

World 1451

Chapter 1451: Searching the Fort

The second floor was a huge dining hall. The light they saw from the outside was because half of the soldiers inside this fort were here enjoying drinks during their time off.

Luckily, no one was sitting near the stairs and the stairs had solid wood deck railings so Paytowin and Clearsky could duck and keep themselves out of sight while they made their way to the ground floor.

The ground floor was mostly empty. The few soldiers who stayed within the fort were mostly at the dining hall while the rest were on the walls outside, so they had no problem sneaking. Still, they searched carefully. All the while avoiding the front entrance because there was likely a guard there.

Since the white dots on all floors were jumbled together on his radar, Paytowin couldn't be sure if the rooms on the ground floor were empty or had a captive inside them. They carefully opened the doors they passed through, just to make sure Drograr was not held behind those doors. With the soldiers mostly upstairs and outside, their acts went unnoticed.

After searching for some time, they finally found stairs that went down to the basement of the keep. They took those stairs and came to a door by the end of the stairs. It was locked.

"Let me try lockpicking it," Clearsky sent a message to Paytowin.

"What is your lockpicking level?" Paytowin asked.

"Intermediate expert," Clearsky said proudly.

"Move aside, newbie," Paytowin replied. "Mine is Basic Master."

Clearsky gaped at the message. Was this guy telling the truth? Then his mouth turned even wider when he saw a special lockpick Paytowin took out from his inventory.

That lockpick was the Eternal Lockpick, a unique-grade tool. Jack had also seen this tool before when Wilted lent it to him. This lockpick had one hundred lockpick counts. Each lockpick count needed one hour to replenish after usage. This tool also increased his lockpicking success chance by 20%.

Paytowin received this eternal lockpick from Ghost Callan as a prize for completing a series of tasks.

Aside from that, Callan always granted him a bronze treasure chest for every completed task or a silver one if the task was hard. Paytowin practiced his lockpicking skill by unlocking these treasure chests. This was how he was able to steadily increase his lockpicking skill to an even higher level than Jack.

With the eternal lockpick and Basic Master lockpicking skill, Paytowin unlocked the door before exhausting the one hundred lockpick counts.

After coming through the door, they found themselves in a dungeon with several jail cells. The lighting was dim, they couldn't see clearly, but they saw some shadows behind those cells. They looked around for a warden, ready for a confrontation. After looking around, they confirmed no one was outside the jail cells. There was no warden.

Clearsky cast illumination to help them see clearly in this dim lighting. Clearsky was a level 69 reaver. She bought the illumination spell from the magic association shop as Jack did. With the increased radiance, Paytowin and Clearsky moved forward to take a better look at the prisoners inside the jail cells.

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Grace and David took the stairs directly to the top. The keep was rather huge. It would take them lots of time if they had to search every floor. It was better to start searching from a place where they suspected the most to have a captive.

Just as they were coming up to the topmost floor, Grace gave David the sign to stop. They didn't have God-eye monocle, but Grace had mana sense. She sensed someone not far away from the stairs. That person was moving. The person soon moved away from the scope of Grace's mana sense. She couldn't sense anything anymore.

"Someone is up there. I don't know how many. I only sensed one person," she messaged David.

The top part of the keep became smaller into a tower, so the topmost floor wasn't as big as the floors below. If they went up, that person would surely see them.

David was currently closing his eyes. Grace received a message from him, "There is only one person."

"How do you know?" Grace asked.

"I have good hearing. I hear his footsteps," David answered.

"He?" Grace asked.

"The footsteps were faint but they were heavy. The dwarf is most likely a male."

"Female dwarf can be heavy as well."

"I guess you are right. That's why I said most likely."

"Are you sure there is only one?" Grace asked.

"Unless there are others who are staying still," David answered. "Oh, he stops moving now. He probably sits down or does something quiet."

"What should we do?"

"I will take a peek."

"Isn't that risky?"

"Unless I am awfully unlucky and he happens to be looking in my direction, it should be okay," David said. "Or do you want to just head back down and search the floors below?"

Grace thought for a bit. The fact that someone was staying at the top here had to mean something. It was not for lookout. There were tall towers on the fort's outer wall for lookouts. This one here was stationed for something else.

"Okay, let's take a peek," Grace said to David.

David crept silently to the end of the stairs. He moved his head very slowly out of the stair's railing. His head stayed out for only a second before returning to cover.

"The top floor up there is an open hall with one separate room. One male dwarf is sitting beside the door to that room. The dwarf is a level 80 rare elite," David reported his finding.

"Level 80 rare elite...?" Grace was dismayed. There was still such a strong soldier in this fort. She was hoping that all the strong ones had left with Boron.

She was level 75. She was able to fight against a few same-level rare elites. This one was five levels higher than her. Even if she could fight him with David's help, it would take some time. The other soldiers would surely be alerted by then.

"That dwarf seemed to be guarding the door, which meant there might be something or someone in the room," David said.

Grace nodded. She had the same thought. At that time, she received Paytowin's message.

"Grace, we are in the basement. There are jails down here with some prisoners, but no Dograr."

Hearing that, Grace said to David, "Let's take the chance on the door upstairs."

Chapter 1452: Brute Forcing the Way

Grace informed Paytowin what they had found at the top of this keep. They suspected that there was another prisoner up there, most probably Dograr. David asked if Paytowin could free the prisoners down in the basement. Those freed prisoners could serve as a distraction to lure the guards away.

Paytowin told them that he was already in the process of doing that. Most of the prisoners were officials who opposed Boron when he announced his rebellion, hence they were Thelgrun's allies. Several were just level 1 civilians but the rest were combatants. No high-level one, though. The strongest one was level 65 special elite grade.

Paytowin didn't feel comfortable using these prisoners as bait. If he had to do that, he would be with them and try to protect them as best as possible.

With his lockpicking skill, it didn't take him long to free all the prisoners. The locks here were not of high difficulty.

The prisoners numbered twelve. Four were civilians, seven were native combatants, and one was an outlaw. The outlaw was the one who was the level 65 special elite.

Paytowin was a bit hesitant to release the outlaw. He understood the game system treated outlaws similar to monsters. The outlaw also didn't respond with words when Paytowin asked him if he was willing to cooperate with them to get out of this place. The outlaw simply nodded.

Paytowin finally decided to take the risk.

After opening the cell door, Paytowin stepped away and was ready in case the outlaw did anything hostile. The outlaw didn't, but he also didn't cooperate. He simply ran up the stairs. It was obvious he wanted to escape on his own.

Luckily, Paytowin freed the outlaw the last. He told the others to follow the outlaw. Might as well use that outlaw to initiate contact.

Up there, they found the outlaw was fighting against the keep entrance's guard. Paytowin called Brave King and the techno golem charged ahead. It slammed into the guard, which in turn slammed into the door. The door lost half its HP from the impact. It was not a durable structure.

