

Strongest

Chapter 1741 – Popular Silverwing

After the battle outside of Silverwing Town, Zero Wing's prestige and reputation skyrocketed.

"Zero Wing is amazing! Even Beast Emperor's monster army is helpless against the Guild!"

"I've heard that you can get plenty of combat techniques from the Primordial Divine Ruin. Now that nobody can contest Zero Wing for Silverwing Town, won't Zero Wing acquire a ton of combat techniques?"

"That's not all. Don't forget about Primordial City. I've heard that Primordial City can help players improve their combat standards."

"I've heard that Zero Wing has been recruiting new members lately. Why don't we give it a try? I've also heard that even Zero Wing's elite members can learn combat techniques without signing a binding contract right now."

"What?! Those are combat techniques we're talking about! I've heard that even large Guilds' core members have to sign strict contracts if they wish to learn one of the Guild's combat techniques!"

"Honestly, you can learn Zero Wing's combat techniques without joining the Guild. Only, the price is exorbitant. However, if you become an elite member, you can get a significant discount."

...

As news of Zero Wing's victory spread, many independent players made their way towards Star-Moon Kingdom to join Zero Wing.

As a result, the number of players applying to join Zero Wing had increased by nearly three times.

For a time, Aqua Rose was swamped with work.

To make matters worse, now that Zero Wing had proven that it had the strength to defend Silverwing Town, a large number of merchant players and corporations hoped to purchase Shops, conducting their business in the town. This was especially true for the corporations that sold virtual goods[1].

However, Shi Feng had no intention of selling Silverwing Town's Shops. Instead, he would only rent them out. Moreover, the rental price was an astronomical 2,000 Gold or 6,000 Magic Crystals per month...

Because of this price, 99% of the merchant players cursed Zero Wing. This was simply fraudulent!

Shi Feng's decision even confused Aqua Rose.

With 2,000 Gold, one could buy a very good plot of Land in an NPC town. Even in Guild Towns, strategically located Shops only sold for 800 Gold or so, yet not only were Silverwing Town's Shops only available to rent, but the rental cost was also 2,000 Gold per month. With so much money, players could permanently purchase two good plots of Land in another Guild Town.

Although Silverwing Town's location was strategic, Teleportation War Fortresses had appeared in the Orc Empire. It was only a matter of time before the various large Guilds occupied these fortresses. Once that happened, Silverwing Town's value would fall.

The wisest decision Zero Wing could make right now would be pulling as many merchant players as possible to Silverwing Town. By doing so, Zero Wing could make a fortune and solidify the town's position and advantage in the Orc Empire.

Yet, Shi Feng had chosen to rent the town's Shops at astronomical prices, scaring away many merchant players that had solid foundations. When the various large Guilds began to capture Teleportation War Fortresses, these merchant players would gravitate to these fortresses instead. Doing this wouldn't benefit Zero Wing.

But Shi Feng paid the matter no heed.

First, the Orc Empire's Teleportation War Fortresses were not that easy to capture. Second, Silverwing Town had five Magic Towers. Players could gain a full rest just by standing in the town; they wouldn't need to rent rooms from a hotel. There was also the Spirited State buff, which could help players level up far more quickly. One could easily imagine how attractive Silverwing Town would be to players.

However, these players wouldn't just loiter on the street like fools, doing nothing. They would stroll around the town and window-shop. The chances that they'd spend some money would be quite high.

In addition, unlike Zero Wing City, where players could accumulate the Double EXP buff even while they were offline, players in Silverwing Town had to remain online to take advantage of the Spirited State buff. They could only take advantage of the buff while offline if they rested in a hotel room or a Guild Hall. Hence, there would be many players strolling down Silverwing Town's streets.

With how many players would wander Silverwing Town's streets, business in the town would thrive as well as those in Zero Wing City. Naturally, he couldn't ask for too low of a price for the town's Shops.

Moreover, Silverwing Town needed to maintain more than just the five Magic Towers. There was also the Magic King, Craig Midlands. Silverwing Town's daily operation costs could drive any first-rate Guild crazy. Including the fact that Silverwing Town needed the funds to develop and had limited space, selling the Shops cheaply would be foolish. Rather, setting up hotels in place of Shops would generate more income for the town.

In the end, only six merchant associations were willing to rent Shops in Silverwing Town.

Although there were so few, Zero Wing had still earned 12,000 Gold. This allowed the Guild to construct more high-rise buildings in the town, which would, in turn, hasten the town's promotion to an Intermediate Town.

A neutral town's promotion conditions weren't like those of towns constructed within kingdoms and empires. In addition to the population and Town Reputation requirements, the neutral town also needed to achieve certain conditions.

These conditions involved a certain number of high-rise buildings and NPC merchants. Unfortunately, due to safety concerns, NPC merchants would rarely set foot into neutral maps.

The town needed to earn a C-rank in safety, but trying to do so with a Basic Town was excruciatingly difficult.

Because of this, neutral towns had a hard time getting promoted. One had to develop the town to its very limits before it could reach the next rank.

Of course, there were methods that could hasten this process, and one involved using a Town Promotion Order.

Only, the Town Promotion Order a neutral town required was unusual. To upgrade a Basic Neutral Town to an Intermediate Neutral Town, one would need a Gold ranked Town Promotion Order. Meanwhile, Gold Town Promotion Orders could be used to upgrade an Intermediate Town to Advanced rank in kingdoms and empires. One could easily imagine how difficult such a Promotion Order would be to obtain.

Even Shi Feng did not have a guaranteed method of acquiring a Gold Town Promotion Order. All he could do was hasten the construction of high-rise buildings in Silverwing Town.

Although it was true that Silverwing Town currently had the ability to stop Beast Emperor's forces, he wasn't so arrogant to think that Silverwing Town's current state would always be enough to stop Beast Emperor. After all, the Evil God's Temple, which Beast Emperor belonged to, was everyone's enemy on the God's Domain continent. If given enough time to grow, Beast Emperor could definitely become strong enough to overcome Silverwing Town's current defenses.

Moreover, Beast Emperor wasn't the only enemy Zero Wing had to worry about. The various superpowers also eyed Silverwing Town. With these superpowers' foundations, they would only grow stronger as time passed. Once the various superpowers realized Primordial City's true importance and gathered sufficient strength, they wouldn't miss the chance to strike at Silverwing Town.

The various superpowers only saw the benefits Silverwing Town currently offered. However, they had neglected to notice the potential threat Silverwing Town could become. Hence, Shi Feng needed to develop and fortify Silverwing Town as quickly as possible.

However, although Zero Wing currently had a goldmine like Zero Wing City, which earned a large number of Coins and Magic Crystals each day, it wasn't enough to sustain the Guild's development...

This was because Zero Wing had constantly recruited new members recently. Since the start of the latest recruitment drive, more than 150,000 players had joined the Guild. This number would only increase as time went on. Meanwhile, the Guild needed to provide all sorts of benefits for these new members, and to do so, the Guild would need a ton of resources.

Normally, new members were a good thing for a Guild. After all, the more members a Guild had, the stronger it would be. But Zero Wing wasn't like first-rate Guilds. Zero Wing's sphere of influence was tiny in comparison. As a result, although Zero Wing had gained more members, the Guild did not have the necessary territory to let these new members operate and generate wealth for the Guild, which was necessary to sustain the Guild benefits its members enjoyed.

To put it simply, Zero Wing couldn't afford to take in so many members. If the Guild wished to develop, it would need a large amount of resources and Coins. Without the proper funds, the Guild couldn't be self-sufficient.

Meanwhile, after the battle, Shi Feng returned to Silverwing Town's Candlelight Trading Firm and began to evaluate the Guild's latest harvest.

After killing the Evil Demons and Evil Beasts, the Guild had acquired nearly 2,000 Evil Energy Crystals from this battle. This was a considerable harvest. However, it was a drop in the bucket compared to how many Evil Energy Crystals Shi Feng needed.

"Huh? What's this?"

As Shi Feng inspected the loot from the Dark Hunters, he noticed a skeletal hand made entirely of crystal.

Surprisingly, Shi Feng couldn't actually inspect the skeletal hand normally. The system simply stated that it was an unknown item.

His curiosity piqued, Shi Feng used Omniscient Eyes to inspect the skeletal hand.

The instant he tried to appraise the item, he heard the sounds of a series of system notifications.

Chapter 1742 – Philosopher’s Hand

System: You have discovered the Cursed Philosopher’s Hand.

System: Epic ranked Main Storyline Quest “Philosopher’s Wish” activated.

Quest Content: Locate the World Forest using the Philosopher’s Hand and activate the World Gate.

Reward: Philosopher’s Hand

...

A Legendary item? Shi Feng’s heart pounded rapidly when he saw the system notifications.

He had never thought that he would have the opportunity to acquire the Philosopher’s Hand in this life!

Any alchemist in God's Domain would definitely have heard of the Philosopher's Hand!

Like the Philosopher's Stone, the Philosopher's Hand was a treasure of the alchemy world, so Shi Feng knew quite a bit about it. It was a bona fide Legendary item. Unlike the Philosopher's Stone, the Philosopher's Hand was a complete, undamaged item. Countless Lifestyle Players dreamed of using its abilities.

If one were to say that the power of the Philosopher's Stone focused on refining materials, then the Philosopher's Hand focused on strengthening the standards of Lifestyle Players, allowing them to break through all kinds of bottlenecks easily and continuously elevate themselves to a higher level.

In his past, the Philosopher's Hand had appeared in the hands of the first-rate Guild Kingdom's Sword. With the help of the Philosopher's Hand, the Lifestyle Players working under Kingdom's Sword were able to develop rapidly. Back then, this incident had shaken the entire Dark Night Empire. The trading firm operated by Kingdom's Sword also quickly became one of the top three trading firms in the Dark Night Empire, inciting the other first-rate Guilds' envy.

However, the Dark Night Empire was an empire even stronger than the Black Dragon Empire. There were a total of four superpowers fighting over the empire. One could easily imagine what kind of end had awaited Kingdom's Sword!

In the end, the four superpowers 'requested' that Kingdom's Sword sell its Philosopher's Hand. Although it was presented as a request, in reality, it was closer to coercion. However, Kingdom's Sword had already grown to become an extremely powerful first-rate Guild by then. The Guild had plenty of expert members and was already well on its way to becoming a super-first-rate Guild.

Naturally, Kingdom's Sword had refused the superpowers' requests. After all, the requirement to become a super-first-rate Guild was to have sufficient financial strength and resources.

If Kingdom's Sword sold its Philosopher's Hand, that would be equivalent to severing its path towards becoming a super-first-rate Guild.

Originally, it would've indeed been very difficult for one superpower to deal with a powerful first-rate guild like Kingdom's Sword. The surprising thing was that the four superpowers had actually worked together to deal with Kingdom's Sword...

As a result, Kingdom's Sword had become history from then on.

However, the Guild Leader of Kingdom's Sword was also ruthless. Even when his Guild had been on the brink of annihilation, he had still refused to hand over the Philosopher's Hand. In the end, none of the four superpowers had gotten their hands on it, and the alchemy treasure had vanished from God's Domain with the Kingdom's Sword Guild.

Shi Feng found it truly surprising that the Philosopher's Hand had appeared before him.

If not for being targeted by four superpowers, there was no doubt that Kingdom's Sword would've become a super-first-rate Guild. After all, the further one progressed in the game, the more important Lifestyle Players became to Guilds. Many weapons, equipment, and items had to be crafted by the various Lifestyle players. It was simply impossible to sustain a Guild's development with dropped items alone.

Looking at the Philosopher's Hand, many ideas danced in Shi Feng's mind.

Although Silverwing Town seemed free of issues right now, the town would face great danger in the future. Sufficient power would be needed to maintain the town's safety.

Although he had acquired the Bronze Guardian Puppet Design, Zero Wing simply wasn't capable of producing the Bronze Guardian Puppet right now.

It might be fine if he had obtained a design for the Common Guardian Puppet, as it did not require Master-ranked Lifestyle Players to be produced. However, the Bronze Guardian Puppet's minimum requirement was to have a Master Forger, a Master Alchemist, a Master Engineer, and a Master Enchanter. In addition, some parts needed to be made by two different kinds of Masters, while some needed all four kinds of Masters working together to make them.

The Bronze Guardian Puppets could only be crafted after meeting the requirements. Even then, the production success rate was very low. If one wished to produce the Bronze Guardian Puppet reliably, the Master Lifestyle Players selected had to be Intermediate or Advanced Masters. Basic Masters were too unreliable.

Fulfilling these conditions was wishful thinking for the current Zero Wing.

Master Lifestyle Players were not available on demand. Even ten years after God's Domain had launched, Basic Masters had been extremely rare and had been greatly respected by the various large guilds, let alone Intermediate and Advanced Masters.

However, if Zero Wing acquired the Philosopher's Hand, it would be possible to nurture a bunch of Basic Masters within a short time. Building up some Intermediate Masters might even be possible! At that time, Zero Wing could start the production of the Bronze Guardian Puppet.

Just thinking about such a future was incredibly exciting!

Bronze Guardian Puppets possessed combat power at the peak of Tier 3. Moreover, players could control them fully since they were much easier to control than summoned creatures. A Void Realm expert that was ignorant of the Realms of Truth could still, at the very minimum, exhibit combat power at the Refinement Realm when controlling a Guardian Puppet.

Most importantly, unlike summoned creatures, Guardian Puppets could be used permanently. They even dealt additional damage to buildings and magic arrays!

Whether they were used in a siege or defensive battle, Guardian Puppets were the perfect tool. Countless Guilds had dreamed of obtaining Guardian Puppets in the past. Guardian Puppets were so powerful that the first-rate Guilds that had them could even afford to provoke superpowers and get away with it.

If he could produce several dozen Bronze Guardian Puppets now, nobody in God's Domain could threaten Silverwing Town.

Even if ten Mythic monsters charged at the town, the monsters could be easily stopped with forty Bronze Guardian Puppets. After all, Guardian Puppets had extremely high Defense, rivaling Tier 4 monsters!

If he had a hundred Bronze Guardian Puppets right now, he would immediately set out to annihilate Ancient Rock City's Evil God Branch Temple right now!

Of course, these were only fantasies...

However, with the Philosopher's Hand, it was entirely possible to turn these fantasies into reality!

Setting aside those ideas for the moment, Shi Feng quickly inspected the Philosopher's Hand's statistics...

...

[Cursed Philosopher's Hand]

As the creator of the Philosopher's Hand failed to complete his wish before death, the creator's soul had attached itself to the Philosopher's Hand and cursed it to lose all of its power. Only after removing this curse will the Philosopher's Hand recover its original abilities. Twenty stalks of Soul Dissolving Flower are necessary to activate Soul Guidance and remove the curse.

...

Soul Dissolving Flower? What a ruthless price! Shi Feng could not help but frown after reading the item's introduction.

In God's Domain, any item pertaining to souls was extraordinarily valuable!

Shi Feng knew a little about the Soul Dissolving Flower. It was an extremely rare Epic material and the main material needed to produce the Master-ranked Meditation Potion. The Meditation Potion was one of the rare few Potions capable of helping players learn combat techniques more easily.

After consuming a Master Meditation Potion, the Potion would offer players guidance that would help them grasp combat techniques very quickly. In the past, the Potion had been highly sought after by the various major powers.

Unlike Skills and Spells, players needed to train arduously to learn a combat technique. Even expert players struggled to learn Basic Combat Techniques, not to mention Advanced Combat Techniques and above.

Hence, one could easily imagine how valuable the Soul Dissolving Flower was.

On the market, each stalk could sell for 300 Gold. Even so, nobody would be willing to sell a Soul Dissolving Flower they had obtained as they were exceedingly rare... so rare that even the various superpowers could only get their hands on a small number.

The flower's rarity was because it did not exist on the continent of God's Domain. Instead, it only existed in Otherworlds and Higher Planes, which made them extremely difficult to acquire.

Yet, the Philosopher's Hand actually required twenty stalks of Soul Dissolving Flower...

At this moment, Shi Feng finally understood why the Philosopher's Hand had only appeared after mainstream players had already reached Level 80. At that time, the pathways connecting the continent of God's Domain and Otherworlds had already been opened.

Most likely, Kingdom's Sword had only managed to collect the twenty Soul Dissolving Flowers after that event!

It seems there's a need to make another trip to the Ice Crystal World. The only Otherworld Shi Feng could freely travel to right now was the Ice Crystal World. Although there was also the option of visiting a Higher Plane, it would take a very long amount of time to collect twenty Soul Dissolving Flowers all by himself. Meanwhile, there were many players in the Ice Crystal World!

Done thinking, Shi Feng contacted Lifeless Thorn and the other members of the Asura adventurer team and had them gather in White River City. After grouping up, they headed towards the Ice Crystal World.

Chapter 1743 – Revisiting the Ice Crystal World

Ice Crystal World, Cold Wind City, the Snow Rift:

Icy-cold winds blew endlessly inside the snowy valley. If a player without Ice Resistance stood here, they would no doubt freeze to death. Even if players possessed sufficient Ice Resistance to survive the cold environment, their Stamina consumption would be several times higher than usual.

Currently, however, there was a very large number of players grinding inside the Snow Rift.

Looking down from the top of the mountain, one would see many large groups of players grinding the monsters here, seemingly used to fighting in this place already.

“We just left for a short while, and there are actually so many people grinding here already?” Yan Ya, who was currently dressed in exquisite dark-blue mage robes and wielding an emerald staff, was slightly surprised as she looked down at the crowd of players grinding beneath the mountain.

Even the lowest leveled player among the players present inside the Snow Rift was Level 50, with most of them being Level 51. Some of the players giving out orders had even reached Level 52.

In an empire on the continent of God's Domain, a Level 52 player could easily rank within the top 30, yet there were actually more than thirty Level 52 players present in the Snow Rift...

Yan Ya and the rest of the Asura adventurer team members that had gone over to the continent of God's Domain together with Shi Feng had been roaming about the continent grinding and questing constantly. Shi Feng had even helped them level up a little. However, they had only reached Level 52, yet so many independent experts of Cold Wind City had already managed to reach the same point!

"The monsters in the Ice Crystal World are stronger and provide more EXP, so the leveling speed of the players here is faster than that of the players on the main continent. Right now, the average level of large Guild members on the main continent is already close to reaching Level 50. It is very normal for the mainstream players here to reach Level 51 and 52," Shi Feng said, not finding this situation particularly surprising.

During his previous visit to the Ice Crystal World, he had discovered that the average level of the players here was much higher than the players on the continent of God's Domain. The part that truly surprised Shi Feng was the weapons and equipment these players were using.

The drop-rate for weapons and equipment in the Ice Crystal World was extremely low. Normally, monsters here only dropped materials. The main source of weapons and equipment was from Lifestyle Players. Hence, the quality of the weapons and equipment used by the players here was considerably inferior to those used by the players on the main continent. In contrast, the standard of the Lifestyle Players here was much higher.

Most of the Level 50 players present in the Snow Rift were geared in Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment, with some even being geared in Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. The equipment standard of these players was not the slightest bit inferior to the players residing on the main continent.

After reaching Level 50, the drop-rate for weapons and equipment would decrease drastically.

Currently, Level 50, 20-man Team Dungeons were the goal of independent players on the main continent. Meanwhile, the best equipment dropped in these Dungeons was Level 50 Secret-Silver rank, although the drop-rate was extremely low. The drop-rate was only at an acceptable level if one raided at Hell Mode. However, a Level 50, 20-man Hell Mode Team Dungeon was still too difficult of a challenge for current independent players.

As a result, even after reaching Level 50, most players on the continent of God's Domain would only be geared in Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment. Few of them possessed Secret-Silver Equipment. As for Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment, that was something only large Guilds were capable of acquiring.

It also wasn't very easy for players to produce high-quality Level 50 equipment.

After reaching Level 50, not only did the production procedures for weapons and equipment become more complex, but the production success rate also decreased. Even Shi Feng, despite having become a Basic Master Forger already, still needed the help of a bunch of excellent support tools to produce high-quality Level 50 equipment at a profitable rate.

