

Chapter 2291 – Tier 4 Hero

As Shi Feng chanted the summoning incantation some distance below the Northern Fortress's mountain peak, a pillar of golden light rose from the ground beneath him, shooting toward the sky. The light pillar had a 400-yard radius and was even visible from several thousand yards away.

Mana from across the mountainside surged toward the light pillar, condensing until it became liquid before Shi Feng. After 20 seconds of this, the Mana finally took on a humanoid form.

A moment later, a knight in white clothing and carrying a sacred, golden sword stood before the player army.

Although this white-clad knight only stood two meters tall, nowhere near the size of a Mythic monster, his appearance made everyone shudder.

[Arslet] (Hero, Tier 4 Sword Saint) Level 120

HP 55,000,000/55,000,000

A Tier 4 Hero? Phoenix Rain could not believe her eyes as she stared at Arslet.

NPCs were originally already far more powerful than players; only peak experts had any hope of defeating ordinary NPCs. Heroes, on the other hand, were peak combatants among NPCs, treated as kingdoms and empires' absolute pillars and protectors. They were treated as the absolute pillars and protectors of kingdoms and empires.

She had suspected that Shi Feng's trump card would be a Tier 4 combatant. A fighter of that power would be crucial when capturing a fortress, especially the well-fortified Northern Fortress. Current players simply didn't have the strength to succeed.

Considering that Zero Wing had relied on the Tier 4 Divine Magic Dragons in defensive and offensive sieges in the past, Phoenix Rain had assumed Shi Feng would rely on one this time, too.

She had never expected Shi Feng to summon a Hero, and a Tier 4 Hero, at that. The NPC could single-handedly crush an entire NPC city.

Shi Feng had considered using a Divine Magic Dragon, but the materials needed to summon one were incredibly rare and valuable. Collecting them would not be easy. Moreover, the Divine Magic Dragons were only really useful against players. They wouldn't be particularly effective against monsters since monsters had such high Basic Attributes. They did not fear a frontal confrontation. Furthermore, the Divine Magic Dragons had an obvious weakness—the players that managed the summoning array. If a single one of these players died, the array would quickly crumble.

The Mythic monsters that defended these fortresses generally had relatively high intellect. The moment they noticed the Divine Magic Dragon's summoning array, they'd do anything to destroy it. While Shi Feng was confident of standing against an all-out assault from players, trying to stop powerful monsters hellbent on getting near the array would be impossible.

When sieging a monster-protected fortress, very few players would rely on summoning arrays. He wouldn't have waited until now to capture a fortress in the Gravity Mountain Range until now, otherwise.

"Phoenix Pavilion Master, have your men get ready!" Shi Feng said. Now that he had summoned Arslat, he couldn't afford to waste time. He continued, "Once the magic barrier is down, I want everyone to

push into the fortress. Leave the mini Bosses to Zero Wing. Your team just needs to clear out the mobs inside and don't let them get close to the mini Bosses."

"Alright, leave it to us," Phoenix Rain said, a trace of excitement flashing in her eyes.

The Bosses were the most troublesome aspect of sieging a fortress. If Arslet were merely an ordinary Tier 4 combatant, this upcoming battle would be a tough one. The Tier 4 Bosses in the Northern Fortress were much stronger than ordinary Tier 4 monsters since their power was reinforced by the fortress's magic array. An ordinary Tier 4 combatant would be little more than a punching bag for the Bosses.

Bosses also had far higher intellect than ordinary monsters. They might not be as intelligent as players, but they weren't stupid. They would try to kill as many invaders as possible, rather than focus on one target. Unless one had enough strength to overwhelm the Bosses, capturing the Northern Fortress was a pipe dream.

This was why, even now, Thirteen Thrones and Starlink were the only powers to capture a fortress successfully.

Fortunately, Shi Feng's army had a Tier 4 Hero, so suppressing the Northern Fortress's Bosses shouldn't be a problem.

As Phoenix Rain began to bark out orders, Shi Feng sent Arslet after the magic barrier.

The Northern Fortress's magic barrier was extraordinarily powerful. Even an ordinary Tier 4 combatant would have to attack for a long time to deplete its Mana reserve.

However, the magic barrier was incredibly fragile to Arslet. Once the Hero struck it with his Tier 4 Taboo Skill, Spatial Rend, it shattered.

When Phoenix Rain saw this, she was dumbfounded. She had never thought that a Tier 4 Hero would be this formidable.

“Charge!” Shi Feng shouted. The outcome didn’t faze him in the least.

NPC Heroes were considered invincible among those of the same tier, and they were the human’s final trump card against Dragons. How could a measly Medium Fortress’s defensive magic array sustain an attack from such a being?

Hearing Shi Feng’s command, the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion’s 30,000-strong army and Zero Wing’s main force charged into the fortress. At the same time, the Northern Fortress’s Undead Army spilled out of the fortress’s entrance, while the Undead Soldiers on the walls began to attack the invading players.

The Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion’s members, who had defeated plenty of powerful monsters before, couldn’t help but shudder as they watched the Undead army charge to meet them.

[Undead Soldier] (Undead, Lord)

Level 94

HP 22,000,000/22,000,000 [Undead Captain] (Undead, Great Lord) Level 96

HP 63,000,000/63,000,000 [Undead Warrior] (Undead, Grand Lord) Level 101

HP 260,000,000/260,000,000 [Undead General] (Undead, Mythic) Level 102

HP 580,000,000/580,000,000

Although most of the monsters leaving the fortress were Undead Soldiers and Undead Captains, the Undead Warriors and the General were quite eye-catching. These Bosses' frightening auras were even more powerful than the Grand Lords and Mythic monsters they typically faced.

"Why are there so many mini Bosses?" Phoenix Rain's expression darkened when she saw the dozen or so massive Undead Warriors and the Undead General.

Dealing with the Undead Soldiers and Captains was within the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's capabilities, but the Undead Warriors and the General were beyond them.

There were more than a dozen Undead Warriors among the army and a single Undead General...

These were only the monsters stationed at the fortress's entrance, the weakest of the monsters within the Northern Fortress.

Just getting into the fortress was likely impossible, much less capturing it. Not even a Tier 4 Hero could stop the Undead General and his dozen or so Undead Warriors at once.

“Guild Leader Black Flame, the situation is direr than we expected. We should retreat,” Phoenix Rain called out to Shi Feng.

There were more Undead Warriors protecting the Northern Fortress’s entrance than their scouts had reported. To make matters worse, there was a Mythic ranked Undead General among these monsters. The players would be at a severe disadvantage if they tried to face this Undead army head-on.

She was very familiar with just how powerful Level 100-plus monsters were.

Thirteen Thrones had contained a lot of information regarding the fortress it had captured from ordinary Guilds and powers, but hiding such details from superpowers like the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion was impossible.

One Level 100 Great Lord could easily annihilate a 1,000-man legion of current players, not to mention Level 100-plus Grand Lords. Not even Tier 3 players had the strength to contend with these monsters. By the time Arslet defeated the Undead General, the Undead Warriors would have wiped out half of their forces.

As expected of the Northern Fortress. The force protecting its entrance is already so powerful. It’s no wonder why the Northern Fortress had been the last captured in the Gravity Mountain Range. The situation even surprised Shi Feng. It seems I can’t hide them any longer.

Following which, Shi Feng took out two Summon Guard Scrolls and called forth Kite and Anna.

Chapter 2292 – One-man Army

He's summoning his Personal Guards? Phoenix Rain watched Shi Feng, a little surprised.

Personal Guards were powerful beings, but unlike players, they were incredibly difficult to resurrect. Thus, the various powers avoided risking their Personal Guards and would never use them to siege a fortress.

And with how powerful this Undead army was, what could a few Personal Guards possibly accomplish?

Two figures appeared before Shi Feng, a man carrying two longswords, and a woman in luxurious, purple-gold robes with a staff. The instant these NPCs appeared, all of the Mana within 50 yards began to gather toward them.

"Is this for real?! Both of those Personal Guards are over Level 100! Even the strongest Personal Guard in our Guild is only Level 96!"

"Crap! Those Personal Guards are actually Tier 3 NPCs!"

When they saw Anna and Kite, the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's members gasped, feeling a little jealous.

Shi Feng's two Tier 3 Personal Guards shocked them even more than the Tier 4 Hero had. Shi Feng had relied on a special tool to summon the Tier 4 Hero, which meant he couldn't casually summon the NPC, but that wasn't the case for Personal Guards. So long as the Personal Guards in question were alive, he could summon them at any time, and he could continue to nurture them, growing their strengths.

There was also the fact that completing the Tier 3 Promotion Quests wasn't easy for Personal Guards.

Although Personal Guards could reach Tier 3, they couldn't necessarily be promoted as soon as they hit Level 100. Like players, Personal Guards had to complete a Promotion Quest, but the Promotion Quests for these NPCs were actually easier than the ones players had to face. Personal Guards could complete their Tier 3 Promotion Quests in a short time.

Bronze Guards only had a 20% chance of clearing their Tier 3 Promotion Quests, and if they failed, they'd have to wait seven days before challenging the quest again.

Without enough luck, it was practically impossible for a Bronze Guard to complete their Promotion Quest as soon as they reached Level 100. Fine-Gold Guards, on the other hand, had a 50% success rate.

