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Spending the Night in Paradise Bin

Chapter 1841 1841. Spending the Night in Paradise

"Mae, do you mind staying for a while? I wish to speak to you," Chris said.

When Wilted didn't answer, Jeanny said, "I think everyone is tired from the long journey. Let's spend one day to rest here. We will leave tomorrow morning."

"Oh? I'm not tire—ouch! Why did you step on my foot?" Jack complained to Jeanny.

Wilted didn't push for them to leave at once, but she also didn't say anything. She just moved away from the table and left the pavilion.

"Please make yourself at home. If you need anything, just tell Hada," Chris said. He stood up and went after Wilted.

The fairies came flying into the pavilion after Chris left and struck up conversations with the players. They were a chatty bunch.

Everyone enjoyed their time. The fairies kept on refilling their cups with the delicious wine. As time passed, some people started drifting out of the pavilion. They went strolling around the lake. The lakeside was fashioned after a leisure park, so it was very relaxing for strolling. Everyone pretty much forgot about the trouble in the outside world.

Before they knew it, night had arrived.

The fairies built a bonfire by the lakeside. Jack and the others sat around it while the fairies brought them meals and drinks.

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"Ah... This place is a paradise. I can live here forever," Joe said.

"I can't picture you as a hermit, even in a paradise," Badass said.

"Hehe, I'm just saying. This kind of remind me of my mansion in the real life, it has quite a view. I love a place with the view."

"Everyone loves a place with the view, a*shole. Not everyone can afford it," Jet remarked.

"No one is talking to you," Joe talked back to Jet. He then turned to Badass and said, "You are right. No matter how nice this place is, I will get bored eventually. Which makes me wonder, was that truly Chris? You know him too. The real Chris won't stand getting cooped up like this."

"He is not the real Chris, remember?" Badass replied. "He is just a native implanted with his memory."

"But he should have Chris' personality, right? By the way, what do you think they are talking about?"

"Who?" Badass asked.

"Wilted and Chris. They have been together since the meeting," Joe answered.

"I don't know. I guess they have a lot to catch up to... Even if this Chris is just a shadow of the real one."

Not long after, Wilted came and joined them. Before Joe could say something, Jack barged in and asked, "So, what did you two talk about?"

"Dude! That is a personal matter. How can you be such a busybody?" Joe scolded.

Badass rolled his eyes at Joe. Joe had asked him the same question. He was pretty certain Joe would have asked that question if Jack hadn't.

"A bit this and that, nothing that concerns our missions," Wilted answered. "Though he offered me to come here if things went South."

"That invitation is only for her!" Chris came to join them as well.

"Do you mind?" Chris asked Jack who sat beside Wilted.

Jack moved aside for him.

"I have no intention of taking up the offer," Wilted said when Chris sat beside her. "I won't live a secluded life while the rest of the world burns. If the world falls, I will fall with it."

Jet raised his hand. "Since Miss Wilted refuses the offer, may I take the spot?"

Paytowin elbowed Jet for that remark.

"I have said it before, Mae. It won't be a secluded life," Chris said to Wilted. "I won't tell you more, but you have to trust me on this. Just come to me if you have nowhere to go."

"You are saying it like we will lose. We won't! We will find a way even without your help," Wilted declared.

"Well said!" Jack exclaimed.

"Stop encouraging her," Chris said to Jack.

"You stop demoralizing her," Jack talked back.

"Sigh... All right. Tell you what. Once you people get your pinnacle special classes, come back here... Then again, I will just set the disc to teleport you back to this place once you succeed. Once you are back, I will allow you people to use the training dungeons in this place."

"We have our own training dungeons," John said.

"Tsk, tsk. Don't you consider my training dungeons the same as yours," Chris snickered. "If I want to, I can use the dungeons to get to level 99 by now. I remained at this level because I chose to follow the pace of outworlders' top players."

"Why you didn't let us use it before we took the trial? Shouldn't it improve our odds if we have a higher level?" David asked.

"The trial had nothing to do with level. You will have the same chance of beating it even if you are only level 1," Chris answered.

Jack thought about his Time Sage's trial. It was indeed had nothing to do with levels.

"Why change your mind?" Jack asked.

"I think it's okay to help you people a little bit. You won't beat the underworld forces without beating the devils. To do that, you all need to be at least level 95 even with the pinnacle special classes. Even then, you need to work together to defeat them. With my training dungeons, you should be able to reach that level in no time."

"Thank you," Wilted said.

"Hm, don't mention it," Chris replied.

"Mister creator, if you don't mind, I have a question," Spring Crown said.

"Just call me Chris," Chris said. "I'm not the real creator anyway. I'm just his memory."

"Many of us have people we know who are still missing. We have looked around and spread the word around, but it doesn't seem like they are anywhere in the settlements."

Is there any other place the people of the real world may end up in besides the seven countries' main cities?"

Chris nodded after the enquiry. When everyone expected him to answer, he said, "The food is getting cold. Let's eat them. The fairies won't be happy if we let them go to waste after their hard work to prepare the meal."

He then took up a plate and started eating. Spring Crown and the others just stared at him with confused expressions.

"Forget it. He is like this if he doesn't want to answer. You won't get an answer out of him," Wilted told Spring Crown.

Chapter 1842 1842. The Last Night

Everyone continued hanging out around the bonfire after the meal. They chatted and joked around. Someone even started playing music. Joe turned out to be quite a musician. He borrowed the musical instrument from Will to play the music. When he played, the fairies danced and sang.

Grace was motivated by the mood and ended up singing. When she sang, everyone quieted down to hear her song, even the fairies.

"You should have picked the Bard class, my lady," Jet said.

"If she did, we would end up pausing to hear her sing instead of fighting," Paytowin joked.

The festivities went on till almost midnight. John stopped everyone from staying up too late. He doused the bonfire and asked everyone to rest. They would all depart to their respective destinations early tomorrow except for Scarface.

"I've decided! I will give you people two more favors!" Chris exclaimed before they left to rest.

"What favors?" Jack asked.

Chris turned to Wilted. "You said you have people who can travel to the underworld, didn't you?"

"Yes. Two people. Three, if we include Jack. The two are now busy getting the portal-closing stone to close the underworld portals."

"Good. Once they finish that task, send them on another run into the underworld," Chris said.

"What for?" Wilted asked.

Chris took out a strange-looking crimson key instead of answering her.

"Isn't that...," Wilted seemed to recognize the key.

"This is a duplicate. I kept the duplicates of certain things with me. With the underworld forces in the upperworld, his castle will be unguarded."

"Whose castle?" Jack asked.

"Lucifer's," Wilted answered. "This is the key that opens his castle's inner vault. This key was the ultimate reward for one of the post-game quests when players already roamed the underworld after defeating the demon invasion."

"What is inside the vault?"

"The fallen apostle's weapons," Wilted answered. "The best weapons for each of the elite classes. Twenty-four weapons are inside that vault."

"Best? Are you saying these fallen apostle's weapons are better than the God of Courage's Sword I get from the Council of Virtus?" Jack asked.

"That is correct," Chris answered.

Jack whistled after hearing it.

"John," Wilted gave the crimson key to John after receiving it from Chris.

John gave the key to Scarface and said, "Pass it to Tip at Heavenly Citadel, please. I will send him a message about what to do with it."

"Are you sure you trust him with that key?" Jet asked. "It opens a treasure vault to the strongest weapons of this world."

