

World 101

Chapter 101: Joining Hunters Association

The building of Hunters Association was also huge, but the style was more traditional looking compared to the Adventurers Association. It had a thatched roof, though Jack doubted that the straw on the roof was real straw. Above its double door main entrance was a huge sculpture of a monster head with two spears flanking it. Several NPCs freely came in and out of the building.

Jack went into the building and found the foyer to be a large hall with a few mummified monsters on display. There was a receptionist booth directly opposite the main entrance. Jack approached the booth and asked the girl behind it, "Good day, I would like to join the Hunters Association."

"Good day to you too, sir," she replied. She then proceeded to check his status and explain to him the process of joining, which was very similar to the Adventurers Association. He got a bronze color hunter badge at the end of the process. The carving on the badge was identical to the monster head sculpture he saw at the main entrance. The grade of Hunters Association was also the same as the Adventurers Association: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Diamond.

He went to the Bronze hall and looked around. The hall set up was also the same as the Adventurers Association, with a row of counters along the wall, benches around the hall, and giant notice boards hanging from the ceiling. Then what was the difference that Peniel had mentioned? Jack thought.

He browsed the quests on those notice boards hanging above.

Kill 50 Goblins

Difficulty: E

Rewards: 1 silver coins, 100 Experience points, 1 Hunter Points

Kill 100 Silver Wolves

Difficulty: E

Rewards: 1 silver coins, 150 Experience points, 2 Hunter Points

Kill 30 Cave Trolls

Difficulty: D

Rewards: 2 silver coins, 500 Experience points, 5 Hunter Points

'They were all killing monster quests,' Jack said to Peniel in his mind.

"Yes, it's hunting quests. That's why it's called Hunters Association," Peniel replied.

'The coin reward is fine, but why is the experience reward much lower than the Adventurers Association's quests? I might as well just take the Adventurer quests then.'

"Have you considered about the experiences you will also get from killing those monsters? The rewards from the quests here are just supplementary. Unlike the Adventurer quests, you can take a maximum of

ten hunting quests at the same time. And even if other people take the same quest, you can still receive that quest, so you don't need to be afraid of someone else completing the quest first. The competition will be on the field for hunting the same monsters, but you can always team up when that happens. A kill by teammates is still considered as valid kill, and there is no time limit."

'Really? If what you said is true, then this is indeed a good system to be utilized. I can go grind for experience and get hunter points at the same time. Just need to plot out a good route so I don't end up hunting two different monsters that are too far from each other.'

"There is a small library within each Hunters Association where you can look up for which monsters are in which regions. But you don't need that. I have all that info in my head," Peniel said.

'Ain't you a treasure,' Jack complimented. 'All right, now which ten monsters do you suggest me to hunt?'

"Let's see... The Silver Wolves and Goblins are the most common monsters around this region, so those two are a no-brainer. The next most common ones would be Gremlins and Gnomes. Then you can get the Lizardman around the foot of mount Thenias in the South."

'Lizardman? Would it be the same one with that boss I killed when we first met?'

"That one is special. No worries, the ones here are common monsters, nowhere near as strong as that one. However, with your level now, you are already strong enough to go toe to toe with that boss even without Godly Might buff."

Jack breathed out a relief. Even though he was stronger now, he still had lingering jitters when he thought about his fight with that Lizardman Blood Guard.

"If you headed South, then you can also add Giant Ant and Giant Ant Warrior to the list. And in the same mountain, there are also a series of caves where you can find Cave Trolls and sometimes Ogre, tough opponent but not as hard as that Horned Ogre boss you fought. At the side of the mountain is a forest, you can find many Grey Sabrecat there. Well, for your first foray I would suggest for you to go for those ten monsters first. You can start from Siren Hill and go South to Mount Thenias before heading back via the forest. One efficient trip for all ten quests."

'All right, let's do as you suggest then,' Jack came over to the counter and applied for the quests. The process was the same as in Adventurers Association, so he was already familiar with it.

"Before you leave, you can also sell those trophy junks here," Peniel informed.

'Trophy junks?'

"That Wolf's Fur you got from the Silver wolves, remember?"

'Oh, okay. I can sell them here?' Jack said as he took out the Wolf's Fur.

"Yes, if you sell these Trophy Junks at the common markets, you will only fetch 10 copper at most, but you can get their maximum value here. Almost all monsters posted in Hunter Associations quests drop Trophy Junks, so it was another extra for getting coins."

'Sweet!' Jack said as he offered the Wolf's Fur to the girl at the counter.

The girl received them with a smile, and she paid Jack 50 coppers for each. Jack was thrilled, he was another 5 silver richer. This was like getting 50 coppers for every wolf he killed, but not every wolf dropped Wolf's Fur. Based on past experience, the probability was around 30%, so he could consider it as roughly 15 coppers per wolf.

'You are right,' Jack said. 'Joining this Hunter Associations is really a good move.'

"Yeah, and since there is no time limit, you can also take Adventurer quest that requires you to go to the region that had these monsters. So you can kill two birds with one stone."

Jack nodded.

'I need to inform Flame and Bowler about this,' Jack said.

"What's the point? They won't be able to join before they become an advanced class," Peniel countered.

'At least they don't throw away their Wolf's Fur. They can keep it for cashing in here when they join.'

Jack then opened up his Friend interface and sent the message. He soon got a reply from Bowler.

"Brother, why didn't you say that earlier. I have sold all of mine... sigh."

Flame on the other hand, still kept hers. She just replied with a message that thanked Jack for the info.

'I might need to inform SilverWing and The Man as well,' Jack thought.

"Can you just not share everything you know with everyone you know, please?" Peniel said. "It's not like you know them very well, anyway."

After some thought, Jack nodded. He indeed was too generous. Those guys had many underlings under them, especially SilverWing. Those fellows should be able to find out about this info by themselves as well in a short time.

'Okay, let's go see if there is any suitable quest in Adventurers Association before we go on a hunting trip,' he said after deciding that his business here was complete. He was just about to head to the Adventurers Association when he received a message.

"Speaking of the Devil," he said.

He opened the message from Silverwing, "Mister Storm Wind, remember when I said that we might need your assistance someday? Well, it happens that we have a matter at this time that required help from an expert. If it is not too much trouble, shall we set up a meeting?"

And he was just about to go on a hunting trip, Jack scratched his head. He did owe the guy a favor for his help with the Death Associates, it wouldn't be polite to reject it.

"Let's hear what he had to say first then," Jack said as he sent a short message to Silverwing, "when and where?"

"Now, if you are available. I will be waiting in the Raven's Den. It's a tavern in the Business District, ask the NPCs if you don't know the way."

Chapter 102: Dungeon

Jack went directly to the place where Silverwing informed him. It looked like a high-class pub if compared to the real-world facilities. It's nothing like the Thug's Nest in the slum district. The exterior had several outdoor settings for people to drink and chat on both the ground floor and the second floor.

The interior was filled with dim illumination amongst the cool grey color walls. The tables and chairs were set apart to allow enough movement space. There was a group of bards entertaining the guests with their songs on a stage. Maids in alluring outfits treaded around the tavern bringing the guests their orders.

Jack asked one of the maids where he could find an Outworlder called Silverwing. The maid was holding a tray with cups of ale on it. She called to his colleagues who were free and told her to bring Jack to Silverwing. The maid brought him up the stairs to the second floor.

The second floor had much of its space partitioned thus appearing not as large. Jack was directed to one of these partitioned rooms. The maid knocked on the door of the room, which was soon opened.

Jack recognized the person that opened the door. It was Silverwing's beautiful second in command, Bluedaze. After seeing it was Jack, she invited him in. Jack thanked the maid and entered the room.

The room was an enclosed space with walls without any windows. The wall was made of what looked like fiberboard which served as a good soundproofing material, which was out of context considering the medieval setting of the city. Silverwing probably chose to meet in this private room to keep a secret about what they were talking about.

In the middle of the room was a ceramic table surrounded by leather sofa chairs, there were six persons aside from Bluedaze who sat on those sofas. The ones Jack knew among them were Silverwing, the old man Sinreaper, and the runner up in the Tutorial leveling competition, Warpath.

Silverwing and Sinreaper nodded with a smile when they saw Jack entered, while Warpath displayed a hostile gaze. The other three were women, a beautiful young woman, a beautiful adult woman, and a beautiful middle-aged woman, all three exuded elegant bearings. Jack was wondering from where Silverwing found these three generations of beautiful ladies.