Shi Feng found it very difficult to imagine that the Lifestyle Players of Cold Wind City were already capable of producing Level 50 Secret-Silver Weapons and Equipment.

If the Lifestyle Players here had truly reached such a standard already, then the average forging standard of Cold Wind City was even higher than that of the Candlelight Trading Firm!

The Candlelight Trading Firm possessed many Secret Forging Techniques. Candlelight could even send players to train at the Holy City of Titan. Members of Candlelight could also work and practice in the Mana-rich environment of Zero Wing City, yet despite these factors, Candlelight's overall forging standard was still inferior to the forging standard of Cold Wind City. How could Shi Feng not be surprised by this fact?

"Commander, those people over there seem to be members of our adventurer team," Solitary Nine said, smiling as he pointed at a 50-man team currently fighting against a Level 56 Great Lord.

Currently, six Level 51 MTs were working together to pin down the Level 56 Great Lord-ranked Frost Ape. The Frost Ape was very powerful. Even when three MTs worked together to receive one of its normal attacks, the MTs would still get pushed back and receive over 10,000 damage each. To cope with the Frost Ape's powerful attacks, the six MTs would take turns receiving its attacks.

Of course, to Level 51 MTs, losing 10,000-plus HP was not a cause for concern. Instead, the truly troublesome part about the Frost Ape was the Freezing debuff its attacks inflicted. If one were struck by the Frost Ape, their body's movements would turn sluggish. If struck too many times, even their Movement Speed would decrease. At the same time, the damage they received would also increase.

However, although the Frost Ape was very powerful, Asura's 50-man team was still able to reduce its HP steadily. It was only a matter of time before the Frost Ape died.

After hearing Solitary Nine's words, Lifeless Thorn, Cleansing Whistle, Dark Madness, Yan Ya, and the other members of Asura in the team turned to look in the Frost Ape's direction. For a moment, they all could not help but sigh ruefully.

Although the Asura members that were currently in combat were relatively strong and high-leveled, in their eyes, these players were still too lacking when it came to combat standards.

This was something they had learned after leaving the Ice Crystal World.

The players of the Ice Crystal World might be higher-leveled, but the average combat standard of the players on the continent of God's Domain was significantly higher.

The Asura members in the Ice Crystal World needed 50 people to suppress the Level 56 Great Lord ranked Frost Ape. If the task were left to the various large Guilds of God's Domain, a 20-man team would be more than enough to deal with such an opponent.

Just as Solitary Nine and the others were talking about their fellow companions' combat standards, an army of players suddenly entered the valley below them. There were easily over 3,000 players in this army. Meanwhile, these players all wore Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment of matching designs. It was obvious that the equipment was player-made. Some of the leader-level individuals in this army were also equipped in five or more pieces of Secret-Silver Equipment. As for the 100-man team moving in the lead of this army, over half of the equipment on them was Level 50 Secret-Silver rank.

The gorgeous and neat equipment these players wore quickly earned them the envy of the other players present inside the Snow Rift. At the same time, fear surfaced in the eyes of the surrounding crowd.

The players in this army all wore a Guild Emblem in the shape of a black lion. They were, evidently, Guild players.

When the players grinding in the Snow Rift saw the arrival of these players, they immediately started a discussion between themselves.

“Amazing! So, this is Hecate?”

“Sure enough, Hecate isn’t something the Guilds of Cold Wind City can hope to compare to. It’s no wonder the Matchless Family decided to join Hecate. Moreover, with how much pressure Hecate is placing on the Centurion Dynasty, I believe it won’t be long before the Centurion Dynasty disbands!”

“I really wish I could join Hecate! I heard that there are plenty of weapons and equipment made available for exchange in the Guild. One is eligible to exchange for Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment just by becoming an elite member. It’s a pity Hecate’s recruitment requirements are too high.”

...

As the players grinding in the Snow Rift watched Hecate’s army slowly approach, they felt a sense of yearning towards the Guild. Right now, they had to grind arduously for rare materials and then use these materials to trade for a piece of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment from Hecate. If they could become members of Hecate, however, they would not have to go through all that trouble. They also wouldn’t have to make unfavorable trades with Hecate.

“Hecate’s reserving this place! Non-members leave this place immediately!”

“If you’re not gone within five minutes, we’ll forcefully evict you from this place!”

Just as the spectating crowd was chatting among themselves, a few of Hecate’s members suddenly started evicting players from the map.

“What?! Hecate has occupied several high-resource leveling maps before. This leveling spot is something we found after going through great lengths! How can you guys just come here and take it from us?”

“That’s right! This is too much!”

“Without this place, how are we supposed to grind for rare materials?”

For a time, the various independent players all complained about Hecate’s tyrannic actions.

“What? You guys have something to say about this?” At this moment, a savage man wearing light-blue armor walked out from Hecate’s army. The man then sent a glance at the crowd before him, sneering, “If you have something to say, fine! Come say it to my face!”

Hearing this man’s words, everyone suddenly went quiet.

The savage man before them was named Vast Heaven, and very famous in Cold Wind City. On the first day he had arrived in Cold Wind City, he had killed over thirty experts from the Centurion Dynasty. Afterward, in the Guild war between Hecate and the Centurion Dynasty, not only did Vast Heaven managed to kill over a hundred players all by himself, he even managed to slay Centurion Dynasty’s Guild Leader, Sky Slicer!

How could they possibly dare fight him?

Everyone started quietly leaving the area, no longer daring to say anything about Hecate’s actions. Meanwhile, Asura’s 50-man team finally defeated the Frost Ape and were about to pick up their loot and leave as well.

“Wait a minute! This place is already under Hecate’s management! You guys over there leave those materials behind!” Vast Heaven shouted as he looked at Asura’s members.

“Vast Heaven, we killed this Boss! Don’t you dare go overboard!” the Berserker serving as the leader of Asura’s 50-man team said as he looked at Vast Heaven.

“What? You guys want to fight?” Vast Heaven laughed. “Sure! Come at me! I’ll even let all of you attack me together! If you manage to kill me, I’ll immediately have my men leave the area!”

Chapter 1744 – Asura’s Commander

After Vast Heaven was done speaking, he stepped out from the crowd behind him and slowly walked towards Asura’s 50-man team.

When bathed in Vast Heaven’s chilling aura, Asura’s members felt greatly pressured. None of them dared reply to Vast Heaven’s provocation. They knew very clearly what kind of temper Vast Heaven possessed.

During the first few days after Hecate arrived in Cold Wind City, a situation similar to this had occurred. Some adventurer teams that were displeased with Hecate’s tyrannical actions had challenged Vast Heaven. In the end, however, Vast Heaven had defeated every challenger. Even when a 100-man team challenged Vast Heaven, the entire team still ended up getting annihilated.

Vast Heaven’s combat power was on an entirely different level than theirs. Accepting his challenge would simply be suicidal.

“I heard that the Asura adventurer team is the number one adventurer team of Cold Wind City. Your commander has even been labeled a monster and was able to oppress the two large Guilds in Cold Wind City single-handedly. Your adventurer team is also famed for being filled with experts. So, how did your adventurer team end up having a weak bunch like you?” Vast Heaven sneered as he sent a glance at the silent players before him. “It seems those rumors really are just that, rumors! I’ve been in Cold Wind City for some time now, yet I still haven’t met that so-called commander of yours even now! He must be like you bunch, hiding in fear. And to think you all even dare call yourselves the number one adventurer team of Cold Wind City! This truly is disappointing! Oh well. It was my fault for expecting there would be capable experts in a backwater village like Cold Wind City.”

The expressions of Asura’s members darkened when they heard Vast Heaven’s words.

However, they were also powerless to refute Vast Heaven’s words. Vast Heaven’s strength was clear for all to see. He was definitely one of the strongest experts present in all of Cold Wind City. Even if their commander and the other experts of their adventurer team were present, they were unlikely to win against Vast Heaven.

“Leave the loot behind! We’re leaving!” said Stained Maple, the Berserker serving as the leader of Asura’s team, gnashing his teeth.

He knew that their team stood no chance against Vast Heaven whatsoever.

It was definitely unwise to throw away the lives of the entire 50-man team just for the loot of a Frost Ape!

Under the Berserker’s lead, Asura’s team turned around and left.

“Hold it! Who said you could go?” Vast Heaven shouted suddenly.

“We’ve already left the loot behind. What else do you want?” Stained Maple said, irked.

“I see that you have quite a few pieces of Secret-Silver Equipment on you. Hecate just so happens to be in need of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. Since I’ve already come all the way here, you wouldn’t let me leave with nothing, right?” Vast Heaven said, chuckling. “Hand over five pieces of Secret-Silver Equipment as my labor fee. Afterward, you guys can leave.”

Rage immediately burned in the eyes of Asura’s members when they heard Vast Heaven’s words.

This was too much!

They had already chosen to concede, yet Vast Heaven was even telling them to hand over five pieces of Secret-Silver Equipment. That was basically asking for their lives!

Nowadays, while it was indeed true that the mainstream players of Cold Wind City had already reached Level 50, Level 50 equipment was still scarce. Right now, even Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment was worth a fortune, not to mention Secret-Silver Equipment.

Just one piece of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment was already worth far more than the value of the Frost Ape’s loot. They would have to kill over twenty Frost Apes to earn enough to purchase five pieces of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment.

Even though the Asura adventurer team was Cold Wind City’s number one adventurer team, it did not possess a lot of Secret-Silver Equipment. As for their fifty-man team, all together, they only had around a dozen or so pieces of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment.

“What? Not willing to hand them over? Are you asking for me to make a move?” Vast Heaven said as he swept a scrutinizing gaze over Asura’s members.

Meanwhile, Asura’s members’ rage burned brightly as they glared at Vast Heaven.

“Boss Maple, let’s just duke it out with them! Isn’t it just a single death? That’s much better than just handing over five pieces of Secret-Silver Equipment!”

“That’s right! I refuse to believe our 50-man team can’t kill one person!”

...

Asura’s members were expressing their anger on the team chat one after another. They were all willing to fight against Vast Heaven rather than handing over five pieces of Secret-Silver Equipment without putting up a fight.

“Alright! We’ll fight with everything we got! Even if we can’t kill him, we’ll make him lose a few teeth!” Stained Maple said after giving the matter some thought.

After all was said and done, Vast Heaven was only a Level 52 Berserker. Even Stained Maple himself was a Level 52 Berserker. The weapons and equipment his team wore were also much stronger than before. Their chances of winning against Vast Heaven were not entirely zero.

After Stained Maple agreed, Asura’s members all unsheathed their weapons and started encircling Vast Heaven.

“You want to make a move?” Vast Heaven could not help but laugh when he saw Stained Maple brimming with fighting spirit. “Good! I just happen to be in need of some practice targets!”

Saying that, Vast Heaven unsheathed the silver spear hanging on his back. He then charged directly into Asura’s team.

So fast! Stained Maple could not help but be surprised when he saw Vast Heaven transforming into an afterimage.

Despite Vast Heaven being a Berserker, he was so fast that even Stained Maple’s eyes could not keep up with him. In fact, Vast Heaven appeared to be even faster than Asura’s Assassins!

“This bunch from Asura sure is unlucky. The Boss has just been promoted to Tier 2 recently and had been fussing about not having any sparring partners.”

“The Boss is amazing! His speed is so high!”

“Before this, the Boss was famed for having immense Strength. However, back then, his speed was lacking. His promotion to Tier 2 just so happens to have made up for this weakness of his. With this, he is most likely unbeatable in Cold Wind City now.”

Hecate’s members started chatting merrily among themselves when they saw that Vast Heaven had already charged into the ranks of Asura’s team.

Previously, even when Vast Heaven was still a Tier 1 player, he had already managed to make a mess of the Centurion Dynasty. Now that he had been promoted to Tier 2, he was definitely invincible in Cold Wind City.

Let alone 50 players, even if Asura's team had 100 players, the outcome would still be the same.

Seeing Vast Heaven's ridiculous Movement Speed, Stained Maple immediately commanded the ranged players to start attacking the enemy Berserker. He also had the six MTs of the team try to surround Vast Heaven as much as possible, preventing the enemy Berserker from coming close to the team's ranged DPS and healers.

However, Vast Heaven was simply too fast. He was able to easily dodge any Spells and arrows that were sent at him. As for the six MTs trying to pin him down, they were as slow as turtles before Vast Heaven. Very quickly, Vast Heaven managed to circle the six MTs and charged at Asura's healers and ranged DPS.

"Disappear!"

Vast Heaven dashed past the melee players that had tried to hinder his path and abruptly jumped into the air. When he was still in the air, he started rotating his spear and creating a storm with it. Immediately after, he slammed his spear down where Asura's healers were standing.

Tier 2 Skill, Bladestorm!

Just when Vast Heaven was about to descend on the healers, however, a crimson light suddenly flew at him.

Like a meteor, the crimson light flew at the Tier 2 Berserker's defensive blind spot, the frightening power it carried even scorching the air around it into nothingness.

However, Vast Heaven quickly noticed the attack and altered his spear's attack trajectory, forcibly canceling Bladestorm and executing Whirlwind Slash instead.

Boom!

There was an explosion, and dazzling sparks scattered around Vast Heaven. A powerful shockwave also spread from the point of collision.

Like a cannonball, Vast Heaven's body was sent flying over twenty yards away and landed heavily on the ground. Only after taking six steps back did he manage to stabilize himself. Each step he took also left behind a deep footprint in the ground.

A damage of over -22,000 appeared above Vast Heaven's head, his HP bar decreasing by a significant portion.

"What's going on?"

"Is there a monster attack?"

Whether it was Asura's members or Hecate's members, both had incredulous expressions on their faces as they looked at the scene that had just happened. This was especially true for Hecate's members. When they saw Vast Heaven instantly losing over one-third of his HP, their eyes nearly fell out of their sockets.

“Who is it?! Who attacked me just now?! What’s there to be proud about, executing an ambush?! If you have the guts, come out and face me directly!” Vast Heaven bellowed.

Before Vast Heaven finished speaking, ten people were already walking over from a short distance away. Although all ten of these players were wearing Black Cloaks, none of them bothered hiding their appearances.

“Who are you guys? You actually dared to ambush me? Do you wish to make an enemy out of Hecate?” Vast Heaven grew slightly afraid as he looked at the ten approaching figures.

Through the previous attack, he already understood that these newcomers were no ordinary people. At least, in terms of Strength, he was no match for the expert that had just attacked him.

“Who am I?” Shi Feng smiled. “Weren’t you looking for Asura’s commander? I’m the person you’re looking for!”

Chapter 1745 – You Lack the Qualifications

“You’re Asura’s commander?” Vast Heaven revealed a stunned expression as he watched Shi Feng walk towards him step by step. *How is this possible?*

After he had arrived at Cold Wind City, he had heard many things about the Asura adventurer team. Even the Guild Leader and Vice Guild Leader of the Matchless Family feared them.

Originally, he had been eager to challenge Asura's members to a fight.

However, the performance of the adventurer team during recent times was simply too disappointing. While it was indeed true that Asura had many expert members, in his opinion, these expert members were no different than amateurs that were not worth him spending energy to fight.

After all, he had defeated several experts that were originally ranked in the top ten of Cold Wind City. These top-ten experts were only slightly stronger than ordinary experts and were still far from rivaling him in terms of combat standards.

As a result, he no longer paid any attention to the Asura adventurer team. In fact, in his eyes, even Cold Wind City's number one expert was most likely a joke.

But now someone had suddenly appeared before him, declaring that they were Asura's commander. Moreover, this person had even managed to push him back using just a single blow.

How could he possibly believe this situation to be true?

"Commander?"

"It's really the commander! Even the vice commanders are with him!"

The oppressed Asura members had excited expressions when they saw Shi Feng and his team members appear. They never thought that Shi Feng's group would actually return to Cold Wind City. Moreover, Shi Feng had even managed to send an expert like Vast Heaven flying with a single hit.

“Huh? So, he is the Asura adventurer team’s commander?”

“Didn’t they say that Asura’s commander brought a group of experts out for an exploration?”

“The matter regarding the exploration should be a lie. They must’ve known that Hecate arrived at Cold Wind City and used exploration as an excuse to avoid coming across our Guild.”

“This is interesting! The Asura adventurer team has constantly refused to join our Guild. The higher-ups have been fussing about looking for Asura’s commander all this time. Now that he has actually shown himself before us, we’ll see how Boss Vast takes care of him!”

“However, Asura’s commander looks quite strong, as well. He actually managed to take away more than one-third of Boss Vast’s HP in a single hit.”

“That’s just because he executed an ambush. He must’ve used some kind of powerful Magic Scroll for that attack. Don’t forget, Boss Vast is a Tier 2 player. If he gets serious, who in Cold Wind City could possibly be his match?”

...

Hecate’s members could not help but start a discussion among themselves when they saw Shi Feng’s group approaching, filled with curiosity about the Asura adventurer team’s commander. At the same time, they also eagerly waited for Vast Heaven to teach Shi Feng a lesson.

Nowadays, the Asura adventurer team was in rapid decline. The only reason why the adventurer team's members were still sticking around was that they still held hope that their commander and the top experts of the adventurer team would return soon. Now that Asura's commander had returned, if said commander were to be killed by Vast Heaven, the Asura adventurer team would most likely crumble instantly. After all, every member of Asura had placed their faith in Shi Feng.

As Hecate's members were having a quiet discussion among themselves, Vast Heaven retrieved an Advanced Healing Potion from his bag and drank it, his HP instantly recovering by a significant portion. Afterward, his HP continuously recovered in small increments.

After a short time, his HP fully recovered.

"I never thought that the rumors were actually true. You really do possess some abilities. It's no wonder why you were able to become Cold Wind City's number one expert," Vast Heaven said after recovering from his previous shock. "With such strength, you indeed have the qualifications to be my opponent. Come! Let's have a proper fight! Let me see whether your fame as Cold Wind City's number one expert is true or not!" Vast Heaven's eyes started burning with fighting spirit.

From the previous clash, he already understood that Shi Feng's Strength was ridiculously high. However, in a battle between players, the outcome could not be decided based on just the Strength Attribute only.

"You want to witness our commander's strength? I'm afraid you still lack the qualifications to do so!" Cleansing Whistle said, clicking her tongue as she looked at Vast Heaven. "If you wish to challenge our commander, you'll have to get through me first." Cleansing Whistle stepped forward from the group.

"Team Leader Whistle, be careful! He is Hecate's Vast Heaven! Previously, even Sky Slicer fell to him, despite being supported by dozens of experts! You mustn't fight him alone!" Stained Maple warned Cleansing Whistle in a panic.

He knew very clearly just what kind of strength Cleansing Whistle possessed. After all, he was originally a member of the Wave Heart adventurer team and had joined Asura with Lifeless Thorn and Cleansing Whistle.

While Cleansing Whistle was indeed very strong, she should only be roughly equal to the Centurion Dynasty's Sky Slicer. Meanwhile, Vast Heaven was someone who had single-handedly slain Sky Slicer together with dozens of experts from the Centurion Dynasty. Vast Heaven's strength was no trivial matter!

It was a feat that even Lifeless Thorn, Cold Wind City's previous number one expert, was not capable of accomplishing! Stained Maple did not think that the current Cleansing Whistle had any chance of winning against Vast Heaven. In his opinion, only their commander, Shi Feng, could possibly contend against Vast Heaven in a one-on-one match.

However, Stained Maple's warning was obviously ineffective, since Cleansing Whistle still continued walking towards Vast Heaven.

Although Stained Maple wanted to try and stop Cleansing Whistle again, his attempt was hindered by one of Asura's vice commanders, Solitary Nine. When Stained Maple turned to look at the rest of Shi Feng's group, he noticed that nobody on the team showed any intention of stopping Cleansing Whistle. Instead, they simply took on the attitude of spectators, making it look like this upcoming fight had nothing to do with them whatsoever.

This is insane! Every one of them has lost their minds! Stained Maple was rendered speechless by his allies' actions.

Despite having clearly stated that even the Centurion Dynasty was powerless against Vast Heaven, Shi Feng and the others were actually allowing Cleansing Whistle to go into battle all by herself. This was basically sending Cleansing Whistle to her death!