"He can't go to the underworld even if he wants to steal the weapons," John said.

"Don't worry. I'm not that dishonorable," Scarface told them.

"Just know that we will hunt you down if Tip doesn't get this key by tomorrow," John warned. After giving the key, he turned to Chris. "You said two favors?"

Chris nodded. "I heard from Wilted that your guild has three guild guardians and is now looking for a fourth?"

"That's correct," John answered.

"I've also heard what monsters your three guild guardians are. I must say it is a rather surprising coincidence. If you get a certain type of monster for your fourth guild guardians, it will trigger a secret guild enchantment."

"It will?" John asked. He then turned to Wilted and asked, "Do you know about this?"

Wilted shook her head.

"That's why I used the word, secret," Chris said.

"How many secret features do you hide from me?" Wilted asked.

Chris simply chuckled at the question.

"What type of monster should we get?" John asked.

"A bird-type monster, and I have a suitable candidate for you. Here, take this," Chris handed John a miniature cage.

"This is a duplicate of another special item I kept. This cage will allow you to catch a full-grown monster of mythical grade and below. You can then tame it to become your guild pet without a hassle. It has a 100% success chance, and you don't need to reduce the monster's HP. You can capture the monster even at full health."

"That's awesome!" Jack exclaimed.

"You said you have a suitable candidate for this bird-type monster?" John asked while handing the miniature cage to Scarface. Jet again wondered if Scarface wouldn't just use that item for their own guild.

"I will send you the coordinates," Chris said.

After receiving the coordinates, John said, "These coordinates..."

"Yes. It's the underworld again. But trust me, you will want that bird for your guild guardian. It is a large-sized monster, but it can even fight on equal footing against titanic-sized monsters."

"I will take your word for that." John turned to Scarface. Before he could say anything, Scarface said, "I know. Your guild will hunt me down if I don't give these two items to Tip. Don't worry, he will get it. We need to work together with the underworld threat looming over us."

"Good man," Jack clapped Scarface's back. "Can't believe you tried to kill me when we first met, eh? We have come a long way since then."

Scarface could only laugh while shaking his head. It had indeed been a long way since then.

"Do you also have Mana Purifier in your special inventory?" Wilted asked Chris.

Chris shook his head. "You should know a certain way to get it."

"I have tried. It is gone. Someone has taken it. The only way to get another one is through random drops or quests," Wilted said.

"What is a mana purifier?" Jack asked.

"It's something that can reduce the corrupted mana in an area," Wilted answered. "Never mind. Even if I have it, it won't halt the underworld forces too much with only one Mana Purifier."

"That's true," Chris nodded. "Well, have a good rest, everyone. The fairies have prepared accommodations for you. Everyone, please follow the fairies."

"Accommodations? I only saw one hut on our way here," Paytowin remarked.

Chris ignored Paytowin's question. He asked Wilted, "Mae, care to sleep with me?"

"Drop dead!" Wilted scolded. She then walked away.

"Sigh... She is still shy," Chris shook his head.

"I see he inherits real Chris' bad manners," Joe said to Badass, who nodded for a response.

The fairies took the group back to the groove near the hut. They saw in between the trees, several hammocks had been hung. These hammocks were made of vines and covered with leaves and bird feathers. Paytowin climbed on one.

"It is very comfortable!" He exclaimed.

Everyone climbed on available hammocks after hearing Paytowin. The fairies started singing a soothing lullaby after everyone laid on their hammocks.

"Sleeping under the stars... I feel like I am back to my first camping experience," Joe said.

"Yeah, difficult to do that now with monsters roaming the outside. Have to always use a tent when sleeping in the wilderness."

"Enjoy it, fellows," John said. "It will be a long time before you enjoy this kind of peace again. If we lose, this will be our last night for enjoying peace."

Chapter 1843 1843. Going Back to the Lost Forest

The next morning, everyone gathered near Chris' hut. They said goodbye to each other as they prepared to embark on their individual journey. When they were ready, they walked toward the bamboo groove where they entered this garden.

"Wait! Where are you people going?" Chris called.

"We are going out to head to the trials' locations," Badass answered. He made his tone sound like he was answering a stupid question.

"That is not the way. Come here!" Chris said and started walking in a different direction.

Everyone looked at each other with faces that asked, 'Is there another exit from this place?'

"Let's see what he is up to," John said. They all went after Chris.

After walking for a few minutes, they came to a clearing with strange rock formations.

"What is this? Mini Stonehenge?" Paytowin asked.

Chris walked until he was at the center of the formation. There was a stone pedestal. He touched something on the pedestal. A portal appeared. They could see the scenery behind that portal.

"Hey, isn't that Heavenly Citadel?" Jet asked.

"You want the person who doesn't go to the trial to go here, don't you?" Chris asked.

"That will be me," Scarface said.

"There you go. Step through the portal, please," Chris said.

"All right," Scarface turned and looked at the others. "Good luck to you all."

"Hold the fort until we return, okay," Jack said.

Scarface nodded. He went to the portal and walked past it. Once he stepped through, he looked back. Jack and the others could see him behind the portal, but from his face, they knew Scarface no longer saw them or the portal. He put his hand forward to try touching the portal he had just passed through.

"This is a one-way portal?" John asked.

"One way except for me," Chris answered. He pressed several buttons on the pedestal. The scenery behind the portal changed. It now showed a plaza with a huge obelisk at its center. People were walking around the plaza. Most of them were dwarves.

"That's the plaza in Balgadur," Jet said.

"Gunner, what is your name again?" Chris called.

"David," David answered. He gave Jeanny another hug before walking toward the portal.

When he stepped through. He found himself on Balgadur's plaza. The people on that plaza were startled when they saw him suddenly appear out of thin air. David looked back. Yep, no portal. He took out Chris' disc and walked toward the obelisk at the center.

Back at Chris' secret garden, the scene behind the portal had changed again to a different location.

"You can go anywhere using this portal?" John asked.

"Anywhere I want," Chris answered. "What? Do you think I stay here every day for almost two years? Do you think I am a real hermit?"

"So, you have been mingling among the civilians unnoticed?"

"Of course. No sense to create a world if I can't enjoy it."

"This is good," Four Winds said. "This portal saves us from wasting time to travel to the trial location."

One by one, they went through the portal as Chris continued to shift the portal to a different trial location. Finally, the scene behind the portal showed a row of dark trees with thick foliage covered by thin ominous-looking mists.

"This will be me," Jack said. He turned and lifted a fist.

Grace, Paytowin, Jeanny, and John bumped their fists with his.

"Good luck," Grace said.

"Don't fail," John added.

"Don't take too long," Jeanny told him.

"Let's race and see who passes the trial first," Paytowin said.

"Hehe," Jack grinned. He turned back to the portal and lifted his fist in the air. "I will go first, everyone. Let's meet again after we all pass!"

After stepping out of the portal, Jack found himself before the Lost Forest. He looked back. Like David, he saw no portal.

"Let's do this," he said and walked into the dark forest.

Once he passed the first row of trees, he could sense the difference in the atmosphere. His mana sense had greatly improved since the last time he was here. He could sense that he was already under the effect of the forest's enchantment.

He took out Chris' disc. It was now shining a soft grey color. Just like the Chris' Memory Stone that used light to point them through the bamboo groove maze, the glow from this disc also shone in a particular direction. Jack walked in that direction.