Paytowin used his gun and shot the door. The others who had ranged attacks did the same. The door was soon destroyed. The guard was thrown out by Brave King, his HP was near critical. The outlaw ran out and went directly to the main gate, ignoring everything else.

Paytowin and the others followed after him. The alarm soon sounded. Guards started to gather near the main gate. They rained arrows. Sounds were also heard from the keep. The soldiers who were hanging out on the second floor were no doubt rushing downstairs.

Paytowin took out his companion token and summoned Mihos. He asked the divine champion to block the keep's entrance and prevent any of the soldiers from coming out.

He then activated his Brave Techno Suit. With Brave King, he flew up to the top of the wall to deal with those archers. He asked Clearsky to keep the prisoners safe, especially the four civilians.

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Up on the keep's tower, Grace and David had gone back down one floor before the top. They hid and expected the guard up there to come running down after hearing the alarm, but he didn't. David didn't hear any footsteps coming down the stairs even after more than a minute passed since the alarm was heard.

"He doesn't take the bait," David said.

"... Looks like we have to brute force our way," Grace said.

"This can be good as well," David said. "This means whatever he is guarding is more valuable than the prisoners in the basement. With the distraction, at least we only have one guard to deal with."

"What is your lockpicking skill?" Grace asked.

"Basic expert," David answered.

"Not so high, but still better than mine. You handle the door then."

"You think it will be locked?"

"Most likely."

"Will you be okay dealing with a level 80 rare elite?" David asked.

"I'll manage," Grace answered.

The two didn't spend a long time discussing. The distraction Paytown created might not last that long. They needed to break into the guarded room as soon as possible.

Though they decided to brute force their way, they still sneaked back up silently. If they could land an ambush bonus, that would better ease the fight. For that, Grace called Oswald, who used to work as an assassin-for-hire.

Oswald was level 73, which disappointed Grace. He used to have the same level as her. Now he was two levels lower. This assassin must have slacked off after getting his freedom. Grace had no time to chide him at the moment. She would talk to him properly once this was over.

After receiving a brief explanation from Grace about the situation, Oswald activated Hide and vanished from sight.

Grace followed and used her mana sense to keep a distance so she didn't cancel Oswald's invisibility.

The rare elite dwarf up there was looking out the window. He just watched the commotion down there without any intention of joining. His name was Jobreak Goldhoarder. He was tasked by Boron with a more important duty up here than dealing with those prisoners down there.

He suddenly felt a tingling and he hurriedly jumped to the side just as a human in a cloak stabbed from behind.

"Mana sense...?" Oswald uttered after his failed ambush. "No... It's danger sense."

Oswald also had the same skill. It was a passive ability that alerted them of an incoming danger.

"Who are you, human? What are you doing here?!" Jobreak demanded as he brandished two labryses, which were double-headed axes. He then noticed two other people came up the stairs. A human and an elf, both were outworlders.

He no longer wasted his time questioning them. It was clear what their purpose was.

Grace joined Oswald and they engaged Jobreak while David headed to the door.

Grace and Oswald were used to fighting together so they covered one another well. Grace went for frontal assault with her excellent defense while Oswald looked for opportunity from the side. They were both martial artists. Thus, even when Jobreak had a higher level than them, they were not at a disadvantage.

Jobreak couldn't concentrate on fighting the two because he saw David going to the door he was guarding. David started lockpicking the door after finding the door was locked.

Jobreak made an earsplitting cry, which was Berserker's Cry of Rage. At the same time, his body was covered by Berserk's black tattoos. He was not done yet. His body enlarged and his appearance changed. He could also use Beast Form. His form was a crocodile. He now looked like a humanoid croc.

The multiple enhancements made his attributes skyrocket. Grace and Oswald were not ready for the sudden increase of power. Jobreak broke past the two and charged toward David who was still busy lockpicking the door.

Chapter 1453: Saving the Captive

David's sharp hearing picked up the incoming danger. He quickly retracted his lockpicks and used Roll to dodge. Jobreak stopped his charge before hitting the door.

David deftly aimed his gun and fired at Jobreak once he finished rolling. Jobreak's high attributes let him evade the shot. The bullet instead hit the door and a damage number appeared.

'It can be broken!' Both Grace and David had the realization after seeing the damage number. The door was not durable enough to nullify their current levels.

Jobreak also noticed the damage number. He regretted dodging David's shot.

"Oswald, our priority is the door!" Grace said. She used Mace of Selfishness.

At the same time, David used Bulletstorm.

Both their attacks were aimed at the door. Because of that, Jobreak had no choice but to use his body to block. His skin turned rigid as he used Battle Monk's Steel Body. All the damage that battered his body was weakened.

While Jobreak endured the punishment, Oswald turned into a streak of light and zipped past him. As he did, Jobreak received multiple slashes.

Oswald's Deadly Flash Strikes brought him to Jobreak's back. He was now directly in front of the door but he didn't go for the door yet. He hit Jobreak's back using his martial art, Twin Moon Fangs. Because he also had Rogue's passive skill, backstab, his attack power was multiplied.

Jobreak stumbled away from the door due to the hit. He wanted to turn back and strike Oswald but his body refused to move as Grace's Mace of Selfishness hit him again and again. Each of the mace strikes caused him to stun momentarily.

Without any obstacle, Oswald used his skill, Hundred Images Assault, on the door.

Although Oswald had fallen behind Grace in terms of levels, he continued to be diligent in training martial arts Jet had taught him. He also went to Heavenly Citadel to join the martial arts practice from time to time. He was a native who enjoyed martial arts once he experienced it. His diligence allowed him to touch the basics of mana manipulation.

With this technique, he could better control his skills. The Hundred Images Assault had his body split into multiple shadows. But unlike before when his split selves rained down assaults in all directions, this time he was able to concentrate all his strikes onto a target, which in this case was the door.

The door wasn't durable from the start. It broke apart after the multiple strikes.

Through the broken door, they saw a dwarf in noble clothes who seemed both surprised and confused. Grace used Inspect and found that the dwarf was indeed their target, Dograr Mountchest.

"Oswald, bring him out of this place!" Grace exclaimed. She then split the long mace in her hand into two. With them, she rained down fast attacks using Phantom Beating Sticks. The rapid attacks forced Jobreak to focus on her.

David helped by continuously firing his gun aiming at Jobreak's eyes, but the dwarf had danger sense. This let Jobreak move his head at the last instant. David couldn't score a clean shot, but it still caused Jobreak to be constantly distracted. This helped ease Grace's effort.

While the two kept Jobreak busy, Oswald rushed into the room.

"Who... Who are you...?!" Dograr asked in a panic. Although he was in captivity, he also didn't know who this human that barged into his prison.

"We are here to save you. Come with me!" Oswald exclaimed.

"But... Who are you?" Dograr asked again.