Once a Personal Guard reached Tier 3, they'd be significantly more helpful to their player. Personal Guards were NPCs and considerably more powerful than Tier 3 players. With a Tier 3 Personal Guard, a player would have an easier time grinding, questing, and raiding Field Bosses. This was why the various powers desperately nurtured their Personal Guards while protecting them from harm as much as possible.

Now that they had seen Shi Feng's two Tier 3 Personal Guards, these players couldn't even imagine how fast Shi Feng would develop in the future.

Phoenix Rain couldn't help but feel a little envious.

With two Tier 3 Personal Guards, Shi Feng could explore Level 100 neutral maps immediately and start preparing for his Tier 3 Promotion Quest.

However, the two Tier 3 Personal Guards did nothing to alter their current predicament. There were still over a dozen Grand Lord ranked Undead Warriors to contend with.

While the rest of the Pavilion's members worried about the same issue, Shi Feng commanded Anna and Kite to distract the Undead Warriors.

The Level 102 Anna and Level 101 Kite then charged at the 15 approaching Grand Lords.

"Black Flame has gone insane, Big Sis Rain!" Blue Phoenix watched the scene with wide, shocked eyes.

Sending two Tier 3 Personal Guards against 15 Undead Warriors was suicidal. Tier 3 Personal Guards were exceedingly valuable. If they died in battle, resurrecting them would cost tens of thousands of Gold.

"Blue, get ready to use our Tier 3 Summoning Scrolls and magic arrays!" Phoenix Rain hadn't thought that Shi Feng would be so maddeningly bold, either. She had no choice but to rely on the Tier 3 Summoning Scrolls and magic arrays she had prepared.

Great Lord ranked summoned creatures wouldn't be a match for the Undead Warriors, but with their high HP, they should last for some time. If they included the magic array's suppression, the summoned creatures could survive even longer.

However, as Phoenix Rain finished her command, Anna, who had reached the Undead army, began to chant an incantation, swinging her staff gracefully.

Under her command, 18 magic arrays appeared around Anna. Level 102 Great Lord ranked Rock Guardians emerged from each array, stupefying Phoenix Rain and Blue Phoenix.

They had prepared 16 Tier 3 Summoning Scrolls for this siege, and that was Phoenix Rain's limit. She wasn't the Great Pavilion Master, so she only had access to a fraction of the Guild's resources. Even so, this fraction was far more than what any ordinary first-rate Guild possessed.

And yet, not even the 16 Tier 3 Summoning Scrolls were a match for one of Anna's Summoning Spells...

Anna began to chant another incantation before Phoenix Rain and Blue Phoenix had time to snap out of their daze. Golden runes began to appear on the Rock Guardian's bodies, increasing their Basic Attributes and Defense significantly. The Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's members were utterly flabbergasted.

Summoning 18 Great Lords was already ridiculous, yet Anna could strengthen every one of her Great Lords. Her very existence was beyond absurd.

However, Anna hadn't finished her spellcasting. She then began to cast her third Spell.

This time, her chant lasted for five seconds. When she completed her Spell, a magic array with a 40-yard radius appeared above the two armies. After a short moment, a golden-armored warrior with a shield and longsword fell from the array.

[Holy Knight] (Elemental Creature, Grand Lord) Level 102

HP 320,000,000/320,000,000

“Crap! Is she really just a Tier 3 Personal Guard!?”

Many players nearly cursed when they saw the Holy Knight. Anna was practically a one-man army.

Only Shi Feng maintained his composure. After all, he knew just how powerful Anna was. Anna was an Epic Guard with a 113 Growth Potential. He hadn't even heard of a Personal Guard with such high Growth Potential in his previous life.

Moreover, magical classes were more suited to large-scale combat. Anna would perform even better than a Tier 4 melee-class Hero in a group battle.

In truth, Anna's performance had exceeded Shi Feng's expectations. Anna had only used her Summoner class Spells thus far. She hadn't even begun to use her Yin Yang Saint class Spells.

With Anna at their side, the players regained their advantage on the battlefield. Of the 18 Rock Guardians Anna had summoned, 15 rushed forth to distract the Undead Warriors. The remaining Rock Guardians worked with the Holy Knight and Zero Wing's main force to target each Undead Warrior, one by one.

Meanwhile, Kite worked with Arslet against the Undead General. Although he wasn't as proficient in large-scale combat as Anna, his one-on-one combat power was superior to Anna's. With Arslet suppressing the Mythic monster, Kite could attack, unobstructed.

All 15 Undead Warriors were dead in less than half an hour, and facing both Kite and Arslet, the Undead General had fallen, too, leaving behind a pile of loot by its now-still corpse.

Chapter 2293 – Capturing the Northern Fortress

The Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion members gaped in shock when they saw the Undead General and 15 Undead Warriors die.

We won, just like that? Even Phoenix Rain felt as if she were dreaming.

She had read the report on Thirteen Thrones' attempt to capture the Small fortress. Both Thirteen Thrones and Starlink had suffered over 10,000 casualties just to get through the fortress's entrance. Moreover, they had only faced Level 100-plus Grand Lords, not a Level 100-plus Mythic monster, during that battle.

And yet, the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion had only lost a few hundred players, and Zero Wing's forces had already slain the Undead Warriors and Undead General that served as the Northern Fortress's gatekeepers. All it had taken was one Tier 4 Hero and two Personal Guards. Moreover, the Hero wasn't as responsible for their success as the Personal Guard, Anna. No one would believe her if she told this tale.

The Undead General and Undead Warriors had also dropped better loot than any of them had expected. Not only had they dropped a lot of Level 100 Secret-Silver Equipment, but several pieces of Level 100 Fine-Gold Equipment had also dropped. The sight of their harvest even excited Phoenix Rain.

The equipment's Attributes were awe-inspiring. It was no exaggeration to say that a player in full Level 100 Secret-Silver Equipment could easily defeat a player in Level 90 Dark-Gold Set Equipment. Furthermore, the loot included the Mountain Copper Set, a Level 100 Secret-Silver Set Equipment.

“Everyone, get into the fortress! Ignore the mobs!” Shi Feng hurriedly commanded once the mini Bosses had died. “We need to destroy the Defensive Magic Towers before they repair the magic barrier!”

As long as the Northern Fortress’s four Defensive Magic Towers remained, they would automatically reconstruct the defensive magic barrier around the fortress. If they wanted this operation to succeed, they had to be extremely fast.

Although destroying each Defensive Magic Tower would significantly increase the time needed to reconstruct the array, the towers weren’t easy to take down. As soon as players entered the fortress, they’d encounter an endless stream of monsters trying to stop them, and it wouldn’t be long before the fortress’s Guardian Boss joined the battle. With how large and spacious the Northern Fortress was, it was easy to imagine how difficult it would be to destroy the towers while keeping the Guardian Boss and mobs at bay.

With Shi Feng’s command, the players swarmed toward the fortress’s entrance, with everyone following the Tier 4 Hero as Arslet opened a path.

Beyond the walls, the Northern Fortress was organized like a town. As soon as they entered, the players were greeted by the sight of tattered houses. Undead filled the streets, and the Defensive Magic Towers stood in the fortress’s four corners, looking inconspicuous.

Once the players crossed the entrance’s threshold, they gasped.

Numerous Grand Lord ranked Undead Warriors roamed the streets, and when they saw the invaders, two Mythic ranked Undead Warlords emerged from the Undead army’s ranks. A six-meter-tall Undead followed behind the two Undead Warlords, wearing black armor and a crown on its head. When the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion’s experts sensed the crowned Undead’s horrific pressure and death energy, they couldn’t help but shudder. Some of them even struggled to move.

[Undead Warlord] (Undead, Mythic)

Level 102

HP 630,000,000/630,000,000

[Undead King] (Undead Creature, Ancient Fiend, Mythic)

Level 103

HP 1,420,000,000/1,420,000,000 "Why does it have to be an Ancient Fiend?"

Even Shi Feng was shocked when he saw the Undead King's statistics. He had known the Northern Fortress would be immensely difficult to capture, but he had never dreamed that the challenge would be this great.

Based on what he remembered from his previous life, the Northern Fortress's Guardian Boss should only have been a Mythic ranked Realm Lord, yet the Guardian Boss before him was a Mythic ranked Ancient Fiend...

Once it crossed the Level 100 threshold, and its restrictions had been removed, a Mythic ranked Ancient Fiend could nearly rival a Dragon.

Before anyone could react, the Undead King vanished.

It reappeared above the player army, swinging down its skeletal greatsword. Overwhelming death energy poured down on the player army, so powerful that it cracked the space around it.

Not good! Shi Feng's expression turned grim at the sight.

The Undead King's intellect was far higher than the Undead General they had faced moments ago. Once the Guardian Boss sensed the invaders, it launched an attack, targeting the most densely packed area. If they allowed the Undead King to land its AOE attack, several thousand players would die instantly.

However, just as the wave of dark energy was about to land on the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's members, a figure suddenly appeared in the air above them. This figure belonged to none other than Arslet.

Arslet had activated a Skill, sending a towering pillar of light crashing into the wave of dark energy. The light pillar neutralized the attack in the collision, and the resulting shockwave devoured a significant portion of the players' HPs. Some of them hadn't been able to cope at all and died.

Although Arslet had the upper hand against the Undead King, he couldn't suppress the Ancient Fiend completely. As a result, the Undead King attacked the player army from time to time, each blow reaping several hundred lives and devastating the surrounding terrain.

The Pavilion's players began to despair. The difference between their strength and the Undead King's was too massive. This was no longer a fight Tier 2 players had any hope of surviving.

If the Undead King was so terrifying, even while it was distracted, how were they supposed to deal with the two Undead Warlords and numerous Undead Warriors?

“Phoenix Pavilion Master, leave the Bosses to us. Your team should try to destroy the Defensive Magic Towers as quickly as possible,” Shi Feng quickly reminded Phoenix Rain.

Not only could the Defensive Magic Towers regenerate the defensive magic array around the Northern Fortress, but they could also reinforce the Guardian Boss. Without those towers, the Undead King, which was 17 levels lower than Arslet, wouldn't be able to attack the surrounding players while fighting the Hero.

The only hope they had of defeating the Undead King relied on the Defensive Magic Towers' destruction. If that failed, the fortress's Undead would slay every player, regardless of whether or not Arslet could survive against the Ancient Fiend.

“But those two Undead Warlords...” Phoenix Rain insisted, worried as she glanced at the Mythic monsters that guarded the path to the Defensive Magic Towers.

The two Undead Warlords were no trivial opponents. They might not be as strong as the Undead King, but if they ambushed her army's healers, the rest of her players would fall.

“Don't worry about them! We'll keep those two Undead Warlords busy!” Shi Feng shouted back.

Shi Feng then retrieved the Ring of Gospel, sacrificing 7,000 Magic Crystals to activate Miniature World and Ring of Brilliance. Within a 5,000-yard radius, space froze, and all enemies' physiques and Basic Attributes dropped. At the same time, all allies within 2,000 yards of Shi Feng received a boost to their physiques and Basic Attributes.

Everyone immediately sensed the gap between themselves and the Undead army shortening significantly.

Once that was done, Shi Feng sent Anna and Kite after the two Undead Warlords.

Although the Undead Warlords were powerful, the two Mythic Bosses would need quite some time to deal with the players when faced with the strengthened Holy Knight, Kite, and the suppressing barrier the 18 Rock guardians had formed.

When she saw this, Phoenix Rain stopped holding back, activating all of the Tier 3 Summoning Scrolls she had prepared to open a path to the Defensive Magic Towers. She also used quite a few defensive magic arrays and Tier 4 large-scale destruction Magic Scrolls. Once the force had reached one of the towers, the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's members bombarded it with their attacks.

Time passed quickly.

As each Defensive Magic Tower fell, the Undead King's attacks became more powerful. As a result, the player armor suffered more casualties. When only one Defensive Magic Tower remained, the Undead King began to attack the Rock Guardians' magic barrier to free the Undead Warriors.

"Hurry! That barrier won't last much longer!" Shi Feng urged Phoenix Rain and the others as he watched the barrier's Mana reserves rapidly deplete.

Just before the magic barrier shattered, the sound of a collapsing building echoed throughout the fortress.

After fighting for more than an hour, suffering over 10,000 casualties, and expending all of their Tier 3 and Tier 4 Magic Scrolls, the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's members had finally destroyed all four Defensive Magic Towers.

As the fourth and final Defensive Magic Tower fell, the death energy and Mana within the Northern Fortress substantially decreased. The Undead King's Basic Attributes also fell by as much as 20%, instantly giving Arslet an overwhelming advantage.

With Arslet suppressing the Ancient Fiend, the players were able to attack the Undead Warlords without interruption. Finally, after nearly two hours, the Undead King and the two Undead Warlords died.

"We did it!"

"We won!"

The surviving players cheered as the Undead King collapsed to the ground. Even Phoenix Rain was immensely excited. She hadn't actually thought that they'd successfully capture the Northern Fortress.

Shi Feng stepped up to the Undead King's corpse, quickly locating a dark-gold token and picking it up.

The moment Shi Feng touched the token, the sound of a system notification reached every player's ears.

Gravity Mountain Range Region System Announcement: Congratulations to Zero Wing for capturing the Northern Fortress and becoming its lord. Guild Popularity in Dragonheart City increased by 10,000.

Chapter 2294 – Medium Fortress

The regional announcement repeated three times, its contents stunning the players grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range.

“The Northern Fortress’s been captured? What’s going on?”

“Isn’t the Northern Fortress the largest fortress in the northern region?”

“Are you kidding me? Zero Wing actually took down the Northern Fortress?”

“Is Zero Wing really so powerful?”

Practically every player in the Gravity Mountain Range knew about the Northern Fortress. It was one of only three Medium Fortresses in the Gravity Mountain Range and a hot topic among players.

Thus far, the only power to secure a fortress the Gravity Mountain Range was Thirteen Thrones, but the Guild had only claimed a Small Fortress. Taking into account the number of players on Dragonheart Island, a Small Fortress wasn’t enough to satisfy demand. A Medium Fortress, on the other hand, was several times larger.

Now that Zero Wing had captured the Northern Fortress, players grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range wouldn't have to worry about a safe place to rest and recover.

Everyone had assumed that the first power to capture a Medium Fortress would be one of Dragonheart Island's Super Guilds, yet Zero Wing had accomplished the feat. No one had expected this outcome.

However, the masses' shock was nothing compared to how stunned the island's various powers were over the news.

"How is this possible?! That's the Northern Fortress we're talking about! How could a Guild like Zero Wing possibly capture it?!"

"Start an investigation! I want to know every detail of the event! Not even Thirteen Thrones dared to assault the Northern Fortress! Zero Wing must've used some special method to capture it! If we can learn this method, the rest of the Gravity Mountain Range's fortress will be ours!"

The various powers knew just how difficult these fortresses were to capture. Many of the island's superpowers had attempted such operations, only to fail.

These powers also knew what kind of Guild Zero Wing was. Even with the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's help, capturing the Northern Fortress should've been impossible for Zero Wing. If it were that easy, the various Super Guilds would've already occupied every fortress in the map.

Zero Wing must have used some tool or special method to succeed.

Meanwhile, a report regarding Zero Wing's success in capturing the Northern Fortress quickly made it to Melancholy's desk in the Thirteen Thrones' Dragonheart City Residence.

"Interesting. I hadn't really thought that they'd succeed," Melancholy commented, surprised as he read the initial report.

As Thirteen Thrones' Guild Leader, Melancholy knew better than anyone on Dragonheart Island how challenging the Gravity Mountain Range's fortress were to capture. When he had first heard of the operation, he had assumed Zero wing was going for broke, hoping it would work out somehow. The War Blood adventurer team was still going mad over trying to destroy the Guild, after all.

"Guild Leader, now that Zero Wing has captured the Northern Fortress, it will gain more influence on Dragonheart Island. Many powers will likely try to ally with the Guild. Should we..." Happy Art carefully asked Melancholy while eyeing Elder Wu.

Elder Wu had been a strong advocate for their Guild's relationship with Starlink since the superpower could be so helpful in capturing the Gravity Mountain Range's fortresses.

And yet, Zero Wing had successfully claimed the Northern Fortress, a feat that not even Thirteen Thrones had the strength to accomplish. Naturally, a Medium Fortress would offer far more and better benefits than a Small Fortress, and the various major powers already saw Zero Wing as a tempting ally. If Thirteen Thrones waited until other powers had allied with Zero Wing first, it would lose a significant amount of potential profit.

"Happy Art, you reach conclusions too quickly," the masked woman behind Elder Wu spoke up.

"Although Zero Wing has the Northern Fortress, capturing it is a lot easier than defending it, especially now that the Guild has angered both Starlink and War Blood. If we negotiate a partnership with Zero Wing, and it failed to defend the fortress, our Guild will be in an awkward position?"

Happy Art fell silent for a moment.

Other powers might not know much about the Gravity Mountain Range's fortresses, but Thirteen Thrones was very familiar with them. It was true that defending a fortress was far harder than capturing one. Thirteen Thrones had gone as far as stationing a large number of experts in the fortress long-term to protect it from periodic monster attacks, even utilizing a few of the Guild's trump cards. Needless to say, even stronger monsters would assault a Medium Fortress.

If Zero Wing couldn't protect the Northern Fortress during one of these monster attacks, the consequences would be dire.

"That kid has exceeded my expectations, but we should see if Zero Wing can defend the fortress before we make a decision," Elder Wu said. "It won't be too late to negotiate a partnership once Zero Wing proves that it can hold the Northern Fortress."

Elder Wu then stood and left the room. He didn't linger in the Guild Leader's office any longer.

While Dragonheart Island's various superpowers discussed Zero Wing's success, Shi Feng and his team were busy clearing the Undead mobs out of the Northern Fortress.

Capturing a monster-infested fortress wasn't the same as capturing a monster-infested town. Once a town's Guardian Boss was defeated, the remaining monsters would flee and disappear. However, in monster-infested fortresses, players had to kill the remaining monsters after defeating the Guardian Boss and claiming the fortress. Fortunately, once the monsters were dead, they wouldn't respawn.

"Guild Leader Black Flame, we should have these Undead mobs taken care of in a few more hours," Phoenix Rain reported. Worriedly, she continued, "However, according to the information I've recently received, War Blood and Nine Dragons Emperor can no longer sit still. Not only have they locked down the Gravity Mountain Range, but they've also begun to gather forces to capture the northern canyon's Rock Nest Fortress."

Although the Northern Fortress was the largest in the Gravity Mountain Range's northern region, its location was remote. In reality, the Northern Fortress wasn't that attractive to players. Fortunately, there weren't any areas for players in the Gravity Mountain Range, excluding Thirteen Thrones' Small Fortress. Players would have no choice but to visit the Northern Fortress, regardless of how remote it was.

However, if another fortress in the northern region were captured, that situation would change, especially if it were the Rock Nest Fortress.

The northern canyon, where the Rock Nest Fortress was located, was the sole path leading to the Gravity Mountain Range's northern region. If War Blood captured it, it would severely affect the Northern Fortress's popularity.

They have the right idea. We've just captured the Northern Fortress and still need some time to clean it up. If they can stop the flow of players and resources from reaching our fortress, they'll weaken the Northern Fortress's development speed. We might not even survive the first wave of monsters," Shi Feng said, chuckling. "Unfortunately, they don't know what it means to own a Medium Fortress."

After his comment, Shi Feng approached one of the destroyed Defensive Magic Towers.

There was a strict divide between the Gravity Mountain Range's fortresses. A Medium Fortress wasn't just larger than a Small Fortress; it also had Defensive Magic Towers. These towers were the main reason why Medium Fortresses had a qualitative advantage over Small Fortresses.

As he stepped into one of the dilapidated Defensive Magic Towers, Shi Feng used the Fortress Management Token he had obtained to call up the four towers' combined system interface.

Sure enough, repairing the towers will cost a ton. Shi Feng was astonished when he saw the repair cost for the four towers.

If he wished to repair all four Defensive Magic Towers, he would have to pay a total of 320,000 Magic Crystals and 120 units of Seven Luminaries Crystals.

Zero Wing could afford the 320,000 Magic Crystals. After all, the Guild had full control of a Manatite vein and an Attributed ore vein. It earned more Magic Crystals than an ordinary superpower. Unfortunately, the Seven Luminaries Crystals weren't as common.

Although Seven Luminaries Crystals dropped in certain Team Dungeons and maps, the drop-rate was painfully low. Even now, Zero Wing had barely saved up 200 units. He would have to part with more than half of Zero Wing's stock if he wanted to repair all four Defensive Magic Towers.

In the end, however, Shi Feng gritted his teeth and accepted the cost.

Only Medium Fortresses and larger had the privilege of using Defensive Magic Towers, and these towers were not limited to creating a defensive magic array to protect the fortress from invaders. They could also gather and concentrate the fortress's Mana, as well as act as a teleportation point.

Players couldn't rely on Return Scrolls or Guild Transfer Scrolls to return to a rest area while in the World Tower. They'd have to rely on their own feet to travel back and forth.

Of course, players could rely on Land or Flying Mounts, but this was a lot more difficult than using a Return Scroll. Players would have to conserve some of their Stamina for the return trip, which limited how long they could grind.

Meanwhile, the Defensive Magic Towers could nullify some of the World Tower's suppression, and players could connect Return Scrolls to the towers' teleportation point. This way, players could teleport to the Defensive Magic Towers freely.

Although the Defensive Magic Towers were only effective on their own floor, meaning that players couldn't teleport to the fortress after descending to the next underground floor, these towers had been immensely popular during Shi Feng's previous life. Every floor in the World Tower was massive, and traveling across them was inconvenient.

Because of the Defensive Magic Towers, the World Towers' Medium Fortresses could make more profit than their smaller counterparts.

Aside from profiting from visiting players, Medium Towers could also earn money from NPCs through the Defensive Magic Towers. These towers significantly increased a fortress's Defensive Value, and NPC merchants, who disliked risk, would only visit fortresses with a high enough Defensive Value.

Naturally, there was a massive difference between player-generated profit and profit earned from NPC merchants.

Although Ancient Coins were Dragonheart City's only currency, players generally spent Ancient Copper and Ancient Silver. They rarely spent Ancient Gold. This was why Thirteen Thrones had earned much Ancient Gold since capturing a Small Fortress.

However, NPC merchants were a different story. If an NPC merchant rented one of a fortress's Shops, they'd pay with Ancient Gold. The more NPCs that visited a Fortress, the more Ancient Gold a fortress's ruling power would earn.

Shi Feng desperately needed Ancient Gold. His desire for it had become even greater after defeating the Ancient Fiend ranked Undead King.

Normally, a fortress's Bosses only dropped average loot. That was clear based on the loot the Mythic ranked Undead General had dropped. Compared to the Bosses' loot, the fortress itself was the true prize.

Aside from the Fortress Management Token, the Undead King had dropped an extremely rare item.

The Freedom Hotel Design!

Shi Feng had thought he was hallucinated when he had seen the design.

The Freedom Hotel was a Peak Construction in God's Domain. Meanwhile, and it was even more valuable than a Fragmented Legendary item. For a Guild City to become a Main City, it needed a Peak Construction; thus, owning the design for one was akin to obtaining a Main City. Furthermore, a Peak Construction's abilities were out of this world.

If he could construct a Freedom Hotel, he could elevate Stone Forest City into an Intermediate City.

The difference between an Intermediate City and a Basic City in a Level 100-plus map was like the difference between heaven and earth when it came to helping players complete their Tier 3 Promotion Quests.

Of course, building a Peak Construction was extremely difficult. Every required material was exceedingly rare in God's Domain, and many of them couldn't be stored in a player's bag space.

The precious Boundary Stone was one such example!

One could only find a Boundary Stone by luck. The only place that sold them was the Black Market, and each stone cost 8,000 Ancient Gold. Meanwhile, constructing the Freedom Hotel required three Boundary Stones, and including the cost of the other materials, the Freedom Hotel's construction would cost at least 40,000 Ancient Gold...

Moreover, organizing a large-scale mining operation for the Gravity Mountain Ranges' rare ore veins would be a massive Ancient Gold expense.

The ore veins in the World Tower were crawling with monsters, especially at night. Every ore vein in the World Tower was practically a monster nest. Even expert teams

would be annihilated if they weren't careful.

A small-scale operation wouldn't be a problem, but to set up a large-scale operation, one would need to construct a mine and defensive structures, both of which cost Ancient Gold.

If Shi Feng wanted to develop Zero Wing in the World Tower quickly, he needed Ancient Gold.

Time passed quickly. While Shi Feng and the others slew the remaining monsters and repaired the fortress's various buildings, a system announcement reached every player in the map.

Gravity Mountain Range Region System Announcement: Congratulations to the War Blood adventurer team for capturing the Rock Nest Fortress and becoming its lord. Guild Popularity in Dragonheart City increased by 5,000.

The system announcement caused another uproar throughout the Gravity Mountain Range.

"What?! Zero Wing has just captured the Northern Fortress, yet War Blood has already captured the Rock Nest Fortress?"

"War Blood really is vicious. With two fortresses in a single region, Zero Wing won't be able to generate as much income from the Northern Fortress. To make matters worse, the Rock Nest Fortress occupied the path to the northern region."

"That's nothing. War Blood has also allied itself with quite a few of Dragonheart Island's top 10 adventurer teams. They're going to work together to seal off the northern region. They've declared that anybody who visits the Northern Fortress will be considered one of the adventurer team's enemies."

"How vicious! Even with a fortress, Zero Wing has no hope of surviving in Dragonheart City."

"Zero Wing can only blame itself for provoking so many of the island's powers."

The players grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range were astonished by how fast and decisively War Blood had captured the Rock Nest Fortress. They hadn't expected the adventurer team to strike down Zero Wing as soon as it had some success on Dragonheart Island.

"What should we do, Big Sis Rain?" Blue Phoenix paled when she read the latest report. "Because of War Blood's declaration, players that had been preparing to visit our fortress are backing out due to fear."

Maintaining a fortress wasn't easy. They'd have to station players here long-term to deal with the occasional monster raids. Meanwhile, players were a fortress's main source of income. If players weren't willing to visit the Northern Fortress, they'd be lucky not to hemorrhage money on the fortress's upkeep.

"How did they secure the Rock Nest Fortress so quickly?" Phoenix Rain's expression darkened when she heard the news. Although she had known that War Blood planned to capture the fortress, she hadn't thought that it would succeed so soon.

"Why don't we go teach them a lesson, Guild Leader" Aqua Rose suggested in a chilly tone after reading about War Blood's threat.

"Forget it. Their fortress is under a 3-day protection period. Attacking them would be meaningless right now," Shi Feng said, shaking his head. Chuckling, he continued, "However, since they want to play, we'll play. Spread the word that whoever visits the Rock Nest Fortress will be declaring Zero Wing an enemy. None of them will be allowed through the Northern Fortress's gates!"

Chapter 2296 – Fortress Opens

Gravity Mountain Range, Rock Nest Fortress:

The Rock Nest Fortress stood atop the northern canyon. From afar, it looked like a nest, which was how it had earned its name. The fortress was easy to defend and difficult to attack. However, the fortress was filled with tens of thousands of Level 85-plus players that were busy slaying the fortress's prior residents, the Blackstone Ores.

Several tens of thousands of Blackstone Ores had garrisoned the fortress, but less than 10,000 remained. Lying quietly in the fortress's heart was the four-meter-tall Ore King, and all sorts of weapons, equipment, and materials were scattered around its corpse.

"I hadn't thought that capturing a fortress would be this profitable. It's no wonder why Thirteen Thrones is so eager to capture a second one," Nine Dragons Emperor said, sighing ruefully as he gazed at the items on the ground.

Even in the Gravity Mountain Range, Great Lord rank and higher monsters were relatively rare, yet the Rock Nest Fortress had been home to tons of them. Since this was the first time these monsters had been slain, their drop-rate was much higher than the monsters that wandered the map.

Clearing out the Blackstone Ores had yielded over 10,000 weapons and equipment pieces. Moreover, every item was Level 90 or above. There were even some Level 100 weapons and equipment among the loot.

Although most of the weapons and equipment were only Secret-Silver rank, with a few Fine-Gold rank items, it was more than enough to serve as interim equipment. At the very least, his subordinates could use these items to start raiding Level 90 super-large-scale Team Dungeons as soon as they were the appropriate level.

“It’s only natural. Every fortress in the Gravity Mountain Range is a treasure trove. We had planned to work with Starlink to capture a Medium Fortress, but I hadn’t expected Zero Wing to claim the Northern Fortress successfully.

We had no choice but to move forward with our plans,” Blood Oath said. His voice cold, he continued, “Even with the Northern Fortress, I’ll ensure that Zero Wing has no place on Dragonheart Island.”

“That’s right! That Zero Wing is too arrogant! They look down on you, Commander Blood,” Nine Dragons Emperor said, nodding. “I suspect the Guild’s members have already begun to panic. Without any visiting players, even the best fortress in the world is useless.”

War Blood, Crimson Shadow, and Knight’s Sword, three of Dragonheart Island’s top 10 adventurer teams, had agreed to work together against Zero Wing. Not a single adventurer team on the island would dare cross these three. Furthermore, War Blood and Starlink were collaborating to seal off the northern region. Anyone that dared to explore the area would be making a one-way trip.

Aside from Zero Wing’s members and Phoenix Rain’s subordinates, no one would visit the Northern Fortress.

They had ensured that the Northern Fortress would be nothing more than a bottomless pit, steadily devouring Zero Wing’s funds.

The Gravity Mountain Range’s fortresses weren’t like the fortresses in the outside world. Monster attacks were more frequent here. Maintaining a Small Fortress cost enough of a fortune to give superpowers a headache, not to mention a Medium Fortress’s maintenance, and that was excluding the subsidies a power would need to pay the players that guarded the fortresses.

While Nine Dragons Emperor and Blood Oath conversed, a woman with an ancient bow approached.

“Commander, Zero Wing has made a move. They’ve mimicked out declaration, announcing that any player that entered the Rock Nest Forest will have no place in the Northern Fortress,” Ink Feather announced, smiling as she read the report she had just received.

“They’re trying to compete with our influence on Dragonheart Island? Black Flame is a fool. Does he really think Dragonheart Island is the same as Star-Moon Kingdom?” Blood Oath laughed.

“Commander Blood, I doubt that Black Flame knows that we’ve found a Mana Well in the Rock Nest Fortress.

Otherwise, he’d have never made this decision,” Nine Dragons Emperor said, smirking.

The Mana Well was the Rock Nest Fortress’s exclusive construction. Although repairing it would deplete their liquid funds, the Mana Well’s effects were well worth the cost. With this Mana Well, players could fully recover their Stamina and Concentration within half an hour. The Mana Well’s effects would tempt every player grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range.

The main reason that players visited fortresses was to rest and recover their Stamina and Concentration, and for the cost of one Ancient Gold Coin, players could make a full recovery within 30 minutes. Countless players on Dragonheart Island would seek this benefit.

As news of the Mana Well spread, even the players that visited the Thirteen Thrones’ Small Fortress would likely shift their attention to the Rock Nest Fortress, not to mention the powers that were considering setting up a base in the Northern Fortress.

“Since Black Flame is so eager to die, I don’t mind sending him to his grave.” Turning to Ink Feather, Blood Oath commanded, “Ink, quietly inform the various major powers on Dragonheart Island of the Mana Well. I’m sure they’ll know what to do once they receive the news.”

“Understood!”

Ink Feather grew even more eager to see Shi Feng despair. Unless they were stupid, the various powers would recognize the most beneficial fortress once word of the Mana Well spread.

...

Meanwhile, in Thirteen Thrones’ Residence in Dragonheart City...

“Zero Wing thinks that it can suppress War Blood just because it has captured a Medium Fortress? The Guild still isn’t aware of how foolish its being,” Elder Wu, who rested in his office, said as he read the report his subordinate had sent. “Thousand, have Lu Xingluo pay me a visit. Tell him that it’s about capturing a Medium Fortress.”

“Understood.” The masked woman named Thousand Lives smiled and nodded.

In her opinion, Zero Wing was extremely foolish. The Guild simply didn’t realize how powerful superpowers’ foundations were.

Elsewhere, in the Gravity Mountain Range’s Northern Fortress...

While Phoenix Rain organized the fortress's repairs, Shi Feng concentrated on restoring the Defensive Magic Towers' magic arrays.

The Magic Crystals and Seven Luminaries Crystals he had spent to repair the towers only repaired the core crystals. It was barely enough to activate the towers. To restore the Defensive Magic Towers to full power, players needed to repair the magic arrays and magic circuits within the towers.

However, this wasn't an easy task. It required an Advanced Magician at the very least, and the work was intensively time-consuming. Fortunately, Shi Feng was almost a Master Magician, so he could repair the arrays and circuits smoothly and swiftly.

Once the four Defensive Magic Towers' final magic circuit had been repaired, the towers' system interface reported that the towers were complete.

System: The Northern Fortress's Defensive Magic Towers have been fully repaired. It will cost 8,000 Magic Crystals to activate them and 6,000 Magic Crystals per day to maintain them. Do you wish to activate the Defensive Magic Towers?

Running at 100% efficiency is certainly expensive. Shi Feng was a little astonished when he read the system notification. The towers' operation cost was much higher than an ordinary Magic Tower. Not even ordinary first-rate Guilds could afford to keep the Northern Fortress's Defensive Magic Towers running constantly.

However, Shi Feng did not hesitate, activating the towers immediately.

After Shi Feng had sacrificed the required Magic Crystals, a twofold magic array appeared above the Northern Fortress, enveloping it. The twofold magic array then created a double-layered magic barrier

around the fortress, which was much stronger than the barrier Shi Feng and Phoenix Rain's army had broken through.

At the same time, all of the Mana within a 10,000-yard radius of the Northern Fortress began to gather within the fortress's walls. The fortress's Mana density skyrocketed, especially in the fortress's core. The Mana there was so dense that it transformed into a white mist. The players within the mist felt an indescribably pleasant sensation course through them, and a second experience bar appeared below their main bar, show that they had accumulated the Double EXP buff...

The Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion members were dumbfounded.

"Aqua, how are the fortress's repairs coming along?" Shi Feng asked after contacting Aqua Rose.

"We're 60% done. According to your instructions, we've prioritized hotels and accommodations, so they're ready now," Aqua Rose reported.

"Good. In that case, we can open the fortress to the public," Shi Feng said, smiling. He then called up the Northern Fortress's system interface and did just that.

Chapter 2297 – Heading to the Northern Fortress

After Shi Feng opened the Northern Fortress to the public, the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's and Zero Wing's members quickly disseminated news of this throughout the Gravity Mountain Range and Dragonheart City.

“Zero Wing opened the Northern Fortress so quickly!”

“Zero Wing is probably trying to snag some advantages. However, now that War Blood has made that kind of threat, who would dare visit the Northern Fortress?”

The various adventurer teams in the Gravity Mountain Range shook their heads and sighed at this piece of news. The Small Fortress Thirteen Thrones captured was hardly enough to accommodate the players operating in the Gravity Mountain Range. Hence, the capture of the Northern Fortress was naturally good news. However, War Blood had already stated that whoever dared visit the Northern Fortress would become its enemy.

The various adventurer teams with weak foundations did not dare provoke the War Blood adventurer team at all.

Meanwhile, over at the Rock Nest Fortress, War Blood and Nine Dragons Emperor had also received news of the Northern Fortress’s opening.

“Commander Blood, it seems Zero Wing is really anxious. Instead of properly making use of the fortress’s three-day protection period, it actually opened the fortress so quickly. With this, before we can even take action, the Northern Fortress will most likely fall to the monster tides first.” This situation elated Nine Dragons Emperor.

The various superpowers operating on Dragonheart Island all knew that defending a fortress in the Gravity Mountain Range—especially against the first monster tide a fortress would face—was much more difficult than capturing one.

Hence, the wisest decision was to utilize every second of the three-day protection period after a fortress’s conquest to enhance the fortress’s defenses as much as possible.

Now, however, just one day after seizing the Northern Fortress, Zero Wing had taken the initiative to lift the protection mechanism and open the Northern Fortress to the public. Since the Rock Nest Fortress had yet to open, such an action would indeed attract some players to the Northern Fortress. However, the monster tide at the Northern Fortress would not weaken just because the Guild didn't take full advantage of the protection mechanism.

"Zero Wing is indeed quick. Unfortunately for it, I won't leave it with even the slightest shred of hope," Blood Oath said coldly. "Ink, spread the news that we'll be opening Rock Nest Fortress tomorrow. We'll thoroughly eliminate the various adventurer teams, and Guilds' thoughts of moving to the Northern Fortress!"

Upon hearing Blood Oath's words, Nine Dragons Emperor was surprised. He never thought that Blood Oath would be so vicious as to give Zero Wing no opportunities whatsoever.

In reality, although opening the Northern Fortress so soon was very risky, Zero Wing's decision was still a considerably effective move. After all, the number of players grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range increased with each passing day. Thirteen Thrones' Small Fortress couldn't satisfy the needs of all of these players by itself. Hence, despite War Blood's influence and deterrence, some adventurer teams and Guilds would still rest in the Northern Fortress. After all, traveling between the Gravity Mountain Range and Dragonheart City required a lot of time, time which they could spend earning more income.

However, if the various adventurer teams and Guilds only had to wait one more day for Rock Nest Fortress's opening, then they would generally show War Blood some respect and avoid visiting the Northern Fortress, thereby rendering Zero Wing's actions meaningless.

Meanwhile, shortly after War Blood issued its new announcement, Ku Rong, who was in the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's Residence in Dragonheart City, received news about it.

“Moon, what do you think of this situation?” Ku Rong asked as he looked at the majestic woman seated at a corner of his office.

“Originally, I had a considerably high opinion of Zero Wing,” Cloudy Moon said unhurriedly. “Unfortunately, War Blood and Starlink’s influence is far too great. Their foundations are also extraordinary. Even if Black Flame possesses frightening combat power, he alone can’t change the overall situation. Moreover, I heard that Thirteen Thrones is already planning on working with Starlink again to capture a Medium Fortress. Once that happens, Zero Wing would lose all its advantages.”

In Cloudy Moon’s opinion, Phoenix Rain’s decision was simply too immature. Had Phoenix Rain accepted Starlink’s offer for partnership before, then her promotion to Great Pavilion Master would have been practically guaranteed. Unfortunately, Phoenix Rain ended up giving away that opportunity to Nine Dragons Emperor.

“Alright, I understand. Go make the necessary preparations,” Ku Rong sighed.

Now that the situation was clear for all to see, if the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion wished to form a good relationship with Starlink, then Phoenix Rain, who was now considered Starlink’s enemy, was unsuitable for the position of Great Pavilion Master.

While the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion was secretly making its preparations, the various powers of Dragonheart City were in an uproar over War Blood’s decisiveness. This situation allowed the general population in Dragonheart City to realize once more how frightening superpowers were.

Even though Zero Wing was a large Guild that successfully captured the Northern Fortress, it was still no more than an ant before a superpower.

Meanwhile, on a gravel hill in the Gravity Mountain Range, 100 Level 85-plus experts geared in Level 85 Secret-Silver Equipment were frantically besieging a Level 89 Grand Lord.

The Grand Lord ranked Six-armed Demonic Bear possessed extremely high Defense and destructive power. It could easily send several MTs flying with a single attack. However, facing the Level 90 Tigerkin Berserker at the helm of the team, the Demonic Bear was actually getting pushed back one step after another, no match for the Berserker in terms of Strength.

After battling 20 more minutes, the Six-armed Demonic Bear finally fell at the feet of this 100-man team.

“Our boss is too amazing! He actually managed to contend against the Six-armed Demonic Bear. With this kind of strength, he can definitely rank within the top 50 Berserkers on Dragonheart Island,” a Level 87 Shield Warrior said in admiration.

“I know, right? Previously, Heaven’s Blade’s commander even invited our boss to become a vice commander at Heaven’s Blade,” a Level 87 Ranger said, the female Half-elf’s eyes glowing as she looked at the Level 90 Berserker.

Heaven’s Blade was one of Dragonheart Island’s top 10 adventurer teams. Heaven’s Blade’s commander, Zwei, was even the idol of countless female players. An invitation from Zwei to become one of Heaven’s Blade’s vice commanders was considered a great honor on Dragonheart Island.

“Stop spouting nonsense about me,” Swimming Dragon said, rolling his eyes at his teammates. “We don’t have much Stamina left. Once everyone’s recovered, we’ll make our way to the Northern Fortress to rest.”

“Boss, War Blood has already set the Northern Fortress off-limits. Heaven’s Blade also warned us that we’ll definitely get targeted by War Blood if we patronize the Northern Fortress. If that happens, it’ll be very difficult for us to squeeze into the top eight adventurer teams subordinate to Heaven’s Blade.”

Upon hearing Swimming Dragon's words, the other players on the team hurriedly tried to dissuade him.

The Dragon Riders adventurer team was improving so rapidly that they now had a chance at becoming one of the top eight adventurer teams subordinate to Heaven's Blade. This was something that they never imagined was possible.

After all, Heaven's Blade was the fifth-rank adventurer team on Dragonheart Island. Plenty of adventurer teams subordinated themselves to Heaven's Blade, but only eight adventurer teams would receive priority treatment.

So long as Dragon Riders became one of these top eight adventurer teams, its position on Dragonheart Island would skyrocket. At that time, even first-rate Guilds would not dare to provoke it.

"Enough! I know what I'm doing! Tidy up immediately! We're heading to the Northern Fortress right now!" Swimming Dragon berated, completely ignoring everyone's opinion.

He had his current success only because of Shi Feng.

While training inside the Tower of Four Gods, he had not only entered the Flowing Water Realm but also mastered an Advanced Combat Technique and improved his Completion Rate for Tier 2 Skills by a significant margin. After his challenge ended, he even received an Epic ranked Replica of the Legendary Weapon Hurricane's Injury. This Replica was top-tier even among Epic Weapons. Moreover, the greatsword also had high compatibility with him. As a result, his combat power underwent a qualitative improvement after he equipped the weapon.

Now that Zero Wing was in trouble, how could he just stand by and do nothing?

Since War Blood wished to seal the pathway leading toward the northern region and prevent players from entering or exiting the area, then Swimming Dragon could just stick to grinding in the northern region. In any case, with the Northern Fortress around, he would not have to worry about having nowhere to rest. War Blood wouldn't be able to do anything against him.

The other members of Dragon Riders had no choice but to listen to their commander's words and head off toward the Northern Fortress.

After traveling by Mount for several hours and carefully avoiding War Blood's members, Swimming Dragon and the others finally arrived at the Northern Fortress.

However, the moment everyone walked through the fortress's gates, they were stunned.

"What's going on?"

"Why is the Mana density here so high?"

"No, it's not just the Mana here. I can feel my body becoming significantly lighter as well. It's as if the suppression outside is gone."

Chapter 2298 – Heavenly Fortress

After momentarily falling into a daze, Dragon Riders' members promptly revealed ecstatic expressions on their faces. "It's true! That pressure really has disappeared!"

"Boss, if we can rest here long-term, we can keep grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range without returning to Dragonheart City! If that's the case, we won't need more than half a month to surpass those top eight adventurer teams subordinate to Heaven's Blade!"

Previously, they had not expected much of the Northern Fortress. After all, they had visited Thirteen Thrones' fortress before, so they knew what purpose the Gravity Mountain Range's fortresses served. These fortresses were merely temporary rest areas. Aside from allowing players to recover Stamina and Concentration, they only provided materials replenishment and weapons and equipment repair.

However, the Northern Fortress completely overthrew their understanding of the Gravity Mountain Range's fortresses.

Setting aside accumulating the Double EXP buff inside the Northern Fortress, just the fact that the fortress could remove the ever-present pressure they felt while grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range was already plenty amazing. Since the Northern Fortress had this kind of ability, they would not need to head back to Dragonheart City to relieve themselves of this pressure.

Although the pressure the Gravity Mountain Range exerted on them had only a minuscule effect, long-term exposure would still build up mental fatigue, which would rise especially quickly when they were fighting against powerful monsters.

Hence, even with the opportunity to rest in Thirteen Thrones' fortress, they would still return to Dragonheart City once every four or five days to relax and refresh their minds.

At this point, it was already their third day in the Gravity Mountain Range, so the mental fatigue they had accumulated was quite significant. However, the moment they entered the Northern Fortress, said

mental fatigue had disappeared completely. Normally, this pleasant sensation was something they would feel only after returning to Dragonheart City.

If they could rid themselves of the Gravity Mountain Range's pressure just by entering the Northern Fortress, then they could forgo returning to Dragonheart City and remain in the Gravity Mountain Range. With this, they could save plenty on the travel time between the World Tower and Dragonheart City, thereby increasing their leveling speed and resource acquisition rate.

In this situation, Swimming Dragon could not help being overjoyed.

The Northern Fortress's benefits might not seem like much, but with persistence, a drop of water could wear out even a stone. With the help of the Northern Fortress's ability, the Dragon Riders adventurer team could slowly pull ahead of Dragonheart City's adventurer teams. Surpassing the top eight adventurer teams subordinate to Heaven's Blade would also be a piece of cake.

During the time Dragon Riders' members were strolling about, enjoying the Northern Fortress's pressure-free environment, a gasp suddenly appeared in the team chat.

"Boss, come over here, quickly! I discovered something good!" a Level 87 Tigerkin Shield Warrior yelled excitedly.

"What is it? What's so important that you need to make such a huge fuss?" Swimming Dragon asked, exasperated.

Dragon Riders was a well-known adventurer team on Dragonheart Island. Having one of its members act like a country bumpkin in front of the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's and Zero Wing's members after entering the Northern Fortress was a huge embarrassment to the adventurer team.

“Boss, it’s the teleportation scroll for this fortress! Return Scrolls for the Northern Fortress are available at the Defensive Magic Towers!” the Tigerkin Shield Warrior replied.

“What? Return Scrolls?” Swimming Dragon’s breathing momentarily grew heavier.

Return Scrolls for locations in the outside world were unusable inside the World Tower. Meanwhile, the Gravity Mountain Range was an extremely dangerous place, and players could enter a death zone unawares at any time. Players might be able to escape momentarily using Instantaneous Transfer Scrolls, but without the help of a Return Scroll, they would still encounter countless perils on their way back to safety.

If players could utilize Return Scrolls inside the Gravity Mountain Range, they would no longer have to be afraid of exploring unknown and dangerous regions.

Moreover, with Return Scrolls, players would no longer have to conserve their Stamina and Concentration to walk back to the nearest rest area, increasing their range of operations drastically.

“Buy them! Buy them all, quickly! It doesn’t matter even if they cost 1 Ancient Gold each!” Swimming Dragon ordered, his eyes glowing with excitement.

Ancient Gold might be difficult to earn, but compared to their lives, let alone 1 Ancient Gold, even 10 Ancient Gold would not be comparable. After all, even a single death at their levels would deprive them of plenty of opportunities.

“Boss, relax. These Return Scrolls are sold by NPCs. You can have as many as you want. Moreover, each Return Scroll costs only 10 Ancient Silver. However, these Return Scrolls are bound to the buyer and cannot be transferred to other players,” the Tigerkin Shield Warrior said, grinning.

“What? Only 10 Ancient Silver?” For a moment, Swimming Dragon thought he had misheard.

Ordinary players might not be able to bear the price of 10 Ancient Silver, but this was easily affordable for experts like themselves. After all, just entering the Gravity Mountain Range cost 5 Ancient Silver while entering a fortress was 1 Ancient Silver and staying in a hotel, 2 to 3 Ancient Silver.

Following which, Swimming Dragon had everyone in his team immediately go and purchase some Return Scrolls at the Defensive Magic Towers. In fact, aside from some money for accommodation and repair fees, he told his teammates to spend all their Ancient Silver to purchase the Northern Fortress’s Return Scrolls, afraid that the Return Scrolls would become unavailable or increase in price in the future.

However, what Swimming Dragon did not know was that the system handled the price for the Northern Fortress’s Return Scrolls, which could be considered one of the special abilities of the Defensive Magic Towers. This ability was something similar to the Additional Skills found on weapons and equipment. Shi Feng had no say in the settings and could only collect a portion of the profits.

Meanwhile, even after having his teammates spend all their spare Ancient Silver on Return Scrolls, Swimming Dragon was still not satisfied. After all, he knew that so long as they exploited this opportunity to the fullest, the Dragon Riders adventurer team could see a qualitative leap in development.

“Notify everyone in the adventurer team and have them come to the Northern Fortress! From now onwards, the Northern Fortress will be Dragon Riders’ main headquarters!” Swimming Dragon said.

After saying so, he immediately visited four of the Northern Fortress’s Basic Hotels and rented all four long-term for 60 Ancient Gold per day. He intended to have these four hotels serve as Dragon Riders’ temporary headquarters and lodging for the adventurer team’s members. That way, members would not have to worry about accommodations and end up sleeping on the streets.

Shortly after Swimming Dragon gave his command, Dragon Riders' members promptly sprang into action. All 2,000- plus members of the adventurer team suddenly headed to the World Tower.

The large-scale movement piqued the curiosity of many of the adventurer teams that had close relations with Dragon Riders. Some players that were friends with Dragon Riders' members also asked their friends about this situation.

"What are you guys trying to do? Is Dragon Riders conducting some kind of large-scale operation?"

"It's not a large-scale operation. Our adventurer team is just moving our main headquarters to the Northern Fortress."

"Are you guys insane? Didn't you hear the threat War Blood made?"

"War Blood might be powerful, but we can simply stick to the northern region. At worst, we'll just avoid grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range's other areas. Here, let me tell you a secret. Zero Wing's Northern Fortress is freaking amazing. Not only can you accumulate the Double EXP buff there, but my team leader says that you can even rid yourself of the Gravity Mountain Range's ever-present pressure by entering the Northern Fortress. What's even more amazing is that there are Return Scrolls on sale at the Northern Fortress. With those, even ordinary experts like us can grind freely and efficiently in the Gravity Mountain Range."

"You're kidding me, right? I've been to Thirteen Thrones' fortress before."

"It's fine if you don't believe me, but once my level surpasses yours, don't say that I never told you about this."

After saying so, the members of Dragon Riders hurried toward the Northern Fortress. They all wished to start competing for the Gravity Mountain Range's leveling resources as soon as possible.

While the Dragon Riders adventurer team was rushing to the Northern Fortress, information about the Northern Fortress started spreading among some of Dragonheart City's adventurer teams. Shortly after, news of it also reached Dragonheart City's major powers.

Chapter 2299 – Popular Fortress

Dragonheart City was originally already bubbling over the conflict between Zero Wing and War Blood. Hence, the city's various powers were keeping an eye out for news about the Northern Fortress.

The World Tower could be said to be Dragonheart City's greatest resource; the various powers had all obtained a large number of leveling and material resources from it. Meanwhile, the Gravity Mountain Range's fortresses played a crucial role in further enhancing their resource acquisition rate.

With rumors regarding the Northern Fortress's devastating abilities proliferating, Dragonheart City's various powers immediately launched an investigation to ascertain the truth.

“Return Scrolls?”

“Investigate! I want this information verified as soon as possible!”

Previously, the various powers had nothing much to say much about War Blood's threat, as War Blood had also captured a fortress in the northern region and was going to open it just one day after the Northern Fortress opened. A one-day difference wouldn't affect their development by much. Moreover, the Northern Fortress's location was remote, so it wasn't particularly attractive to the various powers. At best, it could only serve as a rest area.

However, things were different now.

The Northern Fortress's Return Scroll would be a game-changer in the Gravity Mountain Range. The difference between having a Return Scroll and not having one while grinding in the Gravity Mountain Range was massive. Moreover, the effects would snowball as time passed.

The reason the various powers had set up a base of operations in Dragonheart City was to gain better development resources. If their own profits were not affected, the various powers would show War Blood some respect and avoid provoking it as much as possible. However, it was a whole other story if conceding to War Blood's demands affected their development by a significant margin.

Dragonheart City's various powers sent scouts to check out the Northern Fortress, which crowded the hall of the World Tower's first underground floor.

The moment the various powers' scouts entered the Northern Fortress, they were shocked by the fortress's environment.

The high Mana density and lack of mental pressure here made the Northern Fortress no different from Dragonheart City. It was entirely possible for players to use the Northern Fortress as a temporary base. With the Northern Fortress, they would no longer have to shuttle between the World Tower and Dragonheart City.

Most importantly, the Northern Fortress possessed Return Scrolls. The price of 10 Ancient Silver nearly had the visiting players wondering whether they were hallucinating.

After the various powers' scouts reported back about the situation inside the Northern Fortress, a huge commotion erupted in Dragonheart City.

The Gravity Mountain Range's resources were incomparably abundant. Until now, the various powers had yet to explore even two-thirds of the entire map. This was especially true for the ruins of the ancient civilization. These ruins contained a plethora of precious treasures. Only, due to the Gravity Mountain Range's environment, exploring these ruins was still incredibly difficult, even with the help of a Small Fortress.

Meanwhile, although the Northern Fortress was in a remote area, it perfectly solved the hindrance to staying in the Gravity Mountain Range long-term.

This meant that Guild members could start exploring the various ancient ruins with much greater efficiency than before and secure even more resources for themselves. Their exploration progress might even surpass that of Thirteen Thrones, which possessed a Small Fortress.

"Notify everyone immediately! We're shifting our Guild's base of operations on Dragonheart Island to the Northern Fortress!"

"But what about War Blood?"

"Screw them! This is an opportunity for our Guild! We'll kill anybody that stands in our way!"

Less than an hour after the various powers based in Dragonheart City verified the rumors regarding the Northern Fortress, many started sending a large number of experts there lest other powers get ahead of them. After all, the Northern Fortress was only a Medium Fortress. Unlike a city, a Medium Fortress could accommodate only a very limited number of players. The number of hotels in a fortress was especially limited.

Not resting in a hotel would severely impact players' recovery speed. Moreover, according to the powers' investigations, the Northern Fortress's hotels could even hasten the Double EXP buffs accumulation rate. The difference between having a hotel to rest in and not having one would drastically affect their leveling speed.

Meanwhile, over at the Gravity Mountain Range's Northern Fortress, the sudden influx of players made the fortress bustle.

"Big Sis Rain, according to our latest statistics, over 150,000 players have visited the Northern Fortress thus far, and estimates state that we should hit the 400,000 mark by the end of today," Blue Phoenix reported excitedly as she approached Phoenix Rain.

Back when Thirteen Thrones had successfully captured a fortress, despite the huge commotion in Dragonheart City, the fortress had managed to attract only around 200,000 visitors on its first day. Meanwhile, the fortress had a player population of only 700,000, which was also the maximum capacity of a Small Fortress.

In comparison, the Northern Fortress was expected to attract over 400,000 visitors on the opening day alone. It would most likely take only two or three days to exceed the 700,000 threshold. Reaching the maximum capacity of 1,500,000 players was only a matter of time.