He walked for quite some time. From past experience, he knew this Lost Forest consisted of multiple interlocking cell spaces. His mana sense informed him he had moved through different cell spaces numerous times.

He didn't see the rats anymore. Chris and Wilted placed a hidden clues where one of the rats led those who entered the Lost Forest to the Village of Peace. This meant there was no hidden clue to his destination. One could only rely on luck or using the disc in his hand. Similar to Time Sage's trial entrance which he encountered by luck.

After walking for some more time, he found the mana before him to be familiar. After thinking for a short time, he remembered. This was the mana he sensed from the black zones scattered around the Lost Forest. The ones he sensed when he was in the corporeal state.

He remembered seeing rats going into these black zones. He saw no rats here, which meant this spot was special even among the black zones. The other black zones were probably traps.

He continued following the shining light from the disc and entered the black zone before him. As he did, he found himself no longer in the forest. He was inside a cavern with walls and a ceiling formed of dark smoke. Opposite him was a door. Guarding this door was an armored kobold. Its hands held two curved swords.

When Jack used his Inspect, he learned that the kobold was called War Kobold. It was a level 99 eternal humanoid monster. Jack figured if he didn't pass the Time Sage trial, the Therras Beast guarding the trial entrance would have increased its grade and level to the same as this war kobold.

Jack was glad to see the trial guardian. This meant the trial was still available for him.

The war kobold just watched as Jack walked toward the door. It didn't do anything to stop him. He walked past it and pushed the door open.

Once he passed through the door, he found himself losing vision. Everything around him became pitch-black.

Chapter 1844 1844. Sword Maniac's Trial

Jack used his mana sense to detect his surroundings since he couldn't see anything, but he sensed nothing.

"Peniel?" Jack called. He received no reply.

Just like that time during the Time Sage trial, he lost contact with Peniel. He tried to access his inventory. As expected, he was unable to. He tried casting the Illumination spell. He failed. He also couldn't use his other skills.

'No wonder Chris said levels are useless in these trials,' Jack thought.

He decided to continue walking without aim.

'Don't tell me this trial is going to make me walk around in years like in the Time Sage trial...,' Jack thought with worry.

When he decided to sit down and use his incorporeal state to scout his surroundings, he heard a voice.

"Give up so soon?"

Jack also sensed a presence that appeared out of nowhere following that voice. He turned around and saw a person there. Despite the surroundings being pitch-black. The person was plainly visible as if light existed around him. Jack looked at himself. He was also plainly visible in this otherwise lightless environment.

Jack returned his attention to the mysterious person. The person was a human male. He wore a simple tunic and leather pants. He was sitting cross-legged on the ground. He had a hardened face and looked to be in his fifties. His hair was disheveled and long.

"You come here for my trial, don't you?" The man asked.

"Greeting, honored elder. Yes, I'm here for the trial," Jack replied politely.

"Hmph. Honored elder? That's amusing. All right, let's begin the trial. Here!"

The man threw a sword that suddenly materialized out of nowhere at Jack. The sword fell clanging to the ground next to Jack's feet. Jack picked up the sword. He couldn't use his inspect, but the sword looked very common and unimpressive.

"Is the trial a test by combat?" Jack asked.

The man chuckled. "That is cute," he said. "No, the trial is not a test by combat. You only need to hit me."

"Hit you? Like, hit you one time? Just a touch? Or am I allowed to hit you as hard as possible?"

The man's smile turned wider. "Just once. As hard as you can, if you like. I don't mind."

"Okay," Jack said. This took him back to the time when Commander Quintus was testing him. The difference was that he was a way better swordsman than at that time.

Jack got ready as he waited for the elder to get ready, but the elder remained in his position. They just stared at one another.

When Jack was about to ask, the elder beat him to it, "What's wrong? Are you going to attack or not?"

"Huh?" Jack thought he heard wrong. The elder was still sitting cross-legged on the ground.

"Uh... Are you not getting ready?" Jack asked.

"I'm ready," The elder replied. He remained in his position.

'Aren't you underestimating me too much?' Jack thought in his mind. 'Well, if that's how you want to do it, then I won't hesitate.'

With that thought, Jack lunged forward. His stats weren't reduced in this place, so he was still unusually fast. In a fraction of a second, his sword was already before the elder. Jack was fully focused on the elder. If the elder moved, his sword would change direction following the elder's movement. The elder wouldn't escape him.

However, even when his sword was a couple of inches away from the elder's body, the elder didn't show any sign of moving.

'Ah, screw this!' Jack thought. He applied true strength to his grip, and his sword slashed away.

"Huh?"

Jack didn't feel any impact from his slash. The elder was still sitting in his original position. He never took his eyes off the elder. The elder never moved. There was also no slash mark on the elder. How did he miss?

Jack couldn't believe it. Even if he was an amateur, he wouldn't miss hitting someone who sat still. For a sword practitioner with the sword's heart technique, this was even more unthinkable.

"You are a good swordsman," the elder spoke. "Perhaps I've underestimated you a bit. I apologize. Nothing earns my respect more than someone who respects the way of the sword. Even so, you won't hit me with your current ability."

Jack frowned after hearing that. He didn't miss. The elder had somehow dodged his sword. But how? It was evident that the elder didn't move.

"May I try again?" Jack asked.

"You can try as many times as you like," the elder answered.

"By the way, may I know how to address you?"

"You can just call me maniac."

"Ma... Maniac?" Jack stammered. That's an unusual name for someone to give to himself.

"Enough talk. Give me your best effort," the elder said.

"Yes, uh... elder maniac," Jack replied.

He readied his stance. He was going to be serious this time.

'Let's see how you dodge this!' Jack exclaimed in his mind as he performed the One-word Slash.

His sword traveled in a straight line with a flashing speed. A thin light slashed past the elder's body. Yet, it was the same as the last time. Jack felt no impact from his slash.

"Good sword technique!" Elder maniac declared. "However, it is not enough."

Jack gritted his teeth. "I don't believe I can't hit you!" He exclaimed and used the burst attack of Formless Flowing Sword Style. Ninety-six sword lights crisscrossed around the elder. It was as if a net of light had materialized, trapping the elder within it.

But even with so many slashes, not one gave Jack the feeling that his sword had collided with something. He felt all his sword hit was just empty space.

'Is elder maniac an illusion?' Jack thought. No, he sensed the elder's mana. His existence was real. But then again, the Vision Bending from his Staff of Illios could create an illusion that fooled one's mana sense.

Jack put down his sword and put his hand forward.

"May I?" Jack asked. He wanted to touch the elder to make sure the elder was not an illusion.

Elder Maniac chuckled. "Go ahead. But that doesn't count as part of the trial. You have to hit me with your sword to consider passing."

Jack nodded. His hand moved forward and touched the elder's crisscrossed leg.

The elder was real.

Chapter 1845 1845. The Essence of the Trial

Jack spent hours trying to hit Elder Maniac with his sword, but he failed every attempt. Tired and frustrated, he sat on the ground panting.

"You are missing the point," Elder Maniac said.

"Can you give me a clue, elder?" Jack asked. "Just a tiny itsy-bitsy clue will be appreciated."

Elder Maniac shook his head. "I must say, I am rather disappointed. I have high hopes after your first slash. I guess you will be another disappointment."

The elder stood up.

