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Chapter 1751 Chapter 1751. The Rebel and the Emperor

The force that Archibald brought was smaller than the legion guarding Horatio. Less than 5,000 vampires were in that force. When Archibald left Sangrod, he could only bring those who were truly loyal to him. Not many were willing to go with him, thus their small number.

"Should we call for reinforcement?" Darius asked.

Horatio pondered for a bit before he answered, "No. If it was before those dragons showed up, then it was fine. Under this situation, our allies need all the manpower they can get. Our force here is enough to deal with those rebels."

"But they have Archibald..." Darius said with worry. "We might outnumber them but we don't have anyone here who can deal with him. I'm afraid no one would be able to stop him from getting to you, my lord. Maybe it's better if I call Ezekiel or my mother back."

"I agree with Sir Darius," Saint Jonathan said.

"No need. I will face him," Horatio said.

"Are... Are you sure, my lord...?" Darius asked.

Darius knew that Horatio was a capable combatant despite choosing to stay out of direct combat most of the time, but he was only a level 76 rare elite. Archibald, on the other hand, was a level 90 mythical grade. The gap between their level was too large.

"There is no need to worry. Get everyone into formation," Horatio ordered.

Since Horatio had commanded so, Darius could only obey. He used the war table to rearrange the legion into a formation that could better handle the enemies coming from behind them.

Darius obeyed Horatio's command not to call Vanessa or Ezekiel to return, but he secretly input the command to call a regiment of death dealers to return. Death dealers possessed the fastest moving speed. Riding their shadow wargs, these special units should come to their aid in a short time. This might reduce the battle power of those who were fighting the dragons inside the capital, but ensuring the safety of their emperor took priority.

Jonathan also called some of his guild members to come.

While Darius operated the war table, Horatio took position among his legion. Jonathan followed Horatio. The vampire soldiers who saw their emperor among them had their morale increased. They braced themselves and swore to not let these rebels touch their emperor.

Horatio used the Book of the Damned to turn the day into night earlier. But by now, the sun had set and real night had begun. Both sides were vampires so neither had any advantage.

Both sides didn't waste time in declarations. They just crashed into each other when they got into range. Horatio's force outnumbered the rebels two to one. It was apparent which side was on the back foot just from the first clash.

But even though Horatio's force seemed to push against the rebels, the middle section had a different outcome. In that section, it was the Sangrod's force who were getting demolished. This section was where Archibald was.

Archibald had a golden orb protecting his body as he charged forward. This was Heroic Charge. All the enemies in his way were smacked to the side. No one could stop his charge. His followers followed behind him. They took advantage and struck those who were still disoriented by Archibald's charge.

Archibald's target was none other than Horatio. As long as he could slay Horatio, it would be his side who won. His heroic charge brought him close to his prey.

"Traitorrrr...!!! It is time for your retribution...!" Archibald shouted after his Heroic Charge ended. Horatio was still a distance away. Many vampire soldiers barred his way.

"Traitor? Did my ears hear wrong? How absurd that you, a rebel, called me, a legitimate emperor, as a traitor?" Horatio asked.

"Legitimate emperor? Pah! You killed your father and usurped the throne. You have no right to call yourself legitimate!"

"Then who should be the emperor? You? Someone who colluded with an enemy nation and is now attacking your countrymen? If anyone is a traitor, you and those who follow you are the most suitable to bear the title!"

Archibald's face turned ugly. He had indeed cooperated with Liguritudum. It was Master's guild members who informed him about Horatio's plan to take him out while he was secretly planning a rebellion. Knowing that his intention had been exposed, he stood no chance of winning. He accepted Master's invitation to come to Liguritudum for refuge.

But even though he had come to Liguritudum, he refused to stay inside Dritzuut and help Master defend the capital. He had no interest in defending another country's

settlement. His beef was with Horatio. So, he and his people stayed in hiding near the woods around Dritzut. They just watched from a distance as the siege took place.

When the wall fell and the Allied army started entering the capital, Archibald had his people silently approaching Horatio's position, but he didn't take action yet. It was easy for Horatio to call his army back if he attacked. He wanted to wait until the Allied army was deep inside the capital and storming the palace before he took action.

But then Azzarilth's brood arrived. Archibald knew then this was his chance. The armies would be too busy dealing with the dragons. He commanded his troops to charge then.

"I'm done speaking to you. You will die!!" Archibald exclaimed.

Many soldiers were trying to stop him, but a swirling energy exploded from his body, pushing those soldiers away. Archibald was carrying a huge two-handed golden hammer. He made a wide swing using that hammer. Another swirling energy was discharged. This one created a giant hurricane that threw everyone in his vicinity in different directions.

"Stay behind me, my lord," Saint Jonathan uttered. He was also wielding a hammer but a one-handed one. The hammer was of unique grade and it had a weapon orb that shone with light elements. On his other hand was a kite shield, also a unique grade.

Jonathan lunged at Archibald when the soldiers blocking the ex-relic marshall were blown away. Their two hammers slammed into one another. The winner was immediately obvious. Jonathan bounced back from the impact.

"Move aside, you weakling!" Archibald exclaimed while making a wide swing. His hammer shone a bright yellow. Trails of rocks and dust followed his swing. This was a power strike modified with the earth element, Earth Strike.

Jonathan put his shield before him and activated Heaven's Shield. The giant shield image was shattered with one hit. Archibald's swing continued and struck Jonathan's real shield. Jonathan was sent far away from the impact.

With that last obstacle gone, Archibald was finally face to face with Horatio.

Chapter 1752 Chapter 1752. The Might of the Book of the Damned

Horatio didn't stay idle while Jonathan was protecting him. When the outworlder and the ex-relic marshall were clashing, Horatio picked up the book chained to his belt and opened it. By extracting power from the book, he drew a spell formation.

That book was the Book of the Damned. The legendary artifact Jack retrieved from Aubelard.

When Jonathan was sent flying by Archibald's earth swing. The spell formation above the book was completed. Horatio cast the completed spell without pause. A gigantic rune appeared on the ground.

The giant rune symbol was in between Archibald and Horatio. Archibald sensed great power from that rune. He chose to be prudent and stepped away. As soon as he did, flames burst out of the rune. With it, a huge and ominous-looking gate appeared.

Jonathan, who was still rising from the ground, saw the gate. He thought the gate looked very much like Warlock's Hell Gate, only much bigger.

Similar to Warlock's Hell Gate, the giant hell gate opened and spewed out a burst of infernal flame. Archibald sensed the attack but it was too late for him to dodge. A layer of hard rocks covered his body. The earth armor protected him as the infernal flame washed over him.

Archibald didn't suffer much damage due to the Earth Armor's protection. The infernal flame didn't trouble him. What troubled him was another obstacle that had appeared before him. Out of the gate, a towering demon-like creature emerged. The creature looked like a buff-up demon with two giant bat wings. It wielded a flaming blade in his right hand and a flaming whip in his left.

