

## Oracle 661

### [Chapter 661 Adventurer's Guild](#)

A few minutes later, Jake stood awestruck before an impressive five-story building with a relatively flat roof except for a small tower ending in a dome with no chimney nor windows.

From the outside this mansion looked snug and comfortable. It had been built with red pine wood and had white brick decorations. Large, octagon windows added to the overall style of the mansion and had been integrated to the house in a very symmetric way.

The building was shaped like a short U. The two extensions extended into stylish gardens circling around half the house, while the interior housed a patio partially covered by glass overhanging panels.

Each floor was smaller than the first, which allowed for larger and larger balconies and even what sounded like a pool on the fourth floor from the sounds of splashing and relaxed giggling Jake heard from below.

"These Adventurers really have it good!" Jake smirked. It was hard to believe that the end of the world was upon them.

"Only A-Rank Adventurers and mercenary groups of similar rank can access these services for free. Ordinary adventurers and mercenaries... It's already good if we can visit something other than the first floor." Trash explained bitterly.

To avoid any unpleasant twists and turns, Jake asked everything he needed to know about the Guild so as not to arouse suspicion, woke Jeanie up for fear that she would blow the whole thing, and then walked in with a leisurely walk, whistling with his hands behind his back.

[You don't want to look even more suspicious?] Xi snorted.

'I've always wanted to do this. Doesn't it make me look mysterious and confident?' Jake chuckled.

[If you looked like a wise old man of 200 years, yes. Now it just makes you look stuck up and fake.]

Cough... Jake abruptly stopped whistling, cleared his throat and pushed the door open more violently than he would have wanted.

[Hehe. You're more touchy than I thought.]

'Don't fuck with me, Xi. You know exactly what kind of temper I have.' Jake replied with a straight face. He could be quite thick skinned when he wanted to be.

The interior of the mansion matched the exterior: spacious and grand. However, although the furnishings and tapestries showed a degree of luxury, the first floor was crowded and the smell of grime and sweat prevailed. With his superhuman olfactory sense, Jake couldn't help but tighten his nostrils.

"Some of these adventurers really need a shower." Jake muttered under his breath without covering his displeasure.

As he said this, dozens of angry glares came his way, but he pretended not to notice. Inwardly, on the contrary, he was fairly surprised. He had not spoken loudly just now. Clearly, there were some decent adventurers among them.

Taking in the vast room with his eyes, Jake immediately found several counters held by young men and women in business suits or dresses. Most of the adventurers who weren't chatting or looking at the mission board were lined up at one of them. The remaining people were having a drink or a snack over a friendly game of cards or dice.

The building was U-shaped, so the room was divided into two long wings, and although they were equally crowded and noisy, he had no intention of exploring them. Walls and doors partitioned these two wings, making it impossible to see clearly what was going on inside anyway.

Not wanting to make a spectacle of himself, Jake joined one of the lines and waited his turn with Trash. After a few minutes, the line had thinned out quite a bit and as he moved forward Jake got a direct view of the half-open door giving onto the left wing. With nothing better to do, he glanced around.

On the other side, he saw a group of twenty warriors, built like hulking brutes and equipped with fancy armor, harassing a young woman. Unless it was the opposite? She seemed to be begging them to help her with something... This voice was not familiar to him, but her long white hair stirred up some old memories.

With his eyes suddenly wide open and sharp, he stared hard at the room, even going so far as to run a scan. The scan report turned out to be normal, while the young woman's appearance proved to be completely different from the one he knew.

Still, Jake wasn't the type to fully trust the Oracle. Who knew if there was an Oracle Skill capable of falsifying a scan result. As for changing one's appearance? That was even easier.

Just as he was about to activate his Oracle Skill Promotion before running a second scan, the person in line ahead of him unexpectedly left the guild in a hurry, clearing the way. The adventuress at the counter, a shabby-looking and obviously penniless sorceress, had also finished complaining and left with a crestfallen look on her face along with her meager purse. Jake even heard her grumbling hatefully in a low voice,

"Those Adventurers' Guilds... they're all crooks!"

Upon spotting an unfamiliar handsome man, the pretty receptionist's eyes lit up, but upon recognizing the teenager wearing an oversized chain mail by his side, her kindly facade instantly crumbled.

"What can I do for you?" She forced herself to ask with a bright smile, keeping her practiced manner.

Jake slyly assessed the hostess with his eyes, whose body language and bearing exhibited prominent signs of stress and fatigue. If not for her makeup, she would have looked much older. This job must not have been easy in these times. Especially when there was no hope of ever boarding the Celestial City.

"Two reasons are bringing me." Jake replied gently, pointing to the browbeaten kid next to him. "Firstly to report the death of several of your guild members. His mercenary group got wiped out. He was the only survivor I could save. As for the second reason, I want to join your guild by creating my own adventurer group."

The receptionist widened her blue eyes in astonishment. This time she gave the boy a pitying look. This kind of news, she had been hearing several times a day since the Celestial City descent and the start of this all-out war.

"So Uncle Oaf is dead... I always thought he would outlast all the disasters." She lamented, rubbing her eyes discreetly. Her eyes were a little red after that. "He was never talented, but I've rarely known anyone so resourceful. I guess his fatness got the better of him. I always told him! Eat less or one day you'll be too slow to avoid the arrows!"

"That's pretty close to what happened." Jake remarked without delving into any morbid details. Uncle Oaf had not died from arrows but from monster bites and scratches. The cause of his death, though, was basically the same... excessive slowness.

"Let me check to see if he had taken out life insurance or stored savings in case of death."

The receptionist donned strange glasses and spoke a peculiar word. Glowing symbols flashed behind the lens of her glasses until she found the right folder. She then left for a couple of seconds and returned with a stack of parchments stapled together. She flipped through them briefly and then heaved an apologetic sigh,

"No cash or insurance. The poor fuck and his gang always spent it all on taverns and hookers every time they came back from a mission. In fact... the gang is drowning in debt. This untimely death may be the best thing that ever happened to them... I'm afraid I can't do anything."

Trash collapsed in despair as he heard the sad truth. Uncle Oaf wasn't rich. He was just a spendthrift. Jake patted his head indifferently. To him, this was no surprise at all. He had expected such a result from the start.

"Are you taking gold? I got my hands on a nice nugget a few days ago." Jake asked out of nowhere.

He again experienced a flurry of intense, greedy stares this time, raining down on him. Undeterred, he flung at them his fine middle finger. Whether they got the message or not, he didn't care.

The receptionist was momentarily dazed by his question, even wondering for a second if she had heard correctly, but she pulled herself together and hastily nodded.

"Yes, in the absence of currency we accept precious metals and all magical materials and herbs. Keep in mind, however, that we buy them back from you at a discount compared to the market price. In return, we'll dispose of them immediately regardless of their origin."

"Sounds fair to me." Jake nodded with satisfaction.

Without hesitation, he produced a gold nugget weighing several kilos on the desk and used his Metal and Heat Control to instantly reshape it into a perfect little ingot. The magic trick shocked the receptionist to the core and she began to stare at him with new eyes. The other mercenaries and adventurers also stopped eyeballing him as if they wanted to strip him. No matter the place, the strong was always respected.

"Lord Mage, what should I call you?" She sucked in a deep breath and asked much more politely.

" Jake will do."

"Very well, Lord Jake." She bowed slightly. "To create your Membership Card I need your Identity Card."

It was only now that Jake realized that the Ret'Asi Empire had not invented this method. Obviously, the Adventurers Guild had been using it for much longer and the empire had copied them and spread it to the entire population.

Already mentally prepared, he lent his brand new ID card to the young woman and she swiped it in the same brick-shaped device Jeanie had used in front of him. When she saw the result, her eyes instantly popped out of her face.

### [Chapter 662 Poor Fools](#)

[Level: 28 (Digitized)]

[Species:Human]

[Class: Rune Engraver]

[HP: 10000>52000 (Regen: 182.7>4940.2 HP/min)]

[MP: 0]

[Strength : 960]

[Agility: 505]

[Constitution: 1000>5200]

[Vitality: 775>4030]

[Intelligence: 273>2184]

[Perception: 571>4568]

[Extrasensory Perception: 252>2016]

[Luck: 34]

[Reference for an adult human jobless level 1: HP:10, stats: 1 .]

These were his new stats after acquiring his Soul Class. Compared to ordinary natives, he was already a total outlier. One had to keep in mind that the young female receptionist in front of him had stats ranging from 1.1 to 7.3... And she was lvl 23.

" 5... 5200 ! " She gasped, blinking with a dumbstruck look on her face as she checked out his Constitution. Thankfully, she had blurted out in a whisper or she wouldn't have been the only one to look so appalled. "H-how is that possible?"

When she stared at the handsome man opposite her this time, she saw not a cute guy but a dragon in human skin. If Jeanie hadn't changed his basic information like his species, height and weight, she would have definitely suspected that he wasn't human.

5200 Constitution points? Even a giant bar of Orichalcum wasn't that strong. If a meteorite were to smite the Lodunvals Adventurers' Guild at this very moment, leveling the mansion and the warriors inside, this Jake would undoubtedly be the only survivor. And unharmed to boot!

Such a human in such a remote city and during wartime! It was more than a tad suspicious!

"Something wrong?" Jake snapped her out of her paranoid rant with the same sweet smile.

He could have pressured her, even mentally broken her with a single thought, but that wasn't his style. He much preferred to put the innocent at ease. Especially since this hapless lady already looked very close to burn-out.

The desk clerk sat up jerkily, drawing in a loud breath, then stammered hoarsely as she quivered,

"No-no, everything is fine!" She bit her lip to shake off her fear and negative thoughts and then decided to just do her job. Whatever the agenda of this... Jake Wilderth, it was none of her business.

Jake let her work for a few minutes, silently watching her manipulate a device similar to the Arcanitor Jeanie had used earlier. In this world, it must have been what they used as a computer, judging by the holographic interface flickering before him.