Silverwing stood up and made the introduction, "I believe you have known about him, Mister Storm Wind, the one who holds the first rank in our Bay City tutorial ranking."

"He was just lucky, there is nothing special about him," Warpath commented.

Silverwing chuckled at the comment, while Jack ignored him. Silverwing proceeded to introduced the others to Jack, "You already know me and my teammates, and you should know Warpath here as well."

"Yes, the runner-up," Jack commented.

Warpath smashed his hand on the table as he said with anger, "what did you say, punk?! How about we had a duel now to decide who is the runner up?"

Jack was surprised. The ceramic table was fine after being slammed with such force. The ceramic was obviously a sturdier version compared to the real world one.

"And the ladies are?" Jack turned to the three women.

Jack's indifference infuriated Warpath even more. He was about to erupt again when Silverwing cut him, "This is Jeanny, here is Selena, I believe you had heard about her as well? She was the sixth rank during the tutorial level ranking."

Now that Silverwing mentioned it, he vaguely remembered her. These two were using common names, could they be using their real names?

"And this here is Queen Magenta," Silverwing said as he referred to the middle-aged woman.

Holy shit, that was clearly an alias, Jack thought. He had met a man who was shameless enough to call himself Saint, now he met a contender who did not shy away from calling herself queen.

The woman gave Jack a short glance, her gaze let Jack know that the woman was an arrogant one.

"These three ladies are from the guild Wicked Witches, and Queen Magenta here is their co-leader," Silverwing continued. "Please take a seat, brother Storm Wind."

Before Jack even sat down, Queen Magenta said, "you told me that you would present a reliable helper, co-leader Silverwing. You do know how important the operation is. We have made an effort to hire mister Warpath here, but you instead invited a nobody."

"How can you say that," Bluedaze said. "Mister Storm Wind had the first rank title in the tutorial ranking. Certainly, that means something."

"Don't interfere when leaders are talking, little girl," Queen Magenta said. "As mister Warpath had said, he was just lucky. No one had heard anything about him in the gaming community. How can he be considered as our equal? Co-leader Silverwing, you are a co-leader of a large guild, you should have known better. I am starting to wonder why you have been appointed to your position with that kind of judgment."

"That's right," Warpath commented with a sneer as he picked up his cup of ale and drank it.

Bluedaze was about to retort when Silverwing stopped her. He simply smiled at their insults as he glanced at Jack, afraid that Jack might feel offended. Jack however was indifferent as he copied Warpath by taking the cup of ale that had been prepared for him and drank it.

He then said to Queen Magenta, "I understand the gravity of our coming operation, and I can assure you that mister Storm Wind is crucial in our success. After all, the item we were after will be given to the one that holds the higher rank. So if you are so sure that our helper is inferior, shouldn't it be better for you?"

"Heh, I don't think there is anyone you can find that will be better than mister Warpath here. But still, if you just bring a useless person, our whole operation might instead fail, and that will be a waste of everyone's time."

"If that happens, then White Scarfs will compensate you," Silverwing said with confidence.

"Heh, that's better." Queen Magenta said with a sneer.

"Now, shall we start our discussion?" Silverwing asked.

Queen Magenta gave a slight nod.

Silverwing then looked at Jack and Warpath, "For you two, I would like to summarize first that the reason for us inviting the two of you, is to help us in a mission. It is a joint operation between our two guilds, White Scarfs and Wicked Witches. And the mission is to clear a dungeon."

"A dungeon?" Jack asked.

Silverwing nodded, "the dungeon is at a ruin located at the foot of Mount Thenias south of the capital. The dungeon is similar to other VR RPG games, it has a separate world inside filled with monsters, we need to defeat the dungeon boss in order to clear the dungeon. The reason why we need to clear this dungeon will be the secret of our two guilds. It's sufficient for you two to know that we need one of the reward items for clearing this dungeon."

"How do you know what reward item you get from clearing this dungeon?" Jack asked.

"We have people who did research on this kind of things, a common player like you don't need to ask too much," Queen Magenta said.

"Our people learned it from finding the information in the library," Silverwing didn't hide their source of information, queen Magenta frowned at his honesty. She didn't know that after all, the fact that Silverwing had sent more people to scour the library was due to Jack's message.

Silverwing then continued, "the reasons that our two guilds had joined hands to clear this dungeon are because currently, only our two guilds know about this information and that we have tried to clear it by our individual guild, but we have failed."

"It's that difficult? Even with the support from all members of your guild, it still can't be cleared?" Jack asked.

"The reason is not because we don't have enough members. It's that we don't have enough experts. The dungeon has a limit to the number of people that can enter. Only a party with a maximum number of ten people can go in and challenge the dungeon."

"Ten...," Jack mumbled while giving it a thought.

"As you know, all of us have been thrown into this game world without much preparation. Our guilds are just a splinter of what we really are. Most of our experts are unknown if they have also come into this world. The ones we have in this city are limited. When we tried to clear the dungeon with the experts we have in our guilds individually, we have failed to clear it. The difficulty is very high, but one which in our opinion can still be overcome with enough top experts. And that is what precipitated this meeting."

Chapter 103: A Fair Bet

"You said your two guilds have respectively sent your experts to clear this dungeon, I suppose that some of you are amongst those said experts?" Jack asked.

"That's right," Silverwing confirmed.

"Then you can leave the dungeon even without clearing it or getting killed? Because your levels are still high enough." While Silverwing was talking, Jack had made a scan with his monocle of the people inside the room. Warpath had the highest level among them. He was level 14, while Silverwing and Selena were the next highest with level 13, the rest were level 12.

"We did get killed," Bluedaze answered. "Except Silverwing as he did not join when we go into the dungeon."

"Then how are you still level 12? I thought that players who died outside of safe zone will get their level reverted to 1."

"Because the dungeon is not considered as wilderness," Silverwing replied. "The penalty from dying in the dungeon is the same as dying in safe zones, you only get reduced by a single level."

"I see..." Jack said.

"It is not wise for us to keep throwing our experts to try the dungeon as it will hinder our experts' growth if they kept on dying. However, we also cannot wait for our experts to level up until sufficient strength, as other guilds might find out about the information of this dungeon. If they managed to get the item that we are after, then it will all be for naught. Hence we see no option but to cooperate among our two guilds who have known about this dungeon."

"You said about the item you two guilds are after. Will you get two of those items after clearing the dungeon?"

"No, there will be only one, and it is a reward for first clear. We won't get it anymore if we clear it another time," Silverwing answered Jack's question.

"Then how do you decide which guild get this item?"

Silverwing glanced at Queen Magenta before answering, "there is a ranking system inside the dungeon. After it is cleared, the rank will be announced based on the contribution from each member in clearing the dungeon. We have agreed that the item will be given to the guild whose representative has acquired the first rank. Each of our two guilds will send out five members, among which four will be members from our guilds, while we are allowed one helper from outside the guilds. We don't want to involve too many people outside of our guilds to prevent information leak"

Jack was getting the picture after these explanations. He would be White Scarfs' outside help, while Warpath was Wicked Witches'. Now that he had been told so much, he didn't suppose he could reject Silverwing's request?

"Now that you are done explaining to that fool, can we start talking about our strategy?" Queen Magenta commented without reserve.

"Fine, let's start then," Silverwing said, he was a bit annoyed with the woman's arrogance, but he still kept his calm smile. He had learned to keep a calm exterior under most circumstances after co-leading the guild for quite some time. Jack, on the other hand, kept his indifference to the woman's remark. He had also dealt with people like her in his past VR games, it would be a waste of time to quarrel with her type.

The two of them then started sharing their respective experiences when they tried to conquer the dungeon previously. They laid out the routes in the dungeon and which paths they had taken, what monsters they encountered, where they found traps, and how far they had gone before getting killed.

From their information sharing, they found out that the monsters were roughly the same. They were insect-type monsters. The Giant ant and Giant Ant Warrior that were in Jack's hunting quests were among the monsters found in the ruin. But they also found out that the floorplan which they had mapped out during their past ventures was different.

"Could it be the map layout changes with each entry?" Sinreaper commented after analyzing the information.

"That could probably be the case," Jeanny from the Wicked Witches gave her opinion.

