

## World 351

### Chapter 351: Strategy Planning

"What kind of bullshit is this?" Samuel exclaimed. "You think just by occupying a position will yield us victory? Did you not realize that we are currently in a desert? Anywhere is just the same here!"

The duke waved for him to be quiet, he then said to John, "can you explain the reason?"

"Considering the orcs are already situated at our SouthWestern side, if we place ourselves here, they would move toward us and come to us facing NorthEast. We just needed to shift our position a bit to make sure they were facing East instead. Added with their tendency to have an honorable battle, I reckon if we face one side, they will align themselves to face us in a straight line. So it is imperative that we move out before them and assume our formation at this position before the sun is up. Afterward, we just wait for them to come, do not engage them before they are close."

"What's so special about this position?" Commander Quintus asked.

"The wind and the sun," John answered. The others were still confused by it but the commander seemed to grasp something from it. "Trust me, just arrange your men there and you will see the benefit."

"All right, I will do so," the commander replied.

Samuel was surprised by the commander's approval. He quickly protested, "commander! Are you sure? It's our lives that are on the line here. How can you risk it just based on this ambiguous outworlder's suggestion?"

"The commander has the final say in terms of our placement, you will do as is instructed!" The duke reprimanded.

"Yes, Your Grace," Samuel lowered his head from the admonition.

John was not affected by the protest, he continued, "now this position might get us an initial benefit, but it will not provide us with a decisive victory. To do that, we need to strike the enemy's essential part."

"Which is?"

"Their supplies," John answered. "The desert is a harsh place. Impossible to acquire resources for a large army, if we take down their supplies, they will have no choice but to retreat."

The commander shook his head. "That's easier said than done. The resources will always be placed at the back. Before we can reach there, we would have been annihilated."

"That's why we will send small shock troops to circle around their back for a sneak attack."

"Are you dumb or something? This is a desert, the enemy will see you coming from a mile back!" Samuel exclaimed.

Still unfazed by the insult, John said, "that's why I asked the army to place their position here. Apart from the elements which I mentioned earlier, there is another reason."

"Which is?"

"These sand dunes," John pointed to a series of wavy landscapes on the map not far from where he had requested for the army to position the troops. "A small contingent of troops can hide behind these sand dunes as they make their way to the opponent's rear. Other places will be too flat, but this place here provides enough coverage for a sneak attack."

Commander Quintus reviewed the map while mumbling to himself, he seemed to be deep in thoughts.

John did not let him think for long though, he continued, "however, in order to assure the success of this sneak attacks, we will need to do one other thing."

"Which is?"

"Lure the tiger off its mountain lair."

The others simultaneously gave confused expressions.

Noticing their faces, Jack quickly explained, "I'm sorry, this guy likes to pretend to be a poet. It is just an idiom from our world. It means luring the dangerous opponents away from their positions."

"Exactly!" John exclaimed. "The shock troops will not be able to destroy the supply safely if the high-level leaders are still on stand-by. They will provide supports once the shock troops reveal themselves."

"Which is why I said this sneak attack is stupid," Samuel said.

"Which is why I need you to shut your mouth!" John finally did not ignore the insults any longer.

Samuel was stunned by the sudden outburst. Did all outworlders possess such bravado? Did they not realize how weak they are? He could send this low-level outworlder to death with one slap!

John returned to address the others, "now, in order to ensure the success of our sneak attack, we would need to trouble the ones around this table here."

"We?" Commander Quintus asked. "What do you want us to do?"

"Reverse that custom where the powerful leaders fight later. I will need you to call out their strongest fighters to engage you all, so that the rear line is left unguarded. Try calling for a duel, since they value honor so much, I doubt they will reject such a challenge."

"This..." Commander Quintus was hesitant. "If we all go out to fight, the army would have no one in command. If something happened, the troops will have difficulty responding."

"That's easy," John said. "Just transfer the command to me."

"You... Preposterous! This is going out of line!" Samuel declared.

"I agree, you are getting out of hand," Lucia said.

"Halt," commander Quintus said.

"Commander, you are not thinking..."

"Although there are still many parts that need to be discussed in detail, I think we can try this strategy," Commander Quintus said.

"But, commander..."

"Do you have a better idea against this enemy that outnumbers us?" The commander cut Samuel's protest.

"I... What about if we focus our strength to defeat the warlord?" Samuel suggested. "Killing the chief of an army will usually cause the enemy's morale to drop and thus ensure us a victory! We can trick him into a duel and then we find a chance to deal a killing blow together."

"Amazing, I never thought you can think of such a despicable plan," John said. "But stupid though."

"You! Don't you slander me just because I oppose your plan! Mine had a better chance to succeed."

"Succeed my ass! Killing the chief might ensure victory if the enemy's soldiers only follow this warlord due to profits or fear. But from what Storm Wind described to me just now, this warlord is an influential leader with many loyal supporters. I bet most of his soldiers are loyal to him. If you kill him in front of them, and even in such a dishonorable manner to speak of, you will not get a demoralized enemy army. You will instead get an enraged army that is bound on revenge. At that time, even if we destroyed their supplies, they will still doggedly come at us until either one of us perishes."

Samuel wanted to retort, but he realized the truth in John's words. He lowered his head reluctantly.

"All right, if no one has any better idea, we will follow John's plan. However, for the duel part, Captain Salem and Lieutenant Bailey will not be joining. Captain Salem will take over the command of the army on behalf of me, with John as the advisor. Lieutenant Bailey of course will stay as the Prince's protector."

John shrugged. "No problem, but I will need the full control of the shock troops."

"You want to join the ambushing team?" Commander Quintus asked.

"Hell, no. I will leave that dangerous jobs to the less important persons. I will need 480 soldiers for the shock troops, which will be divided into 24 small teams with 20 soldiers each. I want them to be assigned to each of the 24 outworlders apart from me as their leaders. This way I will be able to command them directly using our special communication means."

'The heck, so I am considered as one of the less important persons?' Jack thought with annoyance.

"Why do you need to command them directly?"

"Things might change during the battle, and they will have little time to destroy as much of the enemy's supplies before reinforcement arrived. I'm sure once the enemy found out about the shock troops, a large portion of the front-line army will be pulled back. These 24 teams will operate separately to target as many supplies as possible in their limited time. They will need fast information to know where to strike for the most efficient ambush."

"All right, we will do as you say," commander Quintus said.

"Commander, if we sent out 480 soldiers, we will only have 2520 soldiers to defend against over 6000 enemy troops. I don't think that will be wise," Nicholas said.

"Not 2520. We will defend with only 2000 soldiers," John replied.

"What?"

"I will need around 500 soldiers for another thing."

"That is insane. We will be fighting an enemy three times our numbers then."

"Don't worry. If you put the army in the position I advised, we will have no problem fighting such a number. At least for a few hours of time."

"This..."

"We have agreed to use his plan, might as well follow it to the letter," commander Quintus said.

"I have a request!" Prince Alonzo suddenly spoke out.

### **Chapter 352: Preparation For War**

"What is it, My Prince?" Duke Alfredo asked.

"I want to join the shock troops team," the prince answered.

"Out of the question!" The duke rejected immediately. "Such operation is too dangerous. Your safety will be at stake."

"Didn't you say that this expedition is for me to learn? This will be the perfect chance for me to learn!"

"No!" The duke was adamant.

"Sorry, prince, I can't agree as well," John said. "if something wrong were to happen, I can't afford to be distracted to keep you safe. I need to prioritize the success of this mission, so I can only send disposable people on this mission."

#@#\*, Jack wanted to curse out.

"You need to stay with the main troops," commander Quintus added. "The orcs might know you are here if it was true their information came from the other princes. You might even be the primary target of the orcs, so you must stay safe. I even need to add more bodyguard details to be with you at all times."

"Bailey alone is enough," prince Alonzo said.

"Unwanted things might happen, I will assign more people for your protection."

Suddenly a voice came from the side, "allow me! It will be my honor to protect the prince."

Jack turned to the voice and found that he recognized this soldier. It was Ronnie, who had come to him with the odd request in Thesewal.

This guy was still trying to get close to the prince? What was his angle? Jack wondered. Jack had detected that he was lying when he made the request, but he was not sure which part the lie indicated. Probably he lied about his desire for the prince's safety, perhaps he was just trying to befriend the prince to promote his career.

"I can vouch for him, he had been following me for some while," Samuel said. "His family is also a strong supporter of the prince."

Commander Quintus looked at Ronnie, he was the aide from Samuel's side. "All right, Bailey will pick the remaining bodyguards. When the Duke and I are absent, these bodyguards should never leave the prince's side."

"Yes, sir!" Lieutenant Bailey affirmed.

Commander Quintus turned to John, "let us talk more in detail about your plan."

Jack was bored as they were discussing the details on the preparation, timing, and positioning of the troops. He just stood there helplessly. He wished he could practice his spell formation here, rather than wasting time in boredom like this. But the ones in front of him were bigshot NPCs, so he did what he had asked from John, he behaved himself.