Besides Stained Maple, his team members were also very anxious.

“Boss Maple, what should we do? The commander and the other higher-ups are refusing to listen to your advice. I heard that Vast Heaven has a special tool that can increase the death penalty of the players he has killed. If he uses that special tool...”

“We don’t have a choice. If Cleansing Whistle looks to be getting pushed back, we’ll charge in together!” Stained Maple said through the team chat as he gritted his teeth. He was determined that he would not let Cleansing Whistle die.

Currently, the Asura adventurer team was in a precarious situation and in urgent need of powerful experts to take charge of it. Meanwhile, Cleansing Whistle was one of the top ten experts in the adventurer team. The adventurer team could not afford to let her get killed and lose multiple levels.

The other members in Stained Maple’s team nodded in agreement.

Meanwhile, seeing Cleansing Whistle slowly walking towards Vast Heaven, Hecate’s members started making a clamor.

“Who is this lady?! She actually dares to challenge Boss Vast?! Boss, let us take action! We’ll teach this little girl a proper lesson!”

“Asura’s members sure are arrogant!”

Hecate’s members were greatly displeased with Cleansing Whistle’s arbitrary decision to take Shi Feng’s place in battle. They all wanted to charge forward and kill Cleansing Whistle now.

“You’re going to fight me? You sure know how to speak bold words.” Vast Heaven could not help but laugh as he looked at Cleansing Whistle’s slender figure. “I know who you are. You’re the sixth ranking expert of Cold Wind City, right? However, even the ones ranked above you failed to last more than ten moves against me. How many moves do you think you can possibly last against me?”

He was filled with feelings of ridicule as he watched Cleansing Whistle walking towards him.

Even before he had completed his Tier 2 promotion, he had managed to defeat experts ranked higher than Cleansing Whistle with great ease. Now that he had reached Tier 2, he could easily defeat those experts in just two or three moves. After all, the difference between tiers was massive!

“You sure speak a lot of nonsense. Or are those your last words?” Cleansing Whistle replied in annoyance.

“Die!” Vast Heaven shouted in rage. He readied his spear and activated Charge, his body transforming into an afterimage as he instantly arrived before her, although she stood over twenty yards away. He then thrust his spear, sending eight rapid jabs at Cleansing Whistle’s defensive blind spots.

Tier 2 Skill, Star Piercer!

The combination of a Tier 2 Skill’s power and his Strength Attribute meant each one of his jabs carried Strength rivaling that of a Great Lord of the same level.

Just as the eight streaks of silver light were about to come into contact with Cleansing Whistle, the female Swordsman brandished her two swords. They created multiple arcs of light before her.

Tier 2 Skill, Split Flash!

Dang... Dang... Dang...

When swords and spear collided, sparks scattered into their surroundings. The sounds of miniature explosions also rang out one after another.

In the end, not only did Cleansing Whistle block all eight spear jabs, but she even managed to force Vast Heaven to retreat three steps, damages ranging in the hundreds appearing above the Berserker's head in succession. In contrast, Cleansing Whistle remained standing steadily in her original position, her HP still completely intact.

Although both sides had only clashed once with each other, the difference in strength was already clear for all to see...

Chapter 1746 – Change in Strength

How is her Strength so high? Vast Heaven was deeply shocked as he stared at Cleansing Whistle.

His class was famed for its Strength. Moreover, he had even been promoted to Tier 2 already. Even if his opponent were a Tier 2 Shield Warrior or Tier 2 Guardian Knight, he was confident in suppressing them with his Strength!

Meanwhile, Cleansing Whistle was only a Swordswoman, a class that was supposed to be an all-rounder, yet he was actually no match for her in a competition of Strength...

Before Vast Heaven could recover from his surprise, Cleansing Whistle quickly followed up with an attack of her own.

Wind Blade!

In the blink of an eye, Cleansing Whistle appeared before Vast Heaven, who had retreated to a distance roughly ten yards away, and started striking with her swords at the enemy Berserker. Like a pair of cunning snakes, her swords twisted and turned like living creatures. In the next moment, over a dozen Phantom Snakes were visible pouncing on Vast Heaven.

Combat technique, Phantom Snakes!

The attack trajectories of the Phantom Snakes were both complex and constantly changing. Unlike normal attacks, which usually moved in a straightforward pattern, her attacks when executing Phantom Snakes constantly changed. Even if her opponent managed to predict her attack trajectories in one moment, those attack trajectories would abruptly change in the next, preventing her attacks from easily being parried.

Although Cleansing Whistle had yet to reach a level where she could change the attack trajectory of every Phantom Snake at any time, she was still able to alter four attacks at any given moment, making it very difficult for her opponents to grasp her attack trajectories.

Seeing the dozen or so Phantom Snakes striking at him, Vast Heaven's expression immediately turned somber.

He was not able to perfectly grasp the trajectory of these Phantom Snakes. In the end, he had no choice but to execute Indiscriminate Slash to cope with her attacks. He did not dare to block all the attacks using normal attacks only.

Dang... Dang... Dang...

A series of clangs echoed through the surrounding area continuously.

Even though Vast Heaven was able to execute over 20 attacks with Indiscriminate Slash, with his Strength even enhanced by the Skill, both he and Cleansing Whistle ended up taking three steps backward after clashing.

“How is this possible?” The spectating members of Hecate could not help but gape in shock.

The Hecate members present were all elites and experts. They knew that, although it appeared that Vast Heaven and Cleansing Whistle had come out as equals during that clash, in reality, Vast Heaven was at a disadvantage.

Indiscriminate Slash was a Sure-kill Skill of the Berserker class!

Yet, even after using a Sure-kill Skill, Vast Heaven was only able to end his clash with Cleansing Whistle with a draw. Meanwhile, Cleansing Whistle hadn't even used any Skills during the previous attack. One could easily imagine what kind of outcome would result from a normal clash!

Looking at Cleansing Whistle again, an indescribable sense of fear sprouted in the hearts of Hecate's members.

Vast Heaven was a bona fide Tier 2 Berserker. His combat standard ranked at the top of Hecate. Yet, he was actually being overwhelmed by a player from some backwater city.

If they were to tell this matter to the other experts of Hecate, their words would most likely be treated as a joke.

At this moment, let alone Hecate's spectating members, even Vast Heaven himself was looking surprised and confused.

He could not understand just how Cleansing Whistle could be so powerful.

How is this possible?! I'm a Tier 2 Berserker! At this moment, the composure Vast Heaven had before had completely disappeared. In fact, he could feel death looming over him already. *Wasn't she the sixth ranked expert of Cold Wind City? How are her Basic Attributes and combat standards so high?*

Meanwhile, Stained Maple and the other members of Asura watching from a short distance away were similarly dumbfounded by this outcome.

How did Cleansing Whistle become so powerful? When Stained Maple saw Cleansing Whistle suppressing Vast Heaven with ease, he could not help but think he was hallucinating.

He had a very clear idea of Cleansing Whistle's previous strength. Although she was indeed stronger than him, the gap between them was minor. However, the Cleansing Whistle he looked at right now was like a completely different person.

“Whistle’s grasp over Phantom Snakes is still too shallow. If she could grasp it completely, she could’ve taken away at least 50% of that Berserker’s HP with that attack just now,” Lifeless Thorn stated idly.

Solitary Nine and the others in the team also nodded in agreement.

Currently, Cleansing Whistle was geared in the Level 50 Fine-Gold ranked Magic Light Set. As for the weapons she was wielding, one was a Level 50 Fine-Gold longsword, and the other was a Level 50 Epic Growth-type longsword.

On the other hand, Vast Heaven was only geared in Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. The difference in equipment standards between the two of them was massive. It was only normal for her to overwhelm Vast Heaven.

Moreover, after leaving the Ice Crystal World, Cleansing Whistle had also traveled around the continent of God’s Domain and challenged all sorts of experts. After the training provided by Zero Wing, Cleansing Whistle, who was originally close to reaching the Half-step Refinement Realm, had now fully set foot into the Refinement Realm standard. Her combat standard was only slightly inferior to Vast Heaven, someone who was a veteran Refinement Realm expert.

However, with the advantage she had in terms of Attributes, she could easily make up for this minor difference!

As for the Phantom Snakes combat technique, it was one of the combat techniques Zero Wing had acquired from the Primordial Divine Ruin. Although it was only a Basic Combat Technique, its power definitely allowed it to rank among the top of Basic Combat Techniques. To improve their strength, Shi Feng had decided to let Cleansing Whistle and the rest of them learn some suitable combat techniques in exchange for having them owe the Asura adventurer team some Contribution Points.

If Cleansing Whistle could fully grasp Phantom Snakes, with her powerful Attributes, it would definitely be possible to shave away half of Vast Heaven’s HP in a single attack.

Taking away half of Vast Heaven's HP with a single attack? When Stained Maple heard Lifeless Thorn's words, he suspected he was hearing things.

This was Vast Heaven they were talking about! The Berserker was someone capable of going up against dozens of experts from the Centurion Dynasty all by himself!

Yet, in the eyes of Lifeless Thorn's group, such an expert was like an ordinary player one could find anywhere on the street...

Just as everyone was feeling shocked by the strength Cleansing Whistle had displayed, Cleansing Whistle immediately altered her footwork after stabilizing herself. She transformed into multiple afterimages, making it look like there were five copies of her as she dashed towards Vast Heaven.

Combat technique, Residual Steps!

Similar to Phantom Snakes, Residual Steps was also a combat technique acquired from the Primordial Divine Ruin. It was a special footwork technique that relied on afterimages to confuse one's opponent.

Footwork-type combat techniques were capable of improving a player's combat power significantly. In terms of value, a Basic Footwork-type Combat Technique was equivalent to an Advanced Offensive or Defensive Combat Technique. When one was fighting against an enemy of roughly equal combat standards, a footwork-type combat technique allowed one to take the initiative in battle. It was something crucial in a battle between experts.

At the end of the day, Vast Heaven was only a Refinement Realm expert. As a result, he was not able to fully grasp the movement patterns of all five copies of Cleansing Whistle. When Cleansing Whistle was close to reaching him, he had no choice but to make a powerful stomp on the ground.

Thunderclap!

The ground around Vast Heaven trembled and shattered, preventing Cleansing Whistle from executing Residual Steps properly. As a result, her afterimages disappeared, and her real location was revealed.

“Die!” Seeing an opportunity to strike, Vast Heaven immediately used his strongest Tier 2 Skill, Death Charge.

Vast Heaven’s body increased in size, instantly becoming a three-meter-tall giant. He raised his silver spear and stabbed it at Cleansing Whistle.

Death Charge was a Sacrificial Skill that sacrificed 40% of his maximum HP to execute a charging assault on a target within 50 yards ahead of him. While the Skill was in effect, it increased his Movement Speed by 150%, Strength by 100%, and damage dealt by 500%!

In the next moment, the ground beneath Vast Heaven’s feet shattered. The Berserker transformed into a blur as he charged at Cleansing Whistle.

Just as Vast Heaven was about to reach Cleansing Whistle, the latter suddenly swapped out the Level 50 Fine-Gold longsword in her right hand and replaced it with a tattered longsword engraved with silver divine runes. She swung the tattered longsword at Vast Heaven.

Just as the tattered longsword was about to collide with Vast Heaven's spear, the silver runes engraved on the longsword lit up brightly.

Boom!

There was an explosion, and the ground beneath the point of impact shattered.

Contrary to expectations, Cleansing Whistle did not get sent flying. In fact, she was still standing steadily in her original position. On the other hand, Vast Heaven's charge had stopped abruptly. He took three steps back involuntarily, the spear in his hands trembling visibly. His body had also fallen into a complete paralyzed state for a brief moment.

Vast Heaven was thoroughly dumbfounded by this outcome. He failed to understand what Cleansing Whistle had just done, actually overwhelming his strongest attack.

However, before Vast Heaven could recover from his brief paralyzation, Cleansing Whistle quickly swung the Epic Growth-type longsword in her other hand.

Tier 2 Skill, Storm Fury!

This move was the strongest Tier 2 Skill Cleansing Whistle possessed.

In the next moment, countless wind blades assaulted the immobilized Berserker, chipping away at his HP rapidly. By the time Vast Heaven recovered from his paralyzed state, he had less than one-third of his HP remaining. However, Cleansing Whistle had already followed up with another two slashes. A moment later, Vast Heaven's vision darkened, and his body collapsed to the ground powerlessly...

Chapter 1747 – King Returns

As Vast Heaven's body transformed into particles of light and disappeared from the snow-covered field, an exquisite pair of silvery-gray arm guards took the Berserker's place. Before the spectating crowd could recover from their daze, Cleansing Whistle collected the arm guards and stored it in her bag. She then shifted her gaze towards Hecate's army.

"Who else wants to duel?" Cleansing Whistle asked with a faint smile as she glanced at Hecate's members.

She had just acquired a piece of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment by killing one player. This was far more profitable than raiding a Team Dungeon.

Seeing the cute smile on Cleansing Whistle's face, dread filled the hearts of Hecate's members.

Too scary!

Vast Heaven was a Tier 2 expert, yet Cleansing Whistle had fought as if she had randomly encountered some Common monster. Not only had she dealt with the Tier 2 Berserker so easily, but she had also killed him in an instant...

This was a Tier 2 player they were talking about. Even if Cleansing Whistle were also a Tier 2 player, there shouldn't be such a huge difference between her and Vast Heaven. Moreover, a Tier 2 Berserker had even more HP than a Tier 1 MT of the same level.

Yet, Cleansing Whistle had...

Faced with such power, who would possibly dare challenge Cleansing Whistle to a duel?

Hecate's members remained silent for a time. Meanwhile, Stained Maple and his companions were ecstatic once they snapped out of their daze.

Hecate had constantly suppressed their adventurer team in Cold Wind City, so watching Cleansing Whistle kill Vast Heaven, one of Hecate's top fighters, was truly a joy to behold.

"Amazing! So, this is the effect of the special training the commander had mentioned?" Stained Maple could not help but shift his gaze towards Shi Feng, astounded.

When Shi Feng had first established the Asura adventurer team, he had stated that as long as they were willing to work hard, he would help them grow stronger.

He had assumed Shi Feng's claim was merely a boast.

Now, however, it would seem that Shi Feng had told the truth. The man really had a way to make them stronger. Moreover, the improvement wasn't insignificant. Take Cleansing Whistle, for example. Compared to the last time he had seen her, when she had still been a member of the Wave Heart adventurer team, she was like an entirely different person.

However, the increase in her strength wasn't limited to her Basic Attributes. He could also tell that Cleansing Whistle's combat standards had undergone a qualitative transformation.

When Stained Maple looked at Cleansing Whistle now, he felt a mental pressure similar to Lifeless Thorn's previous aura. Only, this pressure was not as intense as Lifeless Thorn's.

When Stained Maple thought about how Cleansing Whistle had grown so much stronger after leaving with Shi Feng, passion and anticipation rose within him.

He knew that Vast Heaven held a high position in Hecate. Although he had no hope of reaching Cleansing Whistle's current standard, as long as he became as strong as Vast Heaven, he would qualify to look down on the various large Guilds.

...

Meanwhile, when the distant spectating independent players saw Vast Heaven die, their jaws hit the ground.

"He died!? Vast Heaven actually died?!"

"Who is that woman?"

"I know her! She's Cleansing Whistle! She used to be the sixth strongest player in Cold Wind City!"

“The sixth strongest player? Are you kidding me? Vast Heaven has defeated two players who ranked higher than Cleansing Whistle by himself. Even if Cleansing Whistle has become significantly more powerful in such a short time, she shouldn’t be able to kill Vast Heaven so easily, right?”

As the spectating crowd watched Cleansing Whistle, they started to research the woman. However, what they learned shocked them.

Vast Heaven was a Berserker, while Cleansing Whistle was a Swordsman.

Normally, Berserkers had an absolute advantage in terms of Strength in a melee battle against Swordsmen without the involvement of Skills. Thus, in a one-on-one confrontation, Berserkers were far stronger than Swordsmen.

Yet, when Cleansing Whistle had fought Vast Heaven, she had suppressed the enemy Berserker from start to end. This proved that the woman wore higher-quality equipment than Vast Heaven.

But what surprised them most was the improvement speed of Cleansing Whistle’s combat standards.

Before joining the Asura adventurer team, Cleansing Whistle’s combat standard had only been slightly higher than independent experts like themselves. However, the combat standard the woman had just displayed was clearly far superior to theirs. The combat technique Cleansed Whistle had just employed, in particular, had seemed like some kind of Skill or Spell. They had never seen such mystifying combat techniques before.

No one would believe that Cleansed Whistle had hidden her strength before she had disappeared. After all, before joining the Asura adventurer team, Cleansing Whistle had constantly competed with Lifeless Thorn for the position of Cold Wind City’s strongest expert. Why would she have held back while doing so?

The only explanation was that Cleansing Whistle had drastically improved her combat techniques after she had joined the Asura adventurer team and left Cold Wind City.

For a time, the distant independent players were overwhelmed by their interest in and desire to join the Asura adventurer team.

...

Meanwhile, Hecate's members glared at Cleansed Whistle in silence, having lost their prior fear.

"Asura adventurer team, huh? You actually dared to kill a member of Hecate? You must be tired of living!" Autumn Changes, the army's vice-commander, said as he strode forward. He sneered at Cleansed Whistle and the others as he said, "This is a good opportunity! We'll teach you who truly rules over Cold Wind City! Everyone, charge!"

Vast Heaven's death was indeed shocking. He had never thought that the Asura adventurer team actually possessed an expert of such caliber.

Normally, he'd simply avoid clashing with an expert like Cleansing Whistle, but he had an army of 3,000 players behind him, many of which were experts. Furthermore, he had to restore the reputation their Guild had just lost due to Vast Heaven's defeat.

"Despicable!" Stained Maple felt his scalp tingle as Hecate's army surged forward.

He hadn't expected Hecate to be so shameless, going back on its previous promise.

Including Shi Feng's team, there were only 60 Asura members present. Meanwhile, Hecate had 3,000 members here. Hecate's army also consisted of elite and expert players. The Asura adventurer team members likely had no hope of escaping with their lives.

"Commander, you guys should take off! We'll hold them back! As long as you survive, Not even Hecate can deal with our adventurer team so easily!" Stained Maple hurriedly said.

Both Shi Feng and Cleansing Whistle were emotional pillars for the Asura adventurer team right now. If Hecate's members took these two down, Asura's reputation would plummet. If that happened, it Asura would struggle to develop in the future.

However, as soon as Stained Maple finished speaking, he noticed Shi Feng approaching Hecate's army with Lifeless Thorn and the others close behind.

"Commander, what are you trying to do?!" Stained Maple asked in a panic.

"Do I really have to answer that. We're getting to work!" Shi Feng laughed nonchalantly. "The fifty of you, get into a defensive formation and focus on dodging AOE's. Just don't die and leave the rest to us."

"We finally get to stretch after such a long trip."

After exchanging a glance, Lifeless Thorn and the others charged at Hecate's army as if they were charging at a group of Common monsters that posed no threat whatsoever.

As Stained Maple and his companions watched Shi Feng's party rush forward, they were utterly dumbfounded.

What was going on?

Ten players were trying to take on an army of 3,000 players?

But before Stained Maple could recover from his daze, Shi Feng used Flame Domain. A towering pillar of flames then emerged amidst Hecate's army, so massive that even the independent players over a thousand yards away could see it clearly.

With this single move, several hundred players instantly turned to ash as ownerless weapons and equipment took their places...

Chapter 1748 – Small Display of Strength

As the towering pillar of fire dissipated, it revealed a charred circle within the snow-covered plain. Even players over 30 yards away could feel the rising heat that radiated from the scorched area.

Aside from the weapons and equipment, nothing remained in the 70-yard radius of charred earth...

A large-scale destruction Spell? Autumn Changes paled when he saw the burned ground.

Although he had his players spread out, Shi Feng's large-scale destruction Spell had slain over 300 of his people. That was more than one-tenth of Hecate's army...

The players that had just died were all experts and elites from Hecate. This was the first time the Guild had suffered such a devastating loss since Hecate had arrived in Cold Wind City. They'd need an astronomical amount of resources to recuperate from this. The responsibility he'd bear would also be massive.

