whenever she went to the Floating Forest to collect herbs as her bodyguard.

While the three were talking, wolf howls reverberated in the forest, making the three of them head towards the outskirts of the forest as fast as possible.

They also noticed a few more Adventurers doing the same.

Clearly, whatever was happening inside the forest wasn't a good thing, and no one wanted to be in the middle of a turf war between the Dire Wolves, and whatever monsters they were planning to fight.

Chapter 22 - Predator Of The Deep Woods

After the three of them had safely left the forest, Alex bid his two new acquaintances goodbye.

But of course, Alex wasn't planning to waste the day. He wouldn't return just yet.

'Since the conflict is in the northwest, I'll just go to the east,' Alex thought as he made his way to the eastern outskirts of the forest.

He wanted to cover as much ground as possible.

This way, he could map the outer perimeter of the forest, allowing him to see monsters prowling in the locations he had visited once.

Dim Dim hadn't said anything either, which meant it hadn't sensed any danger in the surroundings.

Two hours later, Alex successfully found an area filled with Redcap Mushrooms, allowing him to reach his quota.

However, he hadn't seen any Thornberries, making him sigh in regret.

Just as he was planning to dive a little deeper to look for the elusive berries, Dim Dim suddenly warned him.

"Dim!"

Alex immediately stopped moving and crouched down as low as possible.

Dim Dim told him that there was a lone Rank 2 Monster approaching his location.

The young man hid first, wanting to know what kind of monster it was. If it could be defeated, he would try to fight it.

Otherwise, he would stay away and leave the forest for the day.

Soon, a nearly two-meter-long Red-Eyed Zebra Jumping Spider entered his vision.

< Red-Eyed Zebra Jumping Spider >

Monster Rank: Rank 2 Monster

Monster Grade: Common

Health: 200

Attack: 20 - 50

Note: This predator of the deep woods brings inescapable death to those weaker than it. The moment you see it, it has already leaped. And by then, it is far too late.

Alex wasn't good with spiders, especially the big and hairy ones.

He read the information, and he wasn't confident that he was strong enough to defeat it.

Based on the TV documentary he had watched in the past, jumping spiders weren't really aggressive to humans.

But when the jumping spider was nearly two meters long, the possibility of humans being part of their diet was really high.

'Sh*t.' Alex's entire body tensed, knowing how fast these spiders could move.

Not to mention, it was a Rank 2 Monster, making it a very dangerous opponent.

Of course, it was still possible to defeat it, but Alex wasn't too keen on facing a creature that gave him goosebumps.

The young man's body tensed as adrenaline pumped through his body, currently in fight or flight mode.

Alex observed the jumping spider carefully, preparing for what it might do next. Given the current situation, being forced to fight with his life on the line was not far off as an option.

The tense standoff dragged on for nearly half a minute before the monster suddenly turned its head toward Alex.

Its eight eyes locked firmly onto him, and in that moment, he knew there was no more hiding.

When the spider crouched down in preparation for a jump, Alex swiftly took out one of his Brittle Vials, which he had filled with a mixture of chili powder and black pepper.

Everything happened so fast. Before he knew it, the vial had already left his hand and the spider was already mid-air, having leapt from its spot.

Alex didn't pause to check if the vial had hit its mark. He quickly dove to the side, trying to avoid the monster that had locked onto him.

A second later, a heavy thud sounded as the spider landed in the area where he originally stood.

One of the spider's front legs was stained red, enough for Alex to assume the vial had hit the monster mid-jump.

Unfortunately, since it had only struck the leg, the attack had barely done any real damage.

The spider didn't hesitate. In the blink of an eye, it sprang forward, its eight legs blurring as it closed the distance between them.

Alex threw himself to the side, rolling behind a nearby tree just as the monster crashed into where he'd been a moment before. With the creature's speed, running wasn't even an option.

His only chance to win was to hurt it badly enough to make it back off or land one clean hit on its head with one of his brittle vials. And for that, he needed a clear shot.