Archibald used his Inspect and found that the creature was a level 76 mythical-grade Daemon.

He snickered. "Hah! Summoning another weakling won't save you."

But then he noticed Horatio was forming another spell formation using the large book he held. Horatio had started casting when the giant hell gate came out and delayed Archibald. The spell was completed now.

Uncountable thin crimson threads shot out from the Book of the Damned. These crimson threads spread out to a large distance. They latched onto the vampire soldiers under Horatio's command. As they did, thin layers of crimson aura enveloped the soldiers.

The crimson threads boosted the soldiers' stats, making them faster and stronger. They already outnumbered Archibald's force. With their boosted stats, Archibald's soldiers were having even more difficulty fighting them.

"Considering your merit to Sangrod in the past, I will give you one chance to surrender, Archibald," Horatio said. "Surrender and swear your fealty! And I will forgive your transgression."

"Save your bluff! As long as I take you down, I still win!" Archibald said and lunged forward.

The daemon came in his path and swung its flaming blade.

"Move aside, weakling...!" Archibald yelled and swung his giant hammer empowered by Earth Strike.

While he uttered the same statement and used the same skill against Jonathan, the result of the clash was very much different. When his hammer and the daemon's flaming blade clashed, both of them were forced back from the impact.

The daemon was forced further back, so Archibald was still stronger. But the fact that he was also forced back meant the daemon wasn't as weak as he thought. Archibald couldn't believe this outcome. He used Inspect again and found that the level of the daemon had changed. It was now level 86.

He realized that attached behind the daemon was the crimson thread, the same as the ones that attached to Horatio's soldier. This was what caused the power-up on the daemon.

The crimson threads came from one of the powers of the Book of the Damned. It granted the book user's followers a demonic power-up. All the ones under this demonic contract received a boost in their stats. But if the one receiving the demonic contract was a demon-type creature, it received additional effect. Its level was increased by ten levels.

With this power-up, the daemon wasn't that powerless against Archibald. It swung the flaming whip in its left hand. The whip hit Archibald's legs when he was still in astonishment. The whip curled around his legs. The daemon pulled his whip and made Archibald fall to the ground. It then made a giant leap and swung its flaming blade down. An image of a giant flaming blade falling from the sky was conjured following his cleave.

Archibald uttered a roar. His body enlarged with Gigantify. The increase of his mass forced the whip coiling around his legs to unravel. It was not only his body that got enlarged, but his hammer also enlarged after he used the Enlarge Weapon skill.

Now a real giant, he swung his titanic hammer at the incoming flaming blade. The image of the giant flaming blade was destroyed. At the same time, the daemon was sent several meters back from the impact.

"This is still not enough to save you!!" Archibald exclaimed, but then he noticed Horatio had again cast another spell using his book.

Black flames enshrouded Horatio's body. The black flames formed an image. The image was a demon with a pair of curled horns and two pairs of bat wings.

The enchantment affecting Horatio was Devil Possession. An immense power up from Warlock's spell, demonic possession. With this enchantment, all of Horatio's stats were increased. All the damage dealt by his spells was also increased, and he gained massive damage reduction while the Devil Possession was in effect.

Horatio put the Book of the Damned back to his waist. He then lifted his emperor scepter. A spell formation was formed. Repeating Fireball was cast.

Archibald's strength might have multiplied from the Gigantify skill, but it also made him an easier target. Under the Devil Possession, the speed of Horatio's fireballs was increased. Archibald couldn't dodge the fireballs. He put his hammer in front of him to parry.

He couldn't parry all the fireballs but he still had Earth Armor protecting him, so the damage he suffered wasn't high. Horatio might have his spell power increased but his level was still only 76.

If Horatio was alone, he would still lose, but he was not. The daemon came in between Horatio and Archibald again. Jonathan also joined. Jonathan also had the crimson thread on him, enhancing his stats. At the same time, many of Horatio's other soldiers joined in surrounding Archibald.

Archibald looked behind him. The troops he brought were almost routed. They were no match for the soldiers under the demonic contract.

Archibald was now regretting his decision to attack. If he had known Horatio had such a powerful book, he would have waited longer for a better opportunity.

Chapter 1753 Chapter 1753. The End of a Rebel

Archibald might be formidable, but there was little he could do alone. He didn't want to give up. He didn't have a choice for that anymore. When he decided to attack, that was it. Despite believing his cause was just, not many followed him. The ones he brought here were it. They were currently getting slaughtered. Even if he could flee, these followers couldn't. If he fled, that meant accepting that his cause was over.

He was unwilling. He thought that as long as he could end Horatio, then it would be worth it.

Hence, he tried to get to Horatio, but Horatio continued to stay out of range. Horatio cast his enhanced spells from a safe distance while the daemon, Jonathan, and Horatio's enhanced troops continued to bar his way.

As he continued to fight, he noticed that only his spot still had the fighting ongoing. He turned and saw that all his followers were gone already.

Realization dawned then.

He looked at his HP. It was below one-third now. In his zeal, he had forgotten about his surroundings and continued to fight holding onto his belief.

He roared in desperation and made one mad dash. His desperate attempt successfully knocked the daemon aside. Jonathan immediately took the daemon's role. He was nine levels below Archibald but the demonic contract enhanced his stats. He also had Paladin's faith armor in effect.

Aside from that, he had a special class, Crusader Knight. It was only a normal special class, so he only received three new skills despite being level 81.

The first skill was the Unyielding Faith. A buff skill that was currently active. The second skill was the Crusading Charge, which was stronger than a Warrior's Charge but weaker than the Heroic Charge. He received the last skill at level 70, and it was called Heavenly Smite. He was using this skill now.

He lifted his hammer high. A beam of light shot down from heaven and entered his hammer. He then brought this shining hammer onto Archibald.

Archibald's charge had stopped after he knocked the daemon away. Jonathan's Heavenly Smite arrived then. The impact of the Heavenly Smite created an energy shockwave that threw Archibald into the ground. Jonathan himself bounced violently back.

Horatio's spell struck then. A huge pillar of fire erupted from the ground underneath Archibald. Archibald was still unbalanced from Jonathan's blow, so he suffered the full damage from the flame pillar. His HP fell to below 10%

He didn't get up.

When the soldiers were about to land follow-up blows, Horatio stopped them. "Halt!"

Archibald remained still in the ground.

"Do you yield?" Horatio asked.

Archibald didn't answer.

"Do you choose death over serving me?" Horatio asked again.

Archibald remained silent.

"... Very well. Sangrod thank you for your service," Horatio uttered.

He motioned for the troops to move back before casting Warlock's Hellish Explosion. Under the effect of Devil Possession, the spell dealt extra damage.

Archibald's body was lying still on the ground when the spell subsided. He had given up fighting. He didn't use any defensive skill to face Horatio's enhanced Hellish Explosion, so he received the full damage. Several loots were beside his body. Jonathan picked those loots up.