"Kill them! I want all of them dead!" Autumn Changes bellowed as he glared at Shi Feng, the person who was responsible for this loss.

He'd only be able to avoid a severe punishment if he annihilated the Asura members before him.

Hearing Autumn Changes's command, Hecate's members snapped out of their daze. Although they still somewhat afraid of Shi Feng's group and worried that their enemies had more large-scale destruction Spells in store, they had over 2,600 players on their side. How could Asura possibly stop them all with just 60 members?

Like a pack of hungry wolves, Hecate's members descended on their enemies.

Of course, although Hecate's members had been stirred into a frenzy, their movements were still well-organized. Their actions displayed these players vast experience in team battles, and instead of charging as one, they split into dozens of smaller groups to deal with each individual opponent. Each of the groups that aimed for Shi Feng's team of 10 consisted of 50 players.

Stained Maple and his team became incredibly nervous as they watched the army of thousands approach.

Although they had fought in many team battles before, they had been small-scale skirmishes, only involving one or two hundred players. This was the first time they had participated in a battle involving thousands. As they watched the large groups rush towards them in an orderly manner, they struggled to breathe.

Hecate's army outnumbered them by dozens of times. This overwhelming advantage couldn't be negated just because Shi Feng had used one large-scale destruction Spell.

"The Asure adventurer team is finished now."

"There's no helping it. Hecate is Cold Wind City's current overlord. How could an adventurer team hope to contend with it?"

The independent players in the distance sighed ruefully as they watched the battlefield at the bottom of the canyon.

This was the difference between a Guild and an adventurer team!

Even if an adventurer team were very powerful, it would only be able to stand against an ordinary Guild like Centurion Dynasty or Matchless Family at most. However, Hecate was a large Guild that ruled over multiple cities. An adventurer team with a little over a thousand members was a joke before a Guild like Hecate.

As Hecate's army advanced, Lifeless Thorn and the others exchanged glances before they turned to Shi Feng.

“Commander, you mustn’t join this competition! This is a rare chance for us to display the fruits of our labor. If we miss out on such a golden opportunity, it’ll be difficult to find another,” Lifeless Thorn said.

“That’s right! Commander, if you make a move, we won’t have anything to do!” Cleansing Whistle complained.

The rest of Shi Feng’s party nodded in agreement.

They were very familiar with Shi Feng’s strength. After the battle on Thunder Island, in particular, they had learned just how vast the world truly was.

All of the players that had participated in the struggle for Thunder Island had been experts among experts. Refinement Realm experts had been a dime a dozen, yet Shi Feng had slaughtered everyone that had stood in his path. No one had possessed the power to stop his rampage. A couple of thousand elites and ordinary experts were not even worth Shi Feng’s time.

Meanwhile, they had just recently completed their Tier 2 promotions and had yet to test out and familiarize themselves with their newfound strength. A battle of thousands of players was the best practice ground for them.

“Fine, I won’t attack, but you better take care of this quickly. Stained Maple’s group won’t be able to hold on long,” Shi Feng said, sighing. He had wanted to trample over Hecate’s army with overwhelming strength, which would’ve made it easier to expand the Asura adventurer team in Cold Wind City. That way, he would have had more players to help him with his quest. After all, the Soul Dissolving Flower he needed was extremely rare. Without sufficient manpower, searching for the flower would be nigh impossible.

“Commander, rest assured; we’ll make sure to end the battle before Stained Maple’s group starts to falter,” Lifeless Thorn, his eyes glowing with excitement as he turned to the approaching Hecate members.

Shortly after completing his Tier 2 promotion, Shi Feng had suddenly called for them to gather for a trip back to the Ice Crystal World. He hadn't even had the chance to experience the power of his Tier 2 class.

After reaching Tier 2, his physique had improved significantly. This would no doubt affect his execution of Skills and combat techniques, and he would need to fight in many battles before he got used to the new changes. He could also use this chance to try out new combat methods, which he hadn't been able to use with his previous physique.

After saying so, Lifeless Thorn eagerly raised his spear and dashed towards Hecate's forces, which were still over 100 yards away. The rest of the team also advanced, but instead of moving as a unit, they split up and rushed at different sections of the enemy army. They showed no intention of cooperating.

"What are they trying to do?" Stained Maple felt devastated as he watched Lifeless Thorn and the others move independently.

They were going up against an army of over 2,600 players, yet Lifeless Thorn and the others planned to fight solo?

Even Autumn Changes was stunned as the enemies rushed towards him.

"Have these people lost their minds?" Autumn Changes could not help but rub his eyes to make sure that he was not hallucinating.

Hecate's army still had over 2,600 elite and expert players remaining. Even Vast Heaven wouldn't recklessly charge into such a force by himself, using a roundabout strategy instead, yet Lifeless Thorn and the other Asura members were running towards their army like a bunch of lunatics.

“Good! Since they wish to die so badly, we’ll grant their wish! Ranged unit, prepare to attack! Once they’re within 50 yards, launch your attacks and blast them to smithereens!” Autumn Changes commanded.

Hearing Autumn Changes’s orders, the ranged players at the rear line readied their bows and channeled their Spells. As soon as Lifeless Thorn was within range, they would launch their attacks.

Ninety yards... Eighty yards... Sixty yards...

The moment Lifeless Thorn crossed the 50-yard mark, Hecate’s ranged players fired their Spells and arrows.

These arrows and Spells blotted out the sky.

“Come!” Lifeless Thorn revealed a wild grin as the attacks rained down. He responded by swinging his sword at the incoming attacks.

Tier 2 Skill, Bladestorm!

With a light swing, a storm formed before Lifeless Thorn. Like a barrier of wind, the violent storm blocked every Spell and arrow Hecate’s members had launched. Not a single attack had made it through.

“How is that possible?” Hecate’s members were stupefied when they saw Lifeless Thorn emerge unscathed.

They had never dreamed that a Skill could be used in such a way. Lifeless Thorn had actually used an Offensive Skill as a Defensive Skill.

Bladestorm had a three-second duration. Taking advantage of the Skill, Lifeless Thorn made his way towards Hecate’s frontline without receiving any damage.

However, eight MTs immediately stepped forward to intercept Lifeless Thorn. Seeing this, Lifeless Thorn swept his spear in a horizontal arc.

Tier 1 Skill, Whirlwind Slash!

Boom!

The swing sent every MT that stood in Lifeless Thorn’s path flying, their HPs decreasing by a significant chunk. Following which, Lifeless Thorn advanced and arrived before the other melee players. He rapidly thrust his spear at his enemies, and the weapon transformed into over a dozen afterimages. Although the melee players tried to defend themselves, the Lifeless Thorn’s jabs targeted their blind spots. Moreover, his Attack Speed was extremely high. They simply could not keep up with the attacks. In the end, the spear struck these players multiple times before they transformed into streaks of light and vanished.

The attacks Hecate’s ranged players launched were utterly ineffective against Lifeless Thorn as he constantly and swiftly changed positions. Wherever Lifeless Thorn passed, players fell, one after another. Moreover, Lifeless Thorn’s movements became faster and smoother as he continued to fight.

Solitary Nine and the others had also charged into Hecate's ranks by this point. Although their performance was not as violent as Lifeless Thorn's, they were just as unstoppable. Whenever they used a Tier 2 Skill, they instantly killed ten or more players.

Although Solitary Nine and the others took some hits, they instantly recovered the lost HP with an Advanced Healing Potion.

Meanwhile, the Hecate members that had charged at Shi Feng were even more miserable. Before Hecate's members could reach him, Shi Feng activated Defensive Blade, which increased his attack range tremendously. He then lightly swung Killing Ray at the approaching players. The Swordsman's Strength was already beyond that of a Tier 3 Great Lord of the same level, and the players that had failed to block his attacks had fallen instantly. Although the players that had blocked the attack had survived, they were paralyzed for a brief moment. As a result, they couldn't block Shi Feng's following attacks.

At this moment, the difference in tiers and Attributes could not be more obvious.

Asura and Hecate's members were on an entirely different level...

"How is this possible?" Autumn Changes was racked with confusion as he watched this happen. With just ten members, the Asura adventurer team had rendered Hecate's 3,000-man army utterly helpless. "Just who are these people?"

Before even one minute had passed, Hecate's army had lost an additional 800 or so players. In contrast, Shi Feng's group of ten had yet to suffer a single casualty.

"It's about time we end this battle." Seeing that the enemy's morale had plummeted, Shi Feng pulled out the Bible of Darkness and activated Demon Summoning.

Immediately, a massive gate of white bone descended from the sky. As the gate opened, a five-meter-tall, dual-horned, pitch-black Demon emerged.

Chapter 1749 – Legend of Cold Wind City

The massive bone gate immediately caught the attention of everyone present. When the bone gate abruptly opened, Power of Darkness flooded out and instantly turned the snowy plain into a barren wasteland.

When a five-meter-tall, four-armed Demon with two crimson horns stepped out of the gate, the watching players gasped.

...

[Slaughterer Demon] (Demon, Great Lord)

Level 81

HP 33,750,000/33,750,000

...

“A Level 81 Great Lord?!”

“Crap! They can summon Tier 3 monsters!”

Hecate’s members were stricken with fear as they stared at the Slaughterer Demon.

It wouldn’t have been a major issue if the summoned Great Lord had only been Level 50 or 60, but the Great Lord before them was Level 81. That was far above their current levels. Although the level suppression system in the game had been nerfed quite a bit by this point, the suppression from a 30-Level difference would still be powerful.

Naturally, in terms of Basic Attributes, a Level 81 Great Lord was much stronger than a Level 50 Grand Lord.

Even a 100-man elite team wasn’t guaranteed success against an ordinary Level 50 Grand Lord, which would be a nightmare if controlled by a player.

Suddenly, the Slaughterer Demon unfolded its pitch-black wings and disappeared. The Demon then reappeared in the heart of Hecate’s army as if it had teleported. The Demon had used the Tier 2 Skill, Space Jump, which had a longer range than Instantaneous Movement, allowing the Slaughter Demon to cross a 400-yard distance in a fraction of a second.

Emerald flames then flared around the Slaughter Demon’s four bone swords before it stabbed all four into the ground.

Boom!

With the Slaughterer Demon at the center, emerald fire swirled out, only stopping after it covered a 50-yard radius.

Tier 3 Skill, Omnidirectional Incineration!

Everything the emerald flames touched burned to nothingness. Even Level 52, Tier 1 MTs that had activated their Lifesaving Skills had died instantly.

In just one attack, Hecate's army lost another several hundred members...

After this attack, Hecate's members, who had already felt uneasy, fell to their despair.

"Retreat! Hurry up and retreat!" Autumn Changes shouted in the team chat as the Slaughter Demon prepared to attack again.

The combat power Lifeless Thorn's team had displayed had already frightened him. He had never thought that players could become so powerful. Lifeless Thorn and the others were like monsters in player clothing. Lifeless Thorn, in particular, was ridiculously strong. Even several Level 50-plus MTs working together couldn't stop his rampage. Just one of the Berserker's attacks was more than enough to send multiple MTs flying. Meanwhile, cloth armor classes were little more than pests before this man; they'd definitely die if they received a single hit...

Now that a Level 81 Great Lord had joined the battle as well, Autumn Changes could not help but feel like the system was playing some cruel joke on him.

However, although Autumn Changes had already ordered the retreat, before a Tier 3 Demon strengthened by Demon Ruler, escape was impossible. The Slaughterer Demon was simply too fast. Moreover, it only needed one hit to kill the fleeing players.

Since Hecate's members were focused on escape, Lifeless Thorn and his companions had an easier time killing their enemies.

Nine players and one Demon chased after the 1,000-plus players that fled in all directions.

The inconceivable scene left the distant independent players speechless...

They had witnessed many accounts of thousand-man armies chasing down groups of dozens of players, but they had never seen a handful of players chase after a thousand-man army.

The crowds' eyes glowed with excitement, and some players even got goosebumps as they watched this miracle unfold before them.

Ever since Hecate had arrived in Cold Wind City, the Guild had constantly suppressed independent players like themselves. Naturally, they were more than pleased to see this Guild's members get slaughtered. Their blood boiled with passion as they watched.

"Too strong!"

"Asura is invincible!"

“So, this is the strength of Cold Wind City’s number one adventurer team?”

...

The watching crowd gained a newfound appreciation for Asura’s strength. Numbers could no longer replace the strength the adventurer team wielded. As long as these Asura experts were present, the adventurer team would become a legend!

Rather, Asura’s legend would begin today in Cold Wind City!

Meanwhile, Stained Maple and his teammates, who tried their best to keep Hecate’s members from fleeing, felt an indescribable pride and excitement for their own adventurer team.

So strong!

Both the Basic Attributes and combat standards Lifeless Thorn and his companions had displayed today were absolutely mesmerizing.

When they thought about how Lifeless Thorn and the others’ newfound strength was due to their commander, Shi Feng, their hearts burned with even more passion.

Since Lifeless Thorn and the others had improved so much by following the Swordsman, these players realized that if their performances were sufficient, they might get to train under their commander as

well, experiencing the same explosive strength growth. If they could become half as powerful as Lifeless Thorn and his teammates, they'd be more than satisfied.

Meanwhile, many of the spectating independent players had recorded the battle between Asura and Hecate, and some had even uploaded their videos to Cold Wind City's official forums.

Battle of the century in the Snow Rift!

Initially, very few players paid attention to the forum post; those that had checked it out had done so out of boredom. However, as soon as players clicked on the post and watched the videos, they couldn't look away.

"What's going on? Several players are chasing after thousands?"

"Is this some kind of movie shoot?"

"This battle is real! I am at the battlefield right now! You should've seen it for yourself! Several experts from the Asura adventurer team just slaughtered Hecate's army! They can kill even Level 50 MTs with one hit!"

"When did Asura become so powerful?"

"I am also at the scene of the battle. I'm an Assassin, so I managed to get a closer view of the battlefield. It seems that Asura's commander has finally returned. Those are the experts from Asura that left Cold Wind City with the adventurer team's commander a while ago. Just now, Asura's Cleansing Whistle single-handedly killed Hecate's Vast Heaven. Moreover, she made it look easy."

“Cleansing Whistle killed Vast Heaven by herself? Stop lying. Do you know who Vast Heaven is? He’s the current number one expert in Cold Wind City! The city’s previous top-ranked experts didn’t even last ten moves against him. How could Cleansing Whistle beat him?”

“I have screenshots and videos! Take a look for yourself!”

“What?! It’s actually true! That’s Vast Heaven!”

...

For a time, every player in Cold Wind City was focused on the shocking battle between Asura and Hecate. Cold Wind City’s inhabitants were astounded and excited as they watched thousands of Hecate’s elite and expert members flee from a handful of players from the Asura adventurer team.

Any thoughts they had harbored of the adventurer team falling apart had vanished.

After this heaven-defying battle, who in Cold Wind City would possibly look down on Asura’s strength?

At the same time, Asura was fated to become a legend in Cold Wind City after this battle. Even if a long time had passed, today’s battle would be regarded as a classic.

...

While Cold Wind City's players heatedly discussed the Asura adventurer team, Hecate's upper echelons, who had been stationed in Cold Wind City, gathered in Hecate's Guild Residence for an emergency meeting.

Over a dozen people sat in the solemn meeting hall, every one of them radiating an aura that would make ordinary players shudder with fear. However, these players all watched the youth at the head of the table in silence and trepidation. This youth wore a particularly gloomy expression, and even the temperature of the air around him had dropped due to his aura.

"Speak! What is happening?! What is this Asura adventurer team?!" the handsome youth demanded.

Chapter 1750 – Establishing an Adventurer Alliance

Inside the silent hall, the handsome man's shout immediately made Hecate's upper echelon tremble involuntarily.

Although they were part of the upper echelon of Hecate and possessed great individual strength, when facing the handsome man before them, they instinctively felt a sense of awe towards him.

The reason for this was the identity of the male youth before them. He was none other than Carnage, the player nicknamed Hell Knight, who was also one of Hecate's Vice Guild Leaders.

Although Carnage was baby-faced, in reality, he was already over 40 years old, much older than they were. Moreover, he had worked as a mercenary and was nicknamed the God of Death.

It was no exaggeration to say that a large part of Hecate's current success was due to Carnage.

Moreover, Carnage was also the head instructor for Hecate's internal training program, and every one of them present inside the meeting hall right now had actually received his tuition. Even Vast Heaven owed the strength he had today to Carnage's tutelage. Meanwhile, the training they had undergone was akin to going through hell.

Hence, they knew exactly what kind of personality Carnage had.

Normally, he didn't lose his temper easily. When he did get angry, however, it was like hell descending on the world. And right now, they could sense that he was furious.

However, his reaction was only natural.

Of the 3,000 elite and expert members the Guild had sent to the Snow Rift, over 2,000 had gotten killed. Even when Hecate went to deal with the Centurion Dynasty, it had not suffered such a staggering loss. Yet, now, the Guild had sustained such casualties just because of ten players.

The Guild used tons of resources to nurture its elite and expert members. After opening up the path to Cold Wind City, it had sent only 1,000 expert players over. Only after arriving at Cold Wind City and annexing the entire Matchless Family did Hecate's Guild member count in Cold Wind City skyrocket, the number of elite and expert members breaching 10,000. Meanwhile, among the 3,000 players Vast Heaven had brought to the Snow Rift, nearly 400 were the Guild's original expert players. And among the 2,000-plus players that were killed, 300-plus were these original experts—the equivalent to losing more than one-third of the total number of experts Hecate had in Cold Wind City. This was a massive loss.

The levels lost was one thing; the crucial point was the weapons and equipment lost.

In the Ice Crystal World, Guild elites and experts relied mainly on Lifestyle Players for their weapons and equipment. However, very few Lifestyle Players could produce weapons and equipment of suitable standards for elite and expert players. Not to mention, the materials needed to produce Level 50 Secret-Silver Weapons and Equipment were also extremely valuable and very difficult to acquire.

Meanwhile, based on the post-war statistics, they had lost over 200 pieces of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. Since producing just one piece of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment already required a lot of time and resources—all the more for 200 pieces—this loss would severely impact their Guild's raid progress of the Snow Rift.

"Vice Guild Leader, we've already done a thorough investigation. The people who targeted us this time are all experts of the Asura adventurer team that had disappeared previously. From what we heard, it seems that these experts had gone with their commander on an expedition. However, the strange part is that these experts weren't so strong before. Right now, we still don't know how they managed to gain the combat power they have," a Level 52 Elementalist reported in a careful tone.

"They suddenly became stronger?" Carnage's lips curled up slightly as he read the report his subordinate sent him. "This is interesting. They're just a bunch of hillbillies, yet not only did they gain a massive boost in Basic Attributes after going out on an expedition, but even their combat standards have undergone a qualitative transformation? It seems this Asura adventurer team has quite a huge secret.

"Investigate this matter immediately! Use every means available to dig out this secret! As long as Hecate acquires it, then the day Hecate becomes the number one Guild in the north will be just around the corner!

"Right, also notify the main branch to send the Twelve Heavens to Cold Wind City."

Upon hearing Carnage's command, everyone in the room was shocked despite themselves.

They had never thought that Carnage would actually summon the Twelve Heavens to a backwater like Cold Wind City. The Twelve Heavens were the apex combatants of Hecate. In Cold Wind City, aside from Carnage, Vast Heaven was the strongest member of Hecate present. Even so, Vast Heaven's level was still insufficient for him to become one of the Twelve Heavens, only qualifying as a reserve member, at most.

Normally, the Twelve Heavens would be split up and dispatched to Hecate's various Branch Guilds. Nevertheless, Carnage was having all twelve of them come. Hecate's upper echelon shuddered in fear just thinking about this matter.

These people could still remember the last time the Twelve Heavens were all together. Back then, they were gathered to help repel the siege of a super-first-rate Guild's army. In the end, due to the Twelve Heavens, the invading super-first-rate Guild had no choice but to give up on capturing one of Hecate's Guild Towns. Yet, now, Carnage was actually mobilizing the Twelve Heavens just to deal with a single adventurer team. This was simply insane.