"If that is so, then the map we have recorded down is useless," Selena added. "We will be facing a new map the next time we enter."

"Good thing are the monsters and its levels are roughly the same," Silverwing said. "they are ranging from level 12 to 13, which was right around our alley. With our line-up, we should still be able to finish the dungeon despite encountering new map. We just need to make sure we take enough restorative potions for entering the dungeon.

"So none of your two guilds have met the boss?" Jack asked.

Silverwing shook his head, while Queen Magenta stayed silent, which Jack took that her situation was the same as Silverwing's.

"Then we don't know the degree of difficulty for the Boss, then," Jack said.

"Are you afraid?" Warpath said with disdain. "You can just run home and drink milk from your mama if so."

Jack continued to ignore the guy.

"I think the boss' level should not be too far from the other monsters in the dungeon," Silverwing said. "And since there is no time limit in the dungeon, we can proceed cautiously to preserve our survival and our restorative items for the Boss. I think we should be able to do it as long as we don't act recklessly."

"I agree," Selena said.

"All right, I think we have laid out what we know. Now we only need to determine the time. When do you propose we should proceed?" Silverwing asked Queen Magenta.

"The sooner the better," she replied.

"How about tomorrow morning then? We can use this day to prepare. We will meet at the entrance of the ruin tomorrow morning at 8 AM."

"All right," Queen Magenta said.

"Then let's conclude this meeting on this note," Silverwing said.

"Wait!" Jack suddenly exclaimed.

"What is it? A nobody shouldn't make a sound," Queen Magenta uttered with disdain.

"Oh, it's nothing serious. This nobody was just wondering, previously you mentioned that if we fail this operation because of me, Silverwing will be giving compensation. What's the compensation?"

"That's a good question," Queen Magenta turned to Silverwing.

"All right. If we failed, we will pay you 1 gold," Silverwing said.

Queen Magenta shook her head. "If we failed, we are not just wasting everybody's time. Everyone would be losing a level too. You should at least pay 3 gold to show your sincerity."

Silverwing frowned at the demand. 3 gold is a big sum even for their guild's collective savings.

"All right," Jack answered for Silverwing, which surprised everyone. "But on one condition."

Queen Magenta said, "I'm afraid you don't have the authority to make a decision here, boy."

"No, he can. Let him speak," Silverwing said.

Jack nodded to him, he then turned to Queen Magenta. "If the failure was due to me, we will pay you 3 gold coins. But if we succeed and my rank is higher than everyone here, then you should pay us 3 gold coins in return."

Everyone was astounded by Jack's proposal. Silverwing was the first to regain his composure. He said, "Mister Storm Wind's proposal is good. It will be a fair bet. I agree with that term. What about you?"

Queen Magenta smirked, "Heh, why should we agree to such a thing? It won't happen anyway."

Jack smiled, "Well, if you are afraid and have no confidence in your champion Warpath here. Then just forget about all this compensation then."

"Who said we are afraid!" Warpath yelled. He then said to Queen Magenta, "just agreed to it. Even if we succeed, there was no way he would rank better than me. There was nothing to lose!"

Queen Magenta thought for a while, she then said. "All right, I agree. We will put that condition as a compensation bet between us. Everyone shall be the witness here."

"Naturally," Silverwing said with his usual smile.

Chapter 104: Crafting The Scale Armor

The Wicked Witches left soon after, Warpath followed them out. Silverwing's group stayed in the room with Jack.

"That was a pretty bold move you made," Bluedaze said to Jack. "3 gold coins are a very large sum even for our guild."

"Don't worry, if we really lose, you only need to pay the original 1 gold. I will pay for the extra 2 gold coins," Jack replied.

"You have 2 gold coins?" Bluedaze asked with wide eyes.

Jack answered by taking out 2 shiny golden coins to show her.

"Hahaha," Silverwing laughed. "I truly haven't made a wrong judgment about you, my friend!"

"Of course, if we win, I expect to take 2 out of the 3 gold coins from that annoying Queen as well," Jack said.

Silverwing nodded. "Naturally," he said.

"Who will be joining this operation from your side?" Jack asked.

"Apart from the four of us in this room, Grimclaw will also join," Silverwing answered. Then he turned to Bluedaze and asked, "speaking of the fellow, have you managed to get in contact with him?"

"No, he hasn't replied to my message," she replied. "I have also sent messages to our members to keep an eye out for him and to pass our message when they see him. But no one had seen him yet since yesterday."

"That's odd... Tell Honeycomb to prepare in case we still can't find him. She is the best Fighter we have in our group to replace Grimclaw."

"Let's hope it doesn't come to that, those Wicked Witches might blame us if we failed for not bringing our best members," Bluedaze said.

Silverwing nodded. He then said to Jack, "We will be leaving now to make the preparations for the operation tomorrow, what will be your plan?"

"I will make my own preparation as well. Where is this ruin we will be meeting tomorrow?"

"Here, open your map interface, please. I will transfer the coordinates to your map," Sinreaper said as he opened his Map window.

Jack did the same, not long after he received a message that Sinreaper had sent him a coordinate. He accepted it, then he could see a coordinate number appearing in his Map window and the direction to that coordinate corresponding to his current position.

"So we can also send map coordinates other than our current position?" Jack asked.

"Yes, provided that you have marked the place beforehand," Sinreaper said. "And you need to be physically on the place in order to mark the place's coordinates."

"That's convenient, this will be helpful when informing others of an important location we have discovered," Jack said.

The others nodded, but then he heard Peniel's voice, "you can only mark a maximum of five locations though. If you marked a sixth location, the first one will be erased."

After hearing Peniel's information, he said to the others, "but probably there will be a limit to the numbers of coordinates we can keep in our map."

"Probably," Sinreaper agreed.

"Okay, then let's meet tomorrow," Silverwing said as he rose from his seat.

After they dispersed, Jack also went for his own preparations. He went shopping for cooking ingredients, basic healing potions, and basic energy potions. He still had some iron ores, but he would like to buy more in order to upgrade his equipment, so he went looking for a shop that sold ores. When he found the shop, he saw that beside it was a smith workshop.

When he was observing the smithy, Peniel's voice sounded in his head, "if you are thinking about upgrading your equipment by smithing, it is better to use the blacksmith workshop like that one. You can rent one of their special rooms which contained advanced tools that provide you with a better success chance when upgrading equipment."

'Really? I was just about to stock up on iron ores, as upgrading equipment starting from level 8 got some failure chances. If the smithy here can increase my success chance, it will save me some iron ores.'

"About iron ores, you don't need to stock too much actually. You still have much unused equipment in your bags, right? You only need to keep the medium armor types for future use on the Transformation Box, the rests can be dismantled for materials. You would most likely get iron ores from that low-level equipment."

'Dismantling? I did remember you mentioned it before.'

Jack still went into the ore shop first to look at the wares available. He browsed through the wares. Most available ores were indeed iron ores, but there were also some steel ores, but there were only six pieces available in the shop and the price was much more expensive than the iron ores. They cost 2 silver coins each.

Seeing the steel ores reminded him of the blacksmith recipe he had learned, the scale armor, which required one scale, two iron ores, and one steel ore. He still had the rare material, red scale, in his storage bag. Though the recipe mentioned scale and not red scale, it should be usable? Perhaps using that special scale could even give better results from the smithing.

He then spent his coins to purchase 30 iron ores and 6 steel ores which were the current stock the shop had. If he wanted to buy more of either ore, he would need to either wait till tomorrow's restock, or searched for another shop that sold ores. After completing the transaction, Jack went to the next door blacksmith workshop. Jack approached an NPC who looked to be in charge, and asked him about the special room that Peniel had informed him.

The NPC advised him that they had two types of rooms that he could rent. One was a room that contained uncommon blacksmith tools, costing 5 silver for a one-hour usage. Another was a room that contained rare tools, costing 50 silver for a one-hour usage.

The price had taken Jack aback, especially the room with the rare tools. It was practically half gold coins just for an hour. He then asked Peniel, 'how much difference is between uncommon tools and rare tools for blacksmithing?'

"Uncommon tools increase your success chance by 10%, while rare tools increased it by 30%," Peniel answered. "But if you are thinking about making that armor recipe with that red scale, I suggest you rent the one with rare tools."

'Oh? Why is that?'