"It's finally over," Darius said.

The death dealers he called for reinforcement just arrived but their service was no longer needed, so he sent them back to fight in the capital. Jonathan did the same to his guild members who were rushing over.

"I already told you people that there is no need for reinforcement. Do you two have so little confidence in my words?" Horatio asked when he saw those reinforcements.

"Forgive me, my lord. I just can't gamble on your safety," Darius replied.

"I have a feeling you planned this," Saint Jonathan said. "That's why you didn't hole up inside Themisphere's mobile fortress, didn't you? You suspected Archibald was nearby."

Darius gave a surprised expression hearing that, while Horatio simply smiled for a response.

"Now, we no longer have a hidden thorn to worry about," Horatio said. "Sangrod is wholly mine."

"We still need to win the war here. Can you do what you did with that book again?" Jonathan asked while pointing at the Book of the Damned beside Horatio's waist. The crimson thread that strengthened the legion here vanished after the battle was over, and so was the summoned daemon.

"The spells in this book have cooldown time," Horatio answered. "Additionally, the spell is not without a drawback, especially the demonic contract. The cost of using that spell is getting my age cut down by one day for every follower I strengthen. So, I just lost around twenty-seven years of my life in that battle just now."

Twenty-seven years might be nothing for a vampire, but it was still a loss. Hearing that, both Darius and Jonathan felt that it made sense Horatio didn't use the spell indiscriminately. It should only be used as a last-ditch effort.

Horatio didn't inform them that this cost was only applied to natives. If outworlders were the ones using the Book of the Damned, they didn't suffer the same penalty. Just like how Master could use the Necronomicon freely. If natives were the ones using the

Necronomicon, they also had to pay something when they revived their fallen followers into zombie soldiers.

Horatio kept this information because Jonathan was there. If the outworlders knew, they might get the temptation of trying to steal this book from him.

"Now that we have taken care of our hidden enemies, perhaps it's time to move to a safer location and watch this battle inside that mobile fortress?" Jonathan asked.

They turned to the mobile fortress. It was still battling the eldritch beholder. Its pincers never let go of the ancient monster ever since they gripped the tentacles. Relying on its weight, the mobile fortress had been keeping the eldritch beholder from moving away. The two had been constantly trading blows to see who could last longer.

"That fortress doesn't look safe to me," Horatio said. "Also, how do you think we can enter that fortress while it is tangling with the eldritch beholder? I don't suppose they will stop the fight for us to enter, do they?"

Horatio and the others might not have had a way to enter the fortress in such a situation, but one person did. And this person was not of the Allied forces.

Chapter 1754 Chapter 1754. Infiltrating the Mobile Fortress

The person who entered the mobile fortress while it was battling the eldritch beholder was Speedrun, the player who possessed the Master Thief special class. When he was killed by Hatori, he was wearing an amulet of rebirth. Speedrun always wore this amulet all the time. He wasn't a combatant. He didn't care about the ability boost provided by a piece of pendant equipment. Keeping his level and belonging was more important to him.

Speedrun dropped one level to level 75 after he died, but Master provided him with an exp-grinding team to power-level him. Master even helped by being in that team and letting Speedrun enter a special legacy dungeon in their guild headquarters which provided tons of exp points. Normally, only he and a couple of his high officers were allowed to use this legacy dungeon.

Master's purpose in doing so was to catapult Speedrun to level 80. When a Master Thief reached level 80, they received a new skill. Master required Speedrun to use this new skill for his next assignment, which was to infiltrate the mobile fortress.

Master Thief's level 80 skill was Infiltrate Barrier. This skill allowed the user to bypass any barrier, even those protected by a rune diagram.

Speedrun successfully reached level 80 just before the Allied forces arrived. He had been hiding outside the capital waiting for the right opportunity to infiltrate the mobile fortress.

He waited until the battle turned heated and most of the soldiers charged at the wall, then he made his approach.

Speedrun was given several invisibility magic scrolls by Master. He used the first scroll to roam among the Allied forces. While invisible, he used Master Disguise to copy the appearance of an enemy soldier. He then made his way to the mobile fortress.

It took him some time to sneak over the battlefield because of the chaos amid the battle. The mobile fortress always moved around. It was not easy to get close. When the mobile fortress tussled with the eldritch beholder, it moved less. He carefully made his way there then.

When he was close, he used the second invisibility scroll. He then used Grappling Hook to jump onto the mobile fortress. He scaled the wall until he reached the battlement. Normally, one couldn't enter the battlement because of the barrier protecting the mobile fortress. This barrier stopped even flyers. Speedrun used his Infiltrate Barrier and stepped into the battlement.

Still under invisibility, he used Master Disguise to copy one player who was inside the mobile fortress. This was because his invisibility would be out of duration soon. With the disguise, he continued to roam inside the mobile fortress after his invisibility ended.

Master wasn't familiar with the monarch system. Because of that, he was also not familiar with the mobile fortress. He didn't know the layout of the fortress but he suspected there should be a power crystal similar to a palace or guild headquarters. Speedrun's mission was to find this power crystal and destroy it so the mobile fortress was immobilized.

Speedrun entered the keep inside the mobile fortress. The keep was the most likely place for the power crystal to be. He roamed inside the keep for some time while the battle outside continued to rage. Most of the people in this fortress were outside the keep operating the siege weapons or fighting in the battlement, so he encountered no one inside the keep.

From his roaming, he found three doors with rune diagram seals. If there was a power crystal, it should be behind one of these three doors. His Infiltrate Barrier had a two-hour cooldown. He had a cover disguise but it was still safer for him to hide while waiting for his skill's cooldown to end. He went and hid in a corner. He had a cloak that had the shadow meld ability, similar to Jack's previous Cloak of Shadow. He became invisible after staying still for a while.

While waiting, his mind wondered about his current situation. He thought this was all very troublesome. Normally, he felt a thrill when he sneaked into a heavily guarded place to steal a valuable object, but he felt no such thrill this time. He was sure then that he despised war.

He might be indebted to Master for his special class and for helping him reach his current level, but he thought that with this mission, he should have repaid Master enough. After this mission, he planned to say goodbye and go his own way.

Of course, he didn't plan to say his goodbye directly. Master gave him the impression of someone who didn't take kindly to people who quit his service. He would just disappear and leave a letter explaining his farewell, like what was done between lovers in those outdated romance movies.

After the cooldown of his Infiltrate Barrier ended, he came out of hiding and approached the first door. All three doors were on different floors. If no power crystal was behind this door, he would have to wait another two hours before he could try another door. He didn't care if the Liguritudum force had to wait longer, but he would hate it if his plan to depart was delayed because he entered the wrong door.

He prayed to all the Gods in existence, asking for luck so he didn't pick the wrong door. He then used the Infiltrate Barrier. A portal opened before the sealed door. He stepped into that portal and came out the other side of the door.