The spider screeched, frustrated by another missed attack.

Making use of the terrain, Alex moved from tree to tree, avoiding fighting it head-on. He let the woods shield him, successfully keeping himself uninjured.

"Dim Dim!"

"Okay, let's go with that plan!"

The Dim Sum God jumped off Alex's head and climbed the tree he was using as a shield.

Holding a vial in his hand, Alex tried to hit the spider's head, but the latter was moving too fast for him to hit.

The only thing he could do was to circle around the tree, holding a sword with his left hand and a vial with his right.

The young man was right-handed, so swinging with his left hand halved his fighting prowess.

However, there was nothing he could do about it.

He put all of his concentration into trying to stay alive, circling around the tree to prevent the spider from biting him.

A desperate struggle ensued, making Alex sweat profusely.

Sometimes he would thrust his sword forward in an attempt to stab the monster's head, but its legs would block his attack, pushing his weapon aside.

It would then counterattack, but Alex didn't stay still. He kept moving, circling the tree like his life depended on it, using the thick trunk to shield himself from the enemy.

To an onlooker, the scene would look unserious and quite silly. They might not even think that a life was on the line and assume that the young man and spider were merely playing a game of tag.

Suddenly, the sound of something breaking reached Alex's ears.

A moment later, a screech of pain reverberated through the forest.

Dim Dim had climbed up the tree earlier, holding two of Alex's brittle vials. Being the reliable teammate it was, it threw one of the vials at the spider's head at the right moment.

The vial broke, hitting the monster's head. Its contents spread and hit its eyes, blinding it momentarily.

Knowing that he couldn't miss this moment of truth, Alex struck the monster's head with his sword.

Blue blood sprayed from the monster's head, and its screaming only became louder.

With a roar, Alex hacked the monster's head a second time.

However, the monster jumped away, so his attack only grazed the side of its body.

Still blinded by Dim Dim's surprise attack, the jumping spider slammed into a tree head-first, causing it to stagger before falling.

Alex knew that if he didn't kill this monster now, the one who would die was him.

Since the spider was thrashing about, it was extremely hard to target its head. In the end, the young man resorted to hacking whatever was within his reach.

He hacked its legs, then its back, then the side of its body, and watched as blue blood streamed down from its injuries.

But this wasn't enough to make him feel better. Thinking that the effect of the vial might be weakening by the second, he threw more vials at the monster's head as soon as he saw an opportunity.

Every time the chili-pepper mix got into the monster's eyes, a loud scream left its vocal cords as it jumped and thrashed about, desperately crazy to flee.

Unfortunately, they were surrounded by trees, so every time it jumped, a part of its body would hit a tree, adding injury to itself.

< Red-Eyed Zebra Jumping Spider >

Monster Rank: Rank 2 Monster

Monster Grade: Common

Health: 30/200

Attack: 20 - 50

When Alex saw the monster's health points were around the 15% mark and still decreasing due to bleeding damage, he no longer held back and started to hack it repeatedly.

He no longer cared what part of its body he could hit. As long as he dealt damage to it, that was good enough.

Finally, the spider uttered its dying scream before collapsing on the ground.

[Level Up!]

Alex didn't even bother inspecting the monster's body, directly storing it inside his beast pouch.

Without hesitation, he dumped all of his stat points into Agility before running away.

Leaving the forest was his top priority, especially since he was certain that his battle against the jumping spider had caught the attention of monsters in the area.

Dim Dim was following behind him, jumping from tree branch to tree branch. They only slowed down when both of them had managed to leave the forest completely.

As soon as the woods were all behind them, Alex caught Dim Dim as the latter jumped in his direction.

Still not feeling safe from his latest encounter, he decided to speed up again, only stopping when he was hundreds of meters away from the forest.

As he panted, sweat dripped down his clothes, which were dyed blue by the blood of the spider. He looked disheveled, but looking like a mess was still better than being dead.