"Because that rare material is a variant from uncommon material: scale. Such material has the chance to produce an upgraded version from the originally intended equipment, and your chance of getting this upgraded version will be better if you use higher grade tools."

After listening to Peniel's explanation, Jack gritted his teeth and took out 50 silver coins to rent the room. His savings was now less than 2 gold coins. He would need to earn more coins before the meeting tomorrow. Otherwise, it would be embarrassing if the White Scarfs people asked him to show the 2 gold coins for the bet again.

The NPC took him inside after receiving his pay. The room he was brought to was a small room with a circular forge in the middle of the room. When the NPC activated the room, an intense fire rose up at the center of the forge. Besides the forge was a large anvil, with hammer and tongs, and a small tub filled with cold water to cool the hot metals. The setting was quite real-like. did he really have to use all those tools like a real blacksmith? He thought. That would be troublesome.

The NPC then left him after reminding him that he had one hour. Since time was limited, Jack immediately went to work. He warmed up first by making three Whetstones. After getting the hang of it, he then took out the materials for crafting the Scale armor. In the blacksmithing interface, he selected the option for the Scale armor recipe and started the crafting process.

The video instruction showed him how to process iron ores and steel ores. He hammered the material until they become a particular shape. Each hammering required a particular rhythm and synchronized timing in heating the materials using the forge, Jack put all his concentration as to be able to perform each step perfectly.

Afterward, he was instructed to add in the scale material, which he used the red scale from the Lizardman Blood Guard he had fought inside the Trigitech building. He then proceeded to hammer the combined materials again. The materials slowly transformed into a shape that looked like body armor. Once all the steps were done, he was told to submerge the completed shape into the coolant water in the tub.

Smoke rose up with hissing sound as the armor undergoing the final process inside the tub.

Jack waited with anxious feeling before something came out from the tub and he heard a notification voice.

Chapter 105: Upgrading The Rare Armors

"Congratulations! You have successfully forged a scale armor. Due to usage of a variant material, the armor created had been upgraded."

Jack breathed out the air he had been holding since the notification started. But he was soon surprised by another notification.

"Congratulations! Your Blacksmith job has upgraded to Intermediate Apprentice."

Jack was thrilled by his Artisan job's level up. The success in making the scale armor into an upgraded version must have given him lots of proficiency that he was able to level up the job.

After calming down, he took a look at his armor that he had crafted.

Blood Guard Scale Armor, level 15/35 (rare medium armor)

Physical Defense: 31

Magical Defense: 29

Durability: 50

Dexterity +3

Reduce all ranged damage received by 30%

Rare armor! With this, he now had two rare armors, and this one looked to be even better than his Shadow Bear Tasset.

"This is one cool armor," Jack exclaimed, "do you know where I can find more scale material? If I can produce more of this rare armor, I can get rich quickly just by selling it."

"In your dream!" Peniel retorted, she had already come out of his separate dimension since Jack entered the room and was floating around observing him at work. "The reason you got a rare armor is simply because of that rare variant material, in addition to your incredible luck stats. Otherwise, the scale armor you produced will only be an uncommon grade."

"Really?" Jack's excitement was doused a little. After some thought, it is really unreasonable if he could get rare equipment so easily. After all, three out of the four materials could be easily procured from shops, and not that expensive as well.

He immediately replaced his current armor with this Blood Guard Scale Armor. With the addition of the Shadow Bear Tasset, his appearance was completely different from the mainstream players at large now.

He looked at the time, he still had a bit over half an hour left. Not wasting further time, he took out all his non-medium armor equipment. There were one magic hat, one leather bracer, two leather shoes, and one leather pant. He clicked on the dismantle option in his still open blacksmith interface, and dumped all these armors inside. The system asked for confirmation if he would like to proceed with the dismantling, he selected Yes.

A loading bar appeared while the armors were being dismantled. After ten seconds had passed, the loading bar filled up and several materials popped up in front of him. He checked the materials. There were 4 leathers, 1 cloth, and 5 iron ores. All of them were common materials. He stored the materials, then checked his stock of iron ore, he had a total of 37 ores.

"Time to upgrade the equipment level," he said. The one he wanted to upgrade the most was his Storm Breaker sword. Unfortunately, that sword was not being upgraded in a normal way. He would need to visit the weapon shop and bought many one-handed swords in order to upgrade it. But his fund was limited, so he would need to put that plan on hold first. The next most valuable equipment would be his

newly acquired rare chest armor and the rare Shadow Bear Tasset. He then decided to upgrade the chest armor first.

He opened the interface and input the iron ore for the upgrading process. To his amazement, the success percentage was still 100% even though he was upgrading from level 15 to 16.

Peniel who saw his surprise, told him, "It was natural, you already upgraded to Intermediate Apprentice Blacksmith. At this level, the percentage reduction only starts at level 15, so any equipment below this level has a 100% success rate as long as you have the material. The reason why you still have 100% when you are upgrading this level 15 equipment, that was due to the assistance of the rare tools."

Hearing her explanation, Jack decided to not waste this chance. He immediately upgraded his Blood Guard Scale Armor continuously. It only started showing reduce percentage when he hit level 21. He also found out that after level 20, he needed two iron ores to upgrade instead of one.

Since he had limited iron ores, he only focused the upgrades to his rare armors and staff weapon. He upgraded the Blood Guard Scale Armor, Shadow Bear Tasset, and Repeater Staff, all to level 21 since that was the level where the success chance was still 100%. After these upgrades, he had used up 24 iron ores and only had 13 left.

He then continued to upgrade the Blood Guard scale armor to level 22, the percentage was 95% and used another two ores. The upgrade was successful. He continued again, the percentage decreased to 90%. He kept on going. When he was on his way to level 25, he failed twice, wasting 4 iron ores, but succeeded on the third attempt. He only had 1 iron ore left. He kept the last piece and stopped the upgrading process.

He inspected the three equipment which he had upgraded.

Blood Guard Scale Armor, level 25/35 (rare medium armor)

Physical Defense: 56

Magical Defense: 54

Durability: 50

Dexterity +3

Reduce all ranged damage received by 30%

Shadow Bear Tasset, level 21/35 (rare medium armor)

Physical Defense: 35

Magical Defense: 33

Durability: 40

Endurance +3

When HP is below 50%, defense is increased by 80%

Repeater Staff, level 21/25 (uncommon magic weapon)

Magical damage: 57

Range: 10 meters

Attack speed: 1

Energy: 60

Energy automatically refills when out of combat

With the upgrades of these two rare armors, his defense had skyrocketed. He would be able to go toe to toe with stronger opponents without the need to keep on worrying about dodging.

He checked on the time, he still had less than five minutes left. But since he had run out of crafting materials, he just packed up and walked out of the forging room.

When he came out of the blacksmith workshop, it was close to noon already. He decided to use the remaining of the day to start his hunting trip while making his way to the marked location for tomorrow's meeting.

He exited the capital from its Western gate, then proceeded South West. He met and fought several Wolf packs and Goblin packs on his way. When he arrived at a rocky area with a series of deserted mines and broke down mining equipment, he started to encounter new kinds of monsters. They were Gnomes and Gremlins, which were also on his hunting list.

The Gnomes were halfling creatures with green skin. They mostly held pickaxe which they used to mine for ores around the rocky area, but when Jack came into their range, they started to run after him while swinging their pickaxe as a make-shift weapon. Jack gladly met them in combat. He sent some range magic attacks first while waiting for them to come near before engaging in melee.

They were roughly like the Goblins, with childlike appearance and fighting in a group. But their group was considerably larger than a normal goblin pack, numbering around ten gnomes for each group. They fought without any sort of cohesion and mostly just did random attacks. With some cunning, Jack might even cause them to bump into each other on one or two occasions. Once they lost more than half their group, the remaining started to scatter, ran away into the cave mines around the area, making it harder for Jack to score his targeted 100 gnomes.

Jack used his staff's ranged attacks to kill some of the fleeing gnomes, but didn't waste time in chasing the ones that managed to flee into the mines, instead he looked for another group nearby. He prioritized efficiency as he had limited time.

The Gremlins sometimes joined in the attack when he was dealing with the Gnomes. These slick creatures were much difficult to deal with as they mostly use tools to attack from range. Luckily, Jack only needed to kill 30 of these creatures to complete his hunting quest. The Gremlin's weapons were mostly slingshot with some higher-level ones using crude bows and arrows.