He ended up chatting with Peniel about trivial matters. None of the military talks were entering his ears. He only took notice on the few occasions where John and Samuel butted heads. Afterward, he zoned out again. After a torturously long time, the 3D projection was shut down and everybody finally seemed to be leaving.

Jack happily bid everyone farewell as he walked out with John. He said to him, "you seemed to be enjoying the discussion just now."

"I did," John replied. "And you seemed to be awfully not in sync throughout the discussion."

"Is it that obvious?"

"It is, the duke even felt bad about it and was about to dismiss you."

"Then why didn't he?"

"I told him not to. You looked to be so in peace in your reverie, so I think you would want to be left alone."

"You are the one to be left alone, you bugger! You know how bored I am inside there?"

John chuckled at his response. "Don't worry, will be plenty of action tomorrow morning."

Not considering the guy's irritating attitude, Jack was again impressed by his ability to provide a plan that could move even those bigshot NPCs. He said, "that was very impressive of you. You just took a look at the 3D map one time and you knew already exactly where the troops are to be placed."

"It's good that you are impressed with me, but I have known where to place the troops before I entered the tent."

"Huh? How do you know without looking at the map?"

"It's always better to look at the real thing. What do you think I have been doing for the few hours since we started camping?"

Jack remembered now that John had not been around the camp. He had strolled off with two soldiers borrowed from captain Salem. "You have been surveying the terrain?" He asked.

"You think?"

"There is no need to be sarcastic," Jack said.

"How do you think I know where the wind blows at that spot otherwise?" John then said in a serious tone, "we will need to get everybody up to speed since we will be departing very early tomorrow before the sun was up. We will have to organize everything today before we rest. The commander gave me the right to choose any soldiers for the 480 shock troops. So I will go and sort out the soldiers, it would need some proportion of tank, melee, ranged, and healer in each team. You go and informed the others while I do that."

When they arrived at where the players camped, Jack called for everyone to assemble as John went to assemble the soldiers. Jack told them about the plan to raid the supply at the enemy's rear line, and that each of them will head a team. They were rather anxious to be put in charge of a team, but Jack assured them all they need to do was pay attention to party messages and gave direction to the soldiers based on John's instruction.

They were still nervous when John came with the assortment of soldiers, as they would be heading to the enemy's back, far away from the rest of the allies. With their low-level state, they could easily get killed.

John picked up from there and said to them, "there is no need to be worried. The soldiers will keep you safe. You will be at the center of the team. When there is fighting, the soldiers will be the ones that do the fighting. You just need to make sure you give them the direction I send to you in the chat message. Trust in me, I will pick a route that prioritizes your safety. You can take Storm Wind here as an example, he will also be heading one team. If he didn't feel that it is safe, he wouldn't have done it."

Jack looked at him, he wanted to kick this guy. Who said before that he will be prioritizing the success of the mission and will only send disposable people? He was practically lying to them blatantly and using him as a guarantor some more.

Jack did not expose John's lie as he knew the importance of this mission. However, he was also not that heartless to give them a complete lie, so he added, "still, things might go wrong no matter how well we planned, so everyone should make sure that you wear the Amulet of Rebirth at all times during the mission."

"Unnecessary, but you can wear it for an extra sense of security," John proclaimed.

The urge to kick the guy returned.

John then assigned each of them to a collection of twenty soldiers he had sorted out. Each team roughly consisted of a composition of five heavy armor melee soldiers with shields, five medium armored melee soldiers, two mage soldiers, five archer soldiers, and three healer soldiers. All of them were around level 35 to 40, and each team had a squad leader which was elite grade with a level of at least 45.

This batch of soldiers was above average in the army. Since the shock troops would be cut off from the rest of the army, they would need to be strong enough to handle themselves, the commander had basically given him the cream of the crop.

All the melee soldiers were equipped with blunt weapons, like hammer or mace. Such a weapon gave more effective damage to the supplies. While the archers were equipped with flaming arrows. The mage and healer units were only for supports, that was why there were only a small number of them in the team.

Each of these soldiers was also given better mounts. This was one of the details that John discussed in the war meeting. The shock troops needed high HP mounts as they would need high mobility. They would continue to use their mounts even when enemies attacked. Only until they reached the supplies that they unsummoned their mounts, hence the mounts would need to be able to weather some damages.

For the player themselves, they kept using the mounts that were loaned to them. Since they would be at the heart of the team, it would be unlikely for their mounts to receive attacks.

John also assigned Alphabets to each team and asked everyone to memorize them. He was not going to call out names as it would take too long. At first, he was thinking about dividing the map into grids and asked the players to memorize the grid numbers, but then he looked at The Man's team. Remembering the past fiasco, he told them he would be giving them directions following clock bearing as was used in their world's military.

After making sure that everyone was familiar with their own teams, and that everyone knew what they needed to do tomorrow, John dismissed everyone and told them to rest early. They would need to be in their best condition very early tomorrow.

### **Chapter 353: Dawn Of War**

Early in the dawn before the sun rose, the human army marched and claimed the position that had been determined the day before. The scouts that were sent by the orcs to monitor the human army movement immediately reported this development to their main camp.

Warlord Abasi who received this report snickered. "The human was much more agitated to make their move this early," he said.

He was also in the process of organizing his troops and was just about to have them set out. His aide, Badu Thickskull, a level 55 special elite, asked, "are they probably trying some kind of trick? The humans are known for their deceptions and schemes."

"Hmph, whatever tricks there is, we will crush them under the strength of the orcs!" The Warlord exclaimed. His words drew a chorus of recognition from the nearby soldiers.

He went to a large wooden podium and addressed the ready troops. "Orcs! Today we will spill the human's blood and claim honor to our tribe! Every one of you has followed me through numerous battles and I know for a fact that each of you is a courageous warrior! Any human you fells will bring

honor to your family and ancestor. The one that managed to capture or kill the human prince, will receive a bountiful reward. Now, let us go and bring glory to our nation!"

The sea of orcs made a concurrent roar upon the speech. The resulting roar was so loud that it could be heard from miles away.

Jack and the others turned westward as they heard the roar.

"That's the sound of our enemy?" Bowler asked. "Sounds like a lot of them."

"Stop being a chicken and go to your position," John told him.

Jack looked at the landscape, everything was still dark, and it was cold, completely in contrast to the heat when the sun was in the sky. He gazed to the faraway land where their enemy was supposed to be coming from, and said to John, "by the way, how will you give us instruction? I mean, we will be very far away at the enemy's back. How will you be able to see us so far in the distance?"

Even with his Dragon's Eye skill, he was still struggling to see too far away.

John answered him by taking out something from his inventory bag.

"That's..." Jack was astonished to look at the thing in John's hand. It was binoculars. "Where do you get that?" He asked.

"What do you mean where? I bring it from the Tutorial world. Binoculars were a handy tool, I even wonder why none of you bother to bring one."

"It can still work?" Jack remembered his handphone had turned into junk when the world changed.

"Of course it can still work. It was just a couple of lenses that let us see distant objects, why won't it work?"

Jack took the tool from his hand and tried to see through it. He could indeed see distant things.

John snatched it back from his hand. He said, "now go, while the dark still conceals your movement. You need to hide with the others before this pitched battle started. Don't let those orc scouts see you, or everything will be ruined."

"Pitched battle?"

John looked at him as if he had asked a dumb question, and answered, "it's the definition for a battle where the two opposite sides agree on the time and place of combat. Though in our case, only the time. Now, go!"

Jack knew the importance of this operation, so he did not postpone it any longer. He walked by foot far to the side from where the army had taken position, behind one of the large sand dunes amongst the many others around this place. The twenty soldiers under him were already hiding there. The other team was hiding at the other sand dunes.

The plan was for them to move separately as they made their way to the enemy rear line, from one sand dunes to the others for cover. They would start moving once the armies clashed, when the enemy's attention was focused on the troops they were facing.

Jack laid down on the sand as he waited. Before long, his God-eye monocle showed a cloud of red appearing at the edge of his radar. The Orcs were already considered hostile by his radar since the war declaration was made. He must say, seeing the tightly packed dots forming a solid red cloud was rather intimidating.

He crawled to the edge of the sand dune and lifted his head to take a peek. He could see the large cloud of dust even under the dark sky. To be able to create a cloud that large would be a number that he had not yet witnessed before, except maybe in those epic war movies from his real world. And he could be sure this time, that this dust cloud was not made using tricks.

He could hear the heavy sounds of hoove steps next. The sound kept on getting louder as the shadows that created it were getting closer. The rumble was as if the sound of thunder, which was rare in this desert region, as it signified that rain was coming.

The rumble soon came to a stop as the shadows stopped advancing. The dawn was giving way to the morning as a line of red was seen on the horizon behind the human army. The little light dispelled the darkness and allowed the shadows not far away to reveal their true forms.