When he stepped out, he found that he was face-to-face with five people. These five people were sitting on five different chairs and were operating weird-looking control panels. The five showed shocked expressions which he thought would be pretty much the same as his expression right now.

"F*ck!" He cursed. Not only was there no power crystal behind this door but there were players instead.

Both sides were in shock, but Speedrun recovered first. A couple of metallic balls appeared in his hand and he threw them forward. The two metal balls were World Maker's war tool, the Paralyzing Bombs.

The two bombs exploded, dealing damage to the five players who sat near each other. Speedrun then rushed forward while the five were paralyzed.

The five were low-level players. Their levels ranged around level 40 to 55. Speedrun didn't know why these low-level players were here, but he didn't have the time to think about it. Under the paralyzed condition, the five couldn't last long against Speedrun who was level 80.

After dispatching the five, Speedrun uttered another curse. He was sure that his presence inside this mobile fortress was now known to the enemy.

Chapter 1755 Chapter 1755. New Pilots

The eldritch beholder was trying to release itself from the mobile fortress but was unable to. The grip from the mobile fortress' arms was very firm. In the end, they ended up

hitting one another without evasion. They were trading damage and seeing who ran out of HP first.

The eldritch beholder possessed higher firepower compared to the mobile fortress. The green rays from its multiple eyes had short cooldowns and it had many offensive spells that dealt high damage.

The mobile fortress' damage output was the energy guns on its arms and the siege weapons inside it. The damage from those energy guns wasn't much. As for the siege weapons, they dealt extra damage to structures but not as much damage to other targets. The attacks from the mobile fortress' four towers were useless against the eldritch beholder because they dealt magical damage.

Fortunately, the mobile fortress didn't fight by itself. Its role was mainly as an anchor to immobilize the eldritch beholder. With the eldritch beholder unable to move freely, Arlcard, Spark, Therras, and Themisphere past kings had more leeways in sending their attacks.

Therras' elevate beast effect had long ended, but it could still fight the eldritch beholder because most of the eldritch beholder's attention was on the mobile fortress.

Arlcard and Themisphere past kings who were magic users might not be able to use their offensive spells, but they could still use defensive spells. They used their defensive spells to block the attacks from the eldritch beholder, reducing the damage received by the mobile fortress.

Earlier when Arlcard saw the mobile fortress was on its way over to fight the eldritch beholder. He lured the eldritch beholder by casting multiple defensive spells on himself. The eldritch beholder didn't have the cunning of the real thing. She fought only by instinct. Hence, she cast her Greater Dispel on Arlcard, stripping him of his defensive buffs.

When the mobile fortress arrived, her Greater Dispel was on cooldown. Otherwise, she might strip the mobile fortress of its rune diagram protection.

Due to her monotonous fighting style, Arlcard and the others were able to grind the eldritch beholder to one-third of its life. With the defenders occupied by the overwhelming Allied forces, no one could help the eldritch beholder.

Even after Azzarilth's brood arrived, the mobile fortress, Arlcard, and the others continued to focus on defeating the eldritch beholder. They would help the Allied forces fighting inside the capital after they took care of the eldritch beholder.

While they expected things to continue as it was until they slew the eldritch beholder, the mobile fortress suddenly stopped moving.

"Huh...?" Pointy Tip, who was operating the war table at the roof of the keep, was flabbergasted by this turn of events.

"Hey, what's going on inside there?" He sent a message to one of the mobile fortress' pilots.

As he did, he noticed the names of the pilots were greyed. The names quickly turned back to white. He received a message from them then.

"There is an intruder inside the mobile fortress! We were killed. We are now back at the resurrection chapel inside Heavenly Citadel."

"What...?!"

The eldritch beholder felt the grip of the mobile fortress' arms weakening. Without the pilots' control, the pincer stopped applying the extra pressure needed to hold the eldritch beholder. The eldritch beholder heaved and tore its tentacles out of the pincers' grip. It was freed.

The eldritch beholder announced its freedom by casting Force Impact on the mobile fortress. Without anyone controlling the mobile fortress, the legs gave in when it was slammed by the immense power from the eldritch beholder's spell. Its back legs buckled and the mobile fortress almost tipped over as it skidded on the ground.

Seeing that, Arlcard rushed over and engaged the eldritch beholder directly. This was to prevent the eldritch beholder from attacking the mobile fortress which was a sitting duck at the moment. Spark, Therras, and past Themisphere kings did the same. They no longer fought sneakily.

"Shit!" Tip cursed. He sent messages to the players inside the mobile fortress to start searching for the intruders.

"I will go and capture that intruder!" Captain Whitebeard, who was by Tip's side, declared. The mouse then scuttled away down the stairs into the keep.

Tip sent a message to John. John, who received the news, thought about the case.

"There is no hole in the mobile fortress' barrier?" John asked.

Tip had to go to the mobile fortress' control room to check the answer to that question. He asked the pilots who had just been resurrected instead.

"The control panel didn't show any irregularity," Tip relayed the answer to John.

"... It must be that Master Thief," John said.

"Master thief?"

"We encountered a player with that special class during the battle in Aurebor. Jack's royal agent killed that player but I guess he wore the amulet of rebirth. He must somehow level up to level 80 to be able to infiltrate the mobile fortress without getting detected."

"What should we do?" Tip asked.

"His target must be the mobile fortress' power crystal. He entered the control room by mistake. Send people to guard the room. His skill to infiltrate a sealed room has a two-hour cooldown. Also, ask everyone to pair up. Master Thief has a disguise skill. If they encounter anyone alone. Apprehend that person at once. Ask questions later."

"Affirmative," Tip answered.

John then sent messages in the guild chat, asking for people who were either professional pilots or drivers in their real lives. They need substitutes to pilot the mobile fortress. The five pilots who resurrected back in Themisphere would take a long time to return here. They had no time to wait for those pilots.

"I will give it a try!" One of the players volunteered. John looked at the name. Stefan. John remembered this person was among the ones Jack recruited after the incident in the Council of Charites. From Jack's report, Stefan was a good car driver.

"Okay, Stefan. Head to the mobile fortress at once," John said. He connected Stefan with the previous mobile fortress pilots. The pilots would be instructing Stefan via messages about how to operate the control panel inside the control room.

John then looked for volunteers for the remaining four pilots.

Chapter 1756 Chapter 1756. Rescue Mission

On one of the multiple balconies at Dritzuut palace. Two players ducked while looking over the parapet.

"... She is so close," One of the players said. This player was David from the Dogs of War. Under John's request, he had sneaked through the capital and infiltrated the palace with his guildmates.

But even if John didn't give the request, he might still sneak over all by himself. He couldn't bear letting Jeanny remain in captivity now that she was within sight.

The player who was with David put a hand on his shoulder. "Be patient, David. Impatience will only ruin our chance of rescuing them."

The other player was Serpent Boss, Dogs of War's guild leader.