Oswald didn't have the patience for this. He was used to assassinating people, not saving them. It's a good thing that Dograr was not chained. The dwarf was also very weak. Dograr was only a level 20 elite. So, Oswald had no problem overpowering him.

Oswald grabbed the dwarf and forcefully dragged him out of the room. He was on his way to the stairs when Grace suddenly crashed into the wall in front of him. This caused him to stop.

Physically, Grace was unable to contest against Jobreak who was higher level and strengthened by both beast form and berserk. She was utilizing her martial arts to expertly dodge Jobreak's axe slashes while continuing to rain fast hits on the dwarf. She was fully focused on Jobreak's two labryses but she was unmindful that Jobreak had grown a tail after transforming into the croc form.

This powerful tail swiped from below and smacked Grace. Jobreak intentionally hit her at an angle so she flew in Oswald's direction. This stopped the assassin from reaching the stairs with Dograr.

David rushed forward to replace Grace in keeping Jobreak occupied, but one slam by Jobreak's labryses onto the floor caused a small earthquake. This skill caused everyone in that room except for Jobreak to lose their footing and be unable to move.

While his opponents were unbalanced, Jobreak lifted his labryses. The weapons glowed as wind energies started swirling around it.

"If we can't keep you here, then you have to die...!!" Jobreak exclaimed.

Everyone understood whom Jobreak meant. Dograr had a terrified expression on him.

"No...! Please! Don't kill me...!!" Dograr pleaded.

But Jobreak didn't cancel his attack. Instead, the wind energies turned even more turbulent. Everyone understood whatever this skill was, it was AOE. There is no dodging.

Grace used Generosity of Hope. If her allies died from the attack, they would be revived again. Unfortunately, Grace saw that while Oswald and David were covered by the sanctification's light, Dograr was not. The dwarf noble was not considered her ally, perhaps because Dograr hadn't accepted the fact

that Grace and the others truly came to rescue him. He thought they were some strangers who also tried to kidnap him for some reason. Oswald forcing him out of the room didn't help the case.

Grace immediately put herself in front of Dograr. However, everyone knew it was useless to shield someone from an AOE attack unless they had a skill similar to Sentinel's Cover or Jack's Elemental God Barrier.

"DIEEE...!!!" Jobreak shouted as the wind energies he accumulated erupted into a fierce hurricane.

Gashes appeared on the floor, walls, and ceiling as the hurricane spread outward. David, who was the closest was assailed by this hurricane. He had summoned his shield drone and placed it in front of him for protection, but the wind came from everywhere. He was repeatedly slashed by the wind and his HP zeroed.

Oswald used Vanish, but the hurricane hit everything inside the room. He was immediately struck after he teleported. He received repeated damage but as a native, his high HP allowed him to survive.

As for Dograr, he already saw death when the hurricane came. The elven girl put herself in front of him but he knew that was pointless. However, what happened afterward was the weirdest thing he ever saw.

All the winds that came in his direction suddenly changed course and flew toward the elven woman in front of him. Or more correctly, toward her hand that was stretched out. All the winds entered her opened palm. It was as if she sucked all those destructive wind energies into her palm.

Chapter 1454: Escaping the Fort

One person beside Dograr who had a clear view of what was happening was Jobreak. He had a hard time processing what was happening before him. His Hurricane Calamity worked just fine on the other sides, but the side that was facing the stairs was as if all the wind energies had fallen into a bottomless abyss.

Once all the winds finished entering Grace's palm, she felt as if a dam within her had broken. All the destructive energies flooded within her. Numerous damage numbers popped up above her, even when her HP had already fallen to zero.

She slumped to the floor when both Dograr and Jobreak were still unsure about what was happening. The Generosity of Hope took effect then. It brought Grace back to life, which gave the two dwarves another round of surprise.

Grace took advantage of the momentary stun from the surprise and activated Angelic Possession. Wings of light sprout behind her and all her attributes were increased. With the enhanced speed and strength, she grabbed Dograr and flew toward the window.

Jobreak snapped back then. "Don't think you can escape!" He exclaimed.

He threw one of his labryses and used Charge at the same time, but his danger sense warned him of incoming danger. He ignored the warning. Either preventing Dograr from escaping or killing him was more important than his well-being.

He felt an explosion then, which came from David's Throw Grenade. David died but he also came back to life because of Grace's Generosity of Hope.

Jobreak continued forcing himself forward, only to find David's gun right next to his face. David used Rapid shot. From such a close range, Jobreak was unable to dodge. The bullets hit his eye. The pain forced him to stop his charge.

Grace sensed the incoming labrys. She had one hand on Dograr while the other swung her mace at the labrys. She received damage and a slight knockback from the impact. But with David stopping Jobreak, she was able to resume her flight and dashed right through the window.

David ran to the window while Jobreak was still reeling from the pain in his eye. With one eye still open, he saw David running away. He wanted to stop David but Oswald came in between.

"Let me play with you," Oswald said with a grin.

"Grace!" David called and jumped out the window. As he fell, he threw the rope they used earlier to climb to the third floor. Grace caught that rope.

David's fall was stopped as he and Grace held the opposite ends of the rope. Carrying two people was too heavy, even for Grace's enhanced strength. She started falling. She didn't try to fight the weight, she let herself fall slowly toward the ground.

On the way down, she saw a large spaceship above the main gate raining down hell on the soldiers at the top of the wall. That was Paytowin's Mothership Bombardment.

Paytowin was operating the mechanism that controlled the gate while his Beam Turret, Brave King, and the bombardment from the spaceship above kept the soldiers at bay.

The main gate was slowly opening. Clearsky who was waiting below immediately led the prisoners out once there was a large enough gap for a person to pass through.

David let go of the rope once he was around ten meters from the ground. He made a roll as he hit the ground. He suffered no damage.

"Go! Get him out of here. We will rendezvous later!" David shouted at Grace.

Grace nodded. With one load off, she could pick up altitude again. She went past the wall above Paytowin, who gave her the signal to not worry about them. She looked back at the keep and then used her companion token to unsummon Oswald, returning him to safety.

While flying away, she saw Paytowin and Brave King fly out from the fort and join the prisoners who had run earlier. David also rushed out of the opened gate. Some soldiers came chasing after him. He shot at them while continued retreating.

She didn't worry about them. They were capable players. Her priority was to get Dograr to safety.

She used her wings tool after her Angelic Possession ended. She flew past several rock formations which was hard to pass on foot. This was so that any pursuer would have a hard time chasing after her unless they could fly. She was glad then that Jobreak didn't have a wings tool as well.

After flying past the rock formation, she landed on the ground. She noticed that Dograr's face was pale. No wonder the dwarf was silent the entire flight. He was terrified.

"Who... Who are you...?!" Dograr could finally speak again after taking several seconds to gather himself.

"We came to rescue you," Grace said. "Boron is using you to force your sister into supporting his rebellion."