Rows and rows of orcs, each as ugly as the one after it, were seen in an unending line. There were so many of them that it was difficult to see where their formation ended. Even from the first sight under his hiding place, Jack could see that they far outnumbered the army on their side. Could John really defend their assault with just 2000 soldiers?

It took some time for that many orcs to come to a stop into a neat formation. Not long after that, a portion of the orc army came forward. He could see the one in the lead. It was a larger orc than the rest, which was already larger than a standard human. Jack estimated this one might stand three meters tall, or more. He was riding a large lizard creature, unlike the rest who were riding large jackals.

He must be that Warlord Abasi Raretooth that everybody had mentioned.

"Humans!!" This lead orc bellowed. "The time of reprieve was at its end. Whether you are ready or not, prepare for battle! Today let us honor our ancestors and decide who amongst us that will bring glory back to our countries!"

The orc army started roaring, accompanied by the sounds of drums. 'Did they really bring drums to war?' Jack wondered after hearing the sounds.

The warlord lifted his hand and made a sign. The front column of his army came forward in an orderly fashion. They had unsummoned their mounts. They walked steadily at a uniform pace towards the human army that was holding their formation.

John who saw the enemy army coming, looked behind him at the sun that was getting higher, and felt the air that was blowing from behind. He then said to everyone, "hold the line, let them come."

The ones in hiding were getting agitated. John sent them a message in party chat to wait. They waited as they peeked from their hiding place and saw columns and columns of orc soldiers marching in the distance. The gap between the marching orcs with the human army was getting shorter with each of the orcs' steps. They could see the orcs huffed and grimaced, the orcs queerly displayed excited expressions in the coming confrontation.

When the two armies were less than a hundred meters from each other, some of the orcs finally could not contain their eagerness anymore and started to sprint out of formation. Many and many started to follow until the entire marching army turned into a speeding army, they brandished their weapons and waved them around as they bellowed excitedly. Their combined running steps churned out a large cloud of dust into the air.

The players in hiding could not help but feel their hair stood on end. They were going to fight against this race of lunatic beasts?

The human soldiers, however, did not react to such a show of battle lust. They had perfectly accustomed to their opponents' traits. Their armies had been clashing in past occasions after all.

When the advancing orcs hit the fifty-meter mark distance, John finally gave the sign. Commander Quintus followed suit and gave the command to his army. The human army rushed forward in a formation. Their running march was no less powerful than the orcs. Each step was a thunderous rumble that caused the sand in the ground to get thrown into the air.

Due to the wind that was blowing from the back, the dust that was blown upward followed the human army's march. Creating the effect that a sandstorm was following their march.

#### **Chapter 354: Provocations For Duels**

Both the human and orc army divided their armies into four sections. Center vanguard, left-wing, right-wing, and reserve. The one that had moved out to clash was the center vanguard from both armies.

When the two vanguard armies clashed. The sand cloud that followed the human army also slam into the orc army, while the sand cloud caused by the orc army was blown further back as the wind was blowing westward in this area. Since the orcs were facing against the wind, the sand hit their eyes and caused them a short term of blindness.

The human army capitalized on their enemy's sudden loss of visibility and get the first strike. Even after the orcs had removed the sand and managed to open their eyes, another wave of sand cloud hit them again as the wind continued to blow. John had instructed the rear part of the advancing vanguard to keep moving to churn the sand up into the air.

On sparse occasions when the orcs' eyes were spared from the sand harassment, they were blinded by the morning sun. Even the orc archers and mages at the back were having difficulty as the sunlight was shining right into their eyes.

Even though the orc vanguard numbered twice more than the human's, they were forced into a passive state. Not giving quarter, John advised the commander who then commanded the right-wing to advance and flank the orc troops.

The already passive orc vanguard was given more pressure with the addition of the human army's right-wing troops. Seeing his vanguard army at such a disadvantage, warlord Abashi frowned. His aide, an Overseer-ranked named Badu Thickskull, said, "the human had picked an advantageous position."

Warlord Abashi harrumphed, "I never expected for them to be able to work out the most suitable location under such a short time in this foreign terrain, and used the elements against us. I have truly

underestimated them. Send both the wings out! Tell them to do their best to avoid facing directly to the East."

John used his binoculars to keep tabs on the Orc's remaining army.

"What's that?" Commander Quintus asked.

"Magic eyes," John replied wantonly. "They are finally getting serious. Have the left-wing intercept theirs. You, the duke, and the others should get ready soon."

Due to the battle took place close to where the human army's original position was, it took the orc left and right-wing some time to get to the battlefield. Commander Quintus commanded their left-wing to intercept the enemy's right-wing. While the human right-wing which was harassing the orc's vanguard broke off and engage the orc's left-wing.

Both the human left and right-wing were already drilled to always position themselves so as the enemy would always face East. With how crude the orcs were fighting, they had trouble escaping from getting blinded by the sand and the sun, as the human army had already occupied the advantageous position. Unless the orcs decided to disengage completely and maneuver in a large circling route, it would be difficult for them to resolve their current disadvantages.

Still, the orcs outnumbered the humans by more than twice, and their ferociousness was not affected even with the disadvantages. Hence, the warlord had his army continued to push forward.

When John saw that the orcs' attention was fully on the battlefield, he at last, gave Jack and the others the command to begin.

Jack and the others started to creep forward stealthily. They moved slowly and separately in small teams and without mount, to avoid creating dust clouds that would betray their positions. They had been using dust clouds in their tactics, it would be ironic if the same dust cloud became the thing that ruined their plan.

They moved from one sand dune to another, making sure that they were always undercover. Their progress was excruciatingly slow, while the battle between the armies continued to rage on.

In conjunction with the advancing of the shock troop teams, the duke and the others began to take action. Captain Salem was left with John to command the army as they made their way forward. They rode on their mounts as they cut straight through the battlefield.

Some orc soldiers thought they had found some easy targets who had broken off from the human soldiers and wandered too deep into their line. They immediately went over to besiege these stragglers.

While they were on their way, happily thinking about the glory they could claim from these easy targets. One of these easy targets started to form a spell formation. A magic caster? This revelation made them unconsciously slow down their advance. But after seeing their own numbers, their confidence was reaffirmed and they put on pace again. Some of their own mages also started to prepare their spells.

To their consternation, the runes in the spell formation continued to add until there were five of them. At this time, they finally realized this group was not stragglers that had accidentally blundered into their ranks. However, it was already too late.

The spell took effect as hundreds of magic spears shot out and impaled the surrounding orcs. A large portion of the ones hit by the spell was killed upon impact. The rests who were lucky enough or swift enough to perform defensive maneuvers were thrown far away and fell into a critical state.

The mana fluctuation caused by the spell did not escape the warlord's and his aide's attention.

A high-level individual was in the fight? So early at this stage? The warlord immediately called over his retinue as he went over the direction where the spell had been cast. He soon saw a group of humans on mounts coming over. He immediately recognized the lead human as they got nearer. Although he had never met the human personally, he had read some reports about this individual.

"Duke Alfredo!" Warlord Abasi called out. "Are your confidence in your army so low that you had decided to interfere already?"

"Warlord Abasi," the duke called out in reply. "I am in a hurry, and honestly speaking, your obstruction had pissed me off. I don't have the time to play around with you and I will appreciate it if you pull your force away at once, or else, I will not be courteous."

The warlord laughed heartily, "courteous? Do you think there is still a need for that between us at this stage? Do not liken me to a human, duke! I am not your kind who likes to say one thing but mean another. Do you want to fight? Then let's fight!"

"Good! Then that makes this simple," the duke said. "This place is too close with the battlefield. Our fight will cause many unnecessary casualties to the others. Let's head over there." The duke pointed at a faraway empty part of the desert and steered his mount in that direction without waiting for the warlord's approval.

Warlord Abasi harrumphed as he watched the duke. Overseer Badu warned him, "this must be the human's trick, my lord. He must know that his army will not survive ours for long, so he was hoping to gamble in this personal fight to secure victory."

"Even if it is so, do you think it is honorable for me to decline this challenge?" The warlord asked.

The Overseer lowered down his head as he realized his blunder.

"He was just one level higher than me. I have heard much about this human. It is time for me to verify the reports. Do not worry, I will bring a glorious victory back, along with his head!"

With these words, he summoned his giant lizard mount and rode off after the duke.

When they were off, Overseer Badu noticed with a confused feeling the rest of the humans that had come with the duke. They were still standing there after their duke had gone. One of these humans suddenly called out, "I am Commander Quintus of the human army from Themisphere kingdom. Is there any orc of Verremor nation that is brave enough to accept my challenge?!"

The orc's leaders were furious as they heard the call. There was another challenger? The tone that the human used had even carry a tint of arrogance as if he was looking down at the orcs. Even Overseer Badu felt discontent with the challenge. The orc leaders behind him were getting restless as they all volunteered themselves to accept the challenge, but Badu stopped them. They also had the report on this Commander Quintus and his level and grade were higher than all that present here.