When the Minmin had performed these manipulations, he had been unable to even read the holographic markings hovering over the artifact, let alone interpret their meaning. It was somewhat different now.

Although he still couldn't understand what was written, his mind was analyzing, deciphering, and comparing these symbols almost instinctively, with an efficiency far beyond what his intelligence should have allowed. It was one of those passive Rune Engraver skills at work.

'A pity...' Jake regretted inside.

Since he was familiar with his Digitized Status, knowing what those words and their respective symbols meant was easy. He had enough to deduce how this complex alphabet worked, which was based on combinations of strokes and circular patterns.

But even with the words he knew, it was not enough to deduce the meaning of the words displayed on this 'screen'. What the receptionist was typing speedily on that machine, he had only a vague idea. Still, in a few minutes, his photographic memory recorded a lot of information and his progress in this written language was faster than a student with a dedicated teacher to guide him personally.

When she handed him back his ID card a few moments later, his adventurer status had also been added to his information and he didn't require any help to understand it.

[Adventurer Rank: NC]

For now he had no rank, but that would soon change.

"How does His Highness wish to name his adventurer group?" She asked in the most polite tone her etiquette lessons enabled her to imitate.

Even though this human seemed nice and approachable, she now refused to call him by his first name. Their identities were too different. Jake, of course, wasn't so petty as to pick on her. Keeping a smile on his face, he pretended nothing had happened and kept answering kindly.

"Myrtharian Nerds." He stated as a matter of course. He still wasn't a fan of this faction name, though he had chosen it himself, but it was the best way to rally and remind the other members scattered across Quanoth that they weren't alone.

The receptionist thought the name was odd, but after years in the business she had heard it all and didn't care much. She typed the name into the machine and a second card was produced, along with a huge administrative folder the likes of which Jake hoped never to see again.

"As for your adventurer rank, at the moment it is not filled in. By default, however, you will have the same rights as a G Rank." The young woman explained with an embarrassed look.

"And what are those rights?" Jake inquired absentmindedly as he stowed away the folder and his new card.

Seeing these items magically disappear, the receptionist spaced out for a second, but his deep voice jolted her out of her daze.

"Not much to be honest, your highness. You only have access to the first floor of the guild and receive a 10% discount on equipment repairs and potion purchases as long as you do it through our company. These advantages remain valid for all our guilds operating on Quanoth. In return, you do not have to protect the guild in case of an attack and can even leave at any time to join another."

Jake nodded pensively, then said,

"I want to add two members to the Myrtharian Nerds. How do I do that?"

The young woman was relieved to receive such a simple request and explained with a smile,

"It's very easy. All you need to do is to bring the new members to the guild with their Identity Card. If you can't be present during their admission, we'll need a written and signed affidavit from you."

Jake's face darkened as he discovered that the bureaucracy of this world was not much different from that of Earth. As a former procrastinator, he was a proud administration phobic and found these paperwork procedures thoroughly painful and anxiety-inducing.

Or at least he used to. Now he just found it annoying and a waste of his time.

Luckily, he and the two future members were already present, which made it a breeze.

"Trash and Jeanie, hand over your IDs." Jake ordered serenely.

The receptionist wasn't surprised when the teenager gave her his card. She was even happy for him. At least he wouldn't starve to death with such an abnormality by his side.

However, when a small fairy wrapped in an electric blue halo flew in front of her with an ID card barely larger than a confetti in her hands, she could not contain her shock.

"A Minmin!"

This time, it wasn't just a few dozen stares that focused on Jake, but literally every adventurer in the room. Like a forest fire blowing in a hurricane, the news spread quickly from whisper to whisper to the other adventurers and mercenaries in the guild without Jake doing anything to stop it.

In an instant, the atmosphere in the building changed dramatically. From peaceful and lively to frigid and hostile. Jeanie was terrified and immediately hid in a flowerpot sitting on the desk, while Trash swallowed hard.

The receptionist covered her mouth with a horrified expression, aware that she had just made an unforgivable mistake, but Jake had never counted on her. After all, the value of a Minmin was far too tempting.

From the moment Jake had chosen to let them travel with him, he had decided to consider them part of his team. That didn't mean he would sacrifice his life for them, but inviting them into his gang was extremely simple and proved his good intentions.

"And you!" A bearded and muscular two-meter tall warrior vociferated as he stood up heavily from his table where he had just lost a large amount of money playing dice, "I'll buy your Minmin for 100 Auraes."

Many of the mercenaries present sported breathless faces when they heard the amount. On Quanoth, the accepted currencies were bronze, silver and gold coins stamped with the effigy of the king or emperor of their respective nation, but the ultimate currency accepted absolutely everywhere on the planet was the Auraes.

It looked like a tiny crystalline coin, pure and translucent as diamond, but a mysterious energy was contained inside. The Cathedrals dedicated to Auras controlled the circulation of this currency and were the only ones who knew the secrets of its manufacturing process.

"Cut the crap, Holson! Everyone knows you don't have this money." Another warrior as hairy as a bear and with an even larger build rose from his table in turn. "Look kiddo, I'll buy her 90 Auraes from you right now. What do you say?"

Jake then watched bemusedly as the bidding escalated to buy the little fairy, these renowned warriors cussing, cursing and threatening each other to get the deal. At no time did any of them even think of asking him if he was willing.

Seeing that these brainless brutes were not about to reach any kind of agreement, he turned to the receptionist and calmly commanded,

"Finish the registration process."

"Right away!" The stressed young woman bowed low then hurried to finish her task. Thank God he wasn't angry with her!

A moment later, she gave them back their ID cards, and Jake thanked her with a last smile that almost made her swoon. As she watched him disappear into the crowd, and as she saw the crowd follow him... she prayed for the souls of all those dimwits.

Those poor fools had no idea what they were getting into...

## [Chapter 663 Jake!](#)

Jake's mood began to sour noticeably as he got closer to the front door. The atmosphere in the Guild's crowded lobby had suddenly become chilly and solemn. Minmin had quickly forsaken the flower vase at the counter to take refuge in his mantle pocket, while Trash anxiously followed at his heels.

'I won't be able to avoid this fight.' Jake sneered openly as he continued to walk with an even, measured pace as if unaware of the hostility he was receiving.

"J-Jake! You're not going to leave me, are you? These-these people all want to eat Jeanie!" The little fairy began to sob hysterically inside his mantle, soaking the pocket she had curled up in.

"Relax. If nothing else, I'll be out of town a little sooner than I thought." Jake placated her casually.

As soon as Jake walked through the door and stepped outside, the morning sun shone on his face and the Guild gardens. Trash covered his eyes with one hand because of the glare, but Jake kept his eyes wide open, not even blinking.

The first thing he saw once he was outside was a human barrage of adventurers of all races and backgrounds surrounding him closely. From the moment he began to head for the exit, several groups of adventurers near the door preceded him to prevent any escape.

One, two... 67 men and women armed to the teeth blocked his path. With his current visual acuity and processing speed, one look was enough to count the number of enemies. If he wanted, he could even tell the number of bricks and tiles in each building in his field of vision.

Faced with this small army, Jake continued to behave as if they weren't there, walking nonchalantly towards the outer gate delimiting the Guild gardens. If he passed this point, he would leave the Adventurers' Guild territory, returning to Lodunvals' jurisdiction.

In the city, with the exception of the Guilds who set their own rules and laws, the laws of the empire applied and any disturbance of the peace was highly condemned. Basically, if he made it to the street, he would be safe.

Unperturbed, he crossed half the gardens, pacing the cobblestone path, until he found himself fatally blocked by a formation of warriors in heavy armor so tightly packed, they could have been a team of American footballers or rugby players.

"Move." Jake said softly as he lifted his head slightly to stare the taller fellow in the eye.

He had long since noticed this individual. The other nerdy adventurers like Holson and his cronies seemed to fear him and even his own comrades made themselves small around him. The warrior was personally blocking the path to the exit, theoretically giving him the advantage to steal the fairy. The amazing thing was that no one dared to challenge him.

The adventurer in question was a massive human with an unusual appearance. Gray skin, dark and abundant hair, protruding jaw, long canines, prominent eyebrow arch, long muscular arms dropping to his knees and simian features. One could definitely call him an ape-man. At any rate, one of his parents had undoubtedly fucked a gorilla.

Jake didn't know if his appearance was the result of cross-breeding with another race or if he was just very ugly, but it had obviously given him prodigious physical strength. His steel armor was old, but by the thickness of the breastplate alone, it weighed at least 200 kilograms. His shield was a huge rectangular bulwark forged from the same metal as his armor, and his left arm held a heavy, spiked warhammer almost as large as himself.

A scan told him that this terrifying adventurer was a level 51 Warhammer Champion. His confidence was justified. Compared to those cheap mercenaries Jake had exterminated, this was a real warrior who could boast superhuman strength. His strength was a whopping 96, which was simply incredible for a human.

Unfortunately, against Jake, such insignificant stats could only lead to a tragic end. The saddest part of the story was that this adventurer was completely unaware that he was about to miss his only chance to retreat without debilitating injury.

"Mwhahahaha! Did you hear him? This brat wants me to 'move'." The gorilla warrior laughed out loud, his thunderous voice echoing to the far reaches of the Guild and the surrounding alleys.

After a while, he stopped laughing and a vicious expression appeared on his already hideous face. A menacing growl escaped his throat and he slowly raised his hammer before letting it rest heavily on his shoulder pad. Throughout the intimidating display, Jake remained deadpan, as if he were watching a bug about to be squashed.

"You want me to move, is that it?" The adventurer growled grimly in a deep voice before exploding in anger. " DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE, RIGHT NOW?! The adventurer's guild! Only killing is forbidden! Kid, if you refuse to sell me the fairy, prepare yourself to receive the beating of your life! I've got enough potions to beat you up as many times as I want and even more ways to make the life of a pretty man like you a living hell. Choose! Either you give me the Minmin now, or I'll take it by force and you won't like how I do it..."