"Huh?" Jack was confused seeing the elder's action. This was the first time the elder moved. Did his request for a clue angered the elder? It was just a small request, Goddamnit!

"You won't succeed if you keep doing the same thing again and again. Let's change the game a little. Find me. If you can, we will resume the trial."

"Find you...?"

While Jack was still making sense of things, the elder took one step back and vanished.

"Huh?!" Jack jumped to his feet and ran forward. He was now standing where the elder was a moment ago. He looked around. Nothing but darkness and void all around. No trace of where the elder had gone.

"Are you f*cking kidding me? I'm already confused as hell from that trial. Do you have to add another puzzle for me to solve? This is f*cking great!"

Jack turned a full circle. No reference points. Everything was the same. There was nothing! He didn't know where to go.

He closed his eyes. Elder Maniac vanished after taking one step back. Maybe he simply turned invisible. Jack swept his mana sense around. His mana sense had a very wide range. If Elder Maniac was simply invisible, he should be able to detect his presence. However, he sensed nothing.

He opened his eyes and made another circling sweep.

"Shit...," he cursed.

He continued to stay in his position and scanned his surroundings using mana sense. After having no luck in finding anything for almost one hour, he started walking. No sense staying in one place and hoping for something to happen. He didn't know which way to go. He just randomly picked a direction.

After walking for a few hours, he still saw no change in the scenery. Everything was still the same dark void. There was not even an edge to this place. He had been walking in the same direction, and he didn't bump into anything.

"F*ck... This is worse than the Time Sage trial," Jack muttered. At least there was still a scenery during the Time Sage trial. There was absolutely nothing here.

He continued to focus his mana sense while walking but detected nothing.

After having no results for such a long time, he decided to go back to the most basic method of searching technique.

"Elder Maniac...! Hellooo...!!! Where are you? Can you please come out? Let's go back to the I-slash-you trial. I don't like this I-find-you trial!"

Jack continued to shout while he walked. After a few hours of constant walking and shouting, he got the same result. Nothing.

"Crap," he sighed and sat down to rest.

He did not doubt things would continue like this if he just did the same thing. Based on his experience during the Time Sage trial, he could walk for years and discover nothing. During that trial, he only found a way to pass the trial after he discovered the essence of time.

"The essence..." Jack muttered. He had to find out what this trial was all about. Otherwise, he wouldn't get a result. He had tried walking aimlessly. That didn't work, so he had to try a different method.

He sat cross-legged and let himself relax. "Let's see what this place is truly like," he closed his eyes and focused his mana sense.

His consciousness started to drift out. He felt his being expand. During the incorporeal state, his mana sense was enhanced. He could sense further than he normally could. He could also better interact with the outside mana.

"Huh?" With his enhanced mana sense, he could sense that the space here was unusual. He explored further and discovered that he could connect with the mana here like the time when he was exploring the Lost Forest.

He sensed that the structure of this place was similar to the Lost Forest. It was not a single space. It was a lot of small spaces linked to each other. But this place was much more complex than the Lost Forest because the small spaces kept moving. It was like a vast assemblage of compartments that randomly changed places

'I don't even need to touch the space's edge to connect to the mana of this space,' Jack thought. 'Maybe this is the advancement for training how to camouflage my mana with the foreign mana. Hm...?'

As he let his mana sense merge with this space's mana, he could sense further and further. He sensed a unique presence in one of the spaces.

'Found you!' Jack exclaimed in his mind. After locking into that unique presence, he identified it as the mana signature of Elder Maniac.

When he was about to return to his body to start navigating towards the space the Elder Maniac was in, the space where the Elder Maniac was suddenly changed places.

'What...?'

He remembered now about the special characteristics of this place. The compartment spaces kept on moving around. It never stayed in one place. The space where Elder Maniac was in had now changed places to someplace completely different.

Jack stayed and waited. In less than a minute, the space changed positions again. The elder maniac was at another place now.

'F*ck...,' Jack cursed in his mind. With such a short interval, there was not enough time for him to return to his body and travel to the space where the Elder Maniac was.

'What kind of trial is this?' He thought. Should he just wander around until he luckily stumbled upon the space where the elder maniac was? He would rely entirely on his luck if that was the case. That couldn't be the essence of this trial, could it?

Chapter 1846 Hyperspace

Jack continued to stay in his incorporeal state and monitored the spaces. The interval never shortened. It was never more than a minute before the spaces changed places. He would need extreme speed to cover the distance in that short interval. A speed that he didn't possess even with his high dexterity stat.

Jack lost track of time as he monitored the spaces. He finally decided to return to his body after he felt his link with his physical self getting weakened. When he was about to enter his body, he experienced a strange sensation.

'Hm...?'

Since he entered the incorporeal state, he had sensed this place to be unusual. This place was unlike the outside world. He accommodated that sensation to this place's special structures of having the multiple compartment spaces that kept on moving around. Now that he had averted his attention from those compartment spaces, he noticed that strange sensation had nothing to do with them.

He stopped and honed his senses on this strange sensation. 'This... There is another layer of space... It was hidden!'

Jack couldn't spend much time examining this finding. His consciousness had to return to his body.

It would be some time before he could do the incorporeal state again. He focused his mana sense to detect the irregularity he had just found.

His mana sense might not be as enhanced as during his incorporeal state, but after being aware of the secret layer, he could subtly sense its existence. It was very faint, though. He was as if trying to grasp the air.

He didn't give up. He had no other clues, after all. He believed this extra layer of space to be significant. It could be the key to pass this trial.

He spent hours trying to lock onto this secret layer of space without much luck. When he felt he had rested enough, he reentered the incorporeal state. In that state, the secret layer felt much more tangible. He no longer spared his attention to track Elder Maniac's presence. Instead, he focused his attention on this extra layer of space.

Little by little, he familiarized himself with the secret space. He noticed then that although he could better sense this secret layer, he couldn't interact with it. He had to

return to his body and use mana manipulation before he could. So, he alternated between the incorporeal state and physical body. Studying the secret space during the incorporeal state and interacting with the secret space when he was in his physical body.

When interacting with the secret space, he used the same technique as when he was interacting with the Chalice of Blood. He camouflaged his mana to blend with the mana from the secret space. As he did, he gained a better understanding of the secret space.

He didn't remember how many cycles it had been. He had slept two times due to getting tired. This should mean it had been at least three days by now. On this third day, he finally got a better picture of the secret space.

The secret space was a layer of space parallel to the normal space, but its shape was not constant. Using mana manipulation, he could somehow influence its shape. He could distort it to make it change size. Yet, its relationship to the normal space didn't change.

As he learned the characteristics of this secret space, he understood what it was. He had heard about this space from science fiction movies and games. It was hyperspace. A space that could be distorted to bring two faraway points in normal space close to each other, closer than they actually were.

What were Chris' thoughts when he added this science fiction trope inside a fantasy game was beyond him. But now that he knew the nature of the secret space, he knew how he could make use of it.

His mana manipulation delved deeper into the secret space. As it did, he knew he could influence it further. He could create a wormhole via this hyperspace. This would be the means to catch Elder Maniac whose position kept changing.

After knowing what he had to do, things became easier. He no longer went into his incorporeal state. He had enough study of the mana in the hyperspace. He stayed in his physical state and focused on interacting with this hyperspace. He inserted his mana and had them influence the mana in the hyperspace. He pulled the hyperspace using his mana and forced them to shrink. He then made an imaginary tunnel within that shrunk space.