Badu was the strongest amongst the orcs after the warlord, thus he would be the one that should accept this challenge, but he knew he would have little chance of victory. The commander was a Special Elite level 60. He was a whole five levels higher than him. Unlike his warlord, he was more of a prudent kind of orc, which was rare amongst his kind.

Seeing the hesitation in the orcs' countenances, Commander Quintus chuckled and said, "I don't mind taking on two or more challengers if you orcs have no confidence."

### **Chapter 355: Sneak Attacks Of The Shock Troops**

Hearing the provocation, the clamor that had died down from the orc leaders was reignited again. However, Badu ordered them to calm down, and then to the commander, he responded, "since Commander Quintus had said it, then it will be impolite for us to turn you down. It will not be dishonorable since you are evidently stronger than any of us. I will face you with another two of my followers." Badu picked out two amongst the leaders who were level 51 and 53.

"I have no problem with it," Commander Quintus replied. The purpose was to pull the strong combatants away. The more that left the reserve army who guarded the supplies, the better.

After Commander Quintus, the others also threw out their challenges for a duel. Laurent also took on three opponents at the same time, considering his level 70. If he was the same grade as the Duke, it would have made him the strongest amongst the human officers despite him being a healer type. However, an NPC class was not as constricted as players, so even as a healer type, he also had several offensive spells in his arsenal.

They all went to the far part of the Southern side to have their duels, which was also part of the plan. Jack and the others were sneaking at the Northern side, so they were pulled further away from Jack's teams.

Even though it took them quite some time, Jack and the others finally made it to the last sand dune that was closest to the orc army's rearguard. Once they came out of this sand dune, they would be exposed. They could see the rows of supplies in the distance. They were heaps of wood crates on large carts pulled by several large jackals. There were still a significant amount of soldiers guarding them, although none of them was too high a level to deal with. They were just waiting for John's command to move out now.

As they wait, Jack saw some light shows and explosive thunder-like sounds in the far distance. That was where the high-level officers from the human side had clashed with the orc ones. Even from such a distance, they could still see the impacts of their clash, he was feeling pity and gladness at the same time. Pity because their clashes would be amazing spectacles worthy to be witnessed. While glad because if the fights were close, it would be very easy for them to become collateral damage from an accidental fire.

While he was admiring the fireworks show in the distance, he finally received John's signal, "Team J and B, mount up and target the closest supply cart. Team A and C, follow behind, but proceed ahead until I say otherwise."

Jack was in team J, he immediately commanded his team to summon their mounts and came out of hiding. With team B who was Bowler following by his side. John was the one that assigned the Alphabet naming for each team, he probably picked a corresponding alphabet with the players' names to make it easier for him to remember which one in which team.

Team A was The Man's, while team C was led by Viral Cora. The Man was given the alphabet A simply because the guy insisted on it. In fact, he threatened John with his axe on John's neck if he was given any other alphabets other than A.

Jack and Bowler's teams were almost halfway before the orcs realized that some enemies had somehow appeared from behind them. The orcs that saw them clamored for the other's attention. The leader who was left in charge of the reserve team immediately organized a part of the troops to go and engage these enemies.

As the orc troops drew closer, John gave new commands, "Team J and B, go to 11... now 10... 10 again..."

All of the players and the soldiers that joined the shock troop teams had undergone drills on clock-bearing directions yesterday evening. This was to make it easier for John to give detailed instruction on the field. John fed them commands via the party chat message as he monitored their and enemies' movements via his binoculars.

"Team A and C continue straight at 12, team E and F come out and chase after team A and C... Team J goes 10 again, team B now goes 2..."

As Jack continued to follow John's instruction, the orc troops were drawing closer. They were also on mounts as they chased after Jack's team. Looking at the situation he could not help but curse, "f\*\*k! You are using me as bait!"

"Someone has to, friend. Now shut up and just follow my directions," John replied casually.

As the orc troops drew closer, their ranged units could start to shoot their spells and arrows. Jack's team just focus on moving so very few of the attacks reached them. The ones that arrive, were blocked by the two mage soldiers who cast the Barrier spell and put their bodies in harm's way. The spell covered their mounts as well so they were protected. The ones that were not blocked were healed by the healers. The healers prioritize healing the mounts first as their HP was less compared to the soldiers.

As Jack and Bowler pulled away a portion of the reserve troops. The Man's team who had gone further was also chased by another troop which the orc sent out. By this time, John had sent out most of the shock troop teams. Each of the teams went following John's detailed instructions. For a bystander, they would see these separate groups of people going around and around haphazardly.

But as the orc reserve leaders continued to send out troops to engage teams that continued to appear one after another, a portion of the supply carts was left unguarded. At this time, team G led by Giant Steve and team T by Trinity Dawn, crashed onto these unprotected supply carts. The melee soldiers with the blunt weapons immediately went to work, while the archers equipped their flaming arrows and fired at the other carts next to them. The Mage soldiers used Magic Bind on the few guards left while their comrades went to work.

When the orcs found out about the humans destroying their supply carts, they immediately rushed over. But the carts were destroyed already before they arrived. Supply carts did not possess too much HP, while ten melee soldiers with hammers and maces would be able to make short work on them in less than twenty seconds. They quickly ran away before the orcs arrived.

And when they failed to destroy the supply carts before the enemy's reinforcement arrived, the archers shot their flaming arrows to burn the already damaged supply carts, giving them continuous DPS. The orcs would need time to douse the fire, which for the already low HP carts, it was not enough time.

John continued to alternate between the teams for distractions and strike teams. Striking the ones that had holes while the rest created disturbances. Of course, with the supply carts dwindling, this tactic was getting harder as the orcs had fewer carts that needed protecting so they could allocate more manpower.

At this time, John had no choice but to pick the weakest one and punched through using multiple teams at one target. Casualties of course happened when such a crude method was used, but as long as the soldiers ignored the attacks and went directly to the supply carts, they still managed to achieve their objective.

Before long, the commotion reached the main army fighting in the front line and also the orc leaders who were currently in a duel with the duke and the rest.

"You despicable human! You trick us!" Warlord Abashi roared in rage as he saw his army's rear supply line was attacked. He was also floating in the air opposite Duke Alfredo. On his back was a pair of large metallic wings that exuded a bluish aura.

Warlord Abashi was a melee type, he didn't possess a spell that allowed him to fly like the duke. Thus he needed an external tool such as the metallic wing to allow him to contend with the duke in the air. Otherwise, a melee type like him could only look up from the ground as a magic-user blasted him mercilessly from the sky.

His metallic wing beat and created blue sparks that propelled him. He was intending to go back to his army to deal with the cowards that had backstabbed his army's rearguard. However, as soon as he moved, a large rectangular light wall materialized in front of him. The duke had cast Magic Wall to hinder him.

Warlord Abashi swung the gigantic two-handed axe in his hand. Sparks of fire flared as his axe moved, as if the axe had friction with the air itself, creating a trail of blaze along its curved path. It crashed heavily into the Magic Wall and caused an explosion that shattered the Magic Wall, but Magic Wall also discharged a repulsing force that caused him to slid back a few meters. Taking advantage of this, the duke flew and put himself between the warlord and his army.

"You are not going anywhere," Duke Alfredo declared.

### **Chapter 356: The Shout Of Betrayal**

The orc main army had been fighting for almost two hours, and yet despite outnumbering the human army, they were suffering more loss than their opponent. The dust wind and the sun had truly hindered

their fighting prowess. Added to that, when they received the call for help from the reserve unit who guarded the supply carts, they became more agitated.

"What should we do? The reserve had sent a messenger requesting for reinforcements," a short orc who used claw weapon on both his hands said to the chieftain of the vanguard troops, Hubesi Loudroar, who had been the orc who gave the war declaration to Captain Salem the day before.

"A bunch of dolts! How could they let themselves get sneak attacked? The warlord only left them not long ago and they have messed things up!" Hubesi bellowed in his frustration. He made a few more huffs before he calmed himself and said, "Wangombe, sent my order to the left-wing, have them disengaged and go back to aid the reserve unit."

"But, won't that decrease our offensive power? At the rate we are doing now, it isn't looking good."

"Hmph, the human was just depending on petty tricks to buy them time. The sun is getting higher now, they will soon lose the advantage it provided. As for the sand, the fighting is getting more and more chaotic, sooner or later we will force through their formation. They won't be able to force us to continue facing the wind anymore. They will lose their advantage as time passes. Now, go and carry out my order!"

"As you wish, chieftain!" Wangombe went away and deliver the command to the left-wing troop.

They followed the order and disengaged. They lost more troops from the forced disengagement and were harassed as they retreated. The central vanguard tried to cover for them as best as possible.

When John saw the retreat of the left-wing, he gave a signal to Captain Salem, "it's time. Bring up the reserve!"

As the orc's left-wing retreated, the five-hundred human reserve troops came charging on top of their mounts. Same as the shock troops that went with the players, these reserve troops rode on the best mounts with the highest HP and fastest movement speed.