The other adventurers in the circle recoiled slightly as they heard the gorilla make his threats. His reputation preceded him and he was known for his hazardous accuracy. He would destroy his targets, for sure, but he would also smash anything that had the misfortune to be around him...

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Leaning over the fourth floor balcony, an elf with a beauty that dwarfed even those of the hotties clinging to his arm peered over the railing. His form-fitting armor was a mixture of white leather and pale gold plates and a mysterious energy oozed from it, betraying their status as magical equipment.

On this balcony stood several exceptional adventurers sunbathing on deckchairs around a pool in which a mermaid and several men and women whose bodies were mostly athletic and covered with scars were swimming happily.

This floor and the various amenities it provided were reserved for adventurers of rank B and above, which in this city was close to the top of the heap. It was a place of relaxation and fun and those like the elf who wore their armor and remained vigilant at all times were incredibly rare.

"What are you looking at Elduin? Another one of those good-for-nothing brutes racketeering a new adventurer?" A dwarf the size of a ten year old, but wider than a full grown troll asked with a laugh.

His beard fell to the bottom of his bulging belly and was braided, greasy and reddish like his hair, and beer stains covered his loose-fitting doublet flared at the collar to reveal his huge pecs. Beside him, a heavy rusty armor and a huge battle axe were piled up in a disorderly fashion along with several empty pints of beer.

The elegant elf did not hide his revulsion at such debauchery, but he answered with a smile anyway,

"This human is amusing, Bhammod. He has the audacity to show up at the Guild with a Minmin on him and show it to everyone. I don't know what was going through his mind... If he's not an idiot, then maybe we have an opportunity to see a wonderful show."

"Oh that bad?" The dwarf's face suddenly lit up. "Who's that blocking his way?"

"Simgut." Elduin revealed succinctly, his eyes sparkling with excitement.

The dwarf frowned at the name.

"Simgut?" He repeated darkly. "That brute is no threat to us, but to an ordinary human he is an insurmountable mountain. If he's not careful, I'm afraid he'll end his career prematurely."

Bhammod emptied the rest of his pint of beer into the water in the pool, then went to the balcony to the right of the elf to witness the scene in person. As the human below opened his mouth to say something, the crash of a door slamming open behind them made them turn around with a start.

At that moment, eight warriors in golden armor and emitting a killing intent stormed inside the large balcony, jostling several waiters and adventurers in bathing suits. Between these scarred six men and two women, a slender woman with long white hair walked with her head held high, giving the illusion that they were the guard escorting her.

As he crossed the eyes of this woman, the arrogant but ever alert elf was spellbound on the spot. Her eyes... Two inimitable jewels. The left one surpassing the perfection of the most sublime sapphire, the right one, an amethyst more precious than all the Auraes of Quanoth. He had never seen anything like that.

"What a splendid woman..." He praised admiringly.

Coming from a dawn elf, this was no small compliment. The dwarf Bhammod was much less subtle and bawled out loud,

"What, she hasn't given up yet? She really thinks she can recruit us for free!"

"We agreed to join her adventuring group. Our old group has already been disbanded." The man at the head of the group, a warrior in his prime with thick eyebrows and a military haircut, said coldly.

"WHAT?!" The elf and the dwarf shouted at the same time, completely shocked.

The sublime young woman merely flashed them an innocent smile and their incredulity instantly faded by half. If it was her... they could accept it.

"What are you doing leaning over the balcony?" Their former leader asked abruptly.

"Oh... Whatever. See for yourself."

At that moment, the other warriors in golden armor leaned over to the balcony in turn, and with nothing better to do, the white-haired young woman did the same.

When her wistful gaze finally landed on the human below, her eyes brighter than jewels bulged with amazement.

"Jake!"

#### [Chapter 664 Print](#)

'Crap! What the hell is he doing here?!'

Ruby had postponed her Fourth Ordeal for over a year under her aunt's incessant prodding. In the military, disobeying orders was taboo, and all the elite members of the Prodigy Program respected Colonel Hale greatly. Ruby was no exception.

The year of training in isolation had been particularly hard on her and her mood had deteriorated over the past few months to the point where her former friends refused to approach her.

Of course... She now knew why... The end of her third Ordeal had been more than a shock to her. Her whole life had been called into question. And her former comrades who had survived almost as long as she had were no longer fooled either...

Who could hang out with a two-faced sociopath like her and trust her with their lives in wartime? No one.

The tragedy was that upon learning the truth about her nature, her overwhelmed mind had literally gone crazy. The distrustful and frightened look of her comrades, whose attitude had already grown much colder in the past months, had suddenly struck her as awfully hateful.

A brutal desire, an untold hatred to break them, to annihilate their existence and devour their flesh had suddenly overwhelmed her, and even before she realized the horrendous thoughts running through her mind, she had acted on them.

When she came to her senses a few minutes later, all of her mission comrades lay at her feet, forming a filthy pool of human minced meat. She herself was smeared with blood, guts and brain parts from head to toe. When she understood what she had done, she puked her insides out in disgust, but it was too late.

She had already committed the irreparable. The unforgivable.

When she returned from the Ordeal, the most disgusting thing was that her superiors had warmly congratulated her on her first place, completely disregarding her treachery towards her teammates. All that mattered was the free ticket to Quanoth that she had secured for the Earth Union army.

And the most terrible part of it all was that she relished the attention. Congratulating her for having shredded to death her comrades who trusted her... Inwardly she was tingling with profound satisfaction.

She didn't recognize herself anymore, but at that time she was still able to tell that she was losing her grip. Sometimes at night she would wake up sweating from dreadful nightmares that she was never able to remember. Each time she woke up, she forgot everything but felt like she had lost another piece of herself.

After a year of training, the old Ruby was hardly recognizable. Her appearance had changed little, at least on the surface, but her adorable, playful personality of a few years ago was a distant memory. Even her guilt, shame and abhorrence over her actions and thoughts hardly plagued her anymore. Her nightmares had also stopped.

'I'm just a monster... And I behave like one.'

At peace with herself, she had regained some mental sanity. Her peers avoided her, but it was for the best. She didn't have to pretend anymore.

Once she arrived on Quanoth, she had not sought to contact her teammates as she had been ordered to.

'I'm just going to have some quality time by myself.'

Yep, that was her only aspiration. Killing, slaughtering, manipulating, causing mayhem and despair, tasting everything, and enjoying life were the only ambitions she had left.

Here, nobody would judge her. Because the people of this world were already doomed to extinction.

Therefore, as soon as she arrived on Quanoth, she had, like Jake, met a group of adventurers that she had massacred after one of them had inappropriately ogled her cleavage.

So far... nothing excessive. What followed afterwards was much more so.

Eventually, a group of ten elite knights had come across her covered in blood and sobbing during their monster extermination mission and out of pity they had decided to escort her back to Lodunvals. Perhaps because their captain was a strict man enforcing military discipline upon his subordinates, she had not received any inappropriate looks, and thus these hardened warriors had kept their wretched lives.

That was her excuse. The truth was that her instincts had told her that attacking these warriors would not give her the same enjoyment as her previous victims... These guys were not as weak as the rest.

Faced with this unsettling feeling, another emotion had arisen in her and a sadistic desire to enslave them, to transform these virtuous heroes into immoral lackeys had suddenly overtaken her.

After several hours of exerting her charm, and psychological techniques, along with a couple of Aether Spells, she had finally succeeded.

Well, maybe 80% of it.

This elf named Elduin and this dwarf without manners named Bhammod... They were two thorns in her side that she couldn't get rid of.

This Dawn Elf was a Dawn Great Knight practically invulnerable to mind influencing spells. His vigilance was always sharp and he never let himself be touched or approached.

As for the dwarf... He didn't give her the slightest impression of being wary of her, but his attitude hadn't changed at all after all her attempts. After failing several times, she had given up, turning her focus to their captain and other companions.

She was so close to her goal and the accomplishment of the first step of her scheme should have brought her an exhilarating thrill. While she was exulting inwardly, she just had to catch a glimpse of the one person she was dreading meeting for various reasons she could hardly explain.

'Jake... Meeting him here is the worst case scenario for me. If he didn't recognize me I can just leave town, but that's just delaying an inevitable confrontation... Before he regroups with his comrades, I better kill him now.'

With an evil glint in her eye, a young woman with long silver hair began to hatch her evil plan.

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"What? Did I hear wrong?" The ape-like warrior named Simgut blinked in bewilderment as he replayed in his mind what he had just heard.

He had expected all sorts of responses after threatening this good-looking guy, from surrender to polite refusal, but certainly not one like this. If it was the insolence or resolute anger of a desperate person, he might have accepted it. If it was the arrogant response of a spoiled aristocrat who had no sense of danger, he could conceive that too. But this answer...

It was as if the world had just fallen on its head.

"A lvl 51 Warhammer Champion, isn't it? Not bad, not bad. Too bad you're a little too puny for my taste. I'm afraid that won't be enough to warm me up. Well, let's see how you swing that hammer first. When you're ready, please start."

It was the response of an old master to a junior, a veteran to a novice, an adult playing with a toddler. The tone was cordial, even polite, but then why did he feel even angrier than if he had insulted his own mother!

For a second he began to wonder if the human in front of him was really a greenhorn, but then he calmed down. It couldn't be. One of his biggest secrets was that he possessed the Appraisal skill, allowing him to know his enemies' level.

This guy was only lvl 28... What did he have to fear? His doubts gone, his rage hit the sky in an instant.

"Hahaha, good. Good! Remember, you asked for it. EAT MY HAMMER!" Simgut hollered like a degenerate.

Jake had initially just intended to catch that hammer with one hand, but in mid-motion he sidestepped with superhuman speed. The huge war hammer hit the pavement a split second later and there was silence.

There was no deafening explosion on impact, no cracks in the ground, no rocks blown out. The earth didn't even shake and Jake wondered if he had overreacted the moment before. When the simian warrior lifted his hammer from the ground, he got his answer.