...

Elsewhere, Shi Feng and the others had already returned to Cold Wind City.

After reaching the city, the group discovered that nothing much had changed there. The player population in the city had increased only slightly, with the majority of the newcomers being new players to God's Domain, and a small portion being Hecate's Guild members. Unlike on the continent of God's Domain, players belonging to the Ice Crystal World couldn't travel freely between different cities.

In the Ice Crystal World, travel between two different cities generally required players to unlock the gate separating the two cities first. Another method was to use a special pathway. However, activating such special pathways was very troublesome. These pathways also had many restrictions. Hence, ordinary players couldn't travel freely between different cities.

Currently, outside Asura's Residence, Asura's members crowded around the entrance as they welcomed Shi Feng and the others' return.

"It's the commander! The commander is back!"

"All hail the commander!"

"Asura is invincible!"

The Asura adventurer team's members were all thrilled to see Shi Feng. The shouting of thousands of players echoed throughout the streets of Cold Wind City, firing up the independent players that had come to join in on the fun.

Due to Shi Feng and the others defeating Hecate's army, Asura's fame in Cold Wind City had recovered to its peak. In fact, the adventurer team's fame was even greater than before. The strength Shi Feng's group displayed had captivated the independent players of Cold Wind City. As a result, many independent players were now hoping to join Asura.

"Commander, with this, I'm afraid the various large Guilds of Cold Wind City will target our adventurer team," Solitary Nine said, revealing a bitter smile as he looked at the crowded street around him.

The goal of Guilds was to take control of NPC cities. Meanwhile, unlike in the NPC cities on the continent of God's Domain, players could gain a small portion of control over the NPCs in the Ice Crystal World. Doing so required the support of a large number of players. At the same time, players also needed to complete a series of contributions to the city.

At this point, the Asura adventurer team's strength was completely different from before.

Currently, aside from Asura's members, hundreds of thousands of players crowded the street outside Asura's Residence. One could easily imagine how high the Asura adventurer team's prestige and reputation were in Cold Wind City right now. With so many players willing to join the adventurer team, all Asura needed to do was complete a series of contributions to the city; then, it could become the true overlord of Cold Wind City.

With such a situation, how could the various large Guilds of Cold Wind City possibly let Asura operate unhindered?

The large Guilds would undoubtedly treat Asura as a thorn in their side and try to deal with it as soon as possible.

"Don't mind them. If they want a fight, we'll give them a fight," Shi Feng said, chuckling. "Moreover, my original goal was to take control of Cold Wind City and make it the foundation of our Asura adventurer team."

Solitary Nine and the others could not help their stupefaction at Shi Feng's words.

They had thought that Shi Feng's purpose behind revisiting Cold Wind City was simply a quest. Now, however, it would seem that Shi Feng's sights were set much higher than they had imagined.

The thought of an adventurer team taking control of an entire NPC city was simply too crazy.

“Since so many people have come, I’m making an announcement in my capacity as Asura’s commander. From today onward, the Asura adventurer team will be establishing an Adventurer Alliance. We welcome all adventurer teams and independent players to join this alliance! Any adventurer team and independent player that joins this alliance will enjoy a portion of the benefits offered by the Asura adventurer team!” Shi Feng declared loudly as he looked at the crowded street around him.

Chapter 1751 – Future Help

Upon hearing Shi Feng’s announcement, the hundreds of thousands of players on the street outside Asura’s Residence fell silent, every one of them staring at Shi Feng in disbelief.

However, as if some spell had broken, the sounds of cheering echoed down the street a moment later.

“All hail Asura!”

“What?! The Asura adventurer team is so generous?!”

“What a wealthy move!”

“Does Asura plan to unify Cold Wind City?”

...

The Asura adventurer team's sudden announcement stunned everyone in Cold Wind City. Meanwhile, some players from the various large Guilds, who watched from a distance, gaped in shock.

Solitary Nine, Lifeless Thorn, and Asura's other members gave Shi Feng incredulous looks. They all thought that Shi Feng had gone crazy.

An adventurer team wasn't like a Guild. There were very few restrictions on an adventurer team's members. In fact, some adventurer teams didn't even place a single restriction. They were mostly a large group of players with the same goal.

Meanwhile, the Asura offered particularly valuable benefits, even better than what some Guilds offered their members. With the adventurer team's Contribution Points, one could purchase weapons, equipment, and Basic Combat Techniques. However, the adventurer team had strict conditions for joining. Fortunately, Asura had plenty of experts, so the team had a much easier time gathering resources and developing.

However, Shi Feng's decision would allow every independent player to enjoy Asura's benefits without meeting any of the entry requirements, yet the adventurer team had to pay for these benefits.

"Commander, are we really going through with this?" Yan Ya hurriedly asked Shi Feng.

Even if they were going to acquire Cold Wind City, they had many other methods they could use to do so. There was no need to earn the public's hearts with such a wasteful option.

"Mhm. Here are the details. Publicize them in a moment and inform everyone about what the Adventurer Alliance is," Shi Feng said, nodding. He then some details regarding the Adventurer Alliance he had intended to establish to Yan Ya and the others.

In reality, he had planned to establish an Adventurer Alliance even before he had first visited the Ice Crystal World.

Someone had established an Adventurer Alliance, an organization that would serve independent players, during his previous life. It served as a platform for independent players to purchase better equipment, materials, information, and find companions to quest with. This helped independent players avoid getting taken advantage of by the various large Guilds.

However, when the Adventurer Alliance had first appeared during his previous life, mainstream players on the continent of God's Domain had already reached Level 90. Although setting up the Adventurer Alliance was very costly and would require further investments, the organization would command more influence and strength as it gradually took shape.

In the end, the Adventurer Alliance had become the number one ranking adventurer team throughout God's Domain. It had even become one of God's Domain's apex powers!

God's Domain had many superpowers, but very few could be considered an apex power, every one of which had powerful backgrounds and countless experts. Meanwhile, not even ordinary Super Guilds had dared to provoke the Adventurer Alliance in the past due to its frightening member count. Many of God's Domain's top-ranking apex experts had belonged to the Adventurer Alliance, including Tier 6 God-ranked players.

Although the Adventurer Alliance had only established a few restrictions on its members, the alliance and its members had been inseparable. If any Super Guild had harmed the alliance, the independent apex experts and Tier 6 God-ranked experts would've taken action. This was why the Adventurer Alliance had become one of the game's apex powers.

In terms of ability to collect materials, not even the Secret Pavilion had been a match for the Adventurer Alliance. No matter how many members a Guild possessed, independent players far outnumbered them.

Since nobody had established an organization like the Adventurer Alliance in this life yet, Shi Feng wouldn't hesitate to take advantage of this idea. After all, materials were very important in God's Domain, and if he wished to acquire Soul Dissolving Flowers quickly, this was the fastest way.

The Adventurer Alliance could also be a huge help to Zero Wing in the future.

Unfortunately, establishing the Adventurer Alliance would require a lot of investments. This was especially true for the weapons, equipment, and the alliance's resource bank. The alliance would also require a large number of people to manage and operate the organization. Then it would have to earn a reputation and credibility among independent players. Hence, setting up the Adventurer Alliance's foundation certainly wouldn't be easy.

However, Cold Wind City was currently the best place to establish the Adventurer Alliance.

First, Cold Wind City wasn't particularly large, with a player population just over 2,000,000. Meanwhile, unlike the situation on the continent of God's Domain, players in the Ice Crystal World could not communicate easily, so Shi Feng didn't have to worry about too many players trying to join the alliance at once. This also meant that the initial required investments wouldn't be as massive, and the alliance wouldn't have to worry about collapsing in on itself before it could even take shape.

When the Adventurer Alliance had first established in the past, the support it had received from multiple major corporations had been a large part of the reason for its survival during its infancy phases. These corporations had invested an astronomical amount of resources to help the alliance mature.

Shi Feng's second reason was the love independent players had for the Asura adventurer team.

By establishing the Adventurer Alliance, the Asura adventurer team would also have an easier time taking control of Cold Wind City. Once Asura controlled the city, it could use the income to sustain the Adventurer Alliance.

When Yan Ya and the others read the details of Shi Feng's idea, their eyes glowed with excitement as they began to understand why Shi Feng wanted to take on such a thankless task. Although the initial investments were massive, once independent players got used to using the Asura adventurer team's Contribution Points, all sorts of materials, weapons, and equipment would continuously flow into the team's hands. Moreover, Asura would be able to recruit expert players more easily.

Immediately, Solitary Nine and the others went into action and started to spread the Adventurer Alliance's details.

...

Meanwhile, when the upper echelons of Cold Wind City's various large Guilds received this news, hatred towards Shi Feng welled in their hearts. However, as the Asura adventurer team had already displayed such immense strength, they couldn't stop the Adventurer Alliance's establishment forcefully.

Hence, the city's Guilds began to think of ways to stop Asura's plans by deliberately lowering their recruitment standards. They also loosened the restrictions on their Guild members, making their Guilds more attractive to independent players.

After all, there was no way an adventurer team could offer as inviting benefits as a Guild. Moreover, Guilds had far more and far better weapons and equipment in their stocks than adventurer teams. Furthermore, players could earn a very high and stable salary by becoming one of the Guild's upper echelons.

...

Meanwhile, in Hecate's Residence in Cold Wind City...

"This Asura adventurer team is quite ambitious." Like the other Guilds' upper echelons, Carnage was surprised when he received news of the Adventurer Association. He had never thought that the Asura adventurer team would be so enthusiastic to grow. However, he revealed a sneer as he said, "It's a pity that your efforts will go to waste. Notify our subordinates and tell them to lower the exchange rates for Hecate's weapons and equipment. However, keep the original exchange rates for any player that's related to the Asura adventurer team in any way."

Hecate also began to hasten its exploration of the Snow Rift.

Having a large number of Guild members simply wasn't enough to rule over Cold Wind City. An organization also needed to make sufficient contributions to the city.

...

Elsewhere, Shi Feng focused on producing all kinds of weapons and equipment in preparation for the Adventurer Alliance's establishment.

After being away from Cold Wind City for some time, the Asura adventurer team had collected plenty of rare materials. It had even acquired 45 Ice Crystal Fragments.

Other Lifestyle Players might find it difficult to produce Level 50 Secret-Silver and Fine-Gold Equipment, but to Shi Feng, who had long since become a Master Forger, it wasn't a problem. Moreover, he had the

assistance of a Tier 3 Mysterious Flame and the Forging Association's Special Mana Forging Room to increase his forging success rate.

While Shi Feng forged Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment with the forging designs he had purchased from the Forging Association, he had Lifeless Thorn and the others raid the Snow Rift's Bosses and collect materials and Ice Crystal Fragments.

In the end, Shi Feng spent three whole days cooped up in the Forging Association and produced 300-plus pieces of Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment, 100-plus pieces of Level 50 Fine-Gold Weapons, ten Fine-Gold ranked Magic Light Sets, and 500-plus pieces of Secret-Silver Equipment. He had basically spent all of the resources the Asura adventurer team had gathered during his absence.

"Now that the preparation work is complete, it's about time to reveal it to the public," Shi Feng revealed a faint smile as he looked at the room cluttered with the weapons and equipment he had crafted.

Chapter 1752 – Enemy of Guilds

Cold Wind City, Hecate's Guild Residence:

Due to the sudden reduction in Hecate's recruitment requirements and exchange rates for weapons and equipment, the Guild Hall was crowded with players.

Most of these players had been independent players, and all of them traded rare materials for Level 50 weapons and equipment.

“Vice Guild Leader, since we lowered the exchange rates, we’ve seen twice as many players come to purchase our weapons and equipment. Moreover, these players are all at the elite standard and above. Not only have they signed an agreement stating that they won’t support Asura, but they will also secretly discriminate against Asura’s members. The other Guilds have taken similar measures against Asura as well. Right now, the majority of Cold Wind City’s elite players have taken a stand against Asura.

“Even if Asura establishes that Adventurer Alliance, the adventurer team won’t be able to obtain many resources from the alliance to increase its strength.”

“Good! Well done! Now, all that’s left is to find out how Asura’s experts became so strong so quickly. Then, we’ll take full control of the city.”

Carnage was very satisfied with his subordinate’s report.

He had to admit that the Asura adventurer team posed an even greater threat than the Centurion Dynasty when it came to competing for Cold Wind City’s authority.

However, the adventurer team overestimated itself if it thought it could compete with Guilds. The various Guilds simply wouldn’t allow that to happen. After all, if news of this situation spread, they would become a laughingstock in the other cities. The various Guilds would rather sacrifice a portion of their profits to prevent such a thing.

Now, due to the various Guilds’ efforts, the majority of Cold Wind City’s elite and expert players had sided with the various Guilds. The remaining elites and experts had their own methods of obtaining weapons and equipment, so they weren’t interested in the Guilds’ exchange services. All in all, the various Guilds had already taken control of Cold Wind City’s main source of rare materials.

Although the Asura adventurer team had plenty of powerful experts, it couldn’t take control of the city by relying on experts alone. An organization would need well-equipped elite and expert players to perform the difficult and necessary contributions.

While Asura had quite a number of ordinary expert players, it lacked top-tier weapons and equipment. Producing such items required plenty of rare materials, and the high production difficulties only increased how many materials were needed.

With how few members Asura had, the adventurer team simply didn't have the manpower to obtain the necessary resources.

Moreover, unlike Guilds, adventurer teams did not have specially trained groups of Lifestyle Players. Even if an adventurer team had its own Lifestyle Players, it wouldn't have the resources to nurture many, or any, Advanced Lifestyle Players.

Now that the various large Guilds had severed Asura's source of rare materials, the adventurer team would have no way to compete for the authority over Cold Wind City.

"Vice Guild Leader, based on our investigations thus far, the Asura experts that have recently returned haven't said a single word about how they had grown so powerful. The adventurer team's other members know nothing about it, either. It seems they're keeping a very tight lid on this secret," the Level 52 Assassin reporting to Carnage said helplessly.

"No matter. Keep on looking into it," Carnage said, smiling faintly. "It is fine even if we fail to find out about it. Even if we fail to learn Asura's secret, once we take control of Cold Wind City, we'll thoroughly eliminate the adventurer team!"

Hearing Carnage's words, the reporting Assassin could not help but smile.

Although the Asura adventurer team had become quite famous in Cold Wind City, at the end of the day, it was still an adventurer team. Asura was both foolish and suicidal if it thought it could go up against Hecate.

Once Hecate took control of Cold Wind City, the Guild would secure a small portion of the city's authority. This fraction of authority, fortunately, would be more than enough to deal with one adventurer team. A few more powerful experts wouldn't matter in the end.

"Right, didn't I send you out to poach Asura's experts? How is that coming along?" Carnage asked.

He had a very optimistic view of Cleansing Whistle and the others. With such strength, they could become a great source of combat power for the Guild if they joined Hecate.

Hearing Carnage's question, the reporting Assassin fell silent.

"What? Did they dislike our offer?" Carnage asked curiously.

"Mhm. They said that they're not interested in a Reserve Elder position. They said that they might consider joining if we offered them the position of... Guild Leader or Vice Guild Leader..." the Assassin said honestly.

Bang!

Carnage slammed his fist on the office table before him, shattering it when he heard the Assassin's reply. The killing intent he radiated shocked the nearby upper echelons, making them shudder.

“Reckless fools! Since they want to fall with their adventurer team, I’ll grant their wish!” Carnage said, a cold glint flashing in his eyes. Sneering, he continued, “Place a 3,000-Gold bounty on each of those players. Send someone to keep an eye on them and tell the Twelve Heavens to get here as soon as possible!”

“Understood!” Everyone in the Guild Leader’s office nodded. They couldn’t help but feel some pity for Cleansing Whistle and her companions, but the group had simply asked for their deaths.

...

Very quickly, Hecate publicized its bounty and caused a huge commotion in the city.

“Crap! Is Hecate that determined to destroy Asura?”

“Three thousand Gold! With that kind of money, Asura’s own members might take action against these people!”

“But those players are incredibly strong. They’re almost impossible to kill.”

“Who told you that? Although they are very powerful, there are many tools available in God’s Domain. With a sufficiently powerful tool, killing them is definitely possible. It is just a matter of whether the owners are willing to use their tools or not. For 3,000 Gold, though, they might be tempted.”

“It really makes you wonder what Asura’s higher-ups are trying to do. First, they provoked Hecate. Then, they made an enemy of every Guild in Cold Wind City. Not only has Asura’s material sources been cut off, but its peak experts are also targets. As far as I see it, Asura is doomed.”

“I know, right? At the end of the day, an adventurer team is still an adventurer team. It is impossible for an adventurer team to go up against a large Guild.”

...

Cold Wind City’s general populace was sorely tempted by Hecate’s bounty. They wanted nothing more than to rush into Asura’s Residence and slay its experts. However, plenty of independent players pitied the Asura adventurer team.

If Asura hadn’t set its eyes on Cold Wind City’s authority, Hecate might have been powerless against the adventurer team. Eventually, Asura might have even grown powerful enough to intimidate the various large Guilds.

As everyone talked about the Asura adventurer team, Asura had announced the Adventurer Alliance’s official launch and welcomed anyone and everyone to apply for membership at Asura’s Residence. As long as a player was independent, they could join the Adventurer Alliance and enjoy a portion of the benefits Asura offered.

“Asura really is dumb. Who would dare apply to join the Adventurer Alliance right now?”

“That’s right! The majority of Level 50 weapons and equipment on the market have been produced by Guilds. How many weapons and equipment could a measly adventurer team possibly offer? Only people who don’t want to upgrade their weapons and equipment would join the Adventurer Alliance.”

...

The general populace showed no interest in Asura's announcement. In fact, many players did not want anything to do with the adventurer team now. Seeing this, the various Guilds' upper echelons in Cold Wind City sneered at Asura and its members.

...

"Commander, even though we've announced the launch to the public, not a single player has shown interest in joining," Yan Ya expressed her frustration from her seat in Asura's Residence.

She had to admit that the various Guilds' strategies had been very effective. It had utterly dissuaded any independent players from joining the Adventurer Alliance.

"Alright, then. I had wanted to show the Guilds some respect, but since they refuse to accept my kindness, there's no need for me to hold back," Shi Feng said, not particularly surprised by the situation. He then instructed, "Tell Solitary Nine to publicize the Adventurer Alliance's exchange list on the forums."

"Understood! I'll notify the vice commander right away!" Yan Ya said, smiling. Excitedly, she contacted Solitary Nine.

Chapter 1753 – Madness-inducing Benefits

Cold Wind City, Frostbone Plain:

Many adventurer teams grinded the area's Level 50-plus Undead.

The Frostbone Plain was a Level 50 to Level 60 map. Although it wasn't a resource-rich map, the Undead here had a chance of dropping Frost Stones since they absorbed Power of Frost all-year long.

When Frost Stones were used in crafting weapons and equipment, the items had a chance of gaining Ice Resistance. Although each weapon and equipment piece would only have a small amount, if players wore items that all had the bonus, it would add up.

Naturally, there were many maps in the Ice Crystal World that had extremely low temperatures. Without a certain amount of Ice Resistance, players' would be restricted.

As a result, items like Frost Stones, which could increase a players' Ice Resistance, were very valuable. Moreover, since Frost Stones' drop-rate was incredibly low, many Guilds only accepted Frost Stones as currency for the weapons and equipment they produced.

Because of this, grinding Frost Stones had become the best way for independent players to make money and obtain better items.

However, the Frostbone Plain's Undead were not easy to defeat. These Undead rarely acted independently, moving in groups of over a hundred instead. Even the weakest of these monsters was an Elite, while the stronger Undead were usually Great Lords. From time to time, players even encountered patrol squads, usually consisting of 500 to 600 Undead, led by Grand Lord ranked Frost Generals.

Most of the adventurer teams grinding in the Frostbone Plain operated in units of 100. However, many players watched as a 20-man team fought a Level 50-plus Frost Undead patrol squad with relative ease.