Jack dealt with them using his Magician's range attacks, and used Charge when they least expecting to get into a close distance with them before finishing them with a Swing.

Chapter 106: Gathering While Hunting

When Jack filled out his quota for the Gnomes and Gremlins' quests, the area nearby was mostly devoid of monsters already. He got heaps of items from the kills. Plenty of copper coins and some silver, several pickaxes, and some trophy loots. The trophy from the gnome was their red pointy hats, while from gremlin he got their teeth. After picking up all the loots from the monsters, he was just about to leave the rocky area when Peniel called her to a spot.

She had been out in the open since Jack left the vicinity of the capital, without other Players, she didn't bother to hid in her pocket dimension. Even when Jack was in the middle of combat with the Gremlins and Gnomes, she was flying around without a care. The monsters didn't seem to care about her. She was also not providing any assistance to Jack during combat. She acted as if she was a bystander passing through.

Jack came over to the place where she was floating over.

"See the dark rock formation here?" Peniel pointed at a rock protrusion that seemed to be out of place with the rocky ground around it. The protrusion had a hard and shiny surface that was black in color.

"What about it?" Jack asked.

"You got a few pickaxes from killing the gnomes, right? Bring one of them out."

He did as Peniel requested.

"Now mine that rock," she instructed.

"Mine? This thing could be mined?"

"Yes, I was surprised that God-Eye thingy you wear hasn't notified you of the mining spots here."

Now that she mentioned it, he paid attention to his monocle screen, there was indeed green marking around the dark rock formation Peniel had pointed at, indicating a valuable thing. The monocle had been sending markings on all sort of the things he had passed in the city that he had starting to develop the habit of ignoring them.

He then followed Peniel's instruction to mine the rock. He swung the pickaxe on the dark rock which produced a clanging sound.

"Again!" Peniel said.

Jack swung the pickaxe again. After the third strike on it, a portion of the rock chipped off and fell away. Jack picked it up. It was iron ore.

"Wow, so I can get iron ore for upgrading armor from mining here?" Jack exclaimed.

"Iron ore is the most basic ore. It was normal for you to get them from mining. Keep on mining, you should see similar dark rock around this area. This place is mining heaven, you should make use of it since you are here."

Jack concurred with her thought. Not to let the chance go to waste, he got back to hit the dark rock with his pickaxe. After hitting a few more times, he got another two more iron ores. But on his next hit, the pickaxe broke.

Jack was startled, but Peniel told him it's normal. The pickaxe was not meant as permanent mining equipment. Luckily, he had got quite a bunch of these pickaxes from the gnomes. He checked his inventory and found out that there were still 11 pickaxes inside. He took out the second piece and continued with his mining process.

After getting the fourth iron ore, the dark rock formation crumbled and turned pale grey in color. Jack was startled again by the change. Peniel explained that was what happened when one exhausted a mining spot. It will take one natural day for the spot to recover again before it could be mined again.

Understanding the mining mechanic now, Jack proceeded to the other spots. He continued to mine all over the rocky area. After using up all the pickaxes, he had accumulated another 33 iron ores, 5 steel ores, and 1 copper ore. The former two ores were common materials, while the latter one was an uncommon material.

There were still some mining spots left, but he had run out of pickaxe. If he wanted to get some more pickaxes, he would need to go look for more gnomes to kill and hope for it to drop. But Jack decided against it. He had spent quite some time mining at this place. The sun was already starting to lower on the horizon.

He decided to continue on his journey Southward, he hoped to complete more of his hunting quests before the appointment at the ruins tomorrow morning. He met more Silver Wolves and Goblins on his way, and managed to fulfill his quota for those two monsters as well. Four down, another six hunting quests to go. He also got many Wolf's Fur and Goblin's Knife which were their trophy items.

"See that rows of trees over there?" Peniel said while floating on his side.

"Yes," Jack nodded.

"You can pass through there, that is the habitat for the Grey Sabrecat."

Hearing that was the place where he could find one of his hunting targets, he immediately went that way. When he came into the woods, he saw green markings on some of the trees and grasses around.

"Are those weeds and trees valuable?" He pointed for Peniel the ones that were marked in green in his monocle.

"Yes, you can harvest them just like when you did the mining before," Peniel answered. "The weeds will be corresponding to your Forage skill, while the trees are for your lumbering skill."

"There are lots of them," Jack commented.

"There are, you can do the foraging. But for the trees, you would need a lumbering axe, which you don't have at the moment."

"Where can I get one?"

"You can buy them in the tool shops in the city. They function much like the pickaxe, in which they will break after a couple of uses, so you will need to stock up if you plan to do lumbering. You can also buy pickaxes in the city. But are you planning to busy yourselves with these gathering jobs?" Peniel asked.

"Why not?" Jack asked back.

"There are limitless resources which you can gather in this world. If you plan to gather everything, you will end up spending too much time. You won't have enough time to hunt or do quests anymore. I suggest you pick one gathering job and simply focus on it, or two maybe. After all, out of four gathering jobs, only one can be upgraded to the highest level."

"What's the highest level?"

"There are four levels. After Apprentice, will be Expert, then Master, the highest is Grandmaster. Each level is divided also to three sub-levels: Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. Only one job can reach Grandmaster level, another one can only reach Master level. The remaining two will be locked at Expert levels no matter how many times you use them."

"I see," Jack said as he gave it a thought. "I assume this is also the same for the other Auxiliary Jobs? Like for example Artisan jobs, if I upgrade my Cooking job to Grandmaster, then my Blacksmith will be stuck at Master level, is that so?"

"You are correct," Peniel confirmed. "So you see, it is better for you to focus on one of them, rather than try to excel at everything."

"Okay then, let's just take things as they come. Since I don't have the lumbering axe, we'll forget about the trees. I'll harvest the grasses as we searched for the Grey Sabrecat."

He then approached the grass with the green mark.

"How do I do this? Do I just pull them up?" Jack asked Peniel.

"Technically, yes." She answered.

Jack then bent down and grab the grass with his hand, he tried to pull it. Instead of having the grass immediately broke out from the soil, there was a loading bar appearing. Jack couldn't pull out the grass no matter how hard he tugged when the bar was not full yet. After it filled up, the grass disappeared, and a single leaf materialized in his hand.

Green leaf (common ingredient)

That's quite fake, he complained in his mind.

He observed the leaf in his hand. Had he not learned an Alchemy recipe that used this Green leaf? Unfortunately, he did not have the mobile Alchemist Apparatus like Bowler's one. Otherwise, he could make his own potions as well. Nevertheless, he could gather these green leaves and then asked Bowler to make potions for him. That way, he could save coins from purchasing potions.

He then continued to forage as he made his way through the woods. As he was too focused on the gathering, he didn't notice a red dot coming towards him at a high speed. He only realized it when he heard a growl.

"Watch out!" Peniel shouted.

Chapter 107: Monster Settlement

Jack turned but didn't manage to dodge. A shadow went past him as he felt an impact that pushed him back. He suffered 42 damage at the same time. He glanced down and saw a claw mark on his scale armor, then looked at the creature that had attacked him. It looked like a large cat with pointy ears that pointed skyward. Its fur was grey and there were two tusks protruding out from its mouth. He inspected it with his God-eye monocle.

Grey Sabrecat (Basic monster, Beast), level 13

HP: 1500

Yep, it was his target, the Grey Sabrecat, all right.

The Grey Sabrecat, seeing that its prey was still fine, dashed forward and made another lunge at Jack. Jack took out his sword and magic staff. He put his Magic Shield at the sabrecat's way, who slammed onto the shield with force. But Jack was rock steady, the cat fell to the ground with disorientation after the slam. Jack took the opportunity to send a Power Strike to the agile cat's neck. It received critical damage and suffered 275 damage.

He sent another two slashes while it was still reeling. Jack was about to slash another time but it suddenly jumped away. It then sprinted around Jack with incredible speed. Jack waited for it to make its move. When it disappeared from his sight, Jack looked at his radar, it was coming from behind. Jack immediately spun around and used Swing. The affected area of Swing was large so accuracy was not really an issue. The Swing cut through the beast's body while his claw scratched Jack's head.

They both received damage, but it's a good thing Jack had worn a helmet now, so he did not receive critical damage as he often did when receiving blows to the head.