After he regained his breath, he headed straight back to the city, ignoring the looks of the guards, as well as the people, who saw his sorry state.

Thinking that Dahlia would tease him if he went to the Adventurer's Guild in his current state, Alex decided to return to his inn to take a shower and switch to a new set of clothes.

He hoped that the profit from the monsters he acquired during his latest trip in the forest would allow him to stay in the city for a few more days.

'I underestimated a Rank 2 Monster,' Alex thought. 'I need to train more and raise my stats. I just got lucky this time.'

His Master would be returning after a week, so he planned to focus on his swordsmanship training. That way, he could further ensure that Cairo would be satisfied with what he'd see once he was back.

Chapter 23 - A Family Heirloom

"Here you go, Alex," Dahlia said as she placed a pouch on top of the counter. "This is your earnings from the two gathering missions, the goblin ears, the forest wolf bodies, and the Red-Eyed Zebra Jumping Spider's body."

The young man thanked Dahlia and checked the contents of the pouch.

'I hope I at least earned five gold coins after all that trouble,' Alex thought as he opened the pouch.

As soon as he saw its contents, he immediately closed it and stuffed it into his storage ring.

[You gained 10 gold, 3 silver, and 5 bronze coins.]

With the notification screen confirming what he saw, it finally dawned on him that he wasn't imagining things.

Dahlia couldn't help but giggle after seeing Alex's reaction. His dumbfounded expression made him look like a country bumpkin who had earned a sum like this for the first time.

The receptionist then gestured for Alex to come closer, wanting to whisper something in his ear.

"The three wolves are worth a gold coin each," Dahlia murmured. "And the spider is worth seven gold coins. I'm telling you this so you'll know the prices in the future."

"But you shouldn't hunt Rank 2 Monsters until you're truly ready to face them. I don't want you dying anytime soon, okay?"

The receptionist then pulled back and winked at Alex before asking for the next Adventurer to come forward.

News of the teenage boy returning to town with his clothes covered in blue blood had already reached the Adventurer's Guild, so Dahlia knew the young man must have done something reckless again.

Knowing the young lady's words were a subtle reprimand, Alex left the Adventurer's Guild and headed to the clothes shop, intending to buy some new clothes.

The spider's blood was quite difficult to wash off, so he decided to just throw the clothes away and buy new ones.

Since he had earned quite an impressive amount, he decided to buy three sets of traveling clothes, which cost him eighteen silver coins.

While he was at it, he also purchased three sets of casual clothes, which cost him an additional twelve silver coins.

Alex didn't feel bad about it because it was a necessary purchase. Spending the amount he did was much better than running out of clothes to wear in the middle of a journey.

He then took a stroll on the market with Dim Dim, buying meat skewers at the food stalls as a reward for defeating the spider that had almost killed him.

Since he had enough funds for the time being, he decided to wait for his Master's return instead of claiming more gathering missions and going to the Floating Forest to gather herbs.

"Have you heard the news? The monsters in the forest have been getting active recently," one of the people in the marketplace said to his friend.

"Yeah. One of my friends was barely lucky enough to escape from a group of goblins led by a Hobgoblin," a chubby person replied. "That was really a close call. Fortunately, he escaped before they noticed him."

"I just hope there won't be a stampede."

"By the Gods, can you not say something like that? The last thing we need is a monster stampede."

"Sorry."

Alex frowned as he listened to the discussion of the people around him.

Monster stampedes and dungeon outbreaks were like natural calamities that could happen anytime, anywhere.

The Town of Thaloria was protected by high walls, and there were dozens of guards patrolling the town and manning the gates.

As a transportation hub, there were also plenty of Adventurers passing by who could also help during emergencies.

As long as they worked together, handling a monster stampede wouldn't be difficult.

Not to mention, Alex had never heard of an event like a monster stampede happening in Thaloria in the storyline of ELO.

After he and Dim Dim finished eating, the young man headed to the Library to read books once more, since it was already part of his routine.