The 20-man team systematically annihilated the 100-plus Undead in the patrol squad. These players had even suppressed the two Level 55 High Lord ranked Frost Captains. After just ten minutes, the entire patrol squad had been eliminated, leaving a pile of materials on the ground for the battle's victors.

"Brute, your combat standard have improved pretty quickly! You can even solo a Frost Captain now. If you hadn't handled one of the Frost Captains, we might have had to flee," a Level 51 Shield Warrior said, smiling at the Level 52 Guardian Knight beside him. The Guardian Knight wielded a dark-blue diamond shield in one hand and a crystalline axe in the other.

"I recently researched the war between Asura and Hecate and gained some insight from watching Asura's Solitary Nine and Dark Madness. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to tank the Frost Captain by myself," the Guardian Knight named Brute Seven responded excitedly. "After this hunt, I should have enough materials to purchase a Level 50 Secret-Silver chest piece. Once I have that, I might be able to challenge a Level 55 Great Lord."

Anticipation illuminated Brute Seven's features as he spoke about the Level 50 chest piece.

He had been grinding Frost Stones in the Frostbone Plain for a long time now. Once he had the chest piece, their adventurer team might be able to explore more of the map and challenge Level 55 Great Lords.

In the Ice Crystal World, materials' drop-rates drastically decreased after monsters hit Level 50. Meanwhile, Great Lord rank acted like a dividing line for monsters. Not only would Great Lords drop more rare materials of high quality, but they also had a certain chance of dropping Mysterious-Iron Weapons and Equipment. If their adventurer team could grind Great Lords, their income would increase significantly.

“The Guilds are being too stingy right now. They’re asking for several times more materials for each piece of Secret-Silver Equipment. Even now, I’ve only managed to collect half of the materials needed for a piece of Secret-Silver Equipment. It’s a pity that our forgers’ standards are so low. Otherwise, we could craft our own Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment,” the Shield Warrior said, slightly envious when he heard Brute Seven’s plan.

Although their adventurer team had nurtured its own Advanced Forgers, their Advanced Forgers were weaker than those in the various Guilds’ in both techniques and their tools. Their adventurer team’s Advanced Forgers even struggled to craft Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment, not to mention Secret-Silver rank.

Yet, without good equipment, they couldn’t challenge stronger monsters and obtain better resources.

Only the various Guilds’ forgers could produce Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment, and because of that, these Guilds demanded exorbitant prices for the items, leaving adventurer team players no choice but to provide these Guilds cheap labor.

As Brute Seven’s team rested and chatted amongst themselves, one of the team’s members abruptly shouted in the team chat.

“Guys, look at the forums! Asura just announced that it has officially established the Adventurer Alliance, stating that anyone who wants to join can apply at Asura’s Residence.”

“Tch. So what? Although the Adventurer Alliance’s members get to enjoy some of Asura’s benefits, Asura is only an adventurer team. It can’t compare to a Guild. Who would possibly join the Adventurer Alliance now that the various Guilds have singled Asura out?”

“That’s right! Since the Guilds are the sole suppliers of Level 50 Secret-Silver Weapons and Equipment, only players who don’t want to upgrade their items would consider joining the Adventurer Alliance. It

really makes you wonder what Asura's upper echelons are thinking. They are actually trying to compete with the Guilds for Cold Wind City. Isn't that just suicidal?"

...

None of the team's members showed any interest in joining the recently-established Adventurer Alliance. They all thought that Asura's commander, Shi Feng, was a fool. Despite his adventurer team's bright future, he had decided to ruin his players' prospects by competing for Cold Wind City.

After these players chatted for some time, they discovered that the Asura adventurer team had posted a new announcement.

Adventurer Alliance's benefit list!

"What? They're trying to lure people to join by posting their benefits?"

"What is Asura playing at? Even if Asura offers good benefits, how could it possibly contend with the various Guilds, which can produce Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment?"

But as these players clicked on the new post, preparing to laugh at Asura's foolishness, they were dumbfounded by what they saw.

"What's going on?"

“Am I seeing things?”

“Crap! This is amazing! Not even large Guilds can offer this!”

“Is Asura really an adventurer team?”

Everyone’s eyes glowed as they read the benefit list the Adventurer Alliance offered. Even just looking at the offered benefits excited them greatly.

The list contained a total of three benefits, the first of which regarded the purchase of weapons and equipment. The second involved the purchase of combat techniques. The third consisted of the rare materials and tools available for purchase. Meanwhile, players would only be able to buy these items with the Adventurer Alliance’s internal points.

These three benefits were incredibly tempting, especially when players read the list of weapons and equipment Asura had to offer.

If Asura had only offered Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Weapons and Equipment, they might have viewed the adventurer team in a better light, nothing more. If the list included Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment, these players would assume that Asura planned to duke it out with the various Guilds, and they’d consider the adventurer team a little more mad than they had expected.

But there were Level 50 Fine-Gold Weapons and Equipment on that list...

This was practically a dream!

Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment was as rare as a phoenix's feather, even in the various large Guilds. Not even the Guilds' core members were guaranteed to get a piece, yet the Asura adventurer team was offering these items up for purchase.

And that was only the tip of the iceberg!

What truly dumbfounded Cold Wind City's players was the Level 50 Fine-Gold ranked Magic Light Sets Asura offered!

Not even Hecate, Cold Wind City's current number one Guild, likely had such equipment on hand, yet not only did Asura have these items, but the adventurer team was offering them to other players for exchange!

Chapter 1754 – Nightmare's Beginning

Shortly after the Adventurer Alliance's exchange benefits were published on the official forums, news of the post spread throughout Cold Wind City like the plague. Even the members of the various Guilds of Cold Wind City turned green with envy when they read its contents.

Level 50 Fine-Gold Set Equipment!

To the current Guilds of Cold Wind City, such equipment only appeared in their dreams.

"Asura is too ruthless! The adventurer team actually pulled out such a card to lure in independent players!"

“How did Asura get its hands on this Magic Light Set?”

“Crap! If I had this Magic Light Set, I could easily solo-tank a Level 55 Grand Lord!”

“It’s no wonder Asura’s top few experts possess such powerful Attributes. It turns out that they’re wearing this Magic Light Set.”

The upper echelons of Cold Wind City’s various Guilds fell silent when they saw the benefits Asura was offering.

Just the weapons and equipment Asura put up for exchange were far superior to what their Guilds had. However, compared to these weapons and equipment, the second exchange benefit Asura offered was the part that truly gave them a headache.

Combat techniques!

Combat techniques were much more precious than weapons and equipment.

At the end of the day, weapons and equipment were external items. Moreover, as players continued leveling up, they would also have to keep replacing their weapons and equipment; using their current items forever was impossible.

However, that was not the case for combat techniques. Combat techniques would not fall behind the times and could accompany players on their entire journey in God’s Domain. They provided

improvements directly to a player's base combat power and thus were many times more valuable than weapons and equipment.

Given a choice between obtaining Level 50 Dark-Gold Equipment or a combat technique, the majority of players would go with the combat technique. After all, if one chose the Level 50 Dark-Gold Equipment, they wouldn't necessarily be able to obtain a combat technique by using it. Moreover, once they reached Level 60, their Level 50 Dark-Gold Equipment would no longer be considered top-tier for their level. However, if one chose the combat technique, the immediate benefits from the combat technique might not be as much as those of the Level 50 Dark-Gold Equipment, but with their improved combat standards, obtaining equipment that could rival Level 50 Dark-Gold Equipment was only a matter of time.

Combat techniques were also something the various Guilds constantly sought. Unfortunately, these were truly too rare and difficult to acquire.

Even until now, the various Guilds had not found a single clue that could lead to the acquisition of a combat technique. Every known combat technique in Cold Wind City right now was created by talented experts. However, these experts would never teach others the combat techniques they had researched and invented through great efforts, as these combat techniques were their trump cards. Sharing their combat techniques would only result in them losing an edge over others.

Currently, the only Guild in Cold Wind City that possessed a combat technique was Hecate. However, Hecate had a very heavy restriction on the combat technique, and only core members that had signed binding contracts were qualified to learn it. Experts that were not contracted to the Guild had no hope of learning it.

...

Meanwhile, inside Hecate's Residence...

Sitting inside the exquisite Guild Leader's office, Carnage read the exchange benefits of the Adventurer Alliance with an indescribably grim expression on his face, his eyes having turned bloodshot. The Guild's upper echelon inside the room was similarly stupefied by Asura's forum post.

"Is this Asura adventurer team filled with lunatics? They're actually offering combat techniques for exchange?"

"Are they not afraid that letting outsiders learn these combat techniques will hamper their adventurer team's development in the future?"

Everyone inside the room voiced their confusion over Asura's crazy behavior. They had never imagined that Asura would make such a bold move in order to obtain Cold Wind City.

At this time, a Level 52 Ranger suddenly entered the room and reported to Carnage, "Vice Guild Leader, I just received a report stating that a large number of elite players contracted to us have just dissolved their contracts. Currently, we have already lost over a thousand contracted elite players—and this number is still steadily climbing..."

"Have these people lost their minds? Dissolving their contracts means having to pay us three Gold in compensation!" The members of the upper echelon standing at the sides of the room were stupefied when they heard the Ranger's words.

Although the contracts Hecate signed with the independent players wishing to partner with it could be dissolved, the price to do so was very steep.

Three Gold was a lot of money even to expert players, let alone elite players. Although players' income had risen due to their increasing levels, the repair fee for weapons and equipment was also higher. Moreover, players had many other expenses, such as potions and Magic Scrolls, food and

accommodation. In the end, players would be able to save only a small portion of their earnings each day.

At this stage of the game, elite players would be fortunate if they had 50 or 60 Silver Coins in savings, while ordinary players would only have around 10 Silver Coins banked. Only expert players would have a little more extra money, with most expert players having roughly five or six Gold Coins stashed away. Hence, they had set the compensation fee at three Gold, which was half of the liquid funds of an expert player.

Yet, now...

...

Meanwhile, outside Asura's Residence...

Shortly after the Adventurer Alliance's benefits were publicized, a large crowd of independent players had appeared here. Within half an hour of the alliance's benefits' disclosure, over 50,000 independent players had come to apply to the alliance. The long queue that formed outside of Asura's Residence extended across five whole blocks. Moreover, the number of applicants was still climbing rapidly. This situation forced Asura to mobilize over 500 members to maintain order at the application site.

The spectacular scene stupefied the scouts sent over by the various Guilds.

Among the players looking to join the Adventurer Alliance were many Level 51 and Level 52 elite and expert players and even some well-known adventurer teams of Cold Wind City. In fact, the scouts actually recognized some of those standing in line to be elite and expert members of various Guilds. Though, to be precise, these people were former members now.

However, the actions of these former Guild players were also understandable.

Players joined Guilds to obtain good weapons and equipment more easily. If they couldn't, they would have no reason to subject themselves to the restrictions of Guilds. Now, however, the Adventurer Alliance was also supplying weapons and equipment—and these were even better than the ones offered by the Guilds. Moreover, players could exchange for combat techniques, something that even expert players hungered for, from the alliance.

The benefits offered by ordinary Guilds could not compare to those offered by the Adventurer Alliance at all.

Hence, it was only natural that plenty of elite and expert players were trying to join the alliance.

...

“Commander, this move of yours is simply too vicious. I just received a report stating that some of the smaller Guilds in Cold Wind City lost a significant portion of their expert and elite members shortly after we announced the Adventurer Alliance’s benefits. It won’t be long before these Guilds are forced to disband. Even Hecate has lost over 300 experts and 4,000 elites thus far,” Yan Ya reported to Shi Feng excitedly as she walked into the Residence’s Basic Forging Room.

She held not a shred of goodwill towards the various Guilds of Cold Wind City, especially Hecate. Just because they had refused Hecate’s poaching attempts, the Guild had actually publicly placed a bounty on their heads. Had Shi Feng not sent them to grind Bosses in the Snow Rift, a forbidden land for players, she would’ve gone directly to Hecate’s grinding spots and paid the Guild back for its kindness.

Having received news that the Adventurer Alliance had managed to plunder over 300 experts from Hecate, she was naturally elated.

In Cold Wind City, even after annexing the Matchless Family, Hecate had only a little over 2,700 expert members. Losing 300-plus expert players was equivalent to losing one-ninth of its expert forces, which was definitely a huge blow to the Guild.

Right now, she could already imagine what kind of expression Hecate's higher-ups were making.

"Vicious, huh?" Shi Feng laughed, shaking his head. This was only the beginning. He then turned to Yan Ya and asked, "Did you get that thing yet?"

"Mhm. I've already bought the largest plot of Land available in Cold Wind City and constructed a three-story Shop on it. As for the interior design, that can only be done after we make a personal visit there. I spent a total of 8,000 Gold. Almost all of the funds our adventurer team has gathered thus far have been used up already," Yan Ya replied. She then took out a Deed from her bag and handed it over to Shi Feng.

"Good! Let's head over and take a look." Shi Feng nodded. After accepting the Deed, he immediately left for Cold Wind City's largest plot of Land together with Yan Ya.

Originally, this plot of Land was meant for the construction of a Guild Residence. However, as its location was not very good and the Land was quite costly as well, none of the Guilds in Cold Wind City had purchased it. This gave Shi Feng a chance to take it for himself.

"Not bad. This should be large enough," Shi Feng said, nodding in satisfaction as he arrived at the three-story Shop.

Some independent players were already standing around the entrance of the Shop, curiously eyeing the three-story building.

In fact, let alone these passersby, even Yan Ya, who was trailing Shi Feng, was curious to find out why he had decided to buy a plot of Land in this secluded area. Moreover, he had even wanted such a large Shop to be built on it.

If he really wished to set up a Shop, the wise decision would have been to build one in the city's central district. Not to mention, even though they had built such a large Shop, the Asura adventurer team did not possess that many items to sell.

However, Shi Feng did not bother explaining his decisions. Instead, he walked straight into the Shop. Currently, the main hall of the Shop was still empty.

Shi Feng also did not hurry to start the decoration process. Instead, he took out a large number of Magic Crystals and rare materials, then started drawing a magic array at the center of the hall.

The magic array he was drawing right now was none other than the Starlight Gathering Magic Array, which he had gotten from the War God's Temple some time ago. When activated, the magic array would create an enclosed space with a 500-yard radius and increase the Mana density within it by 300%. As the materials needed to produce the magic array were extremely rare and the difficulty of drawing it was equivalent to drawing an Advanced Magic Array, Shi Feng had not bothered putting it to use until now.

Recently, though, Zero Wing had managed to gather the necessary materials for the Starlight Gathering Magic Array. Hence, he decided to use the magic array in Cold Wind City.

The reason for his decision was the dearth of locations with high Mana density in the Ice Crystal World. In fact, the Ice Crystal World wasn't alone in this predicament. Practically every Otherworld faced this problem. Only Higher Planes had many areas with high Mana density. This was also the main reason why the combat standards of Otherworld players were weak in general.

Without environments of high Mana density, players would have great difficulty improving themselves.

If he wanted to truly raise the Asura adventurer team's strength, he could not just rely on weapons, equipment, and combat techniques. As for sending players to the continent of God's Domain via the Ancient Shrine, the cost of doing so was simply prohibitive—way beyond the current means of Zero Wing or Asura. Moreover, having more people cross over would increase the risk of exposure for the Ancient Shrine's secret.

Hence, before coming to the Ice Crystal World, Shi Feng had already decided to create a place similar to Stone Forest Town's Battle Arena in Cold Wind City.

Finally, after spending over an hour, he was done engraving the Starlight Gathering Magic Array. The illusion of a dazzlingly beautiful galaxy then formed in the center of the hall.

"Commander, what's this? It's so beautiful!" Yan Ya was immediately captivated by the magic array.

"What is this?" Shi Feng smiled. "It's a new world!"

Saying so, Shi Feng spent 500 Magic Crystals to activate the Starlight Gathering Magic Array.

Chapter 1755 – Asura Hall

Inside the spacious hall...

When the Starlight Gathering Magic Array activated, white mist began to fill the hall. The light then dimmed, and twinkling starlight glittered around the room.

A short moment later, the Mana density inside the hall swiftly started to rise.

100%... 200%... 300%...

The Ice Crystal World's ambient Mana density was already higher than that in God's Domain, and now, after this 300% increase, the Shop's Mana was even denser than the Mana in Zero Wing City.

Celestial Magic Arrays truly are amazing!

Shi Feng was quite satisfied as he gazed at the galaxy that had appeared on the hall's ceiling.

As he stood in the hall, he could feel his mind become tremendously clear. He could even push aside unwanted thoughts and block his sense until he only existed within his own consciousness. As long as he put a little effort in, his mind could easily process what he wanted and provide the desired results. In fact, he even felt physically lighter.

As a magic array that had been passed down since ancient times, current magic arrays simply couldn't compare to the power of a Celestial Magic Array like the Starlight Gathering Magic Array.

Due to the Celestial Power, Celestial Magic Arrays were able to operate at a cheaper cost and higher efficiency than present magic arrays of similar rank and functionality.

That was also why any Celestial Magic Arrays that had appeared on the market in the past had sold for astronomical prices.

If he hadn't caught Abandoned Wave, he wouldn't have obtained the Starlight Gathering Magic Array.

Yan Ya, who stood beside Shi Feng, was utterly dumbfounded as she felt the change that had taken place around her.

The strength of the Starlight Gathering Magic Array before her was simply too frightening!

The entire hall felt like a revolving galaxy. The ambient Mana was so dense that she felt almost omnipotent.

If she could train in such an environment, she was confident that she could fully grasp the Basic Combat Techniques, which she had struggled with before, in a short time. She even felt like she could learn the Advanced Combat Technique, Void Steps.

An Advanced Combat Technique!

Void Steps was an Advanced Footwork technique that not even Lifeless Thorn had mastered.

If she could grasp this footwork technique, her combat power would rise to a whole new level. She was even confident that she'd be able to take on Flowing Water Realm experts. After all, with Void Steps, she would have absolute control over the battle's initiative. She could clash or retreat whenever she wanted, and her opponent would be powerless to stop her.

Excitedly, Yan Ya turned to Shi Feng and asked, "Commander, are you planning to make this our adventurer team's training ground?"

With such a Mana-rich environment, this place could definitely become a sacred training ground for players.

Ordinary experts, particularly Cold Wind City's experts, did not understand the true benefits of Mana-rich environments. However, Yan Ya had learned well the benefits of such an environment. After all, she had gone through plenty of hardships while learning her combat techniques. If not for the combat rooms in Zero Wing City's Battle Arena, she never would've grasped the several Basic Combat Techniques she now knew so quickly.

If she could train in such a Mana-rich environment, she could practice her Basic Combat Techniques relentlessly without running out of Stamina or Concentration.

"No," Shi Feng said, shaking his head. "I plan to make this the Adventurer Alliance's training ground."

"A training ground for the Adventurer Alliance?" Shi Feng's answer stunned Yan Ya.

Shi Feng had already offered the Adventurer Alliance's members amazing benefits, which not even the various large Guilds could afford to offer. Yet, he also intended to make this sacred ground one of the alliance's benefits, as well. She didn't dare imagine the craze in Cold Wind City if news of this went public.

If Cold Wind City's various Guilds learned of this, they'd want nothing more than to eat Shi Feng alive.

"Of course, I will also segregate a portion of the space specifically for Asura's members," Shi Feng said, chuckling.

While reserving this place for Asura's members was a good idea, maintaining the Starlight Gathering Magic Array was not cheap. The magic array cost 500 Magic Crystals to operate per day. That was the equivalent of running a single Magic Tower.

Since both towns generated massive amounts of income, it didn't really matter that the Magic Towers in Stone Forest Town and Silverwing Town were expensive to run. However, the Asura adventurer team did not possess the ability to generate so much income. After all, Asura only had around 3,000 members.

It might be fine if the Starlight Gathering Magic Array's operation required Coins, as earning Coins was relatively easy for an adventurer team of Asura's caliber, but it was a different story for Magic Crystals. Furthermore, Magic Crystals were rarer in the Ice Crystal World than in the continent of God's Domain.

If Shi Feng wanted to maintain the Starlight Gathering Magic Array, he needed a huge source of Magic Crystal income.