The Sabrecat tried to put a distance again after attacking. Jack didn't give him the chance again to run around like before as he cast Energy Bolts. Five Magical bolts flew toward the sabrecat from different directions, sealing its path of escape. Jack used Charge to get close to it while it was trapped by the Energy Bolts, and then delivered a couple more slashes before the bolts exploded on its body.

The Grey Sabrecat was fast, but Jack completely outclassed it in terms of offense and defense. His speed was not too much off as well, hence he could still keep up with the sabrecat burst movements. After a couple more clashes, the cat fell to the ground and disintegrated, leaving behind some coins and a claw. It was its trophy item.

Jack stored the loots and continued through the woods while harvesting Green Leaf, but this time, he paid more attention to his radar.

He saw another red dot approaching. He didn't hear any sound at all until the dot was closed, then he heard a similar growl. He turned as another Grey Sabrecat lunged at him.

The Sabrecat's legs didn't make any sound at all. It was a silent killer type. Without the radar, he would not know of the Sabrecat's approach until it's too late. Its first strike damage was also exceptionally high, if not for his high stats and rare armor, Jack would have suffered more damage. The cat's subsequent damages were less impressive. As long as he evaded its first strike and coped with its speed, the sabrecat wasn't much of a menace.

He continued to trod through the woods while hunting the Grey Sabrecat and foraging leaves. Apart from Green Leaf, he also received Red Leaf, but the latter was much less despite both were common ingredients.

After around two hours roaming inside the woods, he had finally killed thirty Grey Sabrecats for his hunting quest.

He was lost for direction at first, he was about to use his map system to go back to where he entered the woods from before Peniel pointed to him the way to Thenias mountain. He followed her direction and came out of the woods. He could see the mountain was already not too far away. The sun at the moment was about to set.

He picked up the pace. He still had five more hunting quests to complete. He did not think he could finish them all before they entered the dungeon tomorrow morning. He might need to continue on the hunting quests again after he was done with the dungeon.

As he got nearer to the base of the mountain, he met and confronted two teams of Lizardmen. Both teams consisted of two lizardmen. Peniel was right, they were much weaker, despite them having the same level as the Lizardman Blood Guard he fought before.

The lizardmen here wielded spear as their weapons, and their scales were green in color, different from the red color scale of the Lizardman Blood Guard. Their strength and speed were decent, and could only deal melee damage. Nothing special to take note of, Jack thought after disposing of the lizardmen.

He continued forward and saw some structures up ahead.

"What's that?" He asked Peniel.

Peniel floated higher to take a look. She soon came back down and told Jack in an urgent voice, "let's take a roundabout route."

"Why?" Jack was confused.

"That is a monster settlement," she said.

"A settlement?"

"Yes, sometimes an encampment, nest, or lair might appear when a group of monsters of the same type comes together. In this case, it was a lizardman encampment."

"Lizardman? Then why should we avoid it? I'm looking for more of them, I should go there to slay some instead."

Peniel was rolling her eyes at him. "I will forgive you as you don't know. So I will explain it to you now. When you kill a monster in the field, the nearby monsters will be oblivious unless you are within their range of perception. However, if you kill a monster inside or near a monster settlement, all the monsters in the settlement will come swarming at you. Do you think you can win fighting against one hundred Lizardmen at the same time?"

Jack went pale at the thought.

"Not to mention that there will always be a boss in a settlement. So apart from dealing with a huge number of monsters, you will also be dealing with a stronger version of the monster. Unless you are attacking the settlement with a large party, you can forget about raiding it."

"Does this mean there will also be a benefit if we manage to raid a settlement?" Jack asked.

"Of course," Peniel answered. "There is always a treasure trove at the center of the encampment, so raiding an encampment is actually a favorite activity for adventurers. You just have to make sure you had enough numbers in your Party to raid said settlement. Looking at the size of this lizardman encampment, it was a small settlement. A group of thirty level 12 or 13 adventurers should be able to take it down."

Jack looked at the encampment. What a pity, if he was allowed to take out the lizardman one by one, he should be able to raid the encampment despite having to fight one hundred of them. But if he was to face all of them at the same time, he didn't have the confidence to do it.

But he was curious about the encampment, after all, this was his first time encountering it. He lowered his posture and sneaked closer.

"What are you doing? Are you crazy? Didn't I just now explain to you about the danger?" Peniel asked in a panic.

"Don't worry, I was just trying to get a better picture of the encampment. I'm not going to storm in. I'm not suicidal."

He sneaked to a row of large rocks that stood close to the encampment. He peeked out from those rocks while staying hidden. There are several lizardmen patrolling around the structures. The encampment looked more like a couple of wooden huts built close to each other. At the center was a large hut that looked different from the rest. Jack figured that was where the Boss was, and also where the treasure of the settlement was located.

Chapter 108: Choke Point Strategy

He was thinking if he could sneak into the main hut undetected. After observing for some time, he decided it was impossible. The encampment was not very big, but the numbers of lizardmen were quite dense, he would meet with one no matter which path he took.

Even for rangers with their Silent Step skill, sneaking through the camp was a stretch. Furthermore, there was still a Boss guarding the treasure inside. It would be utterly foolish to successfully sneak into the main hut only to end up fighting the Boss and then get surrounded by the rest of its minions.

After studying the encampment and understanding that there was nothing he could do here, Jack decided to leave. He kept staying low as he paid attention to his radar and moved away from the camp.

He could see some lizardmen going on patrol. They always moved around in a team of two. Unlike the disorganized gnomes and Goblins, these lizardmen seemed to move around in fixed paths around their encampment.

As he had gone quite close to the encampment, he also sometimes saw patrols on the way where he was heading. Hence, he moved carefully. When he was hiding from one patrol, he saw a path where the ground descended into a slope.

Jack crawled to the slope to stay away from the patrol. He checked his radar and estimated that there were no monsters under the slope. He went down and came to a ravine that stretched quite far. He followed the ravine as the path got narrower due to the cliffs on both sides come together close to one another. The narrow path continued for a while, it opened up at some parts and closing in again at other parts. Most of the parts where it closed in, could only be passed by one person.

Jack stopped walking after some time and looked back at the terrain. He thought for a while before asking the Fairy, "Peniel, if I attacked the Lizardman in the encampment, will they come out to chase me?"

"Of course," Peniel said. "Why did you ask that dumb question?"

Jack ignored her mocking. He asked another question, "How far away will they chase?"

"It varied from each settlement. It will depend on the size of the settlement and the type of monster in the settlement."

"Can you make an educated guess for that Lizardman encampment?" Jack continued to ask.

"Don't tell me you are planning to do something with that encampment," Peniel said with a surprised expression.

"Just answer my question first, will you?" Jack said.

Peniel stared at him with uncertainty. She was probably thinking if the guy had lost his mind. But after seeing his serious expression, she figured she should just entertain him. She floated up high and looked in the direction of the Lizardman encampment.

After a while, she flew back down and said, "well, I cannot say for certain, but I would say that if they chase an intruder, it will be till the area around the part ten meters back there to this place here where you stand."

Jack observed the place some more and then looked to the other entrance of the ravine. It was still some distance away on the opposite end. He then gave her another question, "if I kill the lizardman from that encampment far away from the encampment, like, say here, for example. Will they respawn again?"

"If you kill a settlement monster inside its settlement or all the way out here, they will stay dead. Well, until they respawn again the day after, as long as their settlement has not successfully been raided yet."

Hearing the answer, Jack gave the matter some more thought. After a while, he finally decided.

"All right, let's give it a try then!" He said.

"Give what a try?" Peniel asked.

"You will see," he replied as he took out a whetstone and used it on his sword. He then cooked a chicken soup and consumed it. Afterward, he walked back to where he had come from.

"You really are going to disturb that hornet's nest, aren't you?" Peniel asked him.

"Hehe," Jack replied with a grin.

Peniel gave him a helpless sigh. "Up to you, let's see how you fare then. Your speed should be fast enough to run away if something goes wrong anyway."

Jack came out of the ravine and boldly strutted towards the encampment. The sun was already set at the time, but visibility was still enough due to the light from the full moon. A lizardman patrol was coming out of the encampment as he came near it. The lizardmen stopped with a stunned expression as they saw a human had come into their territory.