"Rebellion?" Dograr said with surprise.

Grace understood then that Dograr was unaware of what was happening in this country. Boron probably captured Dograr before he started his rebellion. Grace explained everything to Dograr.

"That... That is terrible...!" Dograr exclaimed after hearing Grace's explanation. "I need to get to my sister!"

"That is our intention. Don't worry, we will get you to her," Grace said. She summoned her unicorn. Her steed could run faster than her flying.

"Come. We are going to your sister," Grace said and offered Dograr her hand. Dograr accepted. After hearing the explanation and remembering how Grace sacrificed herself to save him, he thought he could trust this elven woman.

"What did you do, anyway?" Dograr asked after sitting behind Grace.

"What do you mean?" Grace asked back.

"The thing you do when you block the winds."

"Oh, that. That is called martial arts. Something we outworlders practice," Grace answered.

"Oh...? Fancy. I thought it was a skill," Dograr said. "It was very impressive whatever this martial art is."

Grace chuckled. "It is called the Nine Yin Devouring Palm."

'I haven't been able to master it, though,' Grace added in her mind. In its perfect execution, the Nine Yin Devouring Palm would not only absorb the destructive mana but also convert it into restorative energy. If Grace had mastered the ancient art, the Hurricane Calamity she absorbed earlier would not kill her but heal her instead.

After experiencing the effectiveness of this martial art in a real fight, Grace vowed she would train harder and master the ancient art.

Chapter 1455: The Num Maldur Pass

The Ligiritudum army continued their march after leaving their guild player force to deal with the guild players that had been ambushing them these past days. They were currently in front of a fort jammed between two tall mountains.

It was the Num Maldur pass. It was a pass similar to the Themisphylae pass in Themisphere. A long mountain line with steep cliffs was seen as far as their eyes could see on both sides of the fort. Those

mountains were the Gonrum mountain range. Unless one could fly, there was no going through those mountains except through the fort.

On the left side, opposite the mountain line was a large forest. On the right side, the terrains were mainly rocky plains.

"I've just received a message from Spring Crowns. They have to retreat from the battle against the enemy guild players," Linda reported to Master.

Master frowned after hearing it. "They lost?" He asked.

Linda told Master what Spring Crown told her, regarding the large number of high-level companions the Everlasting Heavenly Legends' members called during the battle.

Master asked if any of their members identified these companions. Linda asked around. Some of their members used Inspect on those enemy companions and still remembered their names. After hearing some of the names, Master knew where those natives came from.

He was reminded again he shouldn't underestimate Jack's persuasion ability. Those Council of Charites' natives should have followed Jack after that incident in their base.

"Never mind them. We will deal with them when it's time," Master said. "Let's move!"

The Liguritudum army turned sideways and moved away from the fort.

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"They are taking the roundabout way," A player on the wall of Num Maldur Pass said.

"It is as expected," Another player answered. "Although they should be able to take over this fort with their force, they will lose troops in the process. The time they need to take this fort is probably the same if they take the roundabout way, or maybe even more. Hence, taking the roundabout way is the wiser choice."

Thelgrun had entrusted this pass to the number two guild in the country, the Licth Squad. Thelgrun had gathered most of the native army in the capital. He let players defend the pass because they could stay at that pass and then teleported back into the capital when the enemy reached the capital. They didn't have the hassle of considering the traveling time as the native army did.

The number of players currently stationed in this pass was almost 100,000. Nowadays, player forces could go toe-to-toe with a native army. Hence, the players could defend the pass as well as a native army.

These players were led by the Licth Squad, but the bulk of their number came from other Palgrost guilds and independent players. The guilds in this fort were mostly those below the rank ten in Palgrost, as most of the ranked guilds were either with Jeanny's ambushing force or on Boron's side.

The Licth Squad was a guild led by five players who used to be an independent team. They never bothered forming or joining a guild in past games, but they were pretty famous as an independent team. In this game world, however, they learned that they couldn't treat it as regular games where they simply used it for entertainment. This time, the game was real.

Luckily, they coincidentally arrived in this world in the same country. Thus, after finding each other and regrouping, they formed a guild using their previous team's name. Using their experience from previous games, the guild flourished under their hard work. They placed second in the country's guild ranking list and had stayed in that rank for a long time.

The leader of the Licth Squad was someone using the alias of Viking. The other four original members of the team were HeroV, Genesis, Kenny Boy, and Dragonmasta. All five of them were among the players who were watching from the wall of Num Maldur fort.

"You know what I think? Since they take the roundabout way, we should take this chance to hit Khulgrun," Dragonmasta said.

Khulgrun was the city closest to the Num Maldur Pass. It was also one of the settlements the Liguritutum army had taken to establish their supply line.

"Khulgrun won't be undefended," HeroV said. "The enemy sure to have left troops to defend their supply line."

"I have had people scouting the place. The troops guarding the city are not more than one legion," Dragonmasta reasoned. "If we bring all the troops here, we should be able to take down the city even without siege weapons."

"And leave this pass undefended? That is irresponsible! We have been given the duty to protect this place!" HeroV exclaimed. "If the Liguritutum army heard of us attacking Khulgrun, they will return and take this pass."

"I didn't say we move out now. We wait until the Liguritutum army is at least one day away. It is only a five-hour ride from this place to Khulgrun. We should have the time to hit the place, free the city, burn or take all the supplies, and return to this fort before Liguritutum's main army arrives. In this way, we not only cut down their supplies but also made them lose time because they wasted their time coming back here. They would waste even more time if they went back to retake Khulgrun. Imagine the war contribution points we will get from these actions."

"It's too risky," Genesis said.

"With great risk comes great reward," Dragonmasta argued.

"What about the player force led by that human guild? I forgot the leader's name again," Kenny Boy said.

"Her name is Jeanny," Viking said.

"Yes, Jeanny. What about their force? We can ask them to attack Khulgrun."

"And give away the war contribution points? What the hell is wrong with you?" Dragonmasta chided. "It's bad enough that the president gives an outsider the right to command a second player force, now you also want to give the glory to them?"

"The force Jeanny brought with her is less than half ours," Genesis said. "They will not be able to free Khulgrun with only their force."

"That's not the problem. The point is why are we discussing giving our glory to somebody else?" Dragonmasta said. "The force we command should be the one to liberate Khulgrun!"

"I don't like that plan," HeroV said.

"You are always the first one to charge first in a battle. Why chickening out now?" Dragonmasta ridiculed.

"This is different!" HeroV yelled.

"What do you say?" Genesis asked Viking.

Viking was silent as he watched the Liguritutum army that was slowly moving away.

Chapter 1456: Fake Tail

After what seemed like a very long time, Viking finally said, "Let's wait until the Liguritutum main army is two days away."

"This means you will be going with my suggestion?" Dragonmasta said with excitement.

"Send a scout to tail that army. Make sure they are truly away," Viking said.