Currently, Cold Wind City had over 2,000,000 players, the majority of which were independent players. Shi Feng wouldn't have to worry about a lack of interest in the new training ground with such high Mana density. As long as he charged a small fee for using the training ground, he could easily maintain the Starlight Gathering Magic Array's operation.

Moreover, by making the Starlight Gathering Magic Array available to the Adventurer Alliance, not only could he earn back the magic array's operation cost, but he could also attract more players to join the alliance, killing two birds with one stone.

Following which, Shi Feng began to modify the Shop's interior.

All three of the Shop's floors would become training grounds. He also set aside some room on the first floor to establish a restaurant and bar for players to rest.

Using the remaining space, he constructed a total of 270 training rooms, 50 of which would be reserved for the Asura adventurer team.

However, although there were 220 training rooms left for the Adventurer Alliance's members, considering how many members the alliance had, Shi Feng ensured that each alliance member could only rent a training room for one hour per day if they paid with Coins or Adventurer Alliance Points. If players paid their rent with Magic Crystals, they would be allowed to rent up to two hours a day. This way, Shi Feng wouldn't have to worry about not earning enough Magic Crystals. This would also help reduce some of the points alliance members accumulated.

Whether players wanted to purchase the Adventurer Alliance's weapons, equipment, or combat techniques, they all required a large number of points. In other words, none of the Adventurer Alliance's services were cheap.

If that were the case, it would only be a matter of time before the Adventurer Alliance collapsed in on itself.

With the training ground absorbing some of the points the alliance members accumulated normally, the alliance's points would be more valuable and meaningful.

After Shi Feng finished arranging the training ground's layout, he made a trip to the Adventurer's Association and hired five Advanced NPCs and 100 Basic NPCs to manage the training ground. This way, his players wouldn't have to waste their time with managing the building.

Naturally, he set the training room's rent higher than the fee for Zero Wing City's Battle Arena. He decided on five Silver Coins' worth of points per hour. This might be costly to ordinary players, but to elite players, who normally had 50 to 60 Silver Coins in their pockets, it was affordable. Besides, they could only rent the training rooms for one hour per day with points. If they paid in Magic Crystals, they'd only have to spend 10 Silver Coins per day.

For expert players, this expenditure was pocket change.

"Commander, the only thing left to do is name the training ground. Then, we can open it to the public," Yan Ya said. As she looked at the dazzling training ground before her and watched the NPCs as they prepared to work, she couldn't help her growing excitement.

"A name?" After giving the matter some thought, Shi Feng said, "Let's call it Asura Hall, then."

His main goal in establishing this training ground was to strengthen the Asura adventurer team. Now that that was done, he had to put Asura's name on it, letting everyone know about the Asura adventurer team.

Once Shi Feng had stated his desired name for the establishment, the NPC managers engraved the name on a plaque on the building's entrance.

The massive, golden engravings quickly caught the attention of the players passing by. Players could even see the words 'Asura Hall' from a good distance away.

“Asura Hall?”

“What’s this place?”

“It should be related to the Asura adventurer team!”

“It seems to be open already. Let’s go in and have a look.”

After the Asura Hall opened, the passersby curiously entered the building. They had seen all kinds of Shops before, but this was the first time they had seen one with such an ambiguous name. Furthermore, the Shop seemed to be related to the Asura adventurer team.

Chapter 1756 – Adventurer Alliance’s Power

Upon entering the Asura Hall, the group of independent players felt as if they had stepped into a sports arena’s main lobby. The ceiling was covered in a galaxy of stars as if it were the actual night sky. It gave players a relaxed, happy feeling.

“What’s going on? The Mana density here is so high!”

“Why do I feel like my mind has become so much clearer than before?”

“This place is amazing!”

Every player that entered the Asura Hall quickly discovered its peculiarities. Not only did they feel calmer after entering the building, but they also felt physically lighter. They felt as if they could now accomplish tasks that had been impossible, and these players eagerly wanted to test themselves in battle in this environment.

However, when these players saw the pricing list at the Asura Hall’s front counter, their eyes nearly fell out of their sockets.

“So expensive!”

“Is this a joke? Renting a training room actually costs five Silver per hour? Is the Asura adventurer team that desperate for money?”

“Wait, that’s not right. Only the Adventurer Alliance’s members are allowed to rent training rooms. No one else has access.”

“Just where has Asura gotten the confidence to impose such a restriction? Who would bother to rent a training room here, to begin with?”

Everyone’s burning interested in the Asura Hall instantly froze after they saw the rental prices. Some players had even turned and left the building on the spot, not wanting to waste any more of their time with this place.

As the first group of visitors left the Asura Hall, news of the establishment quickly spread throughout Cold Wind City, becoming the latest and hottest topic for discussion.

Although many players had deemed that the Asura Hall's prices were too high, they were very interested in its Mana-rich environment.

"Commander, although quite a few players have visited the Asura Hall, none have tried to rent a room. They all think that the price is too high. Why don't we lower the price slightly?" Yan Ya suggested as she watched a group of players idle around the first-floor hall.

"No need to rush. We have plenty of time. Players will eventually discover the Asura Hall's true benefit," Shi Feng said, smiling. He then continued, "Right now, we need to focus on collecting enough Ice Crystal Fragments and Soul Devouring Flowers."

"I've already posted a purchase request for Ice Crystal Fragments and Soul Dissolving Flowers in the Adventurer Alliance. Moreover, I've ensured that players who want to purchase Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment or the Magic Light Set will have to use both CPs and a sufficient number of Ice Crystal Fragments or Soul Devouring Flowers," Yan Ya said. "Right now, a piece of Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment will require at least one Ice Crystal Fragment. For Level 50 Fine-Gold Weapons, each will require two Ice Crystal Fragments or one Soul Dissolving Flower. For the Magic Light Set, players must contribute 12 Ice Crystal Fragments or six Soul Dissolving Flowers.

"While you were designing the internal layout of the Asura Hall, we acquired nine Ice Crystal Fragments and one Soul Dissolving Flower through the Adventurer Alliance. I doubt it will be long before we have the required number of fragments and flowers."

"That quickly?" Shi Feng could not help his surprise when he heard Yan Ya's report.

Ice Crystal Fragments only dropped from Bosses in the Ice Crystal World's forbidden lands. Moreover, only Great Lord ranked and above dropped the fragments. Even if he used Icarus's Heart, obtaining an Ice Crystal Fragment from each Boss he killed wasn't guaranteed. The drop-rate would be even worse for other players.

The Adventurer Alliance had only established a few hours ago, yet it had already collected nine Ice Crystal Fragments and one of the super-rare Soul Dissolving Flowers. The alliance's material collection speed was astonishing.

If the Adventurer Alliance were developed properly and attract hundreds of thousands of independent players from Cold Wind City, the alliance would beat any Guild in the city when it came to collecting materials, aside from the items that dropped from Team Dungeons.

As for Guilds that tried to acquire the Adventurer Alliance's top-tier weapons and equipment or combat techniques by disguising their members as independent players, Shi Feng did not particularly mind. Rather, he welcomed it. After all, the extraordinary items the alliance offered required other items of considerable value, such as the Ice Crystal Fragment and Soul Dissolving Flower, in trade.

At this moment, Shi Feng finally understood just how frightening the Adventurer Alliance in his previous life had actually been. It was no wonder why the alliance had become one of God's Domain's apex powers.

Resources were everything in God's Domain. With abundant resources, one could even pump out batch after batch of expert players. If one was fortunate enough, they could even nurture peak or apex experts.

"Although our resource collection speed is very fast right now, as more independent players join the Adventurer Alliance, our stock of weapons and equipment in the alliance's inventory will begin to dwindle. If we don't replenish the items soon, aside from the valuable items that require Ice Crystal Fragments or Soul Dissolving Flowers, everything will be gone," Yan Ya said with a bitter smile.

The Adventurer Alliance indeed possessed a frightening resource collection ability. However, the cost of maintaining this ability was also frightening. At this point, the weapons and equipment they had gained from killing Hecate's members before had already been purchased with rare materials. These materials flooded the Adventurer Alliance's warehouse, and nobody had any intentions of purchasing the items...

The Adventurer Alliance earned its income of Coins and resources by buying and selling items, earning the price difference. For example, it would purchase a particular rare material using nine CPs and selling them for ten CPs, making a profit of one CP between trades.

However, the problem now was that nobody in Cold Wind City wanted these rare materials. The alliance was only gaining a mountain of rare materials that no one wanted while losing a bunch of weapons and equipment...

"You're right." Shi Feng smiled after listening to Yan Ya's concerns, although the situation didn't surprise him. The Asura adventurer team wasn't like Zero Wing, which had the support of the Candlelight Trading Firm. So long as the Guild had rare materials, it could quickly turn those materials into products that various players needed. However, the Asura adventurer team lacked this ability. "Let's do it this way, then. Have Solitary Nine bring a few Assassins and load them up with rare materials, then head to White River City and hand these materials to Melancholic Smile. We'll have Melancholic collect as much Ice Resistance equipment and items as possible and send the items back with the Assassins. Meanwhile, I'll try to craft as many items as possible to cope with the Adventurer Alliance's current expenditure."

While rare materials might not be particularly useful to adventurer teams, they were very valuable to the Candlelight Trading Firm. In Star-Moon Kingdom, Candlelight had difficulty purchasing rare materials in bulk, and the prices for these materials were very high. However, the situation was the opposite in the Ice Crystal World. Rare resources were more common and cost significantly less.

Shi Feng could take advantage of this situation and make a profit off of the price difference of rare materials between the two worlds.

The only problem was the amount of time and Magic Crystals required to transport the materials to the continent of God's Domain. But compared to the potential profits, the cost was practically negligible.

Hearing Shi Feng's plan, Yan Ya's eyes glowed with realization.

Equipment and tools that could increase one's Ice Resistance were worth a fortune in the Ice Crystal World. For example, Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment with Ice Resistance was worth two or three times more than equipment without Ice Resistance. If it were possible to convert these rare materials into equipment and tools that increased Ice Resistance, the Adventurer Alliance would attract plenty of independent players even if it ran out of Magic Light Sets and Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment.

Shi Feng then returned to the Forging Association to resume production of all sorts of Level 50 weapons and equipment. This time, though, he only crafted Secret-Silver Equipment. He left the Level 50 Mysterious-Iron equipment to the Lifestyle Players Asura nurtured internally.

Meanwhile, Yan Ya contacted Solitary Nine and had him gather nine Assassins. After filling their bags with rare materials, Solitary Nine and the Assassins disguised themselves and made their way to the Ancient Shrine before heading to White River City's Candlelight Trading Firm.

...

Time passed quickly. After working for around half a day, Shi Feng had made 50-plus pieces of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment with the rare materials the Adventurer Alliance had acquired. During this time, his Forging Proficiency continuously increased. He also gained a lot of EXP. Now, he was at 41% of Level 66. His leveling speed via forging was no slower than expert players' leveling speed.

While Shi Feng was in the midst of forging a piece of plate armor, Yan Ya sent him a message.

The content was very simple: All 100 Ice Crystal Fragments have been collected!

“The collection’s done?” Shi Feng smiled as he read the message. “It’s about time that I pay the Countess a visit, then.”

Chapter 1757 – Astronomical Wealth

Black Dragon Empire, Lake Heart City:

As soon as Shi Feng walked out of the Teleportation Hall, he was greeted by the sight of a crowded street. The liveliness of the city was not the slightest bit inferior to White River City’s; in fact, it might even be livelier.

Meanwhile, shortly after he exited the Teleportation Hall, players’ shouts entered his ears.

“Seeking a powerful team to enter the Underground Maze’s inner area! I’m a Level 51 Shield Warrior with over 30,000 Defense, 34% Block Rate, and combat standard at the late stage of the Trial Tower’s fifth floor!”

“Underground Maze team looking for Level 50-plus powerful MTs and DPS! Thirty-two waiting on eighteen! Noobs not welcomed!”

“Purchasing Ice Jade for 30 Silver each! Buying as many as you have!”

...

At this moment, both sides of the street Shi Feng was on were teeming with players either hawking their wares or forming teams.

Moreover, the players thronging the street were all very high-leveled, with the lowest-leveled player being Level 49 and the majority being 50 and 51. Shi Feng also spotted quite a few Level 52 experts. Normally, such a scene could be found only in places like the Ice Crystal World, where the average level of players was slightly higher than that of the continent of God’s Domain. Yet, now, the players in Lake Heart City could actually rival the players of Cold Wind City in terms of levels.

Looking at this scene, Shi Feng even thought that he was still in Cold Wind City right now.

Aside from the large number of independent experts, Shi Feng also noticed plenty of Guild elite and expert teams coming out from the Teleportation Hall from time to time. As soon as these Guild teams arrived, they would dash out of the city.

Did these Guilds finally notice it? Shi Feng did not feel particularly surprised to see the various Guild teams riding their Mounts out of the city. Rather, this situation was within his expectations.

Back then, the reason why he had chosen to set up Zero Wing’s Branch Guild in the Black Dragon Empire’s Lake Heart City was the resources in the vicinity.

During the early stages of the game, the various large Guilds and players disregarded a backwater like Lake Heart City. However, past Level 50, the Dungeon environments would become increasingly severe, and players would need all kinds of Resistances if they wished to survive and raid Team Dungeons. Meanwhile, among the items that provided Resistances, the Ice Jade found within the Lake Heart City region was one of the most well-known of those produced in the Black Dragon Empire.

Ice Jades could be turned into Ice Resistance Gemstones, which could then be inlaid into equipment to increase one's Ice Resistance. What made Ice Jade so popular was the flexibility of Ice Resistance Gemstones, which were different from weapons and equipment that had innate Ice Resistance.

For weapons and equipment that had innate Resistances, these Resistances usually came at the cost of sacrificing some of their Basic Attributes. Moreover, most weapons and equipment with Resistance increased only one type of Resistance, in addition to having level restrictions, and would become obsolete as players reached higher levels. Players would also have to prepare different types of Resistance equipment, depending on what kind of Dungeon they were raiding; this was a great extravagance that even expert players could not afford.

On the other hand, Resistance Gemstones could be freely equipped and removed at the cost of a little money. When raiding Dungeons with different environments, players simply needed to switch to the appropriate Resistance Gemstones.

Due to these reasons, Lake Heart City gained sudden popularity in the Black Dragon Empire, thanks to the resource known as Ice Jade. In Shi Feng's previous life, Lake Heart City had managed to grow into the empire's sixth most populated city at its peak.

For comparison, since the player population in an empire far exceeded that of a kingdom, even an empire's sixth ranking city would have a higher player population than the capital city of a kingdom.

Finally, Shi Feng's previous plans and investments were coming to fruition.

With the increased number of players attracted to Lake Heart City, Zero Wing's Branch Guild would undoubtedly be able to recruit plenty of elite and expert players. Soon, it would be able to truly contend against the first-rate Guilds of the Black Dragon Empire.

After Shi Feng was done observing the situation of Lake Heart City, he rode an advanced horse carriage to Countess Katie Green's mansion.

Having nothing better to do while seated inside the carriage, Shi Feng contacted Gentle Snow.

Back when he sent Gentle Snow to develop in Lake Heart City, he had her continuously collect Ice Jades. Now, the perfect time to let the Ice Jades display their true value had come.

"Guild Leader, you're done with your quest already?" Gentle Snow asked, feeling slightly surprised to receive a call from Shi Feng.

Before he had left, he had informed Zero Wing's core upper echelon that he was going to do a quest and would be incommunicado for a short period. He had also instructed them to handle the Guild's affairs at their discretion and to contact him only for extremely important matters.

"My quest is still ongoing. It'll most likely take a while longer to complete it," Shi Feng replied, shaking his head. Collecting Soul Dissolving Flowers was easier said than done. It had been over half a day since he established the Adventurer Alliance, yet the alliance had managed to collect only five Soul Dissolving Flowers thus far. It would be quite some time before he would have all twenty Soul Dissolving Flowers he needed.

"Do you have some business with me, then?" Gentle Snow asked.

“Mhm. How is the collection of Ice Jade coming along?” Shi Feng said, nodding.

“Ice Jade?” When Gentle Snow heard Shi Feng’s question, her lips curled into a contented smile. She then raised four of her jade-white fingers to the screen.

“Forty thousand? That’s quite a lot.” Shi Feng was slightly surprised.

Although Lake Heart City produced Ice Jade, it was not available in large quantities. Back when Ice Jade became very popular, even Super Guilds had needed to invest a lot of time and effort to collect as many as 40,000 Ice Jades. Meanwhile, 40,000 Ice Jades were enough to fully equip several thousand players with Ice Resistance Gemstones.

“Guild Leader, you guessed wrong this time,” Gentle Snow said, smiling as she shook her head. “Thus far, we’ve collected 400,000 Ice Jades already! Roughly 60% of the Ice Jades available in Lake Heart City right now is in our hands.”

“Four hundred thousand?!” Shi Feng could not help but be stunned.

Although he had asked Gentle Snow to collect Ice Jades, he had never imagined she could collect so many.

Four hundred thousand Ice Jades!

If converted to Coins right now, they would be worth 120,000 Gold. Meanwhile, this price was only the beginning; in the future, it could easily reach 40-plus Silver per piece.

Moreover, before Ice Jades became popular, they sold for only four or five Silver Coins each. If the price grew to 34 or 35 Silver, then they could make a net profit of 30 Silver per piece. If they sold all 400,000 of their stockpiled Ice Jades at that time, their net profit would be 120,000 Gold.

With that kind of money, they could complete all the development and fortification works of Silverwing Town in one go. There would be no need to rely on the income of Zero Wing City and the Candlelight Trading Firm to gradually furnish the town.

“Good. Have some people transfer these Ice Jades to the warehouse of Lake Heart City’s Candlelight Trading Firm immediately. I’ll go collect them afterward,” Shi Feng said. “Right, make sure to keep this matter a secret.”

While Ice Jade was indeed very important to the various large Guilds, so much so that they would be willing to purchase it at a high price, its value in the Ice Crystal World would be even higher. After all, players were already snatching up even weapons and equipment with innate Ice Resistance like crazy. One could easily imagine how popular Ice Jades would be there.

“Guild Leader, rest assured, back when we collected these Ice Jades, I had specifically sent my closest aides to handle the purchases. Only a few people in the entire Guild know about our stockpile.” Although Gentle Snow was curious about what Shi Feng intended to do with so many Ice Jades, she simply nodded her head and had some of her trusted aides deliver the Ice Jades to the Candlelight Trading Firm’s warehouse.

By the time Shi Feng was done conversing with Gentle Snow, he had also arrived before Countess Katie Green’s mansion.

As he arrived before the Countess's mansion and disembarked from the advanced horse carriage, Shi Feng noticed several cloaked players enter the mansion under the steward Milton's lead.

When these cloaked players entered the mansion, they watched their surroundings constantly as if they were afraid of being followed.

When these players noticed Shi Feng, they became alert, their expressions turning somber.

Someone's already discovered this place? Seeing the party's wariness, Shi Feng had a general idea of what they were thinking.

Countess Katie Green's exchange services were a secret. Moreover, every item she offered was a treasure to players. If they could monopolize these treasures, they could profit massively.

However, if others discovered this secret, it would increase their competition and reduce their profits. Moreover, the more people that knew about the Countess, the harder it would be to keep the secret.

Naturally, these six players understood this.

When the Countess's secret had become public in the past, the various large Guilds had contested for her services, and the competition had become so intense that battles had been waged on the street outside of the Countess's mansion. In the end, though, the Dragon-Phoenix Pavilion had monopolized the Countess and garrisoned players at the mansion's entrance long-term, preventing outsiders from entering.

After watching Shi Feng for a moment, the six-man party hastened their way into the mansion. Shi Feng simply chuckled in response and continued onward.

The Countess only offered so many items, and in the six players' opinion, he must be here to purchase these items as well. They likely wanted to get ahead of him and buy as many items as they could before he reached the Countess.

Unfortunately for those six players, Shi Feng wasn't here to buy items.

As Shi Feng reached the mansion's main entrance, he sensed someone's presence nearby. He immediately activated Omniscient Eyes to inspect his surroundings.