They started to shout loudly in a strange language as a warning to their other brethren. Jack responded to their incomprehensible cries with a Mana Bullet. It hit one of the lizardmen squarely on its face. Its mate gave an angry roar at Jack, and came running soon after. Jack heard many footsteps and then saw many more lizardmen appearing from the encampment.

"Wow, so many... It's really like a hornet's nest," Jack commented.

After enraging an entire camp, Jack turned tail and split. He ran at full speed towards the slope. He could see from his radar many red dots were coming after him. There really could be a hundred of them, Jack mused as he continued running. His Dexterity stats made him faster than the lizardman, but he kept a fixed distance with them so as to bait them to keep on chasing after him.

He went into the ravine until the part where it was a narrow part where only one person could pass. He went a bit more distance before turning back. The closest lizardman was struggling to run through the narrow pathway and make its way towards him, as its frame was bulkier.

Jack sent another Magic Bullet, it crashed on the Lizardman's chest. He then sent continuous range attacks from his staff. The lizardman could just take it bluntly as there was no space for it to do an evasive maneuver. When it was closed enough, it stabbed forward using its spear. Jack switched his staff from range attack to Magic Shield. As his shield blocked the stab, he landed Power Strike to the lizardman's head. It received critical damage.

He continued to block and attack the lizardman in that narrow pathway. The other lizardmen arrived behind him but they cannot move forward as the path only allowed one lizardman at a time. So they just queue up behind as the one at the front was combatting the intruder.

Jack was not afraid that there would be lizardmen coming from behind him, as they would need to walk a long distance around the ravine to enter from the other side. Halfway through the travel, they would have reached the limit of their pursuing distance and turned back to return to their settlement.

He was at first afraid if there were indeed some lizardman chasing after from the top of the ravines, maybe they could not go to the other entrance of the ravine as it's too far, but what if they simply jumped down from up there? He would have to abandon this tactic if so. Fortunately, no lizardman rained down from above.

As the Lizardman continued to pile up at the choke point, Jack continued to hack through the one at the front. It took him roughly one to two minutes to slay one lizardman, he continued to kill one lizardman after another. Good thing he had prepared lots of basic healing potions and basic energy potions. Those potions were prepared for tomorrow's dungeon, but he could care less about it now, he just used one potion after another whenever his health and stamina or MP got low. He would just send a message later to ask Silverwing to bring more potions to replace the ones he had used.

He also activated Heightened State to increase his mana and stamina regeneration whenever the skill was off cooldown. Despite their comrades kept on dying at the frontline, the rest of the Lizardmen continued to queue behind, obediently waiting for their turn. As Jack persevered for more than three hours, the number of lizardmen started to thin out.

When the last lizardman fell, Jack looked at the pile of loots stacked along the narrow path. He was panting after a long non-stop fight. If this was in the real world, he would have long dropped to the ground due to exhaustion.

"This was surprisingly going according to plan, without a hitch," Jack exclaimed.

"Well, they are basic low-level creeps, after all. So their levels of intelligence and attack patterns are rather low," Peniel commented.

"That's a good thing for us. Never complain about a plan goes well." Jack said with satisfaction while sitting on the ground trying to catch his breath.

"You had better collect those loots, they will only be around for three hours after they dropped. The first lizardman you killed was more than two hours ago," Peniel said.

Chapter 109: Settlement Guardians

He spent another minute resting and cooling down his tense nerve. Afterward, he then went and picked up the loots. He got a total of 17 silver and 35 copper coins, 3 common equipment which he had no use of and planned to dismantle, 8 scales which were uncommon material, unlike the red scale which he had used to craft his chest armor, and 53 Lizardman's Scale which was the Lizardman's trophy item.

After storing the hefty loots, Jack walked back to the encampment. When he came out of the ravine, the encampment came into view. There was a large figure stood outside the encampment. Jack approached and saw the figure to be a tall lizardman in battle armor, he was holding a large two-handed tomahawk axe.

When it saw Jack, it let out a deafening roar. It was utterly enraged that Jack had decimated its minions. Jack used his God-eye monocle to inspect the monster.

Lizardman Chief (Elite boss, Reptile), level 15

HP: 7200

An Elite boss, not a Special Elite, and the same level as him. Should be manageable, Jack thought. After all, he had fought against an elite level 20 Boss, even though that particular boss had been fought with a

party of many players. A same level 15 elite should be just right for him with his attribute advantage of dual-class.

He was about to go meet the boss in combat when he saw another two figures appearing not far behind the boss.

They were another two lizardmen, they were not wearing armor, but they were also not naked like the other lizardmen though. They wore some kind of ceremonial cloth. One of them was wielding a bow, while the other was holding a wooden staff.

Lizardman Guard Archer (Elite monster, Reptile), level 13

HP: 3100

Lizardman Guard Shaman (Elite monster, Reptile), level 13

HP: 2800

"I know it has been too easy," Jack mumbled to himself as he stared at the trio of lizardmen. "The hard part is always saved for the last."

"Good luck," Peniel said as he flew to the top of one of the wooden huts in the encampment, then sat down on the tip with a relaxed pose as she watched from above.

Jack was speechless by the Fairy. He liked it better when she was just staying in her hidden dimension.

The Lizardman Chief said some weird words to the other two lizardmen behind him, who then fanned out while staying at a distance. The Chief itself then walked forward with an intimidating posture, while uttering some words to Jack.

"You do know that I don't have any idea what you are saying, right?" Jack said to the Lizardman Chief, who seemed to understand Jack's word. It uttered a low growl before opening its maw and roared thunderously.

The roar shocked Jack's body.

'Shit! Is this the same kind of roar like the Horned Ogre Boss which can cause a status effect?' Jack thought with alarm.

But to his relief, he didn't hear any notification about his status effect. He however saw the Lizardman Chief's eyes and the other two lizardman's eyes glowed with red light.

Uh-oh, it seemed that this roar was a reverse from the Horned Ogre boss' version. It did not create a negative status effect on the enemy, but it provided positive buffs for itself and its allies.

The Lizardman Archer made the first strike by shooting an arrow at Jack. Jack hurriedly summoned his Magic Shield to block it. The arrow broke into two due to the impact with the shield. The Lizardman Shaman seemed to be chanting something, but Jack didn't have the luxury to pay it attention as the Lizardman Chief made a giant leap towards him.

The leap was completely defying the law of gravity as its large frame traveled to the height of three meters and a distance of almost six meters. He swung his huge tomahawk axe down at Jack's head.

Jack immediately jumped to the side. The axe chopped down and created a long crack on the hard ground. Jack rolled on the ground to put some distance with the Lizardman Chief. When he stood up, he found the ground he was on was cracking, several thick vines shot out from the cracks. Jack jumped back once he felt something was wrong, but the vines were as if alive as they changed direction and attached themselves to his legs.

Jack was immobilized as the vines held onto his legs tightly. He took a glance at the Shaman and saw it pointing its staff at him, it really was that Shaman's doing.

The Lizardman Chief didn't allow Jack any reprieve as he ran forward with heavy steps.

Jack used his sword to chop at the vines. His sharp sword cut through the vines easily. However, new vines came out to replace the ones that were severed. There seemed to be no end to it.

As the Lizardman Chief arrived, Jack made a quick decision by shooting Mana Bullet at the Lizardman Shaman. He then speedily replaced it with Magic Shield as the Chief's axe came down towards him. He managed to block the axe at the last second, he could feel his left hand becoming numb due to the impact.

His right hand never stopped chopping at the vines. Fortunately, the vines stopped coming out to replace the one he had severed. He glanced and saw that the Lizardman Shaman was staggering due to his Magic Bullet. The vines spell was the type where the caster had to maintain its concentration in order to maintain the spell, its incantation must have been disrupted when Jack's mana bullet hit the shaman.

Not wasting the chance, he doubled down the effort to chop at the vines, and then use brute force to tore his legs off from the remaining ones. At this time, another arrow came and punctured his waist. He felt the stinging pain as damage of 26 appeared above him. He was thankful as his rare Scale Armor provided a reduction of damage from range attack.

The Lizardman Chief's axe came again as he was freed from the vines. Jack used both Parry and Shield to block it. He was thrown back some distance. He noticed the Lizardman Shaman was pointing its staff at him again. He immediately cast Energy Bolts and used Charge towards the Shaman just as vines broke out from where he was standing half a second ago.