The hyperspace was a parallel space to the normal one. Using mana manipulation to interact with it, he could step into this parallel space. He did so. The imaginary tunnel he had formed had its one end directly over him. When he stepped into the hyperspace, he entered this tunnel. With a second step, he came out on the other side of the tunnel.

He looked around. There was no landmark, so under normal circumstances, he shouldn't be able to tell if he had changed places. However, he had mana sense. He knew he had traveled a great deal of distance in just those two steps.

"Great!" Jack exclaimed.

Now, he just needed to familiarize himself to form the wormhole fast enough before Elder Maniac changed positions.

He no longer needed to enter the incorporeal state. When he interacted with the hyperspace, he could shrink the space enough so everything was within his mana sense's scope. Since the hyperspace was parallel to the real space, Elder Maniac's presence was now also within his mana sense's range.

He spent what he thought to be half a day to practice. After he had the required speed, he homed in his mana sense on

Elder Maniac's presence. He waited until the elder changed positions. He then went to work.

He formed the wormhole between his position and the Elder Maniac's. He then stepped into this wormhole.

He came back out into the normal space, and Elder Maniac was right next to him. The elder looked at him with a flat face, but Jack could see the glint of surprise in the elder's eyes.

"Well done," The elder said. "You learned much faster than I expected. Perhaps my hope wasn't wrongly placed."

"Hehe. So, do I pass?" Jack asked with a grin.

Elder Maniac answered by sitting cross-legged on the ground.

"Hit me," he said.

Chapter 1847. Void Sword Saint

Jack still had the common sword Elder Maniac gave him. He was now holding this sword as he got into a ready stance.

"Are you ready?" Jack asked.

"I'm always ready. Anytime you like," Elder Maniac replied.

Jack lunged forward and slashed. He was doing a normal slash. The same as before, he sensed no impact from his slash.

"You are still doing the same thing. Perhaps you haven't learned enough?" Elder Maniac said with a disappointed tone.

Jack didn't respond to the elder's criticism. He was contemplating. He expected his slash to fail. He was doing it to understand the true nature of Elder Maniac's defense mechanism. After being aware of the existence of the hyperspace inside this trial, he could sense what was truly going on during his slash.

To confirm a theory, he made another attack. It was a thrust now instead of a slash. The tip of his sword headed to Elder Maniac's chest. He was just a bit over a meter apart from the elder. If he extended his arm, the length of his sword should pierce the elder's body and go out the back. Yet, the tip of his sword never touched the elder's body. It remained an inch away from the elder's body, even after he had fully extended his arm.

What the elder did was reverse what Jack had done earlier to the hyperspace. While Jack shrunk the hyperspace to cover the distance between him and the elder maniac, the elder expanded the space and made the distance between him and Jack's sword farther than it actually was.

No matter how many times Jack slashed, his swords would never touch Elder Maniac. This was because there was a vast expanse of parallel space separating him and the elder.

"You are manipulating the space around you," Jack said.

Elder Maniac grinned after hearing Jack's words. "Good. Now, what are you going to do about it?" He asked.

Jack didn't answer. He took a step back and closed his eyes. As he did, his mana spread out into the hyperspace. He could sense the elder also had his mana over this hyperspace. Their mana vied for dominance over the parallel space.

This went on for some time. If someone saw the two, they would just see two people staying still like statues. But behind the scenes, a mental war was raging between the two inside the hyperspace.

The elder's mana was immense, but Jack's was no pushover. His diligent training had brought his mana manipulation to an extreme height. He was also backed by his mana affinity talent. Combined with his technique of camouflaging mana, he slowly overpowered the elder's mana and exerted dominance over the hyperspace.

He made his slash.

He was not even close to the elder when he did the slash. His sword was physically away from Elder Maniac. But when he completed his slash, a clear cut appeared in the elder's tunic. Behind the cut tunic, a red line was seen on Elder Maniac's skin.

Jack opened his eyes then.

Elder Maniac was looking at him with a smile. "Very good, my successor. I'm glad someone as talented as you is the one who bears my legacy. From now on, you will be the next Void Sword Saint."

At the same time, Jack heard a notification, "Congratulations on passing the trial. Your Brave Swordsman class has changed to Void Sword Saint."

"Success!" Jack clenched his fist and made a victory pose.

He then noticed the Elder Maniac was still there, looking at him with a weird expression.

"Ehehe, I was just getting excited," Jack said awkwardly.

"Anyway, my task here is done. When you wish to leave, you can use the void space to leave."

"The void space?" Jack asked.

"It's the other space we did battle earlier," Elder Maniac answered.

'Oh, the hyperspace, Jack thought.

"I will take my leave. Congratulations again for passing the trial."

"Wait! Does this void space exist outside?" Jack asked before the elder disappeared.

"No, void space only existed in this trial space to help the successor of Void Sword Saint understand the fundamentals of space."

"I see." Jack was disappointed but not surprised. If the hyperspace existed, he would have sensed its existence at one point in time. This meant he couldn't use it to cover vast distances or stop attacks as the elder did. It would be cool if he could, but also game-breaking. He understood why Chris only limited the hyperspace in this trial.

"If there is nothing more, I will leave now," Elder Maniac said.

Jack gave the elder a polite bow. "Thank you, elder, for your trial and guidance. I will not disrespect your legacy."

Elder Maniac nodded. He then vanished. Jack was all alone now in this pitch-black trial space.

He closed his eyes and sent his attention into the hyperspace again. There was now a kind of gate at the center of the hyperspace. He supposed that would be the exit. But before he exited this space, he wanted to check his new class first.

It was a pity that he lost the Brave Swordsman class. He was rather fond of its skills. He could no longer use Brave Slash, Swords of the Brave, Dances of the Brave, and Realms of the Sword God. There was still one more skill for this class when he reached level 90. He guessed he would never find out now.

He opened his status page and went to the class section. He also lost all the passive skills from Brave Swordsman but received new ones from Void Sword Saint. As a first-class special class, Brave Swordsman gave four passive skills. The Void Sword Saint gave Jack five passive skills.

*

Strength, Dexterity, Reflex +20%.

Damage, attack speed, critical chance, and critical damage using sword +20%.

5% chance for attacks using swords to ignore 50% defense.

2% chance for attacks using swords to bypass protective skills or spells.

The range of all sword skills +25%

Chapter 1848. Replaced Skills

From Void Sword Saint's passive abilities, Jack thought this pinnacle class was more offense-oriented compared to Brave Swordsman. He lost the endurance boost and the chance to reduce damage, but he packed a lot more punch from the passive skills of Void Sword Saint.

Peniel materialized next to him. After the trial ended, the limitations during the trial were lifted. Jack could also access his equipment.

"Luckily, you didn't take too long," Peniel said. "I had been locked inside my hidden dimension. I could see you during the trial but couldn't do anything else. Anyway, congratulations on passing the trial."

"Thank you," Jack said and took out his Storm Braker. He started slashing around. Once in a while, his sword created some sort of a tear in the air. He had seen this before. It was similar to the effect caused by Azzarilth's Void-tearing Claws. He figured when his sword created this effect was the time the ignore defense was triggered.

He channeled mana manipulation and continued slashing. The void tears were more frequent. It was possible to increase the chance using mana manipulation.

The chance to bypass protective skills and spells was also very useful. It would be like having a passive Ghost Sword skill. The chance of it triggering was very small, though.