"The corridor to that balcony is heavily guarded. We will be found out once we make our move," Serpent Boss said. "For all we know, a field teleportation rune diagram might be under that cage. If they are moved before we break the cage, it will take some time to find them again. We wait until the Themisphere King arrives. He has the firepower to break that cage fast."

David nodded. He knew that was the right move. He just couldn't deny the uneasiness in his heart. He was a soldier. He knew letting his feelings dictate his actions would most likely lead to mistakes. He had been trained to disregard his feelings to avoid those mistakes, but it was still a difficult thing to do.

He bottled his feelings and forced himself to stand down. His other guild mates were getting into positions. Once Jack arrived, they would take action. He just had to endure until then. From the last news he received, Jack was already on his way. It shouldn't be long now.

He continued staring at the faraway balcony where the cage was located until he suddenly felt a strong pull from behind followed by the sound of a gunshot. He saw the parapet he was leaning on earlier had its stone chipped from a bullet. He looked up and saw Ronald standing on the roof above.

The one who pulled David back was Serpent Boss. Serpent Boss sensed Ronald's killing intent before he fired his revolver. Serpent Boss didn't have the time to be gentle. David tumbled back from the strong pull but he quickly backflipped to his feet. Meanwhile, Serpent Boss shot at Ronald using his skill, Spread Shot. Ronald was forced to take cover behind the roof.

"Grenade!" David exclaimed when he saw a round thing that dropped behind Serpent Boss. It came from a different direction from where Ronald was.

Serpent Boss registered the grenade after hearing David's warning. He spun back and accurately kicked the grenade that was still in the air. The grenade was sent away from the balcony and it exploded mid-air.

"Let me end you! You, sneaking rat!" A voice was heard as a large man dropped from the roof to the balcony they were at. It was Sizhad Ruust, the guild leader of the State of Galhana.

Sizhad fired his handgun using one hand at Serpent Boss from close range. His other hand slashed using a dagger. Serpent Boss didn't panic. He had no problem with close-quarter combat. Their arms flailed around deflecting the other's attack while also redirecting the guns' nozzles to make the shots miss.

"David, go!" Serpent Boss shouted.

David understood Serpent Boss' instructions. They had been found out. Stealth was no longer an option. He sent the message to his other guildmates hiding inside the palace to commence with the rescue mission. Sounds of gunshots and shouting were soon heard from the inside.

David ran past the two tussling soldiers and jumped from the parapet. With the super jump from his class, he had no problem reaching the next balcony. His eyes were on the faraway balcony where the cage was. He hoped the enemy didn't prepare the field teleportation rune diagram to teleport that cage away.

He heard gunshots again from the roof. He didn't forget about Ronald. He was sure that the gunslinger wouldn't let him reach the cage. He summoned his Shield Drone and placed it covering the angle where Ronald was seen earlier. He heard the sound of bullets hitting the drone behind him.

He rolled on the floor after landing on the next balcony before shooting at Ronald. He couldn't rely on the shield drone to continue protecting him. Ronald had the uncanny ability to do ricocheting shots.

While the two were firing at one another, Serpent Boss won the close-quarter combat by stealing a kick to Sizhad's knee when Sizhad was too focused on his arms. He then grabbed the big man and threw him to the floor. He didn't take this opportunity to finish Sizhad. He instead aimed upward and fired. The bullet that came out of his pistol was a large grenade.

This was the level 60 skill from his Soldier class, Grenade Launcher. The shot dealt AOE damage and also had a strong effect against structure.

Ronald saw Serpent Boss aimed at him and ducked behind the roof again, but he soon heard an explosion right under him and he lost his footing. Serpent Boss' grenade launcher destroyed the roof where Ronald was on. The gunslinger fell onto the balcony where Serpent Boss and Sizhad were on.

"Go...!" Serpent Boss exclaimed again.

David hurriedly got back on his feet. He saw Ronald's boom hound jumping over the balcony to get to him. David didn't bother to deal with that pet. He summoned his pet, the barghest, and let it deal with the boom hound. He again jumped to the next balcony with his drone shield covering his back.

While he was in the air, a couple of gunshots were heard. He heard the sound of bullets hitting the wall on his right, then he felt a strong impact to the right side of his body. They were Ronald's ricochet shots. Ronald could still steal a shot at him even when facing Serpent Boss.

Ronald's shots were no normal shots. They were done using a non-standard skill, Knockback Shot. Due to the knockback effect, David's body which almost reached the next balcony was sent a few meters away.

The next balcony was out of his reach and he fell.

Chapter 1757 Chapter 1757. Saving the Hostages

On the street of Dritzuut, Abasi and his clan were still fighting the Allied forces. In particular, Four Winds and his guildmates. Abasi had fought with Four Winds for hours and no clear winner was decided yet. However, his clan and he were forced to continuously make a slight retreat. Otherwise, they would be overwhelmed by the enemy's greater number.

The arrival of Azzarilth's brood had given them a huge breather. They could stop retreating and fight back now.

As Abasi was instructing his clan to reform their formation, he noticed the commotion at the palace. The palace was far, but he could roughly see a battle taking place there. The battle was near the balconies where the hostages were.

"You! Take charge and hold the line here!" Abasi commanded. He then summoned his steed which was a giant lizard.

"Abasi...! Where are you going? Our fight has not ended!" Four Winds called.

Abasi glanced at Four Winds and responded with a grunt. He then rode away in the direction of the palace. He had been looking forward to executing Jeanny after this war ended. He couldn't let her get saved.

*

David failed to reach the balcony and fell. Luckily, he possessed the Grappling Hook skill. He used the skill before his body fell too far. His grappling hook hit the balcony he was targeting. The rope of the grappling hook then pulled him back up.

But just as he landed on the balcony, three enemy players burst out onto the balcony from the inner room. Two of them were gunners accompanied by their pets, while the third was an assassin. These players attacked him without delay.

The assassin was Giddo, Sizhad's right-hand man. Giddo used Phase Strike and disappeared when his two associates shot at David. Their pets also lunged at David.

David's shield drone blocked the gunners' attacks while he shot back. He was aware of Giddo's phase strike. His other hand holding a dagger spun to his back and clanged with Giddo who tried to backstab him.

After blocking their attacks, David used Bulletstorm. Giddo dodged by using Vanish but he left a combat clone before vanishing. David's Bulletstorm hit the two gunners, their pets, and Giddo's combat clone.

The two gunners also retaliated by using Bulletstorm, but their control was incomparable to David's. They let their guns fire following the skill's standard aiming system, which was all over the place. Some bullets still headed in David's direction but his shield drone blocked those bullets.

David headed to the balcony's other side after executing Bulletstorm. He had no time to deal with these enemies. He had to get to Jeanny fast!

However, a familiar drone came from above. He recognized it as Ronald's flamethrowing drone. He immediately commanded his shield drone to fly up and cover him just as Ronald's drone unleashed a stream of searing flames.