Guild players? Shi Feng quickly discovered a Level 50 Assassin hidden behind a tree roughly 60 yards away from him. This Assassin also wore a Guild Emblem that he had never seen before. *It seems this place won't stay a secret for much longer.*

It was evident that some Guild had targeted those six players.

Once a Guild discovered Countess Katie Green's exchange services, it wouldn't be long before even more people learned about them. After all, there were simply too many players in a Guild. There were bound to be spies from other Guilds, as well.

This was also why Shi Feng had never told any of Zero Wing's upper echelons about his business here. This way, none of the spies in Zero Wing could learn about this place.

But he also felt relatively fortunate. Had he chosen to visit the Countess at a later date, there would've been a ton of players in the Countess's mansion. They might even have discovered the secret about the Temporal Sand. If the various superpowers learned about the Treasure of Time and, subsequently, the Seven Treasures, they'd use all of their power to obtain them. If that happened, his quest would become exponentially more difficult.

After waiting at the entrance for some time, Milton returned to greet Shi Feng. Under the steward's lead, Shi Feng then entered the Countess's mansion.

...

After Shi Feng entered the mansion, the masked Assassin behind the tree made his way towards the entrance. A sly smile appeared on his face as he watched Shi Feng's disappearing figure.

"Guild Leader, as you've guessed, those people seemed to have discovered some secret exchange point. The exchange point is in Countess Katie Green's mansion in Lake Heart City," the masked Assassin reported to the middle-aged man on the screen before him.

"Excellent. Now that we've discovered their secret, we'll have to remove those players from God's Domain! I will not allow other people access to my treasure!" the gray-robed, skinny man replied, sneering.

"Aside from the people you instructed me to follow, another person has entered the mansion. It seems that person has discovered this exchange point, as well. What should we do about them?" the Assassin asked.

"Someone else knows about it?" the middle-aged man frowned slightly. "Do you know who?"

“They were wearing a Black Cloak. Unfortunately, even after I used my Advanced Identification Skill, I couldn’t see his real identity. All I got was ‘Unknown,’ ” the Assassin reported.

“Keep an eye on him and figure out a way to uncover his identity. Once you know who he is, get rid of him if possible. We don’t need so many people knowing about the Countess’s secret,” the middle-aged man said after giving the matter some thought, making a slicing gesture across his neck with a hand.

“Understood. I’ve placed a tracking mark on that player. He definitely won’t get away from me,” the Assassin said, nodding.

“Good. I’ll send some people to assist you. Keep an eye on those players,” the middle-aged man said before disconnecting the call.

...

Inside the Countess’s mansion...

Under Milton’s lead, Shi Feng quickly arrived in a lounge decorated with various refined antiques. Currently, Countess Katie Green discussed business with the six players Shi Feng had seen earlier.

Shi Feng noticed more items on display on the table before the Countess than there had been during his previous visit. There were a total of 14 items, ranging from weapons and equipment to various designs and recipes. Every item was worth fortunes and would be extremely difficult to obtain elsewhere.

Meanwhile, not only did the party of six purchase three of the 14 items, but they also purchased 30-plus grains of Temporal Sand.

Each grain of Temporal Sand cost one Mana Stone, which was an item that could only be acquired from killing the Bosses in large-scale Team Dungeons. To independent players, obtaining one Mana Stone was extremely difficult, let alone 30-plus. Moreover, the six-man party had used Mana Stones to purchase the other three items.

The party had spent more Mana Stones than what a party of ordinary experts could acquire.

As Shi Feng approached the table and took a seat, the six players rose from their seats. Just before they left, these players sent Shi Feng gleeful gazes. It was as if they were stating that they had already purchased every item available, and Shi Feng had gotten there too late to buy anything.

However, Shi Feng could only laugh inwardly at their response. Outwardly, though, he said nothing as he watched these players leave the room.

“Demon Hunter, you’re finally here. It seems you’ve acquired the items I’ve asked for?” Katie Green smiled at Shi Feng, who sat before her. Her smile felt incredibly intimate, as if she were greeting a long-time friend.

In response, Shi Feng nodded silently.

The Countess’s words stunned the six players, who had yet to exit the room fully.

“What is going on?” The six players watched the Countess speak so casually to Shi Feng with disbelief.

Whenever they visited Katie Green, the Countess maintained a dignified air. Even when they purchased items, she barely spoke to them, yet the Countess treated Shi Feng like an old acquaintance, warm and friendly. For a moment, they even wondered if the Katie Green before them now was the Countess they knew.

As the six players considered lingering to hear the conversation between Katie Green and Shi Feng, the Countess shot them a glare.

“My business with you has finished! You may leave!” Katie Green snapped with a frosty tone.

Immediately, the steward Milton ushered the party out of the room.

This further stupefied the party of six. They could not help but wonder about Shi Feng’s identity to warrant such treatment from a Countess of the Black Dragon Empire.

However, even if they wanted to know more about Shi Feng’s identity and his purpose here, two guards began to walk towards them. It was evident that the guards intended to use force to evict them from the mansion.

After a short moment, the party of six was chased out of the mansion. Meanwhile, only Shi Feng and Countess Katie Green remained in the quiet, elegant lounge.

“Alright, they’re gone. You can show me the items now,” Katie Green said, anticipation flashing in her eyes as she watched Shi Feng. Her desire for the Eternal Ice Crystals was evident.

Without speaking, Shi Feng retrieved the synthesized Eternal Ice Crystals from his bag and lined them up on the table before him, one after another.

When he placed the ten Eternal Ice Crystals on the table, the room's temperature fell abruptly. If not for his sufficiently high Ice Resistance, he might have had difficulty moving.

"Wonderful! These are indeed the Eternal Ice Crystals I have been looking for!" Excitement lit up Katie Green's flawless face. Immediately, she stored the Eternal Ice Crystals away before retrieving a dark-gray pearl bracelet from the void, tossing it to Shi Feng.

The instant Shi Feng received the bracelet, a series of system announcements bombarded his ears, stunning him.

Chapter 1759 – Empire's Highlord

System: Congratulations! Epic ranked Main Storyline Quest "Ice Crystal World" completed. Rewarding one Bracelet of Time, Legacy Skill Points +3, Black Dragon Empire Reputation +100, Katie Green's Favorability +50, and +50% to current experience bar.

...

Suddenly, Shi Feng's experience bar filled up rapidly, going from 41% to 91% of Level 66 in the blink of an eye and saving him several days' worth of grinding.

However, compared to the reward, the part that truly surprised Shi Feng was the system announcements that followed.

...

Black Dragon Empire Region System Announcement: A player has triggered a new expansion pack, "Ice Crystal World." The empire has conferred Countess Katie Green the title of Highlord, and she will become the empire's Eighth Highlord. From now onward, Lake Heart City will become Highlord Katie Green's territory.

Black Dragon Empire Region System Announcement: In three hours, Highlord Katie Green will open a gate to the Ice Crystal World in Lake Heart City and will lead the Black Dragon Empire's First Division on the conquest of the Ice Crystal World, officially starting the empire's conquest of Otherworlds.

...

The system announcements repeated three times, echoing in the ears of every player in the Black Dragon Empire.

At this moment, let alone Shi Feng, even the upper echelons of the empire's various large Guilds were stupefied by these announcements.

"Conquest of Otherworlds?"

"Is this a joke? Who managed to trigger such an amazing expansion pack?"

This was definitely the first time they had encountered a situation where an empire launched an expedition against an Otherworld. As for this so-called "Otherworld," ordinary players might not have an

idea what it was, but those in the upper echelons of large Guilds had a general notion because the libraries within the empire contained some basic information introducing Otherworlds. One could easily find this information with a careful search.

Meanwhile, the information introducing Otherworlds stated that Otherworlds were incomplete, smaller worlds containing many resources that could not be found on the continent of God's Domain. According to rumor, Ancient Gods created these Otherworlds to store their treasures.

Hence, regardless of which era it was on the continent of God's Domain, there were bound to be kingdoms and empires that would try to conquer these Otherworlds to monopolize the resources available there.

Among the various expeditions launched against Otherworlds in the history of God's Domain, four by ancient kingdoms were especially notable. Back then, these kingdoms hadn't been particularly strong. However, after conquering an Otherworld, they had grown into empires within a very short period.

Hence, the conquest of an Otherworld was a major event in any kingdom or empire.

Meanwhile, this was also a major event to players, as it meant that they would gain access to the resources of the targeted Otherworld. The resources available in an Otherworld were much more abundant than those on the continent of God's Domain. If a Guild managed to monopolize the resources of an Otherworld, they could develop rapidly.

The upper echelons of the Black Dragon Empire's various large Guilds glowed upon seeing the system announcements. They immediately held emergency meetings to discuss matters regarding the Otherworld expedition.

...

Lake Heart City, outside of Highlord Katie Green's mansion:

After the steward Milton chased the six players out of the mansion, they all stood stock-still with dumbfounded expressions on their faces as they looked at the latest system announcements.

"Boss, isn't the NPC we just traded with called Katie Green? Why did she suddenly become one of the empire's Highlords? What's more, she's even launching a conquest of the Ice Crystal World."

"No, that's not right. The system announcement appeared as soon as we left Katie Green's mansion. And according to that, a player triggered the new expansion pack. It must be related to that cloaked Swordsman."

"Indeed. Based on the Countess's behavior when she was dealing with that Swordsman, there must be some kind of secret between them."

"Boss, what should we do now?"

"Our luck is really good. Since that person triggered the new expansion pack, he should have plenty of information about the expansion pack itself. We'll wait here for him. If we can get some information on the expansion pack from that guy, we'll have a head start over everyone else."

"Right! As long as we get that kid to spill information on the new expansion pack, our Eternal Song adventurer team might be able to become one of the top few adventurer teams of the Black Dragon Empire just like that."

All six in the party nodded in agreement with the Level 51 Swordsman's suggestion.

A new expansion pack signified the appearance of a huge opportunity, offering potential benefits that definitely wouldn't be the slightest bit inferior to the high-ranking items available from the Countess.

...

Meanwhile, inside the lounge of the Highlord's mansion, Katie Green herself had undergone a massive transformation.

Originally, Katie Green was a refined lady dressed in elegant attire. Now, however, she wore an exquisite battle dress decorated in red and white. She looked more like a female general than a noble lady at the moment. Although her battle dress was made from cloth and appeared to provide very little in terms of protection, in reality, the dress was made out of enhanced cloth that was stronger than even steel. At her waist hung a light-blue longsword that not only looked dazzlingly beautiful but also radiated a frightening aura.

Meanwhile, Katie Green's statistics had also undergone a heaven-defying transformation. She had become a Level 200, Tier 5 Sacred Magic Knight. Currently, only a few people in the entire Black Dragon Empire could hope to rival her in terms of strength.

"I really have to thank you for this. With these Eternal Ice Crystals, I have finally managed to open a pathway to the Ice Crystal World and complete my long-cherished wish. If you ever visit the Ice Crystal World in the future, I will welcome you as a guest," Katie Green said, sending Shi Feng a faint smile. She then turned around and left the lounge to carry out the necessary preparations to launch an expedition against the Ice Crystal World.

...

System: Congratulations! You have received Katie Green's favor and obtained the Honorary Knight title.

...

[Honorary Knight]

Enjoy the authority of a noble when present within any territory ruled by Katie Green.

...

When Shi Feng fully processed everything that just happened, a frown formed on his face.

The recent developments were too sudden. Had he known something like this would happen, he never would've completed this Epic ranked Main Storyline Quest so quickly.

The Otherworld expedition meant that a long-term pathway leading to the Ice Crystal World would be opened. It also meant that players on the continent of God's Domain would be able to travel freely to the Ice Crystal World in the future. In that case, his plan to make a fortune via these two worlds was effectively ruined.

I need to step up my operations. After giving the matter some thought, Shi Feng stored the Bracelet of Time and left the lounge, his next destination being the Candlelight Trading Firm.

Given the situation, he could only sell the collected Ice Jades in the Ice Crystal World and try to make as much profit as possible right now. Once players on the continent of God's Domain started streaming into the Ice Crystal World, he would definitely face greater competition on this front.

However, as soon as Shi Feng exited the mansion, six figures suddenly surrounded him. These six figures were none other than the six players that had been exchanging items with Katie Green earlier.

"Do you have business with me?" Shi Feng asked as he eyed the party of six.

"You're the person that triggered the new expansion pack, right?" the leader of the party, a Level 51 Swordsman named Silent Eagle, asked, smiling as he looked at Shi Feng.

"What if I say that I'm not?" Upon hearing Silent Eagle's words, Shi Feng understood that his identity as the precipitator of the new expansion pack was already exposed.

"Stop lying. As soon as we left the mansion and you started chatting with the Countess, an expansion pack related to the Countess appeared. Who do you think you're trying to fool?" a Level 51 Shield Warrior demanded angrily.

"Then, what is your goal in stopping me?" Shi Feng asked.

"Is there even a need to say this? Tell us all the information you have on this new expansion pack," Silent Eagle laughed.

“What if I don’t speak?” Shi Feng revealed a faint smile as he sent a glance at Silent Eagle. “Are you planning to take action against me?”

“Take action?” Silent Eagle shook his head, chuckling. “No, no. We don’t have the courage to take action inside Lake Heart City. However, although we can’t take direct action against you, we’ve already placed a marker on you. We’ll be able to find you no matter where you go. I believe the various large Guilds in the Black Dragon Empire will be very interested in meeting with the player that triggered the latest expansion pack. What do you think they will do if we tell them about you?”

“I see.” Shi Feng mostly understood Silent Eagle’s purpose now. The man was using the large Guilds to threaten him for information. The various large Guilds had branches all over the Black Dragon Empire. As long as his location got exposed, these Guilds would definitely hunt him down relentlessly.

“If you don’t wish to get hunted by the various large Guilds, you’d best tell us all the information you have regarding the latest expansion pack. This will be beneficial to both you and me,” Silent Eagle said, chuckling.

“Is that so?” Taking a deep breath, Shi Feng eyed Silent Eagle’s party of six and then said, “However, I feel that I have an even better option in mind.”

“What is it?” Silent Eagle asked curiously.

“For example, I will bury all six of you here.”

Saying so, Shi Feng suddenly unsheathed Killing Ray and released four arcs of lightning ahead of him, menacing Silent Eagle’s party.

“This is Lake Heart City... You dare?” Silent Eagle stared in disbelief at the approaching lightning arcs.

However, before Silent Eagle’s party could say anything else, the four lightning arcs devoured them, transforming them into ash with a bunch of items in their place.

Chapter 1760 – The Mantis Stalks the Cicada, Unaware of the Oriole Behind

The four lightning arcs of Thundering Flash killed Silent Eagle and three of his party members instantly. Now, only a Level 50 Oracle and a Level 51 Ranger remained standing before Shi Feng with dumbfounded expressions on their faces.

The two players never thought that Shi Feng would actually take action, much less that he would do so without the slightest shred of hesitation.

After all, they were in Lake Heart City right now. Although their current location was not the busy central district, as long as a player took action inside the city, the NPC soldiers would not let the offender get away.

At that time, depending on the severity of the offender’s actions, not only would they be killed, but they might end up in jail as well.

Now that Shi Feng had killed four players inside the city, he would be locked up for seven days at the very minimum—an even worse penalty than getting killed by another player. Not to mention, he had just recently triggered a new expansion pack. If he got jailed for eight days, he would lose the opportunity to take advantage of his knowledge regarding the new expansion pack. He was simply insane to actually take action inside the city.

“You’re dead! The NPC soldiers definitely won’t let you get away!” the Level 50 Oracle exclaimed, horrified as he pointed at Shi Feng.

“Crazy bastard! You are a real lunatic! You actually decided to go for mutual destruction just to avoid getting your location exposed?! Are you not afraid of losing this advantage of yours?!” the Level 51 Ranger demanded with a somber expression.

“Mutual destruction? Unfortunately, you guys are not qualified to make me sacrifice myself!”

As soon as the Oracle and the Ranger were done speaking, an indifferent voice immediately entered their ears. In the next moment, the Abyssal Blade in Shi Feng’s other hand released a blinding glow. The Swordsman then suddenly disappeared from where he stood. By the time he reappeared, he was already standing in front of them.

Void Steps!

Flame Burst!

The two players were previously already shocked by Shi Feng’s actions. Hence, they failed to react in time to his sudden and swift attack. When the Abyssal Blade cut through them, their bodies were instantly incinerated into nothingness, two ownerless items taking their place a moment later.

After killing Silent Eagle’s party of six, Shi Feng quickly collected and stored the seven items the party dropped. From start to end, merely four seconds had passed. Only after the battle was over did the distant NPC soldiers react to the fight.

...

Meanwhile, the Level 50 masked Assassin, who was hiding behind a tree 50 yards away from Shi Feng, was greatly shocked as he looked at the Swordsman.

Who is he? He was actually able to kill Eternal Song's party of six so quickly! The masked Assassin's expression turned serious as he replayed Shi Feng's actions in his mind.

Although Eternal Song was not a top adventurer team in the Black Dragon Empire, it was still a considerably well-known one. The adventurer team had several hundred members and plenty of experts. Even he would not be able to deal with a party of six Eternal Song members all by himself, yet Shi Feng had accomplished this feat in just a few seconds. Moreover, Shi Feng had even killed Silent Eagle's party right in the middle of Lake Heart City. The Swordsman's strength was truly horrific.

Although the masked Assassin felt fearful of Shi Feng, he still could not help smiling.

His reaction was because he had managed to listen in on the conversation between Silent Eagle and Shi Feng by using his Eavesdrop Skill.

Eavesdrop was a super-rare Skill of the Assassin class that enhanced the user's hearing. With the Skill, he could easily pick up a conversation 50 yards away from him. He could even listen in on a conversation held behind closed doors if he wanted to. It was also because of this Skill that his Guild Leader had selected him to keep watch over Silent Eagle's party.

The person that triggered the new expansion pack, is it? If I notify the Guild Leader about this, he will definitely be very happy. Now, not only did I discover an exchange point for high-ranking items, but I also found information regarding the new expansion pack. With this, I should have no problems entering the

Guild's main force. The masked Assassin inwardly laughed in joy. He had gained such an unexpected harvest from stalking Silent Eagle's party. The value of this harvest was much greater than even the discovery of the secret exchange point. *However, this person is too strong. We'll need the peak experts of the Guild to capture him.*

He had already placed a tracking marker on Shi Feng. Unless he got killed like Silent Eagle, his tracking marker would not disappear.

Moreover, thanks to Silent Eagle's party foolishly threatening Shi Feng, the masked Assassin had obtained even more information regarding the Swordsman. Now, his Guild would have a much easier time capturing Shi Feng.

As the masked Assassin was entertaining such thoughts, Shi Feng, who had just finished collecting his spoils of war, suddenly swung Killing Ray in the direction of the Assassin.

Lightning Slash!

Suddenly, a massive lightning bolt tore through space, leaving a pitch-black spatial tear in its wake as it streaked toward the masked Assassin. The attack had been so quick that, before the masked Assassin even realized he was under attack, the lightning bolt had already torn his body in half.

In the next moment, the masked Assassin's vision started darkening.

What's going on? Why's my vision darkening? The masked Assassin looked at his surroundings in confusion. When his eyes fell on his HP bar, which was located at the top-left corner of his vision, he gasped inwardly. *How did I die?!*

Even after the masked Assassin's body had collapsed to the ground, the Assassin himself still could not believe what just happened was true. He failed to understand how he had died so suddenly.

He clearly stood 50 yards away from Shi Feng. Moreover, he had remained in Stealth all this time. Even a Tier 2 expert should not be able to detect his presence. Despite that, the Swordsman managed not only to discover him but also to strike with pinpoint accuracy. The attack had been so fast that the Assassin didn't even realize he had been attacked.

What the masked Assassin did not know was that Shi Feng had long since noticed his presence. Shi Feng was no ordinary Tier 2 player. Currently, he had already reached Level 66; hence, the masked Assassin's Stealth Skill had a greatly reduced effect against him. Not to mention, Shi Feng also possessed extraordinary Basic Attributes. Although