He went back to his status page and checked his skill page. The skills from Brave Swordsman had been replaced by a series of new skills. Their levels and stars followed previous Brave Swordsman's skills.

*

Void Slash, level 20/20 (Active skill, range, requires sword), star: 2

Deals 2000% physical damage and ignores the target's defense.

+50% critical chance and +100% critical damage.

30% chance of causing Bleed and Weakness.

High chance of wounding the opponent.

Range: 34 meters

Cooldown: 2 minutes 48 seconds.

Stamina: 200

*

Void Walk, level 20/20 (Active skill), star: 1

Teleport to a maximum distance of 20 meters. Teleports up to 5 times.

Causes the space around the destination to become unstable. All enemies in a 2-meter radius are stunned for 1 second.

Can teleport through a barrier that normally blocks teleportation.

The skill ends if the next teleport isn't triggered within 5 seconds after the last teleport.

Cooldown: 2 minutes

Stamina: 150

*

Void Defense, level 20/20 (Active skill), star: 10

Turns the space around the user into a malleable space. The user can manipulate the space at will.

Duration: 30 seconds

Radius: 2 meters

Cooldown: 30 minutes

Stamina: 300

*

Void Cage, level 20/20 (Active skill, range, requires sword), star: 10

Tears the space of a 100-meter radius area into a dimension filled with chaotic energies. All within the area receive 200% chaos damage each second.

Everyone within the affected area received a strong pull.

Those who escape the affected area receive 1000% chaos damage and are afflicted by Disoriented status.

Those who remain in the area after the skill ends receive 2000% chaos damage and are afflicted by Confused status.

Range: 200 meters

Duration: 10 seconds

Cooldown: 2 hours

Stamina: 400

*

Void Slash was similar to **Brave Slash**. It dealt the same percentage of damage and had the chance to wound the target, but it was a range attack with a higher critical chance and completely ignored defense.

"The star upgrade of **Void Slash** affects range and cooldown, is it?" Jack asked Peniel.

"Yes, each star increases **Void Slash**'s range by two meters and reduces its cooldown by six seconds," Peniel answered.

"I have the passive skill of increasing all the range of a sword's skill by 25%. This meant this Void Slash had a range of 42.5 meters."

Jack gave the skill a demonstration. He slashed while using the skill. He saw a tear happen in the space some distance away. The tear appeared instantly once he completed his slash. This meant Void Slash not only ignored defense but was also virtually unblockable. Unless the target had acute mana sense and was extremely fast, this skill would also be very difficult to dodge.

Jack turned to the second skill. After reading its description, he found he liked this Void Walk very much. It was like teleportation without casting time. Its distance was shorter than the Teleportation spell, but teleporting five times using Void Walk covered a distance of a hundred meters. It didn't lose too much to the Teleportation spell. It could also bypass a barrier that otherwise blocked Teleportation.

"You should know, this doesn't mean you can get past all barriers," Peniel informed.

"It doesn't?" Jack asked.

"Every barrier has different powers. The star upgrades of this skill give it a stronger power in passing through a barrier. So, if you want to truly be able to pass through any barrier, you should upgrade it to its ten stars."

"I see. Thanks for the info," Jack said.

"Aside from the power to penetrate barriers, Void Walk's star upgrades also increase the instability that occurs when you teleport. Some enemies with high endurance are very hard to be stunned. By upgrading its stars, enemies will have a hard time resisting its stun effect."

When Jack read the description of the third skill, he said, "Hey, this is what Elder Maniac did to stop my slash from hitting him. With this skill, I can achieve the same feat in the outside world. Nothing will be able to hit me."

"Nothing except skills or spells that take effect directly on the target," Peniel countered. "For example, your Void Slash, the Peerless Slash from your weapon's skill, or Hope's Light. Those skills don't traverse a distance to hit the target. They just appeared directly on the target. Hence, Void Defense is useless against those types of skills."

"But those types of skills are rare. I can pretty much stop any other skills. Even one that causes AOE damage."

"That's true," Peniel agreed.

The last skill was an AOE offensive skill that affected a very large area. It didn't lock the enemies inside the area, but it did slow them down from escaping. If he could keep the

enemy throughout the skill's entire duration, the accumulated damage combined with its final damage would be massive.

All in all, he was satisfied by his gains.

"The pinnacle special class truly doesn't disappoint," Jack remarked.

"You don't say," Peniel said.

"Let's go out," Jack said.

He interacted with the hyperspace and stepped into it. He went directly to the gate at the center. Once he did, he found himself outside the Lost Forest.

Jack closed his eyes. He opened them again after a while. "Yeah, there is no hyperspace outside here," he said.

"Hey, the disc is glowing," Peniel said.

She could see into Jack's inventory. Currently, Chris' disc inside the inventory is gleaming. It became brighter with each second.

Jack took the disc out. A display box appeared. The texts inside the display box asked him if he wanted to return to Chris' secret garden.

"What the... There is only a yes option. What kind of request doesn't give people the choice to say no?" Jack complained.

"The kind that comes from the creator, I guess," Peniel said.

When Jack was still speaking with Peniel, the yes button on the display box suddenly shone. It was as if someone had pressed it.

"F*ck! Why bother asking then?" Jack cursed as a flash of light enveloped him.

He found himself at the pavilion by the lake inside Chris' secret garden. Chris was sipping tea inside that pavilion. Above the round table was an image projection. Wilted was seen inside that projection. She was climbing some sort of winding stairs.

Jack's sudden arrival startled Chris. He did a spit take out of surprise. He quickly pushed the button on the table and the projection vanished.

"Hey! Are you spying on Wilted?" Jack asked.

"Don't make it sound so bad. I was watching over her!" Chris answered.

Jack wanted to say, 'Then why did you act like a burglar getting caught?' But he decided not to tease the guy.

"You... So fast? It has only been four days!" Chris exclaimed after realizing what it meant for Jack to be there.

"Hehe, yeah. I do remember you said the trial should last at least one week," Jack said.

"I was being generous by saying one week. I never believe anyone can do that. At most, I think two weeks is the fastest... Not to mention, aside from Time Sage, the trial for Void Sword Saint is the hardest among the twenty-four pinnacle special classes."

"Damn, man. So, I unintentionally chose the two classes with the hardest trials? Do you have something against Blade Dancer and Archmage?"

"Actually, those two special classes you got are also the strongest. Well... I guess that depends on perspectives. Those two classes embody the fundamental aspects of space and time. I must say it is rather poetic that you acquire both."

"I hope this power is enough," Jack said. He then asked Chris, "So, how is the march of the underworld forces?"

"I don't know," Chris answered.

"F*ck! You spied on Wilted but didn't bother to check the underworld forces' march?" Jack cursed.

"Their march is limited to the speed of the corrupted mana's expansion. The speed is fixed. What is there to check?"

"It is still good if we know for sure. We don't want to get caught in surprise when our enemies already greatly outnumber and outpower us!"

"Fine, fine! Here, I take a look for you," Chris said.

Chapter 1849. The Underworld Forces

The image projection reappeared. It showed a different image. It was the scene of a city, or at least what was left of it. The city was filled with ruins. None of the buildings were intact. They saw some ethereal corpses on the streets. Those must be natives who failed to evacuate in time or chose not to evacuate.