Somewhere in the Kingdom of Avalon...

"So, you're back," said a Catkin wearing an eye patch on his left eye.

"Yes, Grandpa," Cairo replied. "I have returned."

"Are you going to participate in the annual hunting mission of our tribe?" Cairo's grandfather, who went by the name Ramza, asked.

"I will," Cairo answered. "Also, Grandpa, there is something important that I need to tell you."

"And that is?"

"I have taken in a disciple."

"Huh?!"

Ramza looked at his grandson in disbelief. In his eyes, the Catkin was still too young to have a disciple under him.

"Grandpa, I know what you're thinking," Cairo said in a calm tone. "But when I saw Alex, I just felt as if he was very different from the humans that I had met in the past. It's like... he is meant for great things."

"Swordsman's intuition?" Ramza arched an eyebrow.

"I can't explain it properly with words." Cairo shook his head. "I just know that he's special."

"If you really felt that way, then it must be so." Ramza gestured for Cairo to follow him inside the house. If they continued their chat outside, chances were others could overhear their discussion.

As Cairo walked past their living room, his gaze landed on the shield that hung on the wall.

It was a round black shield that didn't have any redeeming features. Of course, their family had tried to use it in the past.

The shield was just average and had been damaged more times than they could count.

However, the shield had an auto-repair function, so it had been able to repair the damage received during those battles.

In the end, their family had come to believe that this shield was more of a ceremonial item than a true defensive equipment.

They no longer used it in battle and simply treated it as a family heirloom meant for decoration.

"Grandpa, can I have that?" Cairo asked as he pointed at the shield on the wall.

"Are you using shields now?" Ramza asked in confusion.

"No. But I think my disciple might want it."

Ramza pondered for a while before glancing at the shield hanging on the wall.

It was supposed to be a family heirloom, but they didn't actually need it. Also, it didn't even look that good as a decor.

After a few minutes, Ramza decided to compromise.

"I have two conditions," he said. "The first one is that you should be the King of the Hunt this year. The second one is that your disciple must promise to return Svalinn once he no longer has any use for it. As long as these two conditions are met, I will allow you to take it."

"Deal!" Cairo replied before his grandfather could even change his mind.

"Good." Ramza nodded. "I expect good things from you this year, Cairo."

The old Catkin patted his grandson's shoulder before asking him what he wanted to eat.

Although he was curious about Cairo's disciple, he decided to put this matter aside and ask him about the adventures he had experienced when travelling the world to look for his Dao of the Sword.

Chapter 24 - A Shield Not Meant For Mortals [Part 1]

[Constitution +1]

Alex eased up his sword stance and wiped the sweat off his face.

After some trial and error, Alex discovered that intensive sword training could also help increase his Constitution stat.

But sword training wasn't just about swinging the blade and practicing downward strikes. It also meant refining his stances, learning how to block, and deflecting attacks. Fortunately, he had Dim Dim to help him train.

The Dim Sum God's role was to hurl stones at Alex, aiming mostly for his upper body and mercifully avoiding the head.

Alex made it a goal to block the stones as best as he could, using only the sword.

He had steeled himself to focus on blocking and deflecting instead of dodging.

Thinking that they were playing some kind of game, Dim Dim took it seriously, occasionally throwing feints at Alex before hitting him with a stone.

The very painful experience made the young man grit his teeth.

But thanks to Dim Dim's help, he was able to shorten his reaction time.

This allowed him to block four out of ten stone throws from the very enthusiastic Dim Sum God, who thought that Alex was playing a game with him.

"Okay, let's take a break, Dim Dim," Alex said to the Dim Sum God, who was about to throw another stone at him.

"Dim Dim~" Dim Dim nodded before obediently putting the stone down.

But just as Alex was about to invite the little guy to have some lunch with him, he noticed movement from the corner of his eye.

A moment later, the sound of two wooden swords striking each other reverberated in the surroundings.