'What the fuck?!'

His laid-back, if not downright apathetic demeanor was now that of prey meeting its natural predator. His skin was sweaty, his eyes were wide open, his pupils constricted and his hair bristled. And for a good reason.

At the collision spot, a rectangular print had embedded itself deep into the earth. If that was all it was, Jake would never have been left frozen in shock like that.

This hammer print in the ground was not just a few inches long. A bottomless rectangular hole had drilled through the rock to the very bowels of the earth. Even when he projected his mental sense into it, Jake couldn't find the bottom. It was only when he ran a scan that he found out to his horror that the hole was nearly 900 meters deep.

Jake was floored. And his opponent Simgut was more than happy with his reaction. Terrorizing these beginners was his guilty pleasure. He could do this from morning to night.

'It should be impossible. His physical strength is more than ten times less than mine. A technique? But what kind of technique can accomplish this kind of inhuman feat?'

Warhammer Champion? Jake immediately ruled out this option. This Soul Class was definitely an excellent one, but if a Soul Class alone could confer such power, then he had greatly underestimated their potential.

'Did I miss something?' Jake mused at full speed.

He replayed the attack several thousand times in his head with his photographic memory in half a second, even forcing himself to relive what he had felt during the attack.

Then suddenly, he put his finger on it.

'Found it!'

[You finally figured it out. Taking so long with your intelligence... What a waste.] Xi scoffed gently.

'If you knew the answer all along, you might as well have warned me. I almost died just now, you know?" Jake retorted with annoyance.

[I knew you'd be okay.] She laughed.

Jake had indeed been slow on the uptake. The answer had always been right before his eyes.

The culprit was the Spirit Body level.

### [Chapter 665 Victory](#)

This half-man, half-gorilla thug was indeed weaker than he was. Jake could on paper thrash him with one arm, but that was notwithstanding his Spirit Body lvl.

The Soul and Spirit Body as defined by the Oracle System did not exist in ordinary creatures nor in those from worlds with low Aether density. For these living beings, consciousness and spirituality were not dissociable from their neural network.

When they died, their residual brain electrical activity was what was called Proto-Soul, but this energy was insignificant and would dissipate very quickly into the environment. For the Oracle, the notion of an eternal soul or life after death simply did not exist in lower worlds.

With higher Aether density and higher mental Aether stats, it became possible to stabilize and strengthen this Proto-Soul and with this condition Extrasensory Perception was awakened, or at least it was raised enough to become harnessable. With this ability to sense and attract Aether, the Proto-Soul would finally become a true Soul and the Spirit Body would take shape, conforming to the shape of its vessel and nervous system.

This was the Spirit Body lvl 1.

Until level 10 this Spirit Body had almost no effect on the physical world. It simply had the merit of existing. The brain, supported by the Intelligence Aether, was generally much more powerful.

This changed at level 10 and above. The Spirit Body now had enough substance to create tangible effects on reality such as poltergeists. A Spirit Body wandering around in this state was what the Mirror Universe more commonly called a Ghost.

These poltergeist effects, however, were extremely limited. Even Jake, with his level 28, high Aether stats and the amplification provided by the Myrtharian Spirit could only muster one or two percent of his maximum physical strength in this state and that took all his concentration.

It was more than enough to extinguish candles, sizzle light bulbs, lift girls' skirts with an invisible breeze in enclosed spaces and levitate small objects. By tormenting ordinary humans, haunting their homes, nightmares and possessing weak minds, one checked all the boxes of the perfect ghost as described in horror stories.

In this state, his Spirit Body was not really strong and he could still easily walk through walls. If he willed it badly enough though, he could actually touch objects and even grab them, but that would take all his energy.

The crucial nuance to mention however was that in this spiritual state he could actually perform any miracle if he wished hard enough. A Spirit Body lvl 10 wishing fervently to make a house's power break could actually do it if its desire was strong enough.

If the ghost was too weak, but persistent, then a lingering obsessive desire could trigger incredible phenomena. If Jake wandered around in his spiritual state and spontaneously wished for the heavens to strike someone down, his lvl 28 would probably not be enough. It would be pretty good if something happened.

But if he focused obsessively on this particular wish, after several days, months or years, then maybe the lightning would strike the right target at some point. This was the danger of wandering spirits. One can then suspect that when a demonic spirit haunts a living being, the end of the story was rarely happy...

But these were anecdotal tragedies and their only victims were ordinary humans and creatures. An Evolver like Jake had nothing to fear from these gnarly ghosts. They were just flies in his path. Noisy and annoying, but certainly no threat to him.

That was why Jake never took his opponent's level 51 seriously. Because of this cognitive bias, he had only paid attention to his stats. Big mistake.

Jake obviously didn't know this at first, but it had become more than clear to him over the past year. Increasing his Spirit Body lvl... that was hard.

The first ten, twenty levels had been gained relatively quickly, but each subsequent level had been hard gained. On that score, unless he could defeat a skilled opponent like Asfrid fair and square, Jake had no particular advantage.

He wasn't a pure Eltarian after all. He couldn't just do sudokus and gain Spirit Body levels.

Nevertheless, this increasing difficulty was there for a reason. This constraint obviously had a cause. And that cause was that each new level gained strengthened the Spirit Body more than the previous levels.

A level 10 had a soul about 3 times stronger than a level 1, but that increased to about 12 times at level 20, and at level 28 Jake estimated his Spirit Body density to be almost 40 times that of his lvl1 Spirit Body.

Following this logic, at level 28 his soul was still of little use in battle, although the Soul Class greatly solved this problem, but what would happen at level 40, 50 or 60?

Jake suddenly had a hunch that this Ordeal would not be as smooth a ride as his proven overpoweredness had suggested.

'This Ordeal is going to be extremely dangerous. I've been thinking the wrong way until now. I'm not the top dog in this place. Jake finally understood, his face solemn. 'With his level 51, every thought from this guy can affect reality. With the synergy of his Soul Class over-specializing his mind in a single field of expertise, the force he can generate is unimaginable.'

Jake was unaware of this, but Ruby who was happily fomenting her evil plan was displaying the same wide-eyed astonishment. She too had not expected such a nasty surprise. The alarm bells in her head warning her not to attack the adventurers around her had never been so legitimate!

"Hmm? You dodged my first strike?" Simgut marveled calmly as he studied his expression.

He had been furious at the beginning of the fight, but now that the duel had begun his veteran experience was showing. No matter how he felt, he would not be easily influenced or distracted.

His opponent's shocked face had indeed given him a jubilant satisfaction, but in retrospect he had finally figured out what was wrong. How could a lvl 28 greenhorn dodge his attack?

This kind of implausible reflex... It shouldn't exist at this level. 'Should I stop or continue the duel...'

Jake saw the hesitation on the adventurer's face and guessed what was on his mind.

'There's no way you're going to back out of this! You're the perfect opponent to learn as much as I can about how the people of this world fight.'

Once the surprise was behind him, Jake took the initiative of launching a counter-attack. With much less grace than his opponent, Jake pushed the ground with his foot with all his strength, which collapsed underneath him, and he vanished from his position leaving an afterimage in his wake.

"So fast!" Simgut and the other spectators gasped in disbelief.

The simian warrior knew at once that he would never make it in time and roaring with rage, he threw his hammer into the air and slammed his heavy bulwark into the ground. In a split second, the single bulwark multiplied around him, creating a formation as invulnerable as a turtle shell.

'Supreme Defense of the Bulwark!' he cried inwardly.

BOOOOOM!

Jake, whose fist was already only a few millimeters away from the enemy's left cheek, suddenly had the illusion that his field of vision was engulfed by a gigantic war hammer. The distance separating his fist from his opponent's cheek seemed to increase exponentially while the air resistance increased sharply, drastically slowing down his movements.

When he finally hit something, the bulwark had intercepted his fist without suffering any noticeable damage and a whistling gust of wind grazed his face, informing him ominously of the cataclysmic landing of his opponent's warhammer.

'Divine Judgment of the War Hammer!'

Alarmed, Jake dodged with a quick leap and Simgut took the opportunity to catch his hammer in flight and strike back with a violent horizontal swing. Cautious, his backward jump propelled him several dozen meters out of reach of the hammer-wielding adventurer, but surprisingly the latter did not try to close the distance.

He continued his lateral hammering and Jake saw again the illusion of a gigantic hammer about to flatten him like a pancake, but coupled with an incomparably hostile killing pressure, as if the sole purpose of this hammer was to drive a nail into the ass of the Universe itself.

Not knowing what to do but refusing to dodge indefinitely like a coward, he equipped his Furnace Gauntlets and struck the huge illusory hammer with all his might, adding his Aether, Telekinesis, Myrtharian Trance, fighting spirit, rage and everything else he had learned in the past year.

BOOOOOOM!

He won the exchange. Even before he fully understood what had just happened the fight was already over. This aura, this illusion was not as tangible and indestructible as he had feared. Or rather, Simgut was not the invincible and formidable opponent he wanted him to believe.

When Jake gave up all fear and thought of retreat, retaining only a supreme will to annihilate his enemy, his punch easily shattered the illusion, passing through with ease after feeling little resistance.

A microsecond later, Simgut was struck by the condensed, superheated blast of the attack, losing consciousness instantly. The hammer illusion faded away instantly afterwards as if it had never existed.

If Jake had not held back his punch at the last moment, his opponent would have been blown several kilometers, smashing through half of the city's buildings and walls before passing away in a state of charred bone powder.

Instead, thanks to the miracle of digitization, Simgut survived. The searing blast had shattered most of his bones and caved in his rib cage, but his heart and brain had not been completely pulped. One of his aghast allies quickly poured the contents of a vermilion potion over his body and his wounds miraculously healed.

The transfixed gaze of the crowd then turned to the culprit, an unranked level 28 adventurer, and a stunned silence fell in front of the guild, only to be noisily replaced by loud eruptions of screaming.