The city was infested by demons. Some crawled around the ruined buildings searching for survivors while a majority marched through the streets. Their number was alarming. Jack clenched his fists after seeing the projection.

"Ah, a bit off," Chris said. The projection shifted. It now showed the scene outside the same city. The demons gathered outside the city. They looked pretty organized, which was another bad sign. A gigantic demon stood before the formation. It had four horns and a large belly.

Jack hadn't seen the devils directly but had heard their descriptions. The gigantic demon was one of the devils, Belphegor.

"They are waiting for the corrupted mana to spread further before continuing their march," Chris said.

"Where is the training cave?" Jack asked.

"Huh?"

"You said you wanted to let us use your training caves, didn't you? I don't have time to waste."

Chris' eyes lingered on Jack for a bit before saying, "You are rather passionate, aren't you? I'm glad you are Mae's ally."

He shut down the projection and rose from his seat. "Follow me," he said.

Chris brought him in the opposite direction from the Stonehenge-like place with the portal that could take them anywhere. They came to a clearing with a different type of stone formation. At the center of this stone formation was also a pedestal. Chris went to that pedestal and pressed several buttons on it.

"What is the level of your other class?" Chris asked.

"The other two are also level 87," Jack answered.

"The other two? You have three classes?"

"Yes. Time Sage and Beast Monarch," Jack answered.

"Beast Monarch. That is a good special class for Beastmaster. I'm impressed," Chris said. "I will set the monsters inside the dungeon to have grades ranging from special elites to mythical. You should be able to handle them."

A dungeon portal appeared next to Chris.

"What about their levels?" Jack asked.

"You can find out inside," Chris answered. "You can stop anytime you want. Just yell stop, and you will be sent back out here. I've input your identity. You just need to press this button and you can enter the same dungeon again. You won't get any loot from the monsters, but in exchange, the exp points are increased. The monsters inside are also set to follow your pace. The faster you kill them, the more they will appear. They have little HP but give out lots of exp points. They are custom-made for providing the fastest speed in leveling up without breaking the main system's rules... too much."

Jack nodded. "Will I be sharing this dungeon with the others when they return?"

"They will enter through the portal here but won't enter the same dungeon as yours unless they use a team setup. Yours is currently set for solo use."

"Good. Keep it that way," Jack said.

Time continued to pass. The natives in Palgrost, Hydrurond, and Aurebor were busy preparing defenses at the border supported by the Themisphere soldiers, the players, and the members of league factions.

Bowler, The Man, Serpent Boss, and Speedrun completed their heist mission in around two weeks. They had to go to four different locations to get four portal-closing stones. Each team handled two locations.

Most of their time was spent canvassing the site. Despite most of the underworld forces being with the invading forces, some demon soldiers still guarded the places where the portal-closing stones were.

Bowler and The Man stood on the sideline while Serpent Boss and Speedrun did their tasks. They would just ruin the plans if they joined the infiltration mission. They were anxious, though, from all the waiting. The Man had it the worst. He kept on worrying if Speedrun had bailed on him while he waited. Fortunately, the thief pulled through. After receiving the first portal-closing stone, he felt much less stressed when waiting for Speedrun to get the second one. After returning with the four portal-closing stones, they gave the stones to their guild members. The four returned to the underworld again to carry out another mission given by Tip.

Their guild members brought the portal-closing stones to the four locations in Hydrurond, Sangrod, Palgrost, and Aurebor that had the underworld portals. The players and native armies were still battling the demons coming out of the portal, preventing them from spreading too far.

The native soldiers' morale was extremely low because they fought a never-ending tide of enemies. The players were still fine because they were motivated by exp points and loots. The natives had no such motivation. Their main concern was defending their

home. It was fine at first. But without the prospect of the end of their strife, their spirits continued to decline with each passing day.

So, when the natives saw the portal-closing stone, their spirits were ignited. The players were happy as well. Although they gained exp points and loot, the demons were not easy opponents. They suffered many casualties.

Only the best players could survive and reap the benefits from fighting these never-ending demon waves.

With reignited morale, they fought their way to the underworld portal to deliver the one who held the portal-closing stone. It was a hard-fought battle, but they finally reached the portal and used the portal-closing stone to seal the underworld portal.

After all four underworld portals were sealed, the countries reorganized their forces to head to the border. They made preparations to face the incoming main underworld forces.

Sangrod sent their army to aid Palgrost's defense. As for Verremor, its army had marched earlier after Four Winds became the grand chief. Verremor's army marched to Aurebor to help with the defense there.

Themisphere's two new mobile fortresses also headed to Palgrost and Aurebor. With restlessness and fear, one month quickly passed. The native and player armies at the border looked over their defensive walls with apprehension. The sky above them started to turn dark red. A sign that the corrupted mana had reached their place. The main underworld forces could arrive anytime now.

After the world notification, most players took a more active approach. They no longer took it easy. Except for those who stayed within settlements since the start, everyone was in a race to level up. Even so, a majority was still around level 50. A portion of experienced gamers or those with combat experiences in real life were level 70 and above. Only a small portion of experts at the peak were level 80 to 85.

Within the natives, a portion were recruits who would see combat for the first time. These recruits were anxious. They had to fight a battle that decided the fate of the world for their first battle. How could they be calm about it? The commanders tried their best to give them speeches to keep their spirits up, but everyone could see the mood was not good.

The veterans were not that well off. This was because they had experienced first-hand the horror of the devils one month ago. They didn't have high hopes for this war.

A few days after the sky above them turned red, they finally laid eyes on their enemies. They watched silently as the faraway landscape was covered by a swarm of moving creatures. As this swarm approached, they had a better look.

The swarm was filled with all kinds of demons. Many demons they had never heard of or thought to exist. Some were shaped like insects. Among the demonic insects were giant centipedes with human hands and a large human face. Demons who seemed to have no physical body. They flew around like ghosts formed of dark smoke. Demons whose bodies were filled with flaming thorns. Giant abominations that seemed to be many demons mashed together. Demonic bats that filled the sky, and many more.

The levels and grades of the marching demons were also not to be scoffed at. They couldn't be compared to the demons that emerged from the underworld portals which had been sealed. The demons here were a majority level 70. Many were level 80 and a small portion were level 90 and above. Their grades were mostly elites and special elites. Many rare elites were seen. A small portion of officer-like demons were mythical grades. There were also a few eternal grades even though not as high level as the devils. If they were only comparing raw power, the demons completely outnumbered and outgunned the upperworld defenders. Many defenders who felt pessimistic about the war became even more depressed after seeing their approaching opponents. But what could they do? There was nowhere to run. If they didn't stop the demons here, the entire world would be overrun.

With that thought, they gritted their teeth. The natives were prepared to not see the end of the coming battle. The players were prepared to lose all their levels, while those who could still afford Amulet of Rebirth were thankful they still had one.

No one let these grim thoughts stop them from defending their home.

Chapter 1850. First Contact with the Underworld Forces

The underworld forces marched at a steady pace. Everyone who watched was surprised by how disciplined and organized they were. That was until they were around one kilometer from the first line of defensive walls built by the Builder Union.

Demons with fast movement speed, such as the lower demons and hellhounds, could contain themselves no longer. They rushed ahead, broke away from the formation, and left the underworld army behind.

As they got near the defensive walls, they triggered the traps placed by the members of Hunter's Lodge. Some traps dealt elemental damage. Some traps caused negative status effects. All traps stopped the movement of the demons who stepped on them.