"Good. Your reaction time has improved."

"Master, don't sneak on me like that. If you didn't purposely enter my line of sight, I would have been hit by your sneak attack."

Cairo smirked and lowered the wooden sword in his hand. He had just returned from his tribe. As soon as he arrived, he went looking for his one and only disciple, even rushing out of the airship that brought him back to the Floating Island of Thaloria.

He had been observing Alex since half an hour ago and couldn't help but chuckle when he saw that Dim Dim was bullying the young man with its stone throws.

Still, he was quite happy because the young man didn't disappoint him, keeping his promise to train everyday.

"I just returned and I'm feeling hungry, so I'll let you off the hook this time," Cairo said. "Now, come. Let's have lunch at the inn." He pressed his hand against Alex's back, firmly but gently pushing him.

Alex breathed a sigh of relief as he had initially been worried that his Master would ask to spar with him on the spot.

Although he didn't mind doing it, his body was still sore from the hits that he had taken from Dim Dim's stone throws.

All he wanted to do was eat, shower, and take a short nap before heading to the library to read.

While the two of them were walking toward the gate of the town, they noticed several people running towards the Floating Forest.

Alex recognized a few of them since they were also Adventurers just like him.

"They look anxious," Cairo remarked. "Something must have happened in the forest."

"Should we take a look, Master?" Alex asked.

The Catkin pondered a bit before shaking his head. "There are already over a dozen Wanderers headed to the forest. Whatever they are going to face, they should be able to handle it with their skill level.

"Besides, I'm hungry. I can't function properly on an empty stomach. Isn't that right, Dim Dim?"

Dim Dim nodded in agreement. "Dim Dim!"

"Good! Now let's go eat something good!"

"Dim!"

Alex gave the Floating Forest one last glance before following behind his Master and Dim Dim, who seemed very eager to have lunch at the Cat Tail's Inn.

An hour later...

"Are there any skilled Adventurers here?!" shouted one of the regulars of the tavern as soon as he entered the establishment. "Please! People are dying. They need help really badly!"

Alex, Cairo, and Dim Dim, who had just finished eating, looked at the disheveled middle-aged man begging for help.

His clothes were very dirty, and his hair was in disarray. A single glance was enough to tell everyone that he might have just escaped from something dangerous in the Floating Forest.

"Please! Can anyone help?!" the man pleaded. "I'll give you all my money. Please! Save my daughter, Annie! Please, someone, save her!"

Suddenly, the memory of the herbalist who Alex and Dim Dim had met in the forest flashed inside Alex's head.

Ever since meeting Annie and her childhood friend, Ronnie, Alex had started to subconsciously notice that they went to the Floating Forest around the same time he did his morning jog.

Although they couldn't be considered friends, they were already acquaintances.

"Master..." Alex looked at the Catkin Swordsman beside him, and the latter nodded.

"A friend of yours?" Cairo asked.

"An acquaintance."

"I see." The Catkin gave Alex's head a firm pat before standing, and approached the man asking for help.

"Tell us the details. What happened in the Floating Forest?" Cairo asked. "Also, did you ask the Adventurer's Guild for help?"

"I did go to the guild!" Annie's father replied. "But they might not have enough men to save everyone. So I'm here to look for help. I heard Catkins are good at scouting and tracking people. Please! Save my daughter, I beg of you!"

"Tell us exactly what happened," Cairo stated. "I need to know what attacked you, and how many they are."

"It's the Hobgoblins," the distressed man answered. "Dozens of them suddenly appeared in the outskirts and encircled low-ranked Adventurers looking for herbs.

"I-I tried to fight them off, but my daughter asked me to come to the town to ask for help. Ronnie bought time so I could run away. I don't know what happened to them after."

"But as I was running away, I saw corpses of young adventurers on my way back. All of them were young men. As for the girls, I'm afraid..."

The middle-aged man shuddered because it was a well-known fact that goblins liked to kidnap girls from other species to be used as broodmares to sire their young.