### [Chapter 666 I'm Going To Kill You](#)

"Im-impossible!"

"What the heck is this insane power!"

"If it were me instead of Simgut..."

The adventurers forming a ring around them shuddered in utter dread as they realized that they had just brushed against death out of sheer greed. This handsome rookie was not a naive greenhorn at all, but a tyrannosaurus posing as a chicken in a barnyard.

Both waddled on two legs and couldn't fly, but it would be a stupid mistake to think they were of the same kind!

Leaning on the fourth-floor balcony, the seasoned adventurers of Lodunvals who happened to be watching were equally astonished. Elduin, the dazzling Dawn Elf, bore a constipated expression, while the dwarf Bhammod had dropped his beloved beer pint.

At odds with the rest of the crowd, there were also several warriors like their leader and one of the scarred women who merely frowned, but if there was one among them who wore an icy expression, it was Ruby.

'How did he improve so fast? I would understand if he had rushed his Ordeals at the risk of his life, but like me, he took his time to hone his skills and maximize his rating. I ended up winning my Third Ordeal and should have been miles ahead of those Evolvers with no background.'

Then, she froze, realizing she had overlooked a crucial detail.

'Wait a second... He's on Quanoth. How did he get here? That should be reserved for exceptional Players.'

Sure, Jake could have gotten his ticket by sucking up to a more talented Evolver, but they weren't common place among humanity, and having such an acquaintance in his social circle was a feat in itself. The thing was, his temperament and the power he had just demonstrated didn't really match that of an obsequious sycophant.

'No way! He won his Third Ordeal?!' She finally understood.

Even if he hadn't won his last Ordeal, he had impressed someone high up enough to be sent here.

'All the more reason to kill him.' She concluded truculently.

Suddenly, a conflicted grimace distorted her face and she felt a twinge of regret and shame, as well as a pang of sadness. Her amethyst eye glowed brighter, and her pent-up emotions were immediately soothed.

'He must die.' She repeated internally like a mantra, but her killing intent had unknowingly weakened by half.

Meanwhile Jake had not changed his posture since his last punch. He was still amazed at the sheer power and intricacy of his opponent's strikes. This last one was much weaker than him, but each of his hammer blows contained deep mysteries and were imbued with an indescribable will, but perfectly compatible with the intents of these attacks.

'I won because ultimately these ghostly illusions stemmed from his spiritual aura and his... hammer intent? I guess I should call it that for now... didn't have enough energy.' He calmly analyzed the unfolding of this brief battle. 'In the end, raw Spirit Energy cannot compete with matter. It would have been different, however, if I had been hit directly by his hammer.'

His final conclusion was that at level 51, a normal person's Spirit Body could only generate 60-70% of his current physical strength (without telekinesis, Aether Control or Skills). No need to freak out. The lesson for the future, as it turns out, was the incredible versatility and unfathomability that these spiritual techniques could generate when combined with a proper Soul Class.

Spirit Body and Spirit Energy alone were pointless, but combined with a Soul Class synchronizing the entire Soul through a single calling, an insane amount of power could be unleashed.

Now Jake wasn't so keen on responding to provocation. Keeping a low profile was by far the best strategy when one lacked information. He wasn't weak, far from it, but now he knew he couldn't underestimate the natives of this world.

And neither could he underestimate the Players in this world... Jake didn't know exactly why he had been sent to Quanoth, but he had enough insight to guess that this world was not normal.

Coolly striding over to his passed-out adversary, whom his comrades had just nursed back to health, Jake casually rummaged through his pockets and found his identification papers. The other adventurers didn't dare stop him.

"Rank-B only?" Jake was disappointed.

He did a quick mental calculation and came up with a theory. The adventurers' Rank was defined in relation to their achievements and the difficulty of completed missions, but if it was also correlated to their levels, then each rank could be interpreted differently:

Rank G for adventurers like Trash from level 1 to 10, Rank F from 11 to 20, Rank E from 21 to 30, Rank D from 31 to 40, Rank C from 41 to 50, Rank B from 51 to 60, and Rank A or higher from level 60?

Jake had yet to verify his hypothesis, but he had a hunch it wasn't that far off the mark.

'If that's how it works, Rank A is my limit. S-rank adventurers or above if they exist can match my physical strength with their Spirit Body alone. At this level, their every thought is capable of hurting me.

[It would have been too easy if these natives had no innate talent.] Xi sighed with a surge of sympathy towards these natives. [Their bodies are weak and their Aether stats limited by the Aether density. They can only rely on Digitalization and their Soul Class to pave their way. Their strong Souls are their only real asset. This is not necessarily an advantage for them. Since they are dependent on their Soul Classes, the personalities of the most powerful Quanoth natives are likely to be irredeemably twisted. I don't like prejudice, but this time I advise you to treat each and every individual as an enemy if their Soul Class or the way they dress and behave seems suspicious. Their spiritual presence should also give you strong clues.]

Jake nodded quietly. Basically, if he couldn't determine their Soul Class, anyone with a kitchen knife could be a Cook as well as a Serial Killer or an Assassin. In between, they could be a Knife Wielder with a passion for knives. By changing their clothes and the way they acted, it was easy to pass themselves off as someone else, but the nature of their spiritual aura would not change. This was a flaw of the Digitalization.

Their Spirit Bodies couldn't hide from his eyesight, but it was also a disadvantage for him. Some adventurers who had seen the fight and had special abilities might already be trying to unravel the mystery surrounding his Soul Class.

With a grim look on his face, Jake coolly swept his eyes over the adventurers around him with his Apex Predator Glyph, and most took a step back, but not all of them. Fortunately, those who were blocking his path to the exit had quickly scurried away, picking up their fainting comrade.

As Jake was about to fade into the crowded streets of Lodunvals, his gaze landed fleetingly on one of the Guild's fourth-floor balconies and in a split second he tensed up.

He had just caught sight of a sublime young woman with long silver-white hair, lovely arched eyebrows of the same color, exquisite turned-up nose, pink moist lips, and pale, glistening skin in the sunlight. With her shifty eyes and anxious smile, she gave the false impression of being introverted and insecure, even compliant, but Jake knew how fake it all was.

Those amethyst and marine blue eyes, that adorable but oh so devilish face, how could he have forgotten them after that treachery!

"Rub-"

As he was about to roar out of anger, even considering attacking her on the spot, a cruel smile crept onto the young woman's face and she suddenly let out a shrill scream out of terror.

"A G-Guilty!"

In an instant, her voice overlaid his, echoing throughout the city as if she had just screamed into a megaphone. In a flash, the Guild, and then the whole city, erupted into a state of war, its highest level of alarm triggered.

Jake was so taken aback that he forgot to even voice his indignation or protest.

"What the f-"

Just as he was taking in what was happening, a barrage of light projectiles rained down on him, including a strange white beam of light that encompassed the entire Guild and its surroundings. These spells did not hit only him, but none of the adventurers present suffered any damage. However, there were other, more annoying complications that clouded the picture.

"I can't teleport!" Jake exclaimed in shock as he realized he couldn't avoid the beam in time. Looking up in the beam's direction, he saw Ruby proudly pointing her two illuminated palms at him.

"Anti Aether Magic Spell." Jake read her lips as she silently articulated to taunt him.

The effect of this anti-magic spell didn't stop there. The Aether Symbol of Miniaturization keeping his body in human form broke apart in a heartbeat, and from a six-foot tall handsome man, he transformed into a glowing titan over four meters tall.

Worse, the pavement beneath his feet instantly liquefied and a searing heat and gamma radiation powerful enough to give cancer to an ordinary human in half a second erupted forth from his huge body. His silver and gold hair shimmered like polished swords, his translucent fangs and claws reached their maximum length, and his muscles swelled disproportionately.

In the blink of an eye, Jake had transformed into a true monster, a Silver Myrtharian in all his glory. All his efforts at self-control and undercover work had been undone.

"RUBY, I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!"

### [Chapter 667 You Won't Blame Me, Right?](#)

His furious roar detonated all around him, producing a monstrous sound blast that shattered all the windows within a radius of one kilometer. All the untrained humans in the vicinity had their eardrums implode from the shock, but thanks to Digitization they survived with only a handful of HP lost.

Still, the adventurers forming a ring around him were almost all groggy on the ground, blood pouring from all seven of their facial orifices. Shrill tinnitus and an excruciating headache as if their brains were about to explode had completely incapacitated them. It would be many minutes before they could move again.

The elite adventurers watching the scene from the balcony were completely shell-shocked. The elf Elduin had subconsciously drawn his two scimitars, while the dwarf Bhammod had picked up his great axe without anyone noticing.

"It's terrific." Their usually strict and inexpressive captain had his eyebrows so arched that they practically formed an arrow aiming at the top of his skull. "If he's not a Screamer, then the power of his vocal cords is just downright terrifying. This... is not a human."

"Tilla, what is his Soul Class?" Bhammod asked coldly to one of the two scarred women in armor.

Feeling the gaze of her teammates, the warrior named Tilla, with her hair shaved on the sides and a long scar running down the center of her forehead to below her chin, riveted her amber eyes on Jake and a mysterious glint pulsed inside. After a brief moment, she put on a troubled expression,

"Rune Engraver."

"What the fuck is this Class? Never heard of it." Bhammod snorted gruffly to the side.

"That's the problem, dumbass. If your skull wasn't filled with beer, you'd be able to figure this out on your own!" Elduin mercilessly inveighed his comrade.

"Why do I feel like you're insulting me?" The dwarf grumbled with a frown.

"Because I am!"

As the pair bickered, Ruby continued to stare at Jake with a cocky smirk.

'What are you going to do now?'

Jake easily discerned the defiance and contempt in the young woman's eyes. He didn't have many nemeses, but she was one of them. So why didn't he retaliate immediately?