Aside from those traps, caltrops and war fires were also hidden all over the grounds. Every guild that possessed these war tools no longer saved them. They knew this was not the time to be selfish. They would lose everything if the underworld forces won.

The demons who ran at top speed crashed into the ones stopped by the traps and caltrops. They all stumbled. The whole advance turned into a huge mess. The war fires were triggered then. A sea of fire spread over the battlefield.

"Fireee...!!!" The commanders on the walls issued the commands. The traps and caltrops were placed at positions reachable by the siege weapon's range.

The catapults and trebuchets behind the walls released their stones. These stones were produced by the coordination between the Blacksmith Circle and the Alchemist Union. The stones exploded upon impact and released a large amount of chemical fire that hit a large area. This chemical fire caused Burn effects for a long duration.

On the walls, many ballistae and a few mana cannons were mounted. These siege weapons also fired without reservation.

The lower demons and hellhounds didn't have high HP. Many perished in this first contact. Yet, their number was staggering. The ones from behind replaced the demons that died and rushed forward.

When they got closer to the defensive walls, magic and range combatants sent their attacks. The bombardments were astounding because the number of defenders participating in this war was unlike any other war before. This was the entire world working together.

Those without ranged attacks contributed by using throwing weapons such as exploding bottles. These throwing weapons were supplied by the Alchemist Union.

Some traps placed by higher-level natives caused multiple triggers, but they weren't unlimited. The highest number of triggers was five times. Afterward, the trap vanished. Many even triggered only one time and they were gone. Hence, as time passed, the traps slowly dwindled and ran out. The caltrops were the same.

The siege weapons killed a lot of demons when they were incapacitated. After the traps and caltrops were gone, the demons' advance was slowed only by the offensive attacks from the siege weapons, players, and natives. They were not enough to stop the demons from arriving at the walls.

The demons started banging on the walls. Some climbed over their comrades and jumped up to reach the battlements. Melee combatants immediately engaged these enemies.

As time passed, more and more arrived at the walls. The dark-smoky ghost simply floated up the wall and started attacking the defenders. Their touches caused dark-element damage and they could emit piercing cries like the banshee monsters encountered in the wilderness.

They were very resistant to physical damage. The most efficient way to deal with them was using magic spells.

The centipedes with human hands and faces easily climbed the walls as if they were flat ground. From close-up view, the defenders saw each of the centipedes' hands were armed with daggers. These hands stabbed their daggers at melee. With so many hands, the defenders were like fighting multiple enemies at once.

The centipedes also dispersed poisonous gas regularly, dealing earth damage and inflicting poison effects. If they managed to isolate a target, they rolled over the target, preventing it from moving. Their multiple hands then stabbed at the helpless target without mercy.

From up in the air, the demon bats came swooping down. They were fast and their interference disrupted the defenders from maintaining their attack rhythm. Thus, allowing more and more demons to reach the walls.

Defenders who could fly took to the sky and engaged these demon bats. But soon, winged high demons joined the fray. Many of these high demons could cast spells and they proved to be formidable opponents.

The giant abominations formed by collectives of demons also arrived. They slammed into the walls with their heavy bodies. They then started banging the walls fiercely. Their melee attacks cause extra damage to structures. The HP of the walls decreased at an alarming rate.

After some time, one part of the wall finally succumbed. Its HP was zeroed and it crumbled. The demons burst through like a broken dam.

The demons with flaming thorns all over their bodies rushed ahead. Their thorns dealt damage every time they were attacked in melee. They didn't have high HP. When they were defeated, they exploded. Their explosions caused the flaming thorns on their bodies to shoot in every direction, dealing high physical and fire damage. These thorns traveled a large distance, hitting many enemies.

They were kamikaze demons who rushed ahead of the other demons. Because of them, the defender's formation was a mess.

Many of the demon commanders were high demons with high levels and grades. They easily fought and kept the high-level natives and players occupied, allowing the rest of the demons to slaughter the weaker defenders.

When more parts of the walls crumbled, a gigantic moving fort came forward and covered the broken defense. This fort was Themisphere's first mobile fortress. The one with the rune tree in it. The rune tree's effect healed nearby defenders and let them survive longer to battle the demons. The multiple siege weapons mounted on it also never stopped firing at the mass of demons.

Once the mobile fortress showed itself, the demons immediately swarmed at it. Eleven Themisphere's past kings and members of Everlasting Heavenly Legends rushed out of the mobile fortress and engaged the enemies. Arlcard was with them. Jack had requested him to join the defense here. He didn't refuse. He was level 83.

At the roof of the mobile fortress' keep, Tip and other Themisphere guild with guild headquarters used their Guild Army Summoning Crystals. In the blink of an eye, the defenders received a dose of reinforcement. This allowed them to halt the demon's advance and even pushed them back from the crumbled walls.

The most impressive was, of course, the guild army from Everlasting Heavenly Legends. They had recovered their guild army from the last war and even increased their number. Their guild army now numbered more than 100,000.

The Brave Golems led the charge. Their huge metal bodies collided with the hordes of demons. The other guild units joined in once the demon's charge was stopped.

At the head of the Brave Golems was a slightly larger Brave Golem. This unique Brave Golem had completely black skins. A layer of dark light constantly swirled around it. This Brave Golem was produced using the best materials, like the Power Core of Courage, but the one material that gave it such a unique look was the Heart of Darkness dropped by the Eldritch Beholder.

This Heart of Darkness not only changed the Brave Golem's appearance but also gave the Brave Golem powerful dark-element skills and anti-magic ability. It was not completely impervious to magical and elemental damage, but almost. A Brave Golem already had high HP and defensive stats. It was also resistant to physical damage. With the addition of the anti-magic ability, it was extremely difficult to cause sufficient damage to this dark Brave Golem.

The guild heroes weren't idle. Among the guild heroes from the guilds fighting here, Nilrem and Rahab shone the most.

Nilrem cast her Knights of the Round to help the army compensate for their lack of high-level combatants. Under the protection of the guild units, she also cast her eight-rune spell, Lake of Death. She placed the spell where the wall had crumbled, thus further halting the demons' charge.

Rahab fought in the front line, destroying demons left and right. Together with the dark Brave Golem, he became the two tips of the spears that helped the guild armies advance.

In the sky, the eagle rider hunters fired at the demon bats. The demon bats tried to drag the eagle rider hunters to a melee combat, but they were unable to. This was because between them and the eagle rider hunters was a score of dragons.

These dragons were smaller than true dragons. They were similar in size to the monster-typed dragons found in the wilderness. They were no less formidable than those dragons, perhaps fiercer even. Their claws and bites delivered high physical damage, and they could fire powerful fireballs from their mouths. They also had an ultimate skill that let them unleash a beam of searing flame. These beams traveled a long distance and could hit multiple targets. If Jack was here, he would remember these dragons from the Dragonflight portal in Greed's sanctum.

Sitting atop the dragons were elven riders. These riders were not helpless. They were armed with javelins. The riders fought enemies who tried to attack the dragons from their blind spots, which were their backs. They could also throw these javelins as ranged attacks. They had a limited number of javelins, but these javelins replenished magically after some time.

Penny led these dragon riders. She was now level 81. Together with the eagle rider hunters, natives, and players who could fly, they fought off the horde of demon bats and stopped them from hitting the defenders' backline.