"Right away, boss!" Dragonmasta went and carried out the order. Two ranger-based class players with rare-grade steed were soon riding away chasing the Liguritutum army.

"Are we truly going to attack Khulgrun?" Genesis asked.

"Dragon was right. This is a good chance for us to reap war contribution points," Viking said. "That Jeanny had led her force around engaging the enemy while we are only tasked to sit here and do nothing. If the Liguritutum army decided to attack this fort, then we would get something. But they had decided otherwise. I don't think we will get many war contribution points just by standing here, do you?"

Genesis didn't refute the fact.

"So, I assume we are not calling Jeanny's force to join us in taking Khulgrun?" Kenny Boy asked.

"No," Viking replied. "Let them go and hinder the enemy their way. We will do it our way."

"I still don't like this plan," HeroV said.

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After almost two days had passed, the Licth Squad opened the fort's door and almost the entire army rushed out. They only left a few players to operate the gate for when they were back later.

They rode directly to Khulgrun and under the cover of night. If possible, they wanted to sneak a few players into the city to create havoc before they proceeded with a frontal assault on the city gate. Some of their rogue-based players had the grappling hook skill. They should be able to climb the city wall under darkness.

After almost three hours of riding, Viking received a message. The message was from the few players left behind at Num Maldur Fort.

"What...?!" He yelled after receiving the message.

Seeing their leader's tense expression, Genesis issued the order to stop the march. The whole army ground to a halt.

"What's wrong?" Genesis asked Viking.

"The... The Liguritutum main army... They are attacking Num Maldur Fort right now...," Viking answered.

"What?! How can that be? They are two days away!" Dragonmasta exclaimed. After a few seconds, he added, "I just checked with the scouts tailing the main army. They still have the army in their sight."

"Then are you saying the players in the fort sent me a fake message to toy with me?!" Viking shouted.

"No... I just... I don't understand...," Dragonmasta was speechless.

"We have been had...," Genesis sighed.

"Uh... Should we still go to Khulgrun?" Kenny Boy asked.

"If they are already in front of the fort, they can send an army at us. Although I think we can take down Khulgrun fast, the enemy reinforcement might have arrived before we can enter the city."

"Then... Should we rush back to Num Maldur? Maybe we can still prevent the enemy from taking it?" Kenny Boy asked again.

Genesis didn't answer this time. He thought that was pointless. Their position at this moment was outside. The Liguritutum army would be in between them and the fort. They could harass the enemy from the back but they won't be able to do anything to contribute to the fort's defense.

He turned to Viking for a decision.

Viking was silent. His face had an ugly scowl.

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At Num Maldur Fort, its gate was currently being hit repeatedly by a dragon-head battering ram. It was a guild's siege tool that Master had used. The metal end with the shape of the dragon head slammed into the gate and produced high damage with each ram.

Around it were defensive soldiers who cast spells to protect against the attack from the few players above the wall.

The players inside the wall tried using the defensive weapons within the fort but with so few operating them, they were not effective against such a large army.

Master could have flown up and made all this go easier but he couldn't. This was because one of the enchantments on Num Maldur Fort was the no-flying zone. No one could fly past or up into the wall. That's why this pass was such an ideal defensive stronghold as long as it had enough manpower.

Unfortunately, it did not.

The gate was soon destroyed and the Liguritutum army poured in. The players inside were quickly slaughtered. The Num Maldur Pass was now theirs.

Master and Linda were up on the walls while the army organized themselves to go through the pass. They would be leaving some troops here to secure the supply line coming through Khulgrun.

"What about the player force that was originally guarding this pass?" Master asked Linda.

"I have sent a 500,000-strong army to deal with them. If they proceed with attacking Khulgrun, they will be annihilated. If they are smart, they will scatter."

"What about the decoy army?"

"They had turned back and were on their way here. Once they arrived, we could proceed toward Balgadur."

Because the Liguritutum army was so huge, the formation stretched out into a very long line. The troops that Dragonmasta's scouts were following were just the rear of this long line formation. While they were watching this rear, the front part of the army made their way into the forest opposite the mountain range.

The majority of the army hid inside that forest while the troops at the rear continued onward following the road. Dragonmasta's scouts happily tailed behind this rear unaware that they had passed the army they should be keeping track of.

This hiding army waited. Linda planned to wait no more than two days. If the enemy didn't take the bait, they would lose at most two days. But if the enemy did, they would save more days than the ones they lost for waiting. Taking the roundabout way added an extra four to five days to their travel.

Linda thought the enemy would most likely take the bait. She knew the guild that was assigned to defend the pass. She had studied their past. The Licth Squad used to be an independent team. As an independent team, they had less consideration compared to a formal guild and were more prone to taking risky jobs. Additionally, all five original members of the Licth Squad were brave mother*ckers who enjoyed chasing rewards.

Luckily, the Licth Squad didn't disappoint. They took the bait just as it was near Linda's appointed time frame.

By taking this pass, it also meant a shorter supply line for the Liguritutum army. Hence, fewer troops had to be left behind to guard the supply line. From this pass to Balgadur, it was only around three more days of travel.

"Turn this pass into our main base in this country," Master commanded. "This will be where we piled most of our supplies before bringing them to the front line. Leave 100,000 troops here to guard this pass."

"Yes, My Lord," Linda replied.

Chapter 1457: Unending Labyrinth

It had been five days since Jack and Arlcard first entered the mausoleum. At this time, they were still wandering through the unending maze.

"Bloody hell! We've already spent five days inside here. How deep is this bloody Mausoleum? Horatio could already be starting his siege up there!" Jack said with worry.

Arlcard didn't answer because he also didn't know. He never expected they would be spending days to get to the deepest floor of the mausoleum.

They were currently twelve floors below. Each floor consisted of a series of cubicles linked by doors. They had to keep going from one cubicle to the next until they found one with the stairs to the lower floor.

Each cubicle had different contents. Sometimes they were empty. Sometimes there were monsters. Sometimes there was a totem that gave them buffs for a limited time. Sometimes they contained a treasure chest. All the treasure chests he had found were bronze grades, though.

On the first two days, Jack still spent time to unlock all these treasure chests. On the third day, he no longer bothered. His primary objective was to get out of this place.

Unfortunately, once one came down the stairs, the stairs vanished. They couldn't go back up again. Arlcard said that there would be a portal back out once they arrived at the deepest floor.

"Do you know how many floors in total under here?" Jack asked.

"I told you already before. I don't know," Arlcard answered.

"How can you not know? This is your quest, isn't it?"

Arlcard didn't reply. He was getting annoyed by Jack's complaints, but he couldn't blame the guy. If they didn't go back up soon, Horatio would be screwed. Horatio needed Jack to go up against his father, and he couldn't cancel the rebellion once it started. Marcus should notice the rebel army's movement once they advanced to Vacharest. If the whole operation failed due to his quest, Arlcard would feel bad about it too.