The human reserve troops charged at high speed in an arrow formation as they circled around the battlefield, and then punched through the orc army from its rear flank. The central vanguard and right-wing who were already in trouble, had their rear formation ravaged even more. Their rear was mostly composed of low-HP archers, mages, and healers. Being suddenly flanked had thrown their formation into chaos.

The reserve troops continued to force their way deeper into the enemy's rank as they sent attacks upon attacks from the top of their mounts to disrupt the enemy's formation. These reserve troops had been given two mount whistles. If one of them died, they would immediately summon the second one and continued their advance. The commander had completely used up their mount supply reserves for this operation. The healers were hard at work to heal the mounts to keep the casualties as low as possible.

Those that had the unfortunate fate of having their mounts killed twice could only accept their fate and used their lives to take down as many enemies as possible as their comrades continued onward leaving them behind.

This cavalry charge tactic despite resulting in many mount casualties, still proved effective to disrupt the enemy formations and caused their support on the front line to plummet. Hence the front-line soldiers managed to gain an even more huge advantage against the orc army.

The left-wing leader who had retreated halfway hesitated after seeing this new development. He was unsure whether to go back to help the main army or continued back to reinforce the reserve units. His indecision caused the left-wing movement to slow down, allowing Jack and the others to destroy more supply carts.

Running together inside the cavalry troops wreaking havoc within the enemy's formation, was Prince Alonzo and his personal guards. The Duke had asked him to stay back with Captain Salem and John at the command post, but he had adamantly refused. He demanded to join the charging reserve troops to gather experience on the field of battle.

The duke finally relented, having the prince too sheltered was also not a good thing. The prince's willingness to learn and struggle with the common soldiers was one of his qualities that the duke deemed favorable. That was also the reason why he had been training as if he was a common squire when he first met Jack.

The duke, however, demanded him to stay within the heart of the troops and not to engage any enemy. His level was still too low, after all. The Duke also made him promise to always listen to Bailey's command and to not do things out of impulse.

Everything had been going well as the cavalry troops caused havoc amongst the enemy's formation, until a loud yell sounded out, "prince Alonzo! Look out!"

Prince Alonzo and Lieutenant Bailey turned to the source of the voice and saw Ronnie who was riding at the side.

"I'm sorry, I thought I saw an arrow coming," he said with an apologetic expression.

It might have been an honest mistake, but the harm was still done regardless. When the surrounding orcs heard that the human prince was inside the troops that had perforated deep into their ranks, their focus shifted. All of them started to chase after the cavalry troops. Even the ones supporting the front line left their comrades who were still fighting and joined to capture the cavalry troops.

"Not good! We have to get out of here!" Bailey exclaimed.

The leader of the cavalry troops gave the instruction to turn around as they tried to evade getting encircled. If they got blocked and lost their mobility, they would be done for. The cavalry punched through one blockage after another, losing soldiers with each collision.

Captain Salem who saw the shift, immediately requested the three wings of the main army to push forward to apply pressure on the orc army. However, the orcs seemed to ignore them despite suffering more casualties when they reduced the soldiers that faced the main human army. Their main target was the prince, after all. The captain could only continue having the main army pushed forward in hope of breaking through and went to the prince's rescue.

"Shit is bound to happen sooner or later," John commented when he glanced from his binoculars at the chaos that followed the cavalry troops. He had no time to deal with it as he was still concentrating on

giving orders to Jack's teams. It was not an easy task to give commands to twenty-four different teams at the same time under a situation that was constantly changing.

So the cavalry troops were left to fend for themselves. As many more orcs came to their blockage, the leader of the cavalry troops made a radical decision. He gave the command for them to split. They promptly split into eight smaller groups as they weaved through the gaps among the orc army.

"Prince, this way!" Another shout again, which immediately attracted the nearby orcs.

Bailey turned and found that it was Ronnie again, "you!" Anyone could see by now that the guy was doing it on purpose. Bailey thrust out her spear at him without any warning, but Ronnie must have expected it as he steered his mount to break away from the group.

At this time an orc party on mounts suddenly came upon their side. The lead orc swung his large two-handed hammer and struck one of the human soldiers off his mount. Some of the other orcs in the party crashed into the other human soldiers and caused both to collapse to the ground.

"Do not let the prince flee!" the lead orc bellowed as he and his party chased after the prince's team.

They have broken out of the encirclement, but lots of the orc army was still chasing after them. Bailey turned and had a grim expression. The orcs had chased while having another portion of their team go in the direction between the human main army and the fleeing prince's team. If they were to turn and headed towards the main human camp, they would get blocked. Bailey had no choice but to go further away from the main camp.

She was dismayed. This morning before they departed, Jack had spared the time to find her and asked her to be on the lookout for this Ronnie guy. When she asked if he had proof or a reason for his suspicion, he could not provide one. After all, Jack himself was not sure. The lying detection of his Investigator skill was not exactly in detail. So all of it could be considered as a simple hunch.

Since Jack could not provide a good reason nor evidence, she dismissed his suspicion. She could not afford to be suspicious of his comrades. Trust was a very important thing in the army. Almost a code. If you could not trust the person fighting beside you, then you couldn't fight properly.

After running for a while, Bailey finally decided. They would get surrounded sooner or later in this condition. He said to the prince, "prince, I will stop their chase. You have to find an opportunity by yourself to get back to the main army."

"No, Bailey! I cannot allow you to sacrifice yourself!" Prince Alonzo exclaimed.

"Do not worry about me. I will flee once I stop them long enough. This is not the time to be indecisive. You have to promise me that you will prioritize your safety!"

"I... I will follow your instruction!" The prince said with determination.

"Good!"

## **Chapter 357: Pursuit Catching On**

Bailey assigned two soldiers to accompany the prince as they continued to flee, while the rest turned around and engaged the chasing army. Bailey brandished her spear and made successive thrusts. Uncountable images of spears made of wind slashed through the orc soldiers one after another, stopping them on their tracks. Bailey especially targeted their mounts which fell with just one or two hits from her spear. The other soldiers spread out and made sure that none of the orcs could chase the prince.

As Bailey was stabbing one orc after another, a loud roar suddenly erupted, making the ears of everyone in the vicinity hurt. A large orc leaped forward at Bailey, swinging his large two-handed hammer down. Bailey did not want to be careless in accepting the blow of this powerful-looking hammer. She backstepped a few times as the heavy hammer slammed into the ground, which then erupted into several large pikes that thrust outwards. If Bailey did not retreat, she would have been impaled by these earth pikes.

"I am Hubesi Loudroar! State your name before I kill you!" The orc declared.

"I am Bailey, the prince's guard, and I will not let you take one step further," Bailey exclaimed.

Jack who was still running around alternating between being a bait and attacker at the rear line, noticed the disturbance on the distant battlefield. His Dragon's Eye skill allowed him to see very far. Though not as good as John's binoculars, he could still see several groups of humans getting chased by the orcs. He saw Prince Alonzo amongst one of these groups.

At this time, the orc's left-wing that disengaged from the battlefield was almost upon them. John had asked all the teams to rush to the right side. He had mostly arranged for everyone to wreak havoc at the left and center side of the orc's supply carts. The right side which had been left alone had very few defenders at this moment. They were to deliver a concentrated blitz attack on the right side and destroyed as many of the supply carts as possible, then ran away before the left-wing army got to them.

While the others were galloping to where John commanded them to, Jack turned the other way.

"Expert, where are you going? You do know the 3 o'clock direction, don't you? Or do you suddenly suffer from a case of idiotic syndrome?" John called out.

"Sorry, I leave the rest to you all. I have to go to the prince's aid!" Jack replied, ignoring the sarcasm.

"Do what you must. Everyone, continue onward!" Now was not the time for argument. Time was short, so John just proceeded without Jack.

Jack was not doing this out of impulse as well. He knew that destroying the supply carts was the key to their victory, but losing the prince would also make the entire expedition losing its long-run goal. Not to mention, he had been given the quest to safeguard the prince by the Royal Advisor. Now was the time to fulfill this given duty.

Jack watched as Lieutenant Bailey stayed behind to stop the pursuing orcs together with a large portion of the soldiers. The prince continued to run with two guards. No, there was another one, riding at their heel not far away. He focused his sight and recognized this last one as Ronnie. He urged his team to hurry as they ride toward where the prince was heading.

Prince Alonzo continued to urge his steed to gallop. He tried to turn to the East, but there were some orcs on that side shadowing in the distance. He could only turn westward, getting further from the main army.

Bailey won't be able to hold all the chasing orcs, some still slip through. There were already four of them closing in. In this hot pursuit, the prince seemed to lose direction in this expansive desert. He didn't know which way to go. His indecision caused the pursuit party to catch up.

The two guards that followed him put themselves forward to block the orcs. The four orcs didn't rush to get the prince as they dealt with the two guards.

"Your Highness, run!" One of the guards yelled.

"But..." Prince Alonzo was hesitant.

"Prince, you have to go, now!" The other guards exclaimed.