Jack's fast movement of Charge brought him past the Lizardman Chief and towards the Lizardman Shaman. His Charge stopped before hitting the Lizardman Shaman, but Jack's purpose was not to attack the Shaman with his charge. He simply needed to bring the Shaman into his melee range.

Jack decided that the Shaman was the one that he needed to take care of first, as its vine spell was really troublesome since it could restrict his movement. Jack needed his fast movement in order to cope with the brute force from the Lizardman's Chief.

The Lizardman's arrows didn't stop coming. One had missed as Jack was using charge, another one hit Jack's shoulder just as his Charge ended. He ignored the arrow. He was completely relying on his Scale Armor passive ability to withstand the arrow's damage while he focused on the Shaman.

The Energy Bolts that he had fired before had scattered as they flew to the three targets. Two were blasting at the Lizardman Chief, one flew towards the Lizardman Archer, while the remaining two hit the

Lizardman Shaman. The two bolts disrupted the Shaman's attempt to cast another spell at the approaching Jack.

Jack took the opportunity as he sent a couple of quick slashes, before delivering a Power Strike when he noticed the Lizardman Chief was closing in. The Power Strike threw the Shaman in the direction towards the Lizardman Archer, blocking its attempt to send another arrow at Jack.

Jack turned to face the Lizardman Chief, who just happened to perform a rotating swing. Its body spun around with breakneck speed, with its tomahawk axe extended outward. It was so fast that Jack didn't manage to predict the trajectory and got hit by it without blocking. He was sent flying as he lost 107 damage.

He crashed into one of the wooden huts, creating a large hole in the wall of the hut.

Chapter 110: Battling The Lizardman Chief And Its Guards

Jack's head was spinning as he lied on the floor of the hut. Pieces of broken wood were strewn all around him.

"Are you all right?" Peniel voice sounded from above him.

Her voice helped him to force the dizziness away. He looked to the source of her voice and found her floating above. The hut that the Lizardman Chief sent him crashing into happened to be the one that Peniel was sitting on. Seeing Jack disappeared inside the hut, she promptly flew in to check on him.

"I'm fine," Jack said as he collected himself and rose up. "Damn! Those lizardmen have many skills at their disposal."

"Of course, do you think that they will be the same as the Lizardman minions you killed in drove at the ravine?" Peniel commented.

Jack took out another basic healing potion to recover the health he had lost. He only had another three potions left after this. He heard running footsteps that were approaching the hut. Jack looked around the hut, there was a wooden door behind him. He opened the door just as the Lizardman Chief's face peeked in from the hole on the other side of the wall.

Jack presented the face with a Mana Bullet before exited out from the door. Once he was out in the open, he heard a whoosh sound as an arrow stuck into the wall of the hut just a couple of inches from his head. He quickly ran to the next nearest hut.

The ground cracked apart as he ran, he knew the Lizardman Shaman had used its spell again. His reaction was much better now that he knew his opponent's move. He jumped forward to evade the vines. When the vines changed direction to pursue him, he slashed his sword in mid-air and cut the enclosing vines. He fell to the ground and rolled away and hid behind another hut.

At this time, the door of the hut where he came out from several moments ago, exploded into splinters as the Lizardman Chief barged through.

Jack ran further into the encampment. Weaving through the wooden huts as he tried to break away from the Lizardmen's perception. Finally, the three Lizardmen seemed to have lost him. They looked around in confusion as they continued to search for this intruder.

After he saw the monsters no longer know his whereabouts, Jack no longer ran with speed, he instead crept slowly to avoid making a sound. He tried to hide from the three Lizardmen as he made his way towards the Shaman. It was easier for him as he could use his radar to pinpoint their positions, and he had been paying attention to the Shaman's red dot since he broke away from them, so he knew which one was the Shaman. He needed to take them out one by one in order to win this battle.

The Lizardman Chief was frustrated as it could not find Jack. It started to break down all the doors of the huts he passed through. One was even getting razed to the ground by its violent axe swinging.

As Jack was inching closer to the place where the Lizardman Shaman was, he found out that the area around was full of thick creeping vines. They seemed to be alive and constantly moving. The Lizardman Shaman probably noticed that Jack had made itself his primary target, hence it was covering the area around it with protective vines. Jack had no doubt those plants would instantly snatch at him once he stepped onto their territory.

Jack moved again, trying to get a glimpse at the Lizardman Shaman. Good thing was the monster was standing on the top of a hut. It probably was trying to get a better view by taking a higher elevation. After finding the Shaman's spot, Jack prepared to launch his offensive. He first checked again on his radar for the other two monsters, they were some distance away.

He pointed his staff at the Lizardman Shaman, and fired off Mana Bullet. Then he cast Energy Bolts that had come off cooldown. He then continued his range offensive with standard attacks from his magic staff.

After his magic staff had been upgraded to level 21, its damage level was coming close to his sword, despite it being only an uncommon grade. Combined with high damage from Magician's spells, his range attacks were not lacking compared to his melee. The Mana Bullet scored 144 damage, while the five Energy Bolts dealt damages ranging from 60 to 64.

The Lizardman Shaman was stunned by the sneak attacks. Its concentration wavered as Jack saw the creeping vines around it stopped moving. Not wasting the chance, Jack continued to fire off standard range attacks from his staff as he ran towards the hut that the Lizardman Shaman was standing on.

The vines were crunching as he stepped onto them, but they stayed still. As Jack was running while shooting, many of his range attacks had missed. The Lizardman Shaman snapped out of its daze and immediately returned to control the vines. When the vines came back to life, Jack was already jumping up. He kicked on one of the protruded wood parts on the wall of the hut and pushed himself higher onto the roof where the Shaman was at.

The vines were climbing up trying to grab at his legs as he jumped. They almost got him before he landed on the roof, but Jack swung his sword down while doing a somersault, cutting those vines that were about to reach him. When he landed, he could see the terrified look on the Lizardman Shaman's face.

Jack did not show any mercy as he started hacking at the monster. He positioned himself so as the Shaman's body was blocking the Lizardman Archer. This way the archer could not shoot its arrow at him without hitting its comrade. The Lizardman Archer tried moving to the side to get an angle where he could hit Jack, but Jack adjusted his position, giving it no chance to shoot.

The Lizardman Chief was stomping back furiously as it made its way towards Jack. Jack ignored it for now as it was still far away. He fully utilized the chance he had now by delivering unbroken chain slashes onto the Lizardman Shaman.

Its HP was decreasing rapidly. It was obvious that the Shaman was mainly a supporter unit. It had no capability to defend itself once its enemy got closed to it. And it could not cast a spell as its spell kept on getting interrupted. Because unlike Jack, whose spells could be cast instantly, the Shaman needed time to chant its spells.

While Jack bullied the Lizardman Shaman and evading Lizardman Archer's arrow, he didn't forget about the Boss. His attention to his radar never wavered. When the Lizardman Chief was around ten meters away, he sent the Lizardman flying towards the Archer again with Power Strike. He cast Magic Bullet rapidly and hit the Lizardman Shaman while it was still in the air.

He then turned around and jumped down from the hut just as the Lizardman Chief performing the leaping attack again. It chopped its axe down following its jumping momentum and demolished the hut that Jack was on a moment ago. Jack looked back as the woods tumbled down all over due to the violent strike.

He did not know what was the cooldown of the Lizardman Chief's leap attack. He didn't want to take a risk and just treated as if the Lizardman Chief could already use the attack again. And he was right. If he didn't run away early, he would be among those tumbling woods.

The Lizardman Chief kicked the woods on the floor to clear the way, and then chased after Jack. Jack returned to his tactic of hide and seek. He ran behind another hut to get away from the monster's perception. He planned to make another sneak attack on the Shaman again once they lost him.

The Lizardman Chief let out a furious roar seeing his opponent's cowardly tactic. He brandished his axe to his side and then spin his body around rapidly, crashing into the hut that Jack disappeared to. The whole hut exploded into numerous wooden blocks.

Jack was shocked by the violent display.

"Are you for real?!" He exclaimed as the Lizardman Chief burst through the hut that he had used for cover.

The whirlwind move that the Chief used was still ongoing. It continued to spin as he approached Jack with speed. Jack turned around as he knew he could not escape. This time he managed to put Magic Shield in front and blocked the spinning attack, but it still sent him flying and caused him some damage.