"Let's go, Alex," Cairo said. "Make sure to stay as close to me as possible."

"Yes, Master," Alex replied.

The pair then ran until they reached the gates, where a few other Adventurer Parties were starting to gather.

Perhaps due to the nature of the incident, the Guild Master had decided to issue a rescue mission to save the low-ranking Wanderers, who were clearly no match against Rank 2 Monsters and above.

After leaving the city, Cairo took out a black shield from his storage ring and handed it to his disciple.

"Use this and prioritize your safety." Cairo looked at Alex solemnly. "If you need to run away, just run away. You will help me more if you do that."

Alex understood what his Master implied. The Catkin wished for him to gain some combat experience. However, if the situation becomes too dangerous, the young man should run away.

Cairo wasn't confident that he would be able to protect his disciple if he faced many strong enemies at once.

"Understood, Master," Alex replied and accepted the black shield that was handed to him.

As soon as Alex equipped the shield on his left hand, he heard a notification sound inside his head, and a blue window screen appeared in front of him.

When the young man saw the description of the shield, he almost dropped it due to shock and disbelief.

It was a shield meant not for mere mortals to hold, but for those who wish to defy fate.

Chapter 25 - A Shield Not Meant For Mortals [Part 2]

The young man continued to run, and yet his gaze was glued to the window screen in front of him.

He had already read it over thrice, but he was still shaken by the information of the shield that his Master had casually given to him.

< Svalinn [EX] >

Item Grade: Common [Sealed]

Stats: +20 Defense

Active Skills: [Sealed]

Passive Skills: [Sealed]

Effects: If the shield is wielded by someone whom it has recognized as its owner, it will match the strength of its wielder.

— Will unlock skills and abilities depending on the Stats of its wielder.

Note: A shield not meant for mortals, yet borne by those who defy fate. Svalinn does not shine nor does it shatter. It endures, as it was meant to.

It is the wall before the inferno, the last defense of the living world. So long as Svalinn stands, the sky shall not burn. To wield it is to bear the burden of the heavens.

[This Shield has still not acknowledged you as its Master.]

As the former only Shield Savant of ELO, Alex was very fascinated with the names of the Legendary and Divine Shields in the game.

The name of the shield he had wielded back then was Aegis, and it was considered a Legendary Shield.

He had also had other shields in his collection namely the Ajax Shield, Shield of Heracles, Andvaranaut's Shield, Captain Murica's Shield, and a few more shields of the Legendary Rank.

As the main Tanker of his guild, Endless Horizon, every high quality shield dropped by the Boss Monsters automatically belonged to him.

However, he had never held a shield that had the [EX] suffix.

Although there were [EX] items in the game, acquiring them was extremely hard.

How hard? These items were considered as the personal battle Regalias of the Major Arcanas, who were referred to as the Deities of the world.

Last time, the young man had gained a super rare skill book with the [EX] suffix, which allowed him to choose a skill that could evolve.

The same principle applied to the weapons with the same title, making them incredibly powerful and precious as they didn't have fixed stats.

The stronger their wielders became, the stronger these items were.

'Svalinn? That name sounds familiar,' Alex thought as he shifted his attention to where he was running. 'Where have I heard it before?'

He was certain that Svalinn hadn't existed in ELO. As a shield connoisseur, he had seen every shield in the game.

But he couldn't shake the thought that he should know what kind of shield Svalinn was.

'It's too bad, the Shield does not acknowledge me as its owner,' Alex mused. 'There must be some hidden condition that I need to meet in order to unlock it.'

Suddenly, a scream broke the young man from his daze. It came from inside the forest, prompting Cairo to increase his speed, leaving Alex behind.

"I'm going ahead first!" Cairo shouted. "Remember! If things become too dangerous for you, run away!"

The Catkin didn't wait for Alex's reply and activated his movement technique, increasing his speed for a brief period of time.

The young man watched as his Master entered the forest before him.