Prince Alonzo steeled his heart to flee, but as he turned around, a shadow abruptly crashed onto him. He felt his steed suffered quick successive attacks before it fell. This rare steed of his despite having a large amount of HP, had already been continuously bombarded by range attacks while he was on the run. These last sudden attacks had finally claimed its life.

The prince looked up and saw Ronnie. "You!"

Ronnie unmounted, "I'm sorry, prince. Please don't take this personal. I'm just carrying out order."

"Order? From who?"

"Do you even need to ask?"

"You... traitor! Is Samuel in on this?"

"That dumb geezer? No, he is as thick as a dolt, stubborn bastard. Same as my family, do they think they will get a happy ending serving a losing prince? I am doing this to save them. Otherwise, once the crown prince takes the throne, it will be my family that is going to suffer. I have to do something about it."

"Save me your excuses. You are just doing this out of greed, do not pretend it is for the sake of others," Prince Alonzo spat in disgust.

"Hehe, you are right. Well, then let's get this over with," Ronnie brandished his sword and attacked the prince, who had long prepared his sword and shield.

Ronnie was a level 35 Elite. While the prince was a level 26 Special Elite, one level more compared to when he left the capital. Although his higher grade and excellent equipment helped him to cope with Ronnie for a while despite 9 levels lower, Ronnie's experience eventually gave him the upper hand. The light-green sword in his hand seemed to be not simple as well, it might have been given by the crown prince for this assassination purpose.

Prince Alonzo felt his speed growing slower, and his HP also gradually decreased even when he did not suffer any hit. He looked at his wounds which Ronnie had managed to land on several occasions. There were some green blisters on the skin around the wound.

"You... your sword is poisoned?" Prince Alonzo asked upon realization.

"Please just accept your fate, prince," Ronnie said as he thrust out.

The prince managed to dodge despite his body's heaviness, but suddenly another slash came from the other direction and hit him cleanly. Prince Alonzo stumbled back as he lost a significant amount of HP. He looked and saw Ronnie was holding a saber in his left hand.

Ronnie was wielding two weapons. He had been attacking with only one sword all this time, the sudden appearance of his saber had caught the prince off guard and scored him a critical. He was grinning with success so close. If he could bring the prince's head back for the crown prince, he would be awarded an even better reward than having the prince died at the hand of the orcs. He had been working so long to find this opportunity, he must thank the orcs for this. If not for their assault, he did not know how long still he had to wait.

He was about to resume his attacks when someone lunged at him. It was one of the guards that were holding down the orc pursuers. He was full of wounds and had very low HP already. Ronnie evaded his desperate attack.

"Prince, run!" He called out. A heavy axe slash landed on the guard's back after his shout. He fell to the ground. The two orcs that were fighting with him before had come over. One of them saw Ronnie and charged at him.

"Hey, I am on your side!" Ronnie exclaimed.

"Scheming human, do you think me stupid?" The orc said as he resumed his attacks.

"You dumb orc! Didn't you see me fighting with the prince a moment ago?" Ronnie cursed, incensed by the orc's stubbornness.

The other orc was going for the prince, but something grabbed at his leg. He looked down and saw the dying human was clinging to his leg tightly with both hands.

"Prince, go...!!!" He called out with all his strength.

Prince Alonzo could not bear to let the guard's dying effort be in vain. He turned around and ran as fast as he could. However, the poison in his blood slowed his movement. He had drunk an antidote to alleviate the poison, but this poison was not a common one. Although his HP had stopped decreasing, his body still felt weak and heavy.

He took out a second mount whistle after putting a little distance, he did not want his mount to get attacked again. Every one of the cavalry troops had been given two mount whistles. Although this spare one was not as good as his previous one, it was better than nothing. He quickly mounted up.

As he was about to ride off, he watched in despair as several orcs on mount appeared in front of him. He turned to his left and right, there were also orcs there. He had been surrounded.

## **Chapter 358: To The Prince's Rescue**

Prince Alonzo heard the death cry of the guard who had been holding the leg of the orc. He turned and saw the sad scene, his sacrifice still ended up wasted. The one remaining guard was ganged up by another three orcs that had recently arrived and he also fell soon after.

Ronnie, who saw the change in the situation quickly disengaged from the orc he was fighting and attempted to flee, but a short orc suddenly appeared in front of his path.

"Move away!" Ronnie shouted as he swung both his sword and saber at the short orc.

This short orc was wearing a claw weapon on both hands, he spun both his arms around and Ronnie's sword and saber were deflected effortlessly. Ronnie realized from this exchange that this short orc was much stronger than him, but too late, the claws made a lightning-fast motion as they repeatedly slashed at Ronnie. Ronnie's HP decreased frighteningly fast.

In his desperation, he quickly screamed out, "wait! I am on your side!"

"Stupid human is using the same stupid ploy again," the orc that previously fought with him commented.

"No, look. It was me that call out about the prince's location!" Ronnie quickly pleaded with the short orc in front of him. "Without me alerting you, you won't know about the prince's location."

"I see, so we should thank you. By the way, my name is Wangombe Thickskull," the short orc said.

Ronnie became delighted upon hearing it, "it's good to know you, honored Wangombe. Let's kill this prince. If you don't mind, I just need a part of him to..."

Without waiting for Ronnie to finish his sentence, Wangombe said, "good, now you know the name of the one who kills you. Therefore, your spirit won't be restless in the next realm."

Once his words ended, Wangombe turned into a blitz. Six of his images appeared around Ronnie at the same time as they all punched simultaneously. Each strike targeting a different weakness point, throat, temples, groin, ribs, knees, solar plexus. Each strike caused critical damage. Ronnie's HP zeroed out after the last strike ended.

Ronnie fell with his eyes open wide. He was extremely unwilling. He was supposed to go back with news of his success and had the crown prince awarded him with his due rewards, but instead, he had to fall here. All his hard work, his effort, to get close to the prince, to gain an opportunity to carry out this assassination. He was regretful. He regretted his greed. He should not have taken the risk of killing the prince personally just for an extra reward. He should have been content seeing the prince's demise from a distance. But however regretful he was, it was already too late.

Prince Alonzo who saw the traitor fell, displayed no satisfaction. Because his situation was none the better. He was still in a predicament of being surrounded by enemy soldiers. His breath was heavy, the poison effect was not yet alleviated. Not that it would make any difference though, even Ronnie in his best condition couldn't do anything against this short orc.

Wangombe walked slowly towards Prince Alonzo. The other orcs stayed at their places, keeping the prince surrounded. Prince Alonzo took up his sword and shield. Even though there was no hope, even if it was futile, he would not go down without a fight.

"Good spirit," Wangombe commented. "Are you the third prince of Themisphere?"

Prince Alonzo kept his silence for a while before finally answering, "I am." He would not be spared even if he lied.

"I am Wangombe Thickskull, son of Badu Thickskull, a Grunt in the army of the great Warlord Abasi Raretooth! You will say my name when you pass over the river of death, my name as the person who has sent you there!"

As Wangombe's words ended and he was about to move, a ball of light shot at him. He evaded it effortlessly despite the sudden ambush. He looked in the direction where the attack had come from and saw an armored human jumped to almost six meters high, passing over the head of his soldiers who was on stand by and came down at his spot swinging down a large hammer.

The hammer crashed onto the sandy ground, but Wangombe was already several distances away. At this time, numerous human soldiers appeared and clashed with the surrounding orcs.

"Prince!" Prince Alonzo turned to the familiar voice that was calling him and saw Jack coming over to his side.

"You... you came," Prince Alonzo said, words could not describe his relief at this time.

Jack saw the prince's half-empty HP. "Heal the prince!" Jack told the healer soldiers. The healer carried out the command, but his spell only healed a small amount of HP.

"I was poisoned," the prince informed. "I have drunk an antidote, but some of the poison effects are not yet gone. It reduces the healings I received. I have also drunk healing potions with the same little efficacy."

Jack looked at their situation. There were sixteen soldiers with him, he had lost four in the previous assaults on the supply carts. The enemy had close to thirty soldiers. The good thing was the soldiers that came with him seemed to be of higher levels compared to the orc soldiers here. However, there was no guarantee that no more orcs would come. They were still behind the enemy's line, after all.

The lead officers between the humans and orcs, however, seemed to be at a stalemate. Jack inspected and found the short orc with the claws weapon was a level 45 Elite, same as the NPC squad leader of his team. He noticed the short orc had a rank called Grunt, while the other orcs had the rank of Peon. The squad leader on his side was a Knight rank. He was familiar with Themisphere kingdom's military rank, the Knight rank was only a level below Knight Lieutenant. He was not familiar though with the Orc's rank system.

As the two lead officers continued to battle to a standstill, Jack was contemplating if he should give the command to disengage and flee. But to have an effective escape, he would need to have a few soldiers stayed behind, otherwise, they would just get harassed at the back as they were making their escape.

To sacrifice some men and flee? or to stay and fight, risking more orcs to appear? That was the question.