"We should reach the lowest floor soon," Arlcard finally said.

Jack knew Arlcard didn't truly know. Jack sighed. He didn't mean to put pressure on his companion, but he had promised Horatio. Not to mention John, Jeanny, and Thelgrun also awaiting his aid. He didn't want to disappoint them all.

"Let's stop wasting time then. Let's go," Jack said.

They were in a cubicle that was meant as a camping site. In this place were beds and food. If they ate the food and slept in this place for at least five hours, they would receive buffs that not only increased their attributes and defenses but also increased the exp points they received in the next eighteen hours. When they were tired, they looked for this type of cubicle to rest in.

Unfortunately, the exp points provided in this place weren't much because there were not that many monsters. Most of their time was spent on finding their way through the maze.

Jack couldn't use his incorporeal state to find his way here. When he tried to, he found that he couldn't get past the wall of the cubicle he was on. He also couldn't interact with the wall's mana to find out what was behind the doors. Hence, he could only do this the old-fashioned way.

He used a pen and paper from his inventory to map the cubicles and doors they had passed through. Without the map, they might accidentally circle back to the cubicle they had been to before.

Yet, even with the map, they could only descend an average of two to three floors a day. This was because each floor was truly huge. Jack couldn't believe this was the underground of the tiny mausoleum they entered from. He was sure this place was a pocket world.

Each floor also had a boss room. This was the room before the cubicle with the stairs to the lower floor. Every boss was a different monster but they always had the same level and grade, which was level 76 mythical, except for the last one they encountered before going down to the twelfth floor. That previous boss was level 77 mythical.

That was because Arlcard had increased to level 77 in the middle of the eleventh floor. All the monsters in this place followed his level.

Therras also increased one level to level 76. Only Jack didn't enjoy any level-up since the exp points he received were divided between his three classes.

After spending hours maneuvering around the cubicles and with the aid of Jack's hand-drawn map, they finally arrived in another boss room. This time, the boss was an avian type. A huge fat chicken with three heads. Its feathery wings produced violent winds when they flapped. Each of its three heads shot different elemental energies of fire, ice, and lightning.

However, since it was also a level 77 mythical. Against Jack, Arlcard, and Therras. The fat three-headed chicken stood no chance.

Jack used Runestone of Luck every time he slayed the boss of a floor. He didn't get anything noteworthy from those bosses, but he did get a few unique-grade equipments and plenty of super rare ones.

He would donate the unique equipment to the guild. His transformation prism couldn't fuse unique-grade equipment to produce legendary-grade. Its limit was creating a unique grade. The regal outfit he wore was also better, so he had no use keeping the unique equipment dropped from these bosses.

He bet Jeanny would be glad for this. Unique grade equipment was still extremely rare even among top players.

He himself felt no joy. Rather than getting these loots, he preferred they reached the bottom of this place. He shoved all the loot into his storage bag and ran to the next room, which as expected, contained the stairs to the lower floor.

He made a resolution. He couldn't let Horatio's rebellion fail. If they still had not reached the bottom by the time this day was over, he would use Pandora to escape this place.

Arlcard would be disappointed. His companion quest might even fail, but he guessed he had to make the hard choice. Horatio's quest was tied to the fate of a nation and a potential ally to Themisphere. It was more important.

Chapter 1458: Blood Urn

Fate might have been laughing at Jack because just as he resolved to abandon Arlcard's quest by the end of today, he found that they had reached the bottom.

They knew they had reached the bottom because what they saw after coming down to the next floor was different from what they had seen before. The cubicle they were in was much larger, probably ten times larger. Furthermore, there was no door in all four walls. There was no next room. This was the end of the labyrinth.

The place was mostly empty except for a single pedestal at the center. On the pedestal was a blood-red urn.

"I found it... I found it!" Arlcard suddenly exclaimed.

Jack looked at his companion and was surprised to see Arlcard's normally emotionless face showed such a colorful expression. Arlcard's emotion was easily seen through his current face. It was a mix between longing, relief, and elation.

The vampire suddenly rushed forward.

"Hey, Arlcard! Wait...!" Jack yelled. He was taken aback by his companion's sudden action.

"There could be traps!" Jack ran after Arlcard, but the vampire was very fast. His speed didn't lose to Jack.

When Arlcard got near the red urn, what Jack was worried about came into being. Red smoke erupted from the urn. This took Arlcard by surprise and forced him to stop.

Arlcard had natural mana sense. He could sense the danger from that smoke. The red smoke formed a large column which came at Arlcard. Arlcard split into a swarm of bats just as the column smashed into the floor Arlcard was standing on a moment before.

The bats flew around the smoke, trying to get close to the urn but were unable to. The smoke completely covered the urn. Arlcard was unable to get close. The red smoke expanded, seemingly about to engulf the bats.

"Arlcard, get back!" Jack yelled. At the same time, he fired Mana Beam into the red smoke.

Damage number appeared when the beam pierced the red smoke. Once it did, the red smoke shaped into a form. It was vague, but Jack thought that perhaps he saw a face inside the smoke. One that stared at him with a grimace.

'That thing is alive?' Jack thought and used Inspect.

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Tethered Soul (Mythical Monster, Magical), level: 82

HP: 1,940,000

Strength: 4380

Physical Defense: immune

Magical Defense: 4250

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"Immune?" Jack uttered after reading the description of the thing's physical defense.

He had summoned Therras, his spirit weapons, and the golden wolves. Therras and the golden wolves charged into the smoke, but their attacks were useless. They mostly dealt physical damage. Their attacks just went through the smoke as if it was real smoke.

The spirit weapon fared better since its attack dealt chaos damage. It was in ranged mode and firing from a distance.

The bats retreated after unable to find a way through the red smoke. Some of them were caught when they tried to fly in and were dissolved. The bats merged into Arlcard and he received damage in proportion to the number of bats that were destroyed.

Arlcard could see now if he wanted to get to the urn, he had to defeat this smoke creature first.

His standard attack was also physical but he had many darkness-based skills. He cast a spell and his rapier was now coated with dark energy. All attacks done using his weapon now dealt dark damage.

Arlcard cast his protective shadow veil on himself before flying back to the red smoke. The vampire seemed to be very eager to defeat the enemy. He flew around at high speed while his rapier slashed the smoke every time he zoomed past. The smoke was having trouble keeping up with Arlcard's speed.

The smoke suddenly exploded. At least that was what Jack first thought, but he then noticed the explosion was slowing down. Turned out the red smoke was simply changing shape. It now had multiple tentacles coming out of its center. These tentacles chased after Arlcard and blocked his flight path at the same time.

"Arlcard, get back!" Jack shouted again. He had been firing magical attacks from afar when Arlcard engaged the smoke. He was now casting a spell while channeling his mana.