Giddo appeared beside him then. David's reflex allowed his hand with the dagger to block Giddo's stab but an illusory dagger followed that stab. Giddo's Unblockable Stab sank into David's belly. David gritted his teeth from the pain. He lost some HPs. He retaliated by firing at Giddo's point blank but Giddo dodged by rolling away.

The other gunners resumed shooting at David while their pets and Giddo's combat clone rushed ahead to block David from jumping to the next balcony. They used their bodies as blockades without caring about the damage they received.

David cursed his situation. The enemies were intent on stopping him from reaching the cage. But if he stopped and focused on dealing with them, he would waste precious time. The enemy could already be moving Jeanny and the other captives to a safer location for all he knew.

In his turmoil, he saw the two gunners aiming at him again. He couldn't move his shield drone to block their shots because it was still blocking Ronald's flamethrowing drone. While his gun and dagger were busy fighting the two pets and Giddo's combat clone. He also saw from the corner of his eyes Giddo rushing back at him again.

When he braced himself to lose some more HPs from the gunners' shots, the two gunners were suddenly thrown violently into the room. It was as if something invisible had crashed into them. They slammed into the far side of the wall inside the room.

Someone materialized at the spot where the two gunners used to be.

"Jack!!" David called when he recognized the person.

Jack had been sneaking through the streets of Dritzuut following the path informed by the Dogs of War. Even though he was under invisibility, he chose to not fly out of fear of getting detected by enemies who could see through illusions. He didn't want the enemy

to know of his presence before he got near the cage where Jeanny and the others were held.

But then he saw the battle occurring at the balconies. He was close already by then. So, he forwent stealth and took to the sky at high speed. He saw David in trouble and headed over to help him.

"What are you doing here?! Hurry up and go save Jeanny!!" David chided.

'That's a way to thank someone,' Jack thought. But David was right, saving Jeanny should be the priority. His gold dragon wings flapped and he shot toward Giddo's combat clone and the gunners' pets, who were blocking the way to Jeanny's cage.

When he wanted to smack those three out of the balconies and help David reduce his opponents, those three ran out of his way.

"Huh?" They were so adamant about keeping David from jumping to the next balcony but now they cleared away from his path?

Jack attributed their actions to them knowing that they couldn't block him even if they tried. He ignored them and flew forward.

Now that Jack was here, David left the rescuing to Jack. He could now focus on dealing with his opponents. He dodged Giddo's attack and ran into the room while firing at the two gunners who were still dizzy from Jack's attack.

On the balcony where the cage was located, four members of the State of Galhana were guarding the cage. Those four ran away when Jack approached.

"Are you that scary?" Peniel asked after seeing those four's actions.

"Well. I was once feared as the Demon of Crestfall Plains. Perhaps the enemies have a different nickname for me now, hahaha," Jack laughed.

"How about you let that head swell after you successfully rescue the hostages?" Peniel said while rolling her eyes.

"They are as good as saved!" Jack exclaimed. He flew to the cage's door which was no doubt locked. He didn't have the time to lockpick that door. This was not the time for subtlety. He used Brave Slash combined with One-word Slash as he landed in front of the cage.

"Jack...!" Jeanny called when she saw Jack before their cage. Leavermealone and Red Death, who were sitting on the ground, rose to their feet. Inside the cage was a rune diagram that prevented them from using skills, sending messages, or dealing damage.

The door to the cage lost more than half of its HP bar from Jack's Brave Slash. Jack followed up by using his sword art. The damage boosted by combo multipliers quickly depleted the door's remaining HP. The door broke apart.

"Hehe. Ready to taste freedom again?" Jack asked with a wide grin.

"I can't believe you all made it here," Jeanny said as she ran out. Leavemealone and Red Death followed behind. The three stood on the balcony next to Jack as they gazed at the battle still happening out there.

"The battle is not yet over. Let's go, we will..." Jack stopped talking when he felt a loud thump from his chest.

"What...?!"

Not only him. Jeanny, Leavemealone, and Red Death also felt the same thing. They clutched their chest as if they were having a heart attack.

They heard a chuckle. They looked up and saw a tiny mechanical sphere glowing above them. The glow made them feel weak. They also felt like they were getting pulled by the sphere.

While they were still puzzled by the situation, a person materialized next to the glowing sphere.

That person was Master.

Chapter 1758 Chapter 1758. This Country is Yours

"That... That's the container that houses a divine heritage!" Peniel exclaimed when she saw the glowing mechanical sphere.

"You... Impossible! Why can't I sense you?" Jack asked. Master might be outside the range of normal mana sense, but Jack's mana sense had a wider range due to his mana affinity talent. Yet, he didn't sense Master's presence.

"You... You can do mana concealment?" Jack came to a realization.

Master simply grinned at Jack's question. He was indeed using mana concealment, even if not as advanced as Jack who could do it when attacking.

"But... Aren't you still over there?!" Jack pointed at the battle on the wall.

Jack had asked Hollow Girl to make an illusion copy of himself to fool the enemies about his presence when his clones ran out of duration, but he had arrived at the cage

faster than planned. His clones were still a few minutes away from their duration. Even now, one of his clones was still battling Master in the sky above the capital's wall.

Master's grin turned wider. "Do you seriously think you are the only one who learned the Magic Clone spell?"

"You... You have the magic clone?" Jack asked.

"I have had that spell for a long time already. I simply never used it. Same as my mana concealment. All is to ensure that my enemies aren't aware I have them. It has finally paid off."

"Magic clone has a duration. When did you...," Jack realized it then. It was when Master was sent crashing to the ground by his seemingly normal attack. Master must have created his clone when he hid among his zombie soldiers on the ground.

"You've planned this...?" Jack asked.

"Of course. Why do you think I put the hostages out in the open like this?" Master replied.

Upon hearing the answer, Jack understood then. When Master came out to propose a duel, that was not his true intention. His true purpose was to inform Jack where the hostages were.

"I... I can't move!" Red Death exclaimed. She had been trying to attack Master since Master showed himself, but the weak feeling caused by the glowing sphere was getting stronger by the second.

Not only she. Jack, Leavemealone, and Jeanny were in the same situation.

"What did you do to us?!" Jeanny asked Master.

"What should have happened during the convention," Master answered.

Peniel cast her group fast heal, hoping it could negate whatever status effect afflicting the four, but it didn't change anything. Peniel even tried using Invulnerability on Jack, but Jack still felt weak all over his body.

"It's useless," Master said to Peniel. "Nothing can oppose the effect of this divine container. Unless a God interferes, it will carry out its intended function."

"What function is that?" Jeanny asked.

While Jeanny was asking Master questions, Jack was leaning on the balcony's railing. He could hardly move, but his condition was better compared to the other three whose

bodies were completely stiff. Perhaps this was due to his high stats. He was forcing his body to go over the railing. If he could distance himself from the divine container, he could probably free himself from its effect. Falling would be a good way to put a distance.