Jack knew that he could not afford to be indecisive for long, each second gone meant an additional chance on more incoming perils. After making his decision, he took out the three remaining Magic Bind scrolls in his bag. He called the two healer soldiers nearby and gave two of the scrolls to them each. The

last one he gave to Prince Alonzo. He also called the one remaining mage in his team over, the other one was among the ones who had fallen.

"Everyone, on my mark, uses these scrolls on that short orc," he pointed to Wangombe who was fighting with the human Knight.

The main advantage Wangombe had over the human Knight was his speed. As time passed, his advantage over the human Knight was more apparent as he landed much more hit on the knight. The knight had trouble catching Wangombe's movements. To tip the battle in the Knight's favor, Wangombe's movements needed to be halted. The best spell in their arsenal to do that was the Magic Bind spell.

But he doubted one spell cast by him would give much help. He needed to land multiple Magic Bind on the Grunt to have an effect. He could not use the same spell scrolls successively due to the scrolls also had a cooldown, so he needed others to cast it together with him.

To the mage soldier, he said, "you use your Magic Bind together with me."

Jack had gained Magic Bind spell when he reached level 25 of his Mage class when the Grim Sand Drake died. At that time, his Warrior had also reached level 25, which granted him a new Warrior skill, a passive skill Superior Body Recovery. It was an upgrade to his Natural Body Recovery skill. This skill added an additional 10 HP to each healing, but the best effect this skill brought was that it allowed the recovery effect to operate even during combat, despite with half efficiency. This skill meant every Warrior level 25 and above had a continuous small regeneration effect.

On the same night when the Grim Sand Drake died, due to Superior Body Recovery, Jack decided to max out his Natural Body Recovery skill together with the Heightened State skill, using a small part from the 221,298 souls he had gained from the Grim Sand Drake and Grandmother Spider. For the remaining souls, he used them all to max out his Superior Body Recovery skill.

Natural body recovery, level 20/20 (Passive skill), star: 1

Recover 65 HP every 9.5 seconds when out of combat.

Superior body recovery, level 20/20 (Passive skill)

Allow Natural Body Recovery to be in effect even during combat, with 50% efficiency.

Additional 330 HP on each healing

Heightened State, level 20/20 (Active skill), star: 2

Increase mana regeneration by 60%

decrease skill cooldown by 24%

Duration: 6 minutes 30 seconds

Cooldown: 10 minutes

He was at first expecting to gain a secret reward again for max leveling one of his advanced skills, but no such luck. He had decided to max his Superior Body Recovery to increase his survivability. In

combination with the Natural Body Recovery, he could recover 395 HP every 9.5 seconds. When he was in combat, he would heal 197.5 HP instead, which was almost like drinking a free basic healing potion every 9.5 seconds.

### **Chapter 359: Shooting Dash**

Jack took out his Rapid Dazing Staff and said, "target his limbs." He was adopting the same tactic as John had done on the Grim Sand Drake. To the mage soldier, he said, "begin the incantation."

They both started forming their spell formation. The mage soldier formed his rune faster than Jack, but Jack's one had all three runes forming at the same time. In the end, Jack's spell was completed a tad bit faster than the mage soldier's one.

"Cast it!" Jack uttered to the others. The others unfurled the magic scrolls in their hands. Five Magic Bind hit the unsuspecting Wangombe who was in intense combat with the human Knight. Four of them locked his two arms and two legs, the last one by Jack was sealing his torso.

Wangombe was taken by surprise by the sudden interference. One magic bind cast by low-level casters would be easy to be broken, by five of them locking different parts of his body, he needed to exert extra effort to break it. Not to mention he was not a strength-type class, hence it was more difficult for him to break these united spells.

A window of opportunity was all it needed to decide the outcome of a battle between two equal opponents, the human Knight did not let this chance go to waste. His heavy hammer crashed onto Wangombe's chest as he was still incapacitated, then a follow-up attack crashed onto his head.

Jack and the others did not stay idle. They cast their offensive spells and ranged attacks. Jack turned on the burst shot ability of his staff to maximize damage. Wangombe's defense was not as insane as the Grim Sand Drake, so they had no problem causing sufficient damages even with their levels.

The other orcs saw their leader's predicament and tried to lend a hand, but the other human soldiers were also aware and thus immediately put themselves in harm's way to hinder them.

Wangombe roared in fury as he forced himself free from the Magic Bind. He finally managed to break four of the magic binds, leaving only the one in his left leg. The human Knight had stopped his attack for a second to channel his strength for an ultimate strike, he lifted his hammer high as a magnified image of his hammer appeared above. This gigantic image fell on Wangombe at the same time as he broke the last magic bind.

Wangombe was just about to utilize his incredible speed to flee the attack when the ground underneath him lit up just as the last magic bind was shattered. He was affected by disoriented status which slowed his movement. A crescent light also hit one of his knees. The crescent light did not cause much damage to him but it still caused his knee to buckle for a breath. Jack had started casting Arcane Turbulence when he saw the first magic bind was broken, he then executed Sword of Light at the same time when his spell was cast.

This short pause had deprived Wangombe of a dodging chance. The giant hammer summoned by the human Knight slammed at him heavily and brought him collapsing to the ground. The force of that giant

hammer was so powerful that it created a small tremor and a cave-in at the point of impact. Sand dust exploded out and covered everyone's vision.

Everyone watched with apprehension as the dust receded. Wangombe's battered body was soon exposed as he was lying pitifully on the small crater of sand. His HP was only a hair-breadth left.

Wangombe spoke with difficulty as he tried to stand up, "d-detestable humans... y-you will no-not... defeat the gr-great Wangombe ..."

His subordinate orcs went into a frenzy as they saw his condition. They tried to barge their ways through without a care of their own safety.

Seeing the situation, they would break through before long. There were healer orcs as well among them. It would be troublesome if they managed to heal that orc. "Finish him!" Jack ordered as he executed Shredding Fang together with ranged attacks from his staff. The human Knight also sent another strike with his hammer.

Wangombe was close to death already, he would not survive these attacks. Before they connected, Jack willed out the Runestone of Luck. On the night that the Grim Sand Drake was defeated, he had fused with the Runestone of Luck. This runestone had the element of lightning, so he had gone through electrocution torture again that night.

Runestone of Luck (rare runestone)

Increase luck by approx. 5 points for 10 seconds.

Elemental energy required for upgrade: 0/1000

He focused his willpower on the runestone and boosted his luck by an additional 7 points as the attacks connected with Wangombe, whose HP bar was immediately depleted. He doubted that it was his attack that dealt the killing blow, but it does not matter, the human Knight was under his command, so his luck stats should still apply when the orc died.

Wangombe's body did not disappear as monsters did, but a couple of items dropped beside him. Jack came over to pick them up.

The other orcs were devastated seeing their leader's demise. Yet they still did not stop their frenzied. It's like they had gone berserk. The human soldiers had trouble dealing with them. But now that the human Knight was no longer preoccupied, he immediately made short work on the other orcs.

One of the orcs yelled out to his comrade, "you go back! You have to tell Overseer Badu of this. He will surely avenge our leader, Wangombe!"

That orc nodded and turn back as he summoned his mount and rode away. The other orcs continued to fight until all of them fell. Jack was relieved to see that no other orc units were coming, but they still had to leave this place soon. Sooner or later, the orcs would find them if they stayed still at one place. Not to mention with how much respect these soldiers showed this Wangombe, they would surely come back to claim his body.

Jack observed the items that the slain orc had dropped.

Technique Book: Shooting Dash (Super Rare Consumable)

Grant the skill: Shooting Dash

Restriction: Any advanced physical class

Skill Book (rare consumable)

Grant 1 skill point

Amethyst (rare gemstone)

Amazing, he exclaimed in his mind. He doubted this orc was at the standard of the Grim Sand Drake, yet all the items it dropped were also at least rare grade. He did not doubt that the increase in luck played a significant role in this outcome. Peniel was right, it was the right decision to choose the Runestone of Luck.

There were also 1 gold 42 silver coins and 4 mana cores which he picked up. Other slain soldiers also dropped some coins but he chose not to waste time to pick them all up, he was just about to ask them all to leave but his God-eye monocle picked up a yellow marker on one item among the ones dropped by the others.

He ran over there to pick the item up. Other items might not be valuable enough to take the risk, but a yellow-colored marker was different. It indicated a rare grade. When he arrived at the place, he saw a light-green-colored sword. Jack picked it up.

Venomous Viper sword, level 35/65 (Rare one-handed sword)

Physical damage: 175

Attack speed: 2

Durability: 80

Reflex +6

15% chance to cause Poison status effect on each attack

"That was Ronnie's sword," he heard Prince Alonzo said. Jack saw the approaching prince, his countenance was not pale any longer. His poison status must have expired.

"Ronnie?" Jack remembered the guy as the one who had volunteered as the prince's guards. "Who killed him?"

"That orc leader just now," the prince replied. He then gave Jack the short version of Ronnie's treachery.