Because he had a minor issue at that very moment. The burst of colored spells that had rained down on him had formed multiple formations of cryptic symbols and runes on the ground, sealing off the space, nullifying his powers and dispersing the surrounding Aether.

This should have been a dire and time-sensitive emergency, but at that moment Jake couldn't bring himself to react in a logical manner. Runes! Strange inscriptions by the thousands all around him! He wanted to leave, he really wanted to! But he couldn't look away...

'I have to stay here as long as possible to memorize and understand all these Runes.' Jake was gloating with excitement inside, his predicament completely swept out of his mind.

[What are you doing, Jake?! Pull yourself together!] Xi abruptly yelled in his head, making him wince in agony.

'St-still one more minute...' Jake tried in vain to negotiate like a fussy child playing video games.

[RIGHT NOW!] Xi switched her tone, and the spiritual impact momentarily blurred his vision for a split second.

"Hmmp, okay I heard you." Jake shot one last peek at the Runes and closed his eyes to burn them into his memory. "Xi, you recorded everything, right?"

[Even if you miss a detail, the Oracle Device is infallible.] Xi sneered scornfully.

"Good! Let's go then."

Trash and Jeanie, who had been standing terrified next to him, were not at all relieved when they heard him talking to himself. Their faces spoke volumes.

'We chose to follow a madman...'

Anyway, even if Jake wanted to stay and study the runes, he wouldn't have been given the chance. After a brief lull that lasted no more than three or four seconds, the first squadron of royal knight-mages providing security for Lodunvals descended from the sky, riding huge woolly griffins as big as mammoths.

"A monster! A non-human!" Several of them cried out in disbelief as they identified the smoldering titan beaming down on the entire square.

The cobblestone pathway where Jake was standing had long since melted into lava and the plants in the nearby gardens had withered for those that hadn't caught fire outright. Adventurers still able to move were fleeing in all directions or trying to stop the fire with their magic or by pouring buckets of water.

The passive heat generated by his uncontrolled body could not be stopped by a common anti-magic spell. Quite the contrary. He needed to finely control his Aether to stop this heat release!

"Lodunvals has been infiltrated by a non-human! By order of Emperor Ret' Asahi IX, I command you to shoot him down immediately!" The knight with the most gaudy armor of the group and a golden lion-faced mask proclaimed loudly, amplifying his voice with a spell.

Waving their mage staffs in his direction, they muttered long, incomprehensible incantations and bright projectiles very different from the previous salvo shot at him.

"Firebolt!"

"Stalactite Storms!"

" Hundred Lasers Arcanum!"

" ... "

Without skipping a beat, Jake wisely decided to dodge. The space may have been sealed, he may not have his magic anymore, but his physical strength was intact. His Telekinesis was also usable, indicating that his Spirit Body was not impeded. This Bloodline Spell was not considered an Aether Spell, but more like a Soul Spell.

Applying what he had learned that year in combination with his quick reflexes and supersonic movements, he moved in a flash from one point to another throughout the Guild's gardens, sometimes appearing crouched horizontally on a wall and the next moment hanging upside down under a tree branch.

These spells were not low level, and within ten seconds of intensive bombardment the Guild and half of the adjacent neighborhood was completely razed.

The elite adventurers relaxing on the fourth-floor balcony cursed the royal mages, but they had no choice but to run away with their tails between their legs. Ruby's group jumped out just in time before their balcony was smitten by a huge red lightning bolt. For the unlucky ones who were enjoying the pool in their bathing suits, they had to leave their armor and equipment behind.

"Those Knight-Mage bastards are never around when you need them, but are always the first to destroy everything when diplomacy could have settled things!" Elduin grumbled hatefully as he glared at them

murderously. He clutched the handle of his scimitars so tightly that his knuckles had turned completely white.

"Have patience, Elduin." The captain and his other comrades did their best to comfort him, but deep inside they were equally furious.

"This time, Laudar and the Mage Guild have crossed the line!" This was what all the adventurers who witnessed the scene thought. Whatever the reason, bombing the Adventurers' Guild was strictly forbidden.

The destruction of the Lodunvals Adventurers' Guild, even if officially justified, would be treated as a declaration of war and would mark the beginning of a deadly and endless series of escalations. If this happened a few more times, an all-out war would soon break out on the continent, and they would no longer be safe anywhere.

This disaster had been predicted by certain Auras diviners and oracles and many of the pious natives of Quanoth believed them to be right. Most of these adventurers were among these devout believers, and they could not help but cringe as they beheld the extent of the devastation.

While Jake continued to dodge, indirectly destroying Lodunvals with each extra duck, Ruby gritted her teeth out of frustration.

'He hasn't been killed yet... This speed... I can't compete. I must absolutely not let him close the distance to me.'

Having so far passively observed the confrontation, Ruby suddenly conjured up a huge silver streamlined sniper out of nowhere with bluish lines forming a strange integrated circuit. A pale blue halo emanated from the weapon, instantly lowering the surrounding temperature to  $-150^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

"Hide me." Ruby ordered harshly to the other adventurers she had bewitched.

Dubious, Elduin and Bhammod were shaken when their captain and their other comrades obeyed her order. Acting as one, they hid the young woman from the sight of the knight mages and other adventurers, including their two comrades. An invisibility barrier was even created for the occasion.

Elduin had just enough time to catch a glimpse of the rifle before his vision was obstructed, and that was only because he had keen eyesight.

"What the hell is going on here?" The elf and the dwarf were starting to get badly worried.

Once concealed, Ruby no longer had any qualms about using her sniper. A torrent of negative energy gushed from every one of her cells and was greedily sucked up by the sniper. The dim glow of its integrated circuit brightened dramatically and a ball of pure white light quickly condensed at the end of the weapon's barrel. The air coming into contact with this projectile froze instantly, the atoms affected turning static as if they were at absolute zero.

Without even using the sniper scope to aim, she pointed the sniper single-handedly at Jake's heart and pulled the trigger.

**BANG!**

The icy projectile, charged with an astronomical amount of negative energy, silently crossed the distance between them at over 10,000 meters per second.

"Jake, you won't blame me, right?" Ruby finally smiled fondly.

#### [Chapter 668 Willing To Do Anything To Win](#)

Jake, who was dodging dozens of projectiles at a time, suddenly experienced a sense of danger like he had never felt in his entire life. A cold shiver ran down his spine and his hair stood on end.

Before he received his Soul Class, his Intelligence, and therefore his reaction time, were already 273 times that of a normal human. His Agility also exceeded 500 points and as such he was blessed with incredible reflexes as well as a dexterity and precision in his every move that was hard to imagine for the average person.

Despite these seemingly exceptional numbers, if Jake had been sniped like that by Ruby with his old stats, the outcome would have been far less favorable. His chances of survival would have relied primarily on his luck and his freakish regeneration abilities.

Unfortunately for Ruby, she met him too late. With his new Rune Engraver class, Jake's reaction time was now 2184 times that of a normal human. That supercharged ball of negative energy moving at 10,000 m/s?

To Jake, this terrifying ball was only traveling at 4.57m/s. His Perception was even more absurd and although Ruby had taken every precaution to conceal her position and isolate the noise, he spotted the bullet as soon as he felt threatened.

Subconsciously, he had already begun to twist his body in a certain direction, probably under his Luck's influence, and his eyes locked directly on the icy projectile coming for his life.

His pupils narrowed and a seething gleam of unbridled wrath pulsed inside.

'So, this time you don't want to just rob me, but kill me completely' He snorted inwardly, shaking with anger.

Jake hadn't forgotten about his Second Ordeal ending. After saving her life at the behest of an Ordeal Mission, Ruby had then taken advantage of his vulnerability to strip him, hesitating for a long time to murder him before giving up for some unknown reason.

Now he knew that it wasn't all her fault and that she was probably half Digestor like Nylreg, Sigmar's son. That Fluid Grandmaster had turned into a true sociopath despite his father's best efforts, and Ruby looked set to follow in his footsteps.

Because she had finally spared him, and paid dearly for her greed (the final door leading to Xion was booby-trapped and the Soul Stones useless), to the point of ironically winning his Second Ordeal, he had kept his grudge in check.

But now? By trying to kill him at this moment, she had just crossed the line.

'Everyone who tries to kill me! I'll kill them all!'

A murderous pressure erupted wildly from his body, his killing intent completely unleashed. The adventurers who had not fled far enough were momentarily petrified while the veterans calmly retreated, deciding to withdraw from the battlefield for the moment. Even the griffin-riding knights-mages regained some altitude.

And yet, despite the flaring of his fighting aura, the negative energy bullet relentlessly pressed on toward his heart. Although Jake could keep track of the bullet with his eyes, his body was unfortunately not aligned with his brainpower.

His physical strength, which was once his second highest stats, now lagged behind his mental stats. With 960 strength, Jake could theoretically sprint at two or three kilometers per second, but only in a vacuum and only with a normal human's mass.

This was not reality. On Earth as on Quanoth, air resistance increased with the square of his speed, fatally hampering his acceleration, and breaking the sound barrier without any Aether control and a 3.5 ton body was his limit.

With the help of his Telekinesis, the only external Bloodline ability he could still use in this anti-Aether zone, he could boost his strength by a factor of 24, and that was assuming his body could withstand such stress. As nice as that number may sound, once air resistance was taken into account, it was just enough to get close to 1500m/s.

Nevertheless, taking into account the distance and meticulously controlling each of his muscles, it was still possible for him to narrowly avoid the projectile. And that's what he did.

He tried to slow the bullet down with his telekinesis, but soon realized that his spiritual energy was out of control once it left his body. He could barely control the space around him within a meter or two with strenuous efforts of concentration. Damn anti-spell magic!

As the energy ball drew dangerously close to his heart, he began to tense his muscles and actively mobilize his telekinesis to force himself to move faster and faster. His joints cracked, his tendons ripped, and his entire skeleton creaked ominously, but he gritted his teeth and forced himself to persevere. Damned for damned, he also activated Bloodline Ignition, which was a Soul Glyph, thus further cementing his non-human identity.