Unfortunately, Master saw through his attempt. Master cast Hell Whip. The energy whip coiled Jack's body and kept him from falling over.

"What did you do to that divine container? It shouldn't have this kind of effect," Peniel uttered.

"It's not," Master answered. "I used a combination of alchemy and blacksmith to craft it into its current state. I was required by this world system to use many legendary-grade materials so it could function the way I required it to. The most problematic material was, of course, the divine container. I needed to raid a divine faction whose God had been erased."

"The Council of Virtus...? That's the reason you attacked that council!" Jack made a realization.

"That's correct," Master confirmed. "Fear might have sent his cult to attack the Council of Virtus for the divine heritage, but my purpose was entirely different."

"Did you enter the Council of Charites looking for another divine container?" Jack asked.

"You are correct again. Unfortunately, the container was gone. Otherwise, I would have had two chances to use this. I don't have to go through the trouble of getting you all together like this."

"Why do you need us together? What does that thing do?!" Jeanny asked again.

"What do you think it does? What do you think I desire the most?" Master returned Jeanny's questions.

His question gave the four an uneasy thought. As their faces showed expressions of recognition, Master turned to the glowing sphere and said, "... Any seconds now."

The glow of the divine container abruptly intensified. The glow erupted until everything around was covered by a blinding light. Within that world of pure white, they felt something penetrated their bodies.

"Aaaahhh...!!!"

All four of them screamed out of intense pain. They felt someone or something clawing inside them. They felt their flesh and bones getting pulled out of their bodies. They felt as if their souls being ripped apart.

Their screams lasted for what felt like an eternity. Under the agony, they didn't care what happened to them. They just wanted the pain to stop.

All of a sudden, it did.

The light vanished. Jack was on his hands and knees, panting. He looked around. He found the others were all down on the floor. The pain was gone, but its lingering feeling was still there. The worst thing was, he felt empty.

'No...', He thought. He knew what this feeling of emptiness meant. He looked up.

The scene he saw was what he dreaded. Floating above Master's hand were four items. Three spheres emitting three different elements and one book. Two of them were the things he had seen before, Lightning God Sphere and the Book of Creation. From the elements of the other two spheres, he could surmise that they were Fire God Sphere and Ice God Sphere.

The four items vanished as they entered Master's inventory.

"Mission accomplished," Master said.

"Grrhh...!" Jack forced himself to stand up. The weakness caused by the divine container had begun to wear off. He could slightly move again. His weapons appeared in his hands.

"Return them!!" Jack exclaimed.

Master snickered from the demand. Master took his gaze away from Jack and looked at the battle ahead. He seemed to be contemplating.

Jeanny and the others rose. They all equipped their weapons. They still felt weak but they were ready to battle Master.

"I might still be able to win this battle... but I don't see the need to take the risk," Master said. A dark oval thing the size of a man appeared behind him.

"Dark portal!" Peniel recognized the dark oval thing. It was the same spell possessed by Arlcard.

"I've already got what I want. This country is yours."

With those words, Master disappeared into the dark portal.

Chapter 1759 Chapter 1759. Heavy Loss

"Damn it!!" Jack cursed.

Jack could finally move properly again. It was too late to cast a spell, so he rushed toward Master, but Master was faster. Master entered the dark portal and it vanished before he could touch Master.

"Jeanny!" David jumped over from the next balcony. David ran over to hug her. Jeanny let him. Serpent Boss followed behind David.

"Sizhad and his guild members have pulled back," Serpent Boss informed.

"Master must have called them to retreat," Jeanny said.

"The enemies retreated. The hostages are saved, but why do I see you all having long faces?" Serpent Boss asked.

Jeanny explained the situation to Serpent Boss and David, about how this was Master's plan to lure Jack to the cage. She told them how Master had all the divine treasures and now had the means to become a God.

"This indeed does not bode well...," Serpent Boss muttered.

Jack took a deep breath. "There is no need to dwell on things that have happened. We still have a crisis on hand. We need to win this battle first before we figure out a way to deal with Master. I will go and destroy the throne."

"Will the enemy forces submit once the throne is destroyed?" David asked.

Jack turned to Peniel, who answered, "No. The country's sovereign is still alive. It will be the same case as when Master conquered Hydrurond when Queen Aldryth was alive. Liguritudum will be considered conquered, but the armies and some settlements loyal to him might choose not to submit."

"I doubt he inspired loyalty to this country," Jeanny said.

"That might be so, but in any case, the Liguritudum soldiers fighting on the field might not give up the moment the throne is destroyed," Peniel answered. "But their morale will surely take a deep dive. With low enough morale, they are more likely to surrender or flee."

"What about Azzarilth?" Jack asked. He gazed at the three dragons fighting in the sky. Eoranth had arrived but the situation still didn't look good. He understood now why Peniel said Azzarilth was a force to reckon with. Taking her brood into consideration, defeating her would be the key to the victory of this battle.

"I doubt she will stop fighting even if you kill Master and destroy the throne," Peniel answered. "She has a personal beef with Broidrireg. I don't think she cares about this country."

Jack nodded, "In that case, Jeanny, you and the others go and help our forces. I will join you once I destroy the throne."

Jeanny nodded. She then said to the others, "Let's go!"

They all left except for Red Death, who said to Jack, "... Thanks for saving me. I will go and aid my guild."

She jumped from the balcony. She fell straight down but used her grappling hook to stop her fall when she was close to the ground.

Jack didn't waste time. He headed to the throne room once the others left. He checked his status window while on the way. He had truly lost the Lightning God Blessing and all its abilities. In its place was a new inherent skill.

*

Mark of Lightning

Lightning resistance +20

Every attack +5% lightning damage

*

This skill was like watered-down passive abilities of the Lightning God Blessing. It was probably a residue for someone who used to possess the divine skill. He sighed again. Losing such a powerful ability like the Lightning God Blessing was indeed a heavy loss. Leavemealone and the others were sure to feel the same, but he couldn't let this bring him down. He had others who depended on him. He needed to win this battle before deciding on their next course of action to defeat Master.

The State of Galhana's guild members had left, so Jack didn't encounter any resistance until he entered the throne room. Inside that room were the standard native guards who remained inside to guard the throne. They were not Jack's opponents.

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Throughout the battlefield, the World Maker's members were retreating. They did it secretly so the defenders who still fought didn't notice they were gone. Master also informed his allied guilds but only those which he was sure to be loyal to him, such as World Ruler, State of Galhana, and Death Associates.

The mobile fortress had resumed operating after Stefan and four other new pilots entered the control room. They were still getting used to the control so the mobile fortress' movements were slightly wobbly at first. The four arms also had trouble targeting correctly. The nearby Allied soldiers moved away after seeing it. They were afraid they got accidentally stepped on by the mobile fortress' legs. That would be a tragedy.

After freeing herself from the mobile fortress, the eldritch beholder at first exacted vengeance by raining spells on the immobile fortress. The fortress' HP was reduced to half as a result, but the eldritch beholder herself didn't have much HP left. So, she couldn't do as she wished. Not while Arlcard and the others kept harassing her.