'So there really was something wrong with the guy? I should have given more trust to that Investigator talent of mine and be more adamant about my suspicion when I talked to Bailey this morning,' Jack thought. He was relieved that in the end, he was still not too late in rescuing the prince.

'Eh? Then how come this sword dropped?' He suddenly thought. No loots dropped when the one who did the killing was an NPC who was not under a player's influence.

Feeling his questioning thought, Peniel explained, "that sword must be a special item which was loaned to that Ronnie guy, it was not exactly his possession. Sometimes such an item will still drop even if the one wielding it died without outworlder's interference."

Meaning it was an item naturally of this world. He believed if it was the other soldiers who saw this sword first, they will also pick it up, unlike the other dropped loots. Luckily, he saw it first.

"We need to go," Jack said as he stored the sword. He summoned his steed, the others did the same. "Let's move out!"

They rode away from the place. Jack chose to head Westward, away from the human main army. He had seen the orc army forming a barricade when they chase after the prince, they would just go into the enemy's arm if he headed East. Jeanny and the others had also been headed Westward as they were being chased by the orc's left-wing army. Jack planned to regroup with them before he thought about how to get back to the main army. He sent a message to John so he could inform Captain Salem that the prince was safe with him.

While he was riding, he checked on the loots. He was especially happy with the level 35 Venomous Viper sword. He could instantly increase his Storm Breaker's level to 35 when he fed this sword to it.

He then took out the skill book. His Container of Souls rendered this book less important to him, but a free additional skill point was always welcomed. He used the book and was prompted with a question to apply the free point to his Warrior or Mage class. He chose the Warrior class without hesitation, he still saw his melee class as his main class.

The technique book was next. 'What's this skill do?' He asked Peniel.

"It's a movement skill. It allowed you to cover a decent distance in speed. This skill is similar to the Body Double spell, once you leveled it up to level 10 and 20, it will have additional effects."

### **Chapter 360: Trapped In A Siege**

'Cool,' He had Flash Step, but that skill was mostly for dodging purposes. He still lacked a movement skill that gave him a burst of speed to reach a ranged opponent quickly. The Charge skill was an offensive skill, its increase in movement speed was only average at best.

He proceeded to learn the spell without delay.

Shooting Dash, level: 1/20 (Active skill, movement)

Dash in a direction with 500% movement speed. The next attack after the dash is increased by 200%.

Range: 5 meters

Cooldown: 30 seconds

Stamina consumed: 30

'What additional effect does this skill give after I level it up to 10 and 20?' Jack asked Peniel.

"It allows you to make another dash once the first is done. At max level, it adds another one, so you can make three dashes successively."

'If I can make a continuous three dashes, then I can cover 15 meters in an instant!' Jack thought with amazement.

"Not 15 meters. At max level, you can do 10 meters for each dash. That meant you can cover 30 meters if you aim all three dashes in the same direction," Peniel explained.

Hearing that, Jack hurriedly opened his Container of Souls. Starting from when they left Theseval, he had collected quite a number of souls from the roaming monsters. Then during the war when the shock troops attacked the supply carts, the soldiers had also killed some orc soldiers. Too bad he was not in the main army, the casualties over there would have yielded an astronomical amount of souls. After that, they had killed most of the orcs when saving Prince Alonzo. The souls from Wangombe should have been bountiful, even though probably not as impressive as the ones given by the Grim Sand Drake.

There were 106,298 souls inside.

'Damn, this expedition is truly beneficial. I collected this many souls in just a few days,' Jack commented.

"You met many stronger monsters as you go further away from the city, naturally they gave better souls. The natives also give more souls, especially higher-ranked ones. That Wangombe alone probably contributed half the number you have there."

He went ahead and used 90,000 souls to directly elevate the newly acquired Shooting Dash skill to level 10.

Shooting Dash, level: 10/20 (Active skill, movement)

Dash in a direction with 500% movement speed. The next attack after the dash is increased by 200%.

Range: 7.25 meters

Cooldown: 30 seconds

Stamina consumed: 40

After killing Wangombe, in addition to the accumulation of exp points since they left Theseval, Jack had also increased to level 27 Warrior and level 26 Mage. Most of the exp points came from killing Wangombe, and since the other players in his party were not nearby, he had gotten all the exp. He was catching up with the others' levels again.

He had a saving of 12 free attribute points after these two level-ups. He decided to invest them all into his lowest stat, Reflex, bringing its base point to 129 points. Added with his equipment boosts, he had 145 Reflex.

He had neglected his offensive skills for a while, so he decided to use 10,000 souls together with the 7 Warrior's free skill points to upgrade his Sword of Light to level 17, bringing its damage output to 520%. This skill remained his highest damage single-target skill.

For his 6 Mage's free skill points, he spent them on his Magic Bind skill.

Magic Bind, level 7/20 (Active skill, range, require magic weapon)

Bind a target with a magical leash, power of leash depends on skill level and caster's intelligence stat

Range: 30 meters

Duration: 30 seconds (can be reduced based on target stat's strength)

Mana consumed: 40

Cooldown: 2 minutes

While Jack was organizing his skills and spells, they had been going in the same direction. Prince Alonzo asked, "where are we going? At this rate, we won't be able to reassemble with the main army."

"The enemy has prepared blockage, we won't be able to break through with just our numbers. We are convening with the other shock troop teams," Jack said as he opened his map.

He had also been receiving updates in his party chat messages. The other teams had been forced to flee from the left-wing army. They had been chased around for some time until they were forced into a small rocky mountain range nearby. It was the only mountain range in this desert region. Jack could see that mountain range on his map now, the name Barren Rocks was shown on it.

Jeanny and the others had run into this Barren Rocks and found out that it only had one entrance. The deeper part inside was invested with Giant Scorpions and they even saw several Flame Tigers. They could not deal with these monsters while being harassed by the orc army, so they stayed near the entrance, and formed a barricade. The orc army could not abuse their numbers at the entrance as the path was too narrow.

Jeanny arranged for the human soldiers to take turns dealing with the orcs that tried to force their way in, while sending several scouts inside to look for a different exit. However, the news from the scouts was not encouraging. The only things they found inside were more monsters and an entrance to a dungeon. Under normal circumstances, finding the location of a dungeon would be great news, but not at this time.

The orcs that chased them here laid siege outside the entrance as they went on to send in soldiers to exhaust the humans inside.

Jack followed his map interface. He could see the green dots indicating his party member inside the Barren Rock. He observed the situation once he arrived nearby. There were several small rock hills in this location, so it was not difficult to find a hiding place for a small group. It didn't look good. There were lots of orcs outside the entrance.

"How many of you make it inside there?" He sent Jeanny a message.

"We number only around three hundred. We lost quite a lot of people in the assault," Jeanny answered. "Also, from the player side, we have lost Bitter Rain, Wondrouslife, Swellgoing, Pointy Tip, and four of The Man's underlings."

Only sixteen of us left out of the twenty-five who started out in this expedition, Jack thought. He had no love for that Swellgoing fellow, good riddance if he might add, but it was still a pity for the others. He had expected some to not make it, but to lose that many even before they arrived at the destination was rather disheartening. Luckily they had all worn Amulet of Rebirth. So they should only lose one level as they were resurrected in the capital.

Considering Jeanny's information that there were three hundred humans inside, the orcs outside looked roughly at nine hundred to one thousand. The orcs were around three times the number of humans. The humans on the inside would be worn out if they continued this battle of attritions.

Jack thought for a bit as he observed the situation. He then sent out a message to Jeanny, "you have to break out of there."

"Say what? It took us a while to escape here," Jeanny replied. "Going out again will just put us back to getting chased. And even if we want to, we won't be able to break through all those orcs. We are trapped here now."

"Don't worry about getting chased. I have a way to stop their advance for a while."

"There are still lots of their scouts out there in the desert. They are looking for the prince, right? We will bump into one of them sooner or later. It will be difficult to get back to the main army without being discovered."

"Getting back to the main army might be difficult, but escaping notice from the scouts should be no problem."

"How so?"

"You forget already that I can find out about others' positions from a distance?"

"Oh, that's right. But it is still unlikely for us here to break through outside with them laying siege already."

"I can create some distraction from out here for a short duration, but you will have to rely on your own strength to punch your way through."

After a brief pause, Jeanny finally replied, "all right. Give me some time to talk to the others."

"I will make my preparation also, you let me know when you are ready."

After finished with the chat messages, Jeanny looked at the others. The players were still fine since they knew they will resurrect again even if they died here. Furthermore, with the Amulet of Rebirth, they would only lose one level, a small sacrifice. The natives, on the other hand, didn't appear too thrilled with their current situation. After all, they would die for real if they were killed. Many of them were wearing grim and depressed expressions.

She even heard some soldiers bickering. It had been going on for a while. It was just a whisper at first, but now the quarrel had become heated that either side did not bother if the others heard them.

"I said already from the start! There is nothing good from listening to the outworlders' plans. Look where it gets us!"