As he neared the forest, he heard the sound of weapons clashing against each other.

"Dim Dim, stay close to me," Alex said. "But if you think that you're in danger, feel free to escape first."

"Dim!" Dim Dim nodded in acknowledgment.

Following the sound of fighting, Alex saw dozens of Adventurers fighting off against a pack of Hobgoblins riding on Dire Wolves.

The Dire Wolves ranged from Rank 2 to Rank 3 Monsters, while the Hobgoblins were Rank 3 monsters.

The Adventurers fought against them as a team, but they were being overwhelmed by the enemy because there were Goblin Shamans and Goblin Mages among the enemy's ranks.

Goblin Archers were also attacking them from the trees, forcing the Adventurers to go onto the defensive.

While the young man was observing the battlefield, he saw a brilliant flash in the distance.

There, he saw a Hobgoblin's head slide off from its body as Cairo successfully decapitated it with a single slash of his blade.

'As expected of Master!' Alex couldn't help but clench his fist in excitement.

The Catkin Swordsman was like a reaper of death. Every time he attacked, he drew blood.

Sometimes he would stab his enemies, and at other times, he would slice off one of their limbs, quickly adjusting depending on the situation.

Cairo was strong, but he wasn't arrogant.

Every move he made was calculated. He paid close attention to the Archers, Mages, and Shamans targeting him from a distance.

It didn't take long for Alex to notice that the battle had reached a stalemate, with both sides unable to get the upper hand.

Suddenly, Dim Dim crawled down from Alex's head and whispered something in his ear.

"Dim Dim."

"Are you sure?"

"Dim!"

The Dim Sum God told Alex that it could sense some living humans hundreds of meters away from his location.

According to the Dim Sum God, there were no monsters in that location. This meant that it was safe for him to go there and check the situation.

Knowing that he wouldn't be able to contribute to the ongoing battle, Alex followed behind Dim Dim, who was guiding him to the place where it sensed human presence.

He was moving on all fours, making sure he wouldn't be detected by the monsters, who were fighting against the Adventurers.

When he finally reached the place where Dim Dim was taking him, Alex's face immediately turned serious.

There were a few girls stripped off their clothes, lying on the ground unconscious.

Their bodies had bruises on them, with some even having teeth marks. This was the result of the rough treatment that they received from the Goblins.

Alex felt sorry for these girls, but he had to focus on his mission right now. The only saving grace was that Annie wasn't one of them.

Aside from the ladies who were lying on the ground, there were several more ladies that were tied to the trees by vines.

They all seemed to be sleeping, which might have been due to the power of the Goblin Shaman.

"Dim Dim."

"Good. Please tell me if you sense any danger in the surroundings."

As soon as Dim Dim confirmed that the coast was clear, Alex immediately rushed to the tied captives and used his sword to cut the vines.

He then lightly shook their bodies and tapped their cheeks in order to wake them up.

Some of these ladies were Adventurers, so the moment they regained their senses, they immediately understood the situation.

"Do you have an extra sword?" a lady, who seemed to be a warrior, asked Alex.

Alex handed her a sword he had looted from a Goblin Warrior to the lady. Upon taking the sword, she helped him free the other captives, speeding up the freeing progress.

After cutting the binding on two more people, Alex finally saw the young lady he was looking for.

"Annie, wake up," Alex said as he shook the young lady and tapped her cheek.

It didn't take long before she regained her senses and looked at her surroundings with fright.

"It's okay," Alex said, comforting her. "I will get you out of here. Help me free the others."

Annie nodded and accepted the knife that the young man handed to her.

Together with the warrior lady, they managed to free all the captives.

But just as they were about to escape, Dim Dim suddenly gave the young man a warning.

"Dim Dim!"

"Sh*t!" Alex cursed as he hurriedly grabbed Annie's hand and ran away in the opposite direction where Dim Dim said that the goblins were coming from. "The goblins are coming. Support who you can and follow me!"