She stopped attacking the mobile fortress and played defense while retaliating against Arlcard and the others. When she saw the mobile fortress started moving again, she flew higher. She didn't want to be grabbed by the fortress again.

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Inside the mobile fortress, Speedrun was hiding in the corner. He was waiting for his Infiltrate Barrier to finish its cooldown before he tried entering the remaining two sealed doors. He hoped the next one was the correct one. He didn't want to wait another two hours after his second attempt.

While in hiding, he saw players going back and forth. No doubt they were searching for him. These players moved around in pairs. He was glad now that he had his cloak with the shadow meld ability. Otherwise, he would be found out if he relied on his disguise.

While waiting, he received a message from Master in the guild chat.

"Everyone, pull back. Return to guild headquarters. Pull back secretly. Let the others continue fighting."

'The hell is this?' Speedrun thought. What was the point of him infiltrating this mobile fortress? Have they lost the battle?

But he was glad he didn't have to wait longer inside this place. When he was out of here, he was done. He wasn't interested in being in another war. He would send Master a message, say his goodbye, and quit the guild. He would then again be a lone thief free to do whatever the heck he wanted.

As soon as he took one step out of the corner and out of his shadow meld condition, he heard a voice.

"I know you are targeting one of the remaining two sealed doors. Boy, am I glad I guard the correct one."

Chapter 1760 Chapter 1760. Apprehending the Intruder

"What...?!" Speedrun was startled by the voice. He looked around. There was no one around. Did the speaker use an invisibility spell?

He heard the voice again, "You are under arrest for trespassing this mobile fortress!"

This time, the voice sounded much closer, so Speedrun could pinpoint the source. It was coming from the floor. He looked down and saw a tiny mouse in a uniform.

"What the..."

"Yes, yes. I'm a speaking mouse. I get that a lot," Captain Whitebeard said. "Let me just skip to the part where I bite your head off."

With those words, Whitebeard grew into his true form, a giant creature that looked like a cross between a shark and a rat. Due to the advantage of being Tip's companion, Whitebeard gained outworlder fast-leveling benefits. He was now a level 83 rare elite beast.

The sudden transformation surprised Speedrun, but he had a good reflex. He rolled away just as Whitebeard's claw came slamming.

Speedrun was fast, but Whitebeard was faster. With two jumps, where the second one was by bouncing off the wall, he arrived near Speedrun just when Speedrun stopped rolling. The swing of his claw struck Speedrun and sent him slamming to the wall.

"Oof...!" Speedrun felt the air in his body get forced out.

"Damn you, you oversized rat," Speedrun cursed. He was never a combatant. He preferred to flee from confrontation. If not for World Maker, he wouldn't have gotten such a high level. Even now, his thought focused on how to flee instead of defeating Whitebeard.

A paralyzing bomb appeared in his hand. He threw it at Whitebeard who was charging over. Whitebeard deftly jumped to the side to evade the paralyzing bomb.

While Speedrun threw the paralyzing bomb, a different ball appeared in his other hand. He threw this ball into the ground. The ball exploded and created a thick smoke that blocked the view. The ball was the Smoke Bomb from World Ruler.

He quickly moved to a different position within the smoke. Afterward, he used his skill, Exit Strategy. He had prepared an exit portal before infiltrating this mobile fortress. Now that the mission was aborted, it was time to use this exit.

The portal from his skill appeared next to him. But before he could step through this portal, he saw Whitebeard charging straight at him.

'What?! It can't be... Isn't he blinded by the smoke?' Speedrun had this thought.

Whitebeard was very fast. This was because he was using Shooting Dash. Additionally, his charging direction was right in between Speedrun and the portal. Speedrun had no choice but to step away or Whitebeard would collide with him.

As soon as Speedrun stepped back, Whitebeard's dash took a sharp turn. Whitebeard's shooting dash was max-leveled. He could dash a maximum of three times, but two dashes were all he needed. Speedrun couldn't dodge Whitebeard's second dash.

Whitebeard's huge body collided with Speedrun and slammed him into the wall again. Afterward, he pressed Speedrun to the floor using his heavy body. Speedrun was unable to get up.

"You... You can see in the smoke?" Speedrun asked.

Whitebeard couldn't, but he had joined enough of Domon's training session that he learned mana sense. He could sense Speedrun's position despite the smoke.

Two members of Everlasting Heavenly Legends came running due to the noise from the fight.

"Whitebeard, is this the intruder?" One of the members asked.

"He is. Do any of you bring runic rope?" Whitebeard asked in return.

"I have it," the member took out a runic rope from his inventory.

Speedrun struggled to free himself. Getting captured was worse than getting killed in this world, especially since he wore an amulet of rebirth. However, he was powerless against Whitebeard's strength. He could only resign to his fate as he was bound.

Tip received the news that the intruder had been apprehended. The players inside the mobile fortress could now return to focus on defending the fortress. Stefan and the others also started getting used to operating the fortress. The fortress no longer moved about like a drunken spider.

The eldritch beholder was still battling Arlcard and the others up there. Tip instructed the pilot to keep the mobile fortress nearby instead of going into the capital to help the soldiers fight the remaining enemies and Azzarilth's brood. This was to make sure the eldritch beholder's mind control ability was nullified.

It shouldn't be long until the eldritch beholder was defeated. This clone didn't have the self-preservation of a native. It behaved like a regular monster who continued to fight even when near death.

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Inside Dritzuut, Jeanny and David were rushing to join the battle. Because the battle was spread out all over the capital, everyone split up so they could reinforce all sides. David stayed with Jeanny.

It had been some time since she fought. Her body felt itchy from the absence of action. She was now eager to release all the frustration she felt during her capture.

One regrettable thing was her level remained the same since her capture. She was still level 78. Even so, she could still be considered as high-level among the common players. She was only behind if compared to the top players who already hit level 80.

Jeanny was riding her hippogriff that flew above the street. She didn't fly too high so she wasn't too far from David who was riding his steed on the ground. She suddenly sensed something fast coming at her from her blind spot.

Her spear appeared in her hand. She swung her spear to her back. Her spear collided with something hard. The impact forced her to dismount from her hippogriff and she fell to the ground. She flipped in the air and landed safely on her feet. She sensed whatever had ambushed her was still coming at her from above.

"Jeanny!" David shouted and fired his handgun at Jeanny's assailant, who happened to be an orc.

The orc just tanked David's bullets and focused on Jeanny.

Jeanny vanished before the orc hit the ground. She reappeared again above the orc with her spear pointing down. She used Jump Attack and their positions were now switched.

The orc swung his giant axe which produced a flaming trail. That axe collided with Jeanny's spear. The impact pushed both of them back. Jeanny somersaulted in the air before landing.

"Abasi...?" She said after getting a good look at the orc who ambushed her.