Arlcard was reluctant to retreat but he had been struck by the smoke tentacles a few times. He could still tank the damage but those tentacles stuck to the things they touched. Jack's ten golden wolves had been glued to those tentacles, unable to move. Damage numbers continuously appeared each second they were bound.

If not for his shadow veil, Arlcard would have suffered the same fate as those wolves. His shadow veil prevented the tentacles from attaching themselves to Arlcard's body after hitting him. He finally retreated when his shadow veil was almost destroyed.

Therras was originally also bound, but it used its Autocratic Roar which dispersed the smoke for a second. It quickly retreated afterward.

With all his allies retreated except for the wolves, Jack unleashed his spell. It was the mana manipulation-empowered Perpetual Lightning Judgement.

Uncountable thick lightning snakes erupted from the completed spell formation. Jack directed them all onto the red smoke. At the same time, he used Lightning God Barrage.

Sensing the danger, the red smoke retracted its tentacles and coiled into a sphere. The lightning snakes arrived first and the smoke sphere resisted the lightning. The divine lightning balls came then. The explosions they caused created holes in the sphere's wall. The lightning snakes then punctured through these holes, making the holes even bigger. The lightning snakes then concentrated inside the smoke sphere. The gathered lightning energy reached a critical mass and exploded.

When the explosion was gone, they saw the red smoke was no more. Only thin red mists were seen around the red urn.

"Holy... Did I one-shot a level 82 mythical?" Jack asked in disbelief, which made Peniel rolled her eyes. Weren't the attack just now two moves? Peniel's eyes said.

"Hahaha. I guess I have become too strong for my own good," Jack laughed.

"In your dream! You just momentarily disable it," Peniel uttered.

Jack didn't truly believe it was that easy. He was just joking. He could still sense the mana of the smoke monster lingering.

Arlcard was less mindful. When he saw the red urn again, he turned into a shadow and zoomed forward.

"Arlcard, look out!" Jack exclaimed when he sensed the mana from the red mists became active.

The red mists tried to gather. No doubt to reform into the red smoke monster, but Arlcard was faster. He managed to arrive before the red urn and grabbed the urn using his hand.

As his hand touched the urn. The urn broke apart. But rather than saying it broke apart, it was more like it sublimed away. It turned into a smoke that was thicker and redder than the red smoke monster. Its color was as red as blood.

As it did, this blood smoke wrapped around Arlcard and entered the vampire through his nose and mouth. Arlcard was screaming throughout the process.

Chapter 1459: Sole Heir

"Arlcard...!!!" Jack shouted when he saw the scene.

He tried to get to Arlcard but the mists had reformed back into the red smoke monster. Its tentacles appeared again and they swung at Jack.

Jack had no choice but to retreat while using Magic Shield to block the incoming tentacles. He could still hear Arlcard's scream. He had to get to his companion!

Jack was ready to activate Lightning God Suit and forced himself into the red smoke when Arlcard's scream stopped abruptly.

The silence lasted a second before suddenly the red smoke in front of Jack burst apart.

"Huh?" Jack was flabbergasted. The red smoke was gone. There was not even a mist. Jack's didn't feel a trace of the monster's presence anymore.

He then noticed Arlcard was lying face down on the ground before the now-empty pedestal.

"Arlcard!" Jack shouted while running forward.

"Peniel! Cast Fast Heal!" Jack commanded.

Peniel did as instructed. Arlcard had lost some HP but his HP bar was still above half. It was refilled to full after receiving Peniel's heal. However, Arlcard remained lying on the ground.

Jack knelt on the floor and rolled Arlcard to face him. Arlcard's eyes were open but they looked hollow.

"Arlcard!" Jack called while snapping his fingers in front of Arlcard's face. The vampire showed no response.

"What happened to him?" Jack asked Peniel.

Peniel didn't answer, because she didn't know as well.

Jack continued calling Arlcard while shaking his body, but it was as if he was holding a doll. There was no response whatsoever.

Suddenly, Arlcard's body started to jerk before it trembled vigorously. Jack tried grabbing it to stop the shaking but it just intensified. Then, as abruptly as it started, the shivering ended.

Arlcard's eyes blinked.

"Arlcard...?" Jack asked when he saw some sort of life was back in the vampire's eyes.

Arlcard stood back up.

"Hey... Are you okay...? What happened?" Jack asked.

Arlcard didn't answer. He seemed to be disoriented for a while. He replied not long after, "I'm okay. Our business here is done."

"Huh? Done?" Jack asked. He still didn't understand what it was all about just now. They didn't even get to kill the red monster. It just suddenly went out of existence, and he didn't get any exp points from that. Not to mention, he didn't hear any notification that his companion quest was completed. He opened and checked his quest page and saw the companion quest was still there. The description also hadn't changed.

"Let's get out of here," Arlcard said and walked behind the pedestal.

When Jack looked over, he noticed a portal had appeared there.

He didn't understand what was going on, but he guessed he should be glad they could now leave this place on Arlcard's terms.

Jack looked at Arlcard again. There didn't seem to be anything wrong with the vampire. Arlcard's face was as expressionless as always, but he couldn't forget the sight when Arlcard shook fiercely on his lap.

"Are you truly okay?" Jack asked.

Arlcard turned to Jack as if he didn't understand the question. He turned back again and said, "Let's leave."

He stepped into the portal without waiting for Jack.

Jack was used to Arlcard's cold treatment but it felt different this time. "Do you think he is truly okay?" He asked Peniel.

Peniel shrugged. "He looks okay, but I do worry the urn has done something to him. I don't know what that urn is. We were not close enough to get a better look, but I don't have a recollection of an artifact that resembles that urn."

"A simple urn won't have a level 82 mythical guarding it," Jack muttered as he stepped into the portal.

He found himself in the interior of the mausoleum. The slanted door on the floor where they entered the labyrinth was gone. There was no trace of a door ever being there.

Arlcard was not there. The door to the mausoleum was opened. Sunlight came in from outside. It was daytime. He also heard some commotion from outside.

He went out and saw Arlcard floating above the mausoleum.

'Does he not worry the guards outside the fence might see him?' Jack thought with worry.

Arlcard noticed Jack down there. He understood Jack's worry after seeing his expression.

"There are no guards," Arlcard said and pointed. "They have their attention taken elsewhere."

After making sure there were truly no guards outside the fence, Jack used the Gold Dragon Wings and flew up to where Arlcard was. Arlcard glanced at the golden wings with interest.

Up there, Jack had a better look at the situation. The city army on the wall was fighting against another force from the outside. The most eye-catching thing was a massive dragon above the wall. A dragon that was as black as the night. It was raining dark breath at the army outside the wall. Jack believed that the dragon must be Sangrod's country guardian.

"Horatio's allies have started their siege," Jack said.

"Yes," Arlcard agreed. "I don't think that siege will last long with that dragon around."