His speed picked up another 600m/s, peaking at 2100m/s, and his strained skin began to form micro-droplets of blood on his surface. To counter this damage, Jake activated his Silver Stone Skin ability and his Soul Glyph Extreme Diver in response, which granted him some resistance to the abyssal pressures.

With his 5200 Constitution and 4030 Vitality, Jake's body held up and his body eventually began to move at a satisfactory speed. Time seemed endless as he sped up his thoughts like this, but his confidence in his odds of dodging the deadly projectile only grew. A victorious smile even spread across his face.

Despite the length of this series of actions, the process had taken only a handful of milliseconds, and for Ruby and the others, the BANG had not even reached their ears before the bullet had already hit its target.

Jake, his legs rooted to the ground, but his torso contorted to the extreme, could finally feel the projectile's horror clearly as it entered his spiritual domain of about two meters in radius.

The bullet abruptly adjusted its trajectory, following a slight curve to the right. That is, precisely the direction he had been tilting his torso. On top of that, an icy cold capable of freezing even his Spirit Body began to burn the surface of his flesh and he felt his mind fogging up like a stalled engine.

In this small spiritual field, Jake could use his Telekinesis, and he decided to kill two birds with one stone as he endeavored to slow down the bullet with a Telekinetic counterforce. Although he felt his mind go numb, he materialized Xion's Soul Stone in his left hand and absorbed a Soul Energy strand to restore his mental acuity.

At first, the projectile decelerated sharply, even giving him hope that he could completely stop the energy ball's momentum, but Jake also noticed that the compressed bullet of negative energy had suddenly started to flash strobing.

'Oh shit...'

Jake glanced grimly at Ruby, and even though he couldn't see her he could almost visualize the sadistic, haughty smirk on her face. She'd got him good.

She had anticipated from the start that he might have the ability to dodge or intercept the projectile. Consequently, she had chosen a homing ammunition. Even then, she had considered that he might be able to neutralize the attack before it reached him despite the anti-magic area, and planned a countermeasure.

'You really think I can't do anything to kill you?' A frantic glint shone in Jake's enraged eyes. She had finally provoked him completely.

When Jake forgot fair play and his stinginess, this was his most dangerous form. After a year of training, the Purgatory had finally recognized him as its true owner. Since it was originally forged from a Fluid Grandmaster Core, it could easily merge with his Aether Soul Core after the Oracle System revamp.

His Aether Soul Core was hidden under his glabella between his two eyebrows, and the Purgatory was hidden inside. Suddenly, the skin above his nose cracked and a vertical crack divided his skin in two, revealing a completely opaque black stone. A spectral white light similar to that of his Aether Core swirled inside.

'Purgatory Dream: Activation. Defensive Mode.'

A microsecond earlier, the negative energy ball was about to explode, ripping all heat from the atoms within fifty meters. The next microsecond, the entire Lodunvals was teleported into a hellish world.

The buildings, the adventurers, the citizens were still there, but geysers of lava had replaced the water in the fountains and monstrous volcanoes had risen from the earth, completely rewriting the formerly flat topography of the city.

This time, Jake had not immersed his mind in the separate Purgatory Dream dimension, but brought it into the real world by deploying it at its maximum range of 10k radius.

Inside, no one could hide, no one could run, and no one could resist. Inside, Jake was like a god. He wasn't exactly omnipotent, but to stop a vulgar energy ball and an arrogant bitch? That was more than enough.

The innocent citizens were moved to a secure area by the Purgatory's AI, but Ruby and the other adventurers and knights-mages who had attacked him were trapped inside with him. Panicked and terrified screams rang out, and Ruby broke out in a cold sweat.

'What the heck is this fucking place?!'

Ruby's icy projectile? Before it even exploded, it was engulfed by hundreds of tons of plasma heated to tens of thousands of degrees Celsius.

So much ionized gas in one place was dangerous even for Jake, but summoning a protective capsule made of an alloy designed for spaceship hulls was extremely simple in the Purgatory.

There was only one condition to meet: Be willing to splurge your money.

And to win, Jake was willing to do anything.

### [Chapter 669 Two Bastards To Kill](#)

Standing in the heart of Lodunvals, overlooking the rest of the city from its hilltop, was a spacious manor house halfway between an impregnable fortress and a typical aristocratic summer castle.

Usually at this early hour of the morning, the manor would have been quiet with the only hint of activity being the occasional patrol of royal guards. This manor, which also served as a palace, was minimally defended, but not for lack of means, but because it was utterly superfluous.

Indeed, Laudar Vikien, the Baron at the head of Lodunvals, was also the only S-Rank Adventurer in the city and co-chairman of the Guild of Mages and Adventurers of Lodunvals. With a foot in each guild, his authority was undisputed and no one would even dare to overthrow him.

That was why, despite the growing chaos and war knocking at their doors, Lodunvals remained an imperturbably peaceful and safe city. Alas, this morning was destined to be different.

"A G-GUILTY!"

This amplified woman's shriek had, in a single word, reduced the town's unyielding tranquility to nothing. The royal barracks had immediately dispatched a company of knight-mages to solve the problem, and their captain had then sent a valet to inform his superior, who had himself urgently notified the Baron and the other aristocrats co-ruling the city with him.

The Baron's mansion had been specially treated and enchanted by the Baron himself to be perfectly isolated from the outside world. There were sound-based offensive or bewitching spells, and as a Battle Archmage with many enemies, he had made sure to take precautions against any eventuality.

Therefore, short of directly using a special magical artifact to contact him, the only way to inform him was to dispatch a messenger to notify him. As a direct result of these defensive measures, Laudar did not hear Ruby's cry, leaving his army to deal with it.

As Baron Vikien calmly read his morning report while sipping his cup of coffee, the ground beneath his feet suddenly began to shake and crevices cracked the walls and timbers of his mansion, causing fine dust to fall and cover his hair, making him look as if he had just aged 30 years.

Simultaneously, out of the corner of his eye, Laudar saw the sky change color and geysers of lava erupt from the earth like fireworks. The familiar mountains in the distance were still there, however, reminding him that he was still in Lodunvals.

The valet in his office who brought him the latest news was scared shitless that the apocalypse predicted by the prophecy had come, but the Baron was not lacking in composure and reacted as one would expect from a battle-hardened warrior.

The cracks soon spread through the walls, inevitably causing the ceiling of the room they were in to collapse. Laudar squinted his eyes gloomily, then raised an arm above his head as if he wanted to support the weight of his entire castle with a single hand.

Eerily, a foreign, intangible force field was emitted from it, spreading through the walls until it encompassed the section of the manor he was standing in. The destruction caused by the instantaneous earthquake came to a halt, and then magically the cracks in the beams and walls subsided, the debris resulting from the cave-in returning to their original position to reform the intact structures and furnishings they were once part of.

Still, Laudar was in a foul mood, sporting an ugly grimace. His faithful valet who had followed him for decades had suddenly disappeared, his whereabouts a mystery. The Baron spread his mental sense throughout the manor and his mood deteriorated further.

With the exception of the one wing of the manor he had just saved, the rest of the castle was in ruins. In place of the hill, a huge volcano almost a thousand meters high had sprouted from the earth, shattering the millennia-old building foundations of the palace that had never been designed to withstand such stress. His only consolation was that there were no casualties among the staff present. The problem was that they were nowhere in sight.

"WHO DID THIS!"

With a kick, he uprooted the huge steel door, the only remaining intact vestige of his fortress, and blew a long pure gold whistle. A few seconds later, a black pegasus with the proportions of a small boeing landed heavily next to him, each flap of its wings doing even more damage than the previous earthquake.

"Long time no see Actalaus." Laudar chuckled sinisterly as he stroked the enormous snout of the beast whose hooves were as wide as his former desk.

The creature's intelligent eyes, which glowed like inextinguishable lanterns, fogged over slightly and the pegasus snorted loudly to communicate its glee.

The scene might have been touching if the man and beast were not giving off such dark and overpowering energy. As the giant winged horse curled its lips, huge sharp teeth that had no business being in the mouth of a herbivore showed up in the daylight.

"You know why I summoned you. I have two bastards to kill." Laudar declared with a shaking voice filled with fury.

His beloved city that he had protected for decades had been wrecked in a matter of minutes by a shameless bitch and a fucking Guilty!

Right, Ruby had made an unforgivable mistake in announcing the presence of a Guilty so loudly. Contrary to what she thought and although the Guilty were very badly regarded by the natives of Quanoth, Laudar did not hate them. He didn't fear them either.

What he did fear was an accident like this one ruining the tranquility of his city when he hadn't asked for it. He knew that an all-out war was inevitable and that Lodunvals would sooner or later be forced to enter the war if it were to claim a place in the Celestial City.

To this end, Laudar had long since begun his preparations, recruiting the most loyal and talented adventurers and mages to swell his ranks. The seemingly safe citizens of Lodunvals had long since been discarded by their Baron, who already considered them as good as dead.

Yet! Even a doomed person had his use! These millions of citizens also had a Soul-Class and they were the perfect cannon fodder for his army. His initial intention was to protect them for a while, letting the rest of the world slaughter each other to near extinction, before telling them that if they wanted to survive this apocalypse, they had no choice but to slash a bloody path with him to the Celestial City.

If it had gone as planned, his chances of success would have been much brighter, though still uncertain. With this incident, the deceptively quiet atmosphere of the city had been shattered. After that, it was inevitable that a portion of the inhabitants would flee the city and take refuge deeper into the Empire's lands where the security and military presence was of a whole different standard.

"Damn it! Ten years of preparation down the drain!" The Baron shouted one last time before taking off on the back of his lumbering pegasus Actalaus.

Everywhere in the other palaces of Lodunvals, the Mage Guild, and even the mansions of other independent warriors, a similar scene was playing out. The city's airspace was soon obscured by dozens of flying beasts serving as mounts, as well as hundreds of mages and other warriors.