It should be known that even with just a 700,000 player population, Thirteen Thrones' Small Fortress generated tons of wealth and resources every day. Although Blue Phoenix did not know how much the

Small Fortress was earning exactly, according to the investigations of the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's spies, the fortress's daily income was at least 5,000 Ancient Gold and 600,000 Ancient Silver.

Once the Northern Fortress's player population reached maximum capacity, one could easily imagine how much income it would generate. Moreover, the Northern Fortress had many more sources of revenue than Thirteen Thrones' Small Fortress. Even though Phoenix Rain held only 20% of the Northern Fortress's shares, the income she would receive could rival half of a Small Fortress's total income, at the very least.

Half!

Even Starlink did not receive half of the income from Thirteen Thrones' Small Fortress. At that time, who would dare question Phoenix Rain's position in the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion?

"I'm afraid that even War Blood and Starlink did not expect such an outcome." When Phoenix Rain looked at the statistics report in her hand, she could not help but sigh ruefully.

Previously, even after successfully capturing the Northern Fortress, she had still felt that Shi Feng had gone overboard with his actions in the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion's Residence. Now, however, it would seem that the one to regret their actions would not be Zero Wing, but War Blood instead.

The Northern Fortress's future was already clear for all to see. Once a sufficient number of players gathered and the Northern Fortress was in full operation, it would be impossible for War Blood to exhaust and destroy Zero Wing in the Sea of Death. After all, the disparity in the incomes of the two sides would be simply too massive.

Aside from Phoenix Rain, Dragonheart City's various superpowers were entertaining such thoughts as well.

Although War Blood had captured the Rock Nest Fortress, the difference between that and the Northern Fortress was far too massive. With this, War Blood had backed itself into a corner. After all, War Blood had previously declared that it would ban all those who entered the Northern Fortress from the Rock Nest Fortress. Now, the players that were originally planning on resting at the Rock Nest Fortress would not dare approach the fortress at all—a situation that would definitely reduce the Rock Nest Fortress's income.

While the various powers were paying attention to the Northern Fortress, Shi Feng was hustling in the Northern Fortress.

Not only did he have to reorganize the Northern Fortress's construction plans, due to the explosive increase in player population, but he also had to deal with the partnership offers and Shop purchase requests from the various powers.

"Guild Leader, the Fang Family's people have visited our main headquarters and stated that they wish to meet you," Gentle Snow, who was currently organizing the information on the Northern Fortress's Shops, said, a grim expression on her face.

Previously, due to her personal matters, Shi Feng had stepped forward to provoke the Fang Family, the number one family in Fenglin City, which possessed extraordinary influence in the city. The fact that the Fang Family was paying Zero Wing a visit now definitely wasn't good news for the Guild.

"The Fang Family?" Shi Feng nodded. "Let's go meet them, then."

Chapter 2300 – Clash with the Fang Family

Zero Wing's main headquarters, top-floor reception room:

Four people waited in the reception room, and the atmosphere was unusually depressing. Xiao Yu, who acted as the receptionist, wore a particularly ugly expression.

Xiao Yu's reaction to the middle-aged man was the cause of the atmosphere in the room. The older gentleman wore gray, martial artist robes and loomed like a mountain. His aura was also quite oppressive.

However, his physical presence wasn't the only reason for Xiao Yu's reaction. His identity was the true reason.

The middle-aged man was the current head of the Fang Family and the chairman of the Qilin Corporation, Fang Zhenyuan!

The Qilin Corporation might not be on the same level as the Five States Corporation, but it was one of the first-rate corporations in the country. It was also why the Fang Family stood at the top among Fenglin City's powerful families.

If Fang Zhenyuan wished it, he could destroy the Big Dipper Group with a word.

Why wouldn't Xiao Yu be afraid with such an important individual before him?

Fang Zhenyuan was a true mogul in the business world, nothing like the youngsters that had inherited their families' businesses.

A young man and woman accompanied Fang Zhenyuan in the room. The young man was none other than Fang Mingyu, the Fang Family's strongest expert of the younger generation. On the other hand, Xiao Yu didn't recognize the young woman with long, wavy hair and wearing a bright-red dress. However, he knew she must be of high status, considering that she visited Zero Wing's headquarters alongside Fang Zhenyuan.

As Xiao Yu wondered why a VIP like Fang Zhenyuan would visit Zero Wing's headquarters, the reception room's doors opened, and Shi Feng, Bai Qingxue, and Lei Bao entered.

Fang Mingyu's indifferent expression vanished the moment he saw Shi Feng. Even Xiao Yu could see the fear in the large man's eyes. However, Fang Mingyu's gaze also contained a trace of killing intent.

Xiao Yu found the man's reaction reasonable after giving the matter some thought. Fang Mingyu was the Fang Family's prided genius, yet Shi Feng had subdued him with a single move in the Redstone Restaurant. To make matters worse, Fenglin City's upper society frequently visited the Redstone Restaurant, and they wouldn't miss the news of Fang Mingyu's miserable defeat.

"I had my doubts about Mingyu's claim, but looking at you now, it seems he had been correct. You are both courageous and strong. I'm afraid none among the younger generation is a match for you," Fang Zhenyuan said, a trace of shock flashing in his eyes as he examined Shi Feng.

Gentle Snow, who had already been worried about this visit, began to panic when she saw Fang Zhenyuan. She had never expected him to visit Zero Wing personally.

"Mister Fang's praise is too generous. May I know what business the Fang Family has with me today?" Shi Feng asked, getting straight to the point.

The Fang Family's visit didn't particularly surprise Shi Feng. Since they had made a personal appearance, they must have important business to discuss, but Shi Feng had no desire to play their word games. He still had a lot he needed to do.

"Since you've asked, I'll just put it bluntly. You'd caused quite a commotion in the Redstone Restaurant. After all is said and done, the Fang Family is one of the most reputable families in Fenglin City. If we don't take act, how do you think the other families will view ours?" Fang Zhenyuan peacefully explained. "However, I've heard that Zero Wing's development in God's Domain is quite impressive, and the virtual combat platform you've recently set up has been performing considerably well. The Fang Family has interests in these aspects, so we plan to invest in Zero Wing. In return, the Fang Family only wants 51% of Zero Wing's shares.

"Not only will Zero Wing receive a massive capital deposit from the Qilin Corporation too boost its development, but you'll also have access to the various dojos and training centers in Fenglin City for recruiting and nurturing talented players. What are your thoughts?"

After Fang Zhenyuan's statement, the room fell silent. Xiao Yu stared at the man in astonishment. He had never thought that this colossal existence would be interested in Zero Wing enough to offer full investment.

Although many Guilds in God's Domain were supported by major corporations, that support was limited. No corporation would invest so much in a single Guild.

If Zero Wing had the Qilin Corporation's full support, both Zero Wing and the Heaven's Rumble Training Center's development speed would undergo a qualitative transformation. However, Fang Zhenyuan's demand for 51% of the organization's shares would set him up as Zero Wing's owner.

Gentle Snow paled instantly. She hadn't expected the Fang Family's appetite to be this large.

“This is the friendliest threat I’ve ever heard,” Shi Feng said, chuckling.

To put it simply, Fang Zhenyuan wanted to become Zero Wing’s majority shareholder in exchange for letting the previous insult slide.

“Do you intend to make an enemy of the Fang Family?” Fang Zhenyuan asked, frowning. Coldy, he continued, “Or do you think that you can lead Zero Wing and Heaven’s Rumble against the Fang Family with your martial prowess alone?”

As Fang Zhenyuan’s tone chilled, the intensity of his aura spiked. The room grew heated as if a volcano had begun to erupt.

“A neutralizing grandmaster!” Lei Bao exclaimed from behind Shi Feng, stunned by the revelation.

Although Lei Bao had felt substantial pressure from Fang Zhenyuan and knew this man was no ordinary person, he hadn’t expected the head of the Fang Family to be a neutralizing grandmaster.

It was impressive enough for one family to nurture a single neutralizing grandmaster. A family could prosper for an entire century with just one such individual. The Fang Family only enjoyed its current status today due to Old Man Fang, Fang Zhenyuan’s father.

And yet, Fang Zhenyuan exposed the fact that he was also a neutralizing grandmaster, which meant the Fang Family had two such individuals.

When Xiao Yu heard Lei Bao's statement, he was just as stunned. With two neutralizing grandmasters, it had enough influence to force the various families, dojos, and training centers in Fenglin City to obey its every command, regardless of the rest of the Fang Family's martial prowess.

Fang Mingyu, who reclined on a sofa, sneered at Shi Feng.

Everyone had assumed the Fang Family's rise was due to his grandfather. They also believed that once his grandfather reached his 101st birthday, the family would crumble.

However, the public didn't realize that the Fang Family's foundations had grown since his grandfather had led the family. If they hadn't, his grandfather would never have passed control of the family to his father, Fang Zhenyuan.

Fang Mingyu acknowledged that he was no match for Shi Feng, but the tricks Shi Feng had played against him wouldn't work with his father. When he faced his father, Fang Mingyu didn't even have the heart to resist. He had no hope of contending with his father's inhuman fitness in a direct confrontation.

"How can I know if I don't try?" Shi Feng nonchalantly replied.

"Good! Let me see if you're as strong as you claim!"

Fang Zhenyuan's fist then shot toward Shi Feng with exceptional speed and grace.