Jack heard some pinging sounds then. He thought at first he had received a message from a friend, but he noticed the sound was different. He was still wondering what it was when Peniel said, "Look inside your inventory."

Jack did so and found that it was the communication device given by Horatio.

"Where were you? I've been trying to call you since two days ago!" Horatio's voice was heard once Jack clicked the accept button on the device. Jack could hear the panic in his voice.

"I'm sorry. I'm trapped in some kind of a pocket world," Jack apologized. "I see your plan has started?"

"It has been since yesterday, and we don't have much time. Marcus might have suspected something. The country's main army is closer than we think. They will arrive by tomorrow. The army outside won't survive against the main army and Marcus' blood army. We only have one day to complete our plan!"

"I'm ready now. We can begin immediately. Where are you?"

"I'm hiding inside the palace."

"Hiding?" Jack asked.

"Once the siege started yesterday. Marcus decided he wasn't going to take the chance. He decided to secretly assassinate his three remaining offspring instead of publicly executing them. I managed to flee and hide with the help of the Book of the Damned. My two siblings were not so lucky. I'm now the sole survivor of Marcus' descendant."

'And the sole heir to Sangrod's throne,' Jack said in his mind.

Chapter 1460: Saving a Friend

"Can you still depower the rune diagrams in the palace?" Jack asked.

"The room with the palace's power crystal is the room I'm hiding in," Horatio replied. "Once I shut it down, whatever guards left in this palace will come here. With no ally left in this palace, I need to stay in this room to prevent someone from repowering the crystal."

"Meaning I've got to assassinate Marcus by myself," Jack said.

"Yes," Horatio answered.

"You won't be alone," Arlcard said. "I've something I want to settle with Marcus as well."

"What's the matter? You should have never met Marcus before," Jack asked, which was answered by Arlcard's silence.

"Is that your vampire companion?" Horatio's voice sounded from the communication device.

"Yes," Jack answered.

"You will need all the help you can get," Horatio said. "Go to the palace. Once you are outside, contact me using this device. I will then shut down the rune diagrams. When all the remaining guards come for me, you should be free to go for Marcus. As I mentioned before, he should be in the palace's basement. If you found a squad of blood army barring your way, then you know you have come to the right place."

"All right, I will head to the palace immediately," Jack said.

"Wait... There is something else I need to tell you," Horatio said.

"Tell me," Jack said.

There was a pause before Jack heard Horatio's voice again. "The humans and the outworlder you came with, two native humans and one outworlder were captured. The others were killed during the battle. My father put these captives up for public execution three days ago. He announced that if you don't show yourself, he will execute one of these captives every day. The two native humans had been executed. Today will be the day the outworlder is executed."

"Haon...," Jack muttered. "But this is a safe zone. He should only lose a level."

"A siege is going outside. This capital is considered a war zone now," Peniel reminded.

"Additionally, there is an enchantment to the execution device. He will come back to life at the same place he is executed," Horatio added.

'Which means he will still be in captivity after being executed. The resurrection chapel's effect won't be of much help,' Jack thought.

"Outworlders don't die for real. Leave him. We will go to Marcus. Once Marcus is defeated, he can be freed," Arlcard said.

Jack thought for a moment. He then asked Horatio, "Where is the execution taking place?"

"At the public square in the business district...," Horatio answered. "Are you thinking about rescuing him?"

"That is pointless and a waste of time," Arlcard objected.

"If we can save Haon, he will be a great aid when we get to Marcus," Jack said. "He is a strong combatant. We originally planned to have Horatio and his two siblings with us, but they are unavailable now. If we have Haon, our success chance is better."

Arlcard snickered but otherwise said nothing.

"I wish you luck," Horatio said. "I will wait for your signal before I act. Let me know when you arrive."

"Got it," Jack said. "And, Horatio..."

"Yes?"

"Thank you for letting me know about my friend."

"... Try your best to come here as soon as possible."

Jack stored the communication device back into his inventory.

"Will you help me to go save my friend?" Jack asked Arlcard.

"... I am your companion, aren't I? Even if I don't go, I am bound to come to your aid if you call me when you are there."

"Thank you!" Jack clasped Arlcard's shoulder, which made the vampire give Jack a weird glance.

Arlcard knew the capital better, so he led the way. Jack was again using his ethereal disguise. The streets were mostly deserted. The capital was in the middle of a siege. The inhabitants probably didn't have the mood to conduct their usual businesses.

City patrols were also fewer than usual. Most of the soldiers were at the wall dealing with the siege. Jack hoped this meant the guards at the execution place would also be minimal.

Arlcard took Jack to the roof of a high building that overlooked the public square. From there, they saw the execution platform that had been set up at the center of the square.

The execution device was a guillotine. A squad of twenty vampire soldiers surrounded the platform. Leavemealone was at the platform. He was bounded by both the runic rope and also the guillotine machine. Standing beside Leavemealone was someone in a black mask and black robe that covered the entire body, the classic attire of an executioner.

Next to the platform, a vampire in a dazzling uniform was sitting leisurely on an ornate chair. Beside him was a small table with a goblet. He was sipping from this goblet as he looked around lazily.

Jack's eyes couldn't help but stay on the vampire. This was because aside from his dazzling uniform, this vampire's skin also sparkled. It was as if he was using a glittering make-up or something like that.

"F*ck me, a sparkling vampire. Now, I have seen everything," Jack muttered.

Jack surmised that the sparkling vampire was the supervisor. That supervisor looked bored.

They were all too far away for Jack to use Inspect. He couldn't tell how strong those soldiers and the executioner were.

Jack also noticed above the platform were two people hanging by the neck. He recognized one of them as Dave, the minister who accompanied him to the palace to meet Marcus. The other was a human soldier, one of Dave's two bodyguards. Both of them were no longer alive.

Jack gritted his teeth. Damn that Marcus. He swore he would make that vampire emperor pay.

"Okay. We have to move fast. Firstly..."

"Agreed!" Arlcard said and then flew forward.

"F*ck...!" Jack cursed. Arlcard had rushed to the execution platform when he was just about to lay out the plan.

"He was even more rash than usual," Peniel remarked.

"Yeah. Like he is in a hurry or something," Jack said. His gold dragon wings spread as he flew at high speed chasing Arlcard.

The two were quickly spotted.

The soldiers arranged themselves in a formation facing the two. The mages among the soldiers started casting spells. The sparkling vampire stood from his chair. He was laughing with glee, "Hahaha. Finally, someone came. I've been bored almost to death."

Arlcard stopped above them. He then uttered an inhuman roar. Something that sounded not of this world. Red smoke poured out of him. This red smoke flooded over all the ones below except for Leavemealone.

Jack couldn't see what was inside the smoke. He could hear screams, though.

When he was still wondering what was going on. The red smoke receded and went back into Arlcard. Everyone that was covered by the smoke lay dead on the ground.