Their targets: Jake and Ruby.

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With the Purgatory Dream activated, Jake knew everything that was going on in his territory and immediately detected the monstrous Soul Signatures belonging to the Baron and the other renowned warriors and mages.

He immediately relocated the innocent citizens to a safe area and isolated the weaker warriors who might be tempted to interfere. The stronger natives, on the other hand, he could do nothing against. Their spiritual auras were too strong and no illusion nor magic could impinge on their dominion.

"Some of these natives really do have an overwhelming spiritual presence..." Jake had a hard time staying calm as he discovered these individuals. "I better get the hell out of here as soon as possible, but not before I get my revenge."

If he had stuffed the inhabitants' souls into the artifact, he could have locked them up and moved them around at will, including those souls beaming with power, but the danger was that his real body would have been a sitting duck. When the Purgatory was deactivated, his real body would have been in the exact same spot, just like his enemies'.

If he wanted to flee, he had no choice but to summon the Purgatory into reality.

"J-Jake it hurt." Jeanie's feeble voice rang out several dozen feet above him.

When Jake had been forced into his true form, the little fairy had been lethally irradiated and given third degree burns. If she wasn't a half spirit entity and wasn't digitized, she would have died in a second. Instead, she was hovering between life and death, her single HP barely scraping above zero after drinking three potions.

Trash's situation was even worse. Although he was half-leprechaun, he was still a human made of flesh and blood. His body was tougher than the fairy's, but he already looked like a charred piece of meat. He had been able to gulp down the contents of a potion in time and that was the only reason he was still alive.

All the human adventurers who had calmly watched Jake's acrobatic prowess didn't realize it, but they had been so badly irradiated in those few dozen seconds that most of them wouldn't survive the next month without treatment. Even with Digitization, their destroyed DNA would cause their cells to die, resulting in a continuous and increasing loss of HP over the next few days.

#### [Chapter 670 Jake Strikes Back](#)

The only ones who had a chance of making it were the C-rank adventurers and above whose Constitution and Vitality had reached a satisfactory level. Fortunately, alchemy and healing magic were well developed on Quanoth and by drinking an intermediate healing potion each, they would recover.

Jake had gotten a chance to take a look at the price of these potions and while they were affordable, their per unit price was the average salary of a D-Rank Adventurer. Their effectiveness was almost instantaneous, indirectly regenerating injuries in a flash through HP restoration.

It was a potion like this that had been used on Simgut, the Warhammer Champion he had just defeated.

The problem was that for weaker adventurers of Rank E, F and G, these potions were still too expensive. They couldn't waste them as lavishly as Simgut. For this purpose, much cheaper healing potions existed, but they could at most stabilize a wound and took several minutes or even hours to take effect.

There was also another major drawback with these potions, which was also apparent in more advanced potions. Consuming them too often intoxicated the human organism and created a form of addiction, reducing their effectiveness and forcing them to consume more for the same results.

Last but not least, their very way of healing was also their most glaring limitation. Since they regenerated a certain amount of HPs, it was crystal clear that their effects were most spectacular on frail, or basically low-level people.

If someone like Jake consumed one of these intermediate potions, the HP restoration would be most likely lower than his own HP regen/s.

The other direct consequence was that they could not directly heal the root cause of an ailment. A wound was not a big deal, but removing a poison, a curse, or a radiation was out of their league. For that, other potions existed that were way more costly.

All these potions could do was to provide a vital spark, helping the injured body to recover more quickly. In this respect, they were not unlike the Digestor Blood vials that Jake carried around with him by the hundreds.

As such, they couldn't regenerate lost limbs either, unless the species was naturally capable of doing so. They also left ugly scars most of the time.

Luckily for the natives of Quanoth, even among ordinary humans this problem did not exist. In fact, they were not even aware of its existence.

Thanks to Digitization, they could theoretically recover from decapitation and even disintegration if their HPs were deemed sufficient. The only condition was that their soul was not completely destroyed.

Nevertheless, this kind of injury was very damaging to the Spirit Body and it was not uncommon in such cases to lose several levels and suffer from post-traumatic psychic disorders for several months or years.

All sorts of remedies and spells had been devised over the centuries to deal with these complications, but their cost was staggering and the best thing to do was not to get hurt too badly.

Seeing Jeanie and Trash's condition, Jake was rather alarmed. The potion could give them back their HPs and maybe even repair their DNA, but it could do nothing against their irradiated atoms. The radiation would continue to damage their bodies for weeks to come and there was no way they could afford the astronomical cost of the potions that would ensue.

'There must be a potion solving this kind of condition somewhere.' Jake concluded as he mentally scanned the Guild's rubble.

The Guild offered discounts to adventurers when selling them potions and equipment, so logically they must have had some stock. The building's destruction had destroyed most of their inventory, but he was hopeful that he could find some of it intact.

His Purgatory Dream summoning and the lava swamp he had woven around himself had obliterated the anti-magic runes preventing him from using his powers and he was free to unleash his full might again.

With a relaxed wave of his hand, he lifted dozens of tons of rubble, then shattered it into thin blades. His eyes widened slightly and the thousands of sharp projectiles shot at supersonic speed toward Ruby's supposed hiding place.

"AAH!"

The bewitched adventurers who had created a tight bubble of invisibility around her were caught off guard as these micro stone blades struck their energy shields with terrifying kinetic energy.

BANG! BANG! ...

Several thousand impacts in a tenth of a second struck the barrier powered by the two mages of the group, destroying it instantly, then the next thousands of projectiles pierced the thick bulwark, then the heavy armor of the two tanks of the group, transforming them into pinpricks.

Stunned, their Captain threw himself in front of Ruby to take the rest of the attack, and his body burst into an intense light that finally stopped the last few blades, but not before several hundred of them had

embedded themselves deeply into his body. If he didn't have a high level and such excellent armor, he would have died instantly.

'Terrifying...!' The captain shuddered before worrying about his comrades. At that moment, he began to have some doubts. 'Why would we sacrifice ourselves like this for a woman we barely know?'

Feeling death approaching could restore some lucidity to the most foolish of men. Seeing his friends die needlessly like that had given him a shock.

"Keep protecting me." Ruby ordered coldly without giving a single glance to the two Rank-A Adventurers who had just sacrificed themselves for her.

These warriors were not yet dead despite the severity of their injuries. Sensing the danger, they had ingested powerful healing potions with prolonged effectiveness. The cost of these potions could even make the survivors regret having consumed them. For this reason, the adventurers in the field dubbed them Potion of Regret.

Receiving their order, the two muscle mountains in golden armor struggled to their feet with a grunt and resumed their position. Their gaze, however, was no longer as lovesick and servile as it once was. Like their captain, their brush with death had awakened their distrust and they were now on guard.

How could experienced Rank-A adventurers like them be fooled so easily. Even Simgut had performed better against Jake. Unfortunately, this was the first time they had fallen victim to such swift magical attacks. The sheer urgency of the situation and their confidence in their equipment had made them act out of reflex without thinking and they had no time to trigger any of their skills.

One could not blame them. In Ret'Asi, firearms were not common and spells tended to be unnecessarily flashy and flamboyant. There were formidable archers, but you could at least anticipate the attack by the way they strung their bows.

Throughout the attack, the elf Elduin and the dwarf Bhammod had not taken their eyes off Jake and suddenly shouted,

" We need to get the fuck out of here! Right now!"

Jake had finally found a supply of untouched potions buried under the rubble and after forcing Trash and Jeanie to ingest their contents, he was able to witness just in time the breakdown of the barrier protecting and concealing Ruby from his view.

The sacrifice of these warriors was commendable, but seeing that they were not dead and his attack had failed, he immediately changed his strategy and absorbed several handfuls of illusory lava, which he condensed, heated, and spun until the lava turned into a vicious orb of swirling, blinding white plasma.

Before Ruby and the others could even react to Elduin and Bhammod's warning cry, he grabbed one of them with one hand, then disappeared from his former position and teleported right behind Ruby, his super-dense plasma ball just millimeters from Ruby's neck.

Just before impact, Ruby's long white hair slipped out of his sight, replaced by the shorter hair of a woman with a side-shaven head.

"Hmph! Shameless." Jake snorted as he adjusted his arm position and turned his neck in her direction.

Ruby, who had swapped positions with the adventurer by some miracle, inadvertently met his galactic eyes and the next thing she knew she was... in the same place but she felt right away that something was not right.

'An illusion!' She understood at once.

Her pupils suddenly filled with a bluish radiance and the lava world froze instantly, her comrades moving robotically around her and Jake still glaring at her, crumbled as if they were as dry as wilted leaves.

Jake who had cast this Illusion Spell with the combination of his Myrtharian Eyes and Aether Soul Core was suddenly struck with fatigue, feeling a deep yearning for sleep the likes of which he had not felt in over a year.

"Blue Soul Stones!" Jake immediately identified what this horrible feeling of drowsiness and exhaustion reminded him of.

In his Second Ordeal, unlike the Red Soul Stones, the Blue Soul Stones had the effect of tranquilizing, plunging their users and victims into an illusory dream that could spell their death. Unlike the Chaos Zhorions, the Dream Tribe favored the Blue Soul Stones and had evolved over the years to adapt to them.

Jake had gotten his Soul Glyph Harbinger of Chaos by slaughtering the Chaos Tribe and remembering how Ruby had gained so many points in an instant back then, he immediately drew the obvious conclusion.

Either she had a special Soul Glyph or she also had the Dream Zhorion Bloodline. It was dangerous, but in the end Jake still managed a smile.

" Well played, but it's too late."

Time flowed differently in the illusion and the time Ruby had wasted dissolving the illusion had given him the micro-second he needed to teleport back behind her. This time the compressed, swirling ball of plasma connected with her neck and as Jake teleported away for the third consecutive time, the telekinetic force holding the lava ball together was removed and a monstrous explosion ensued.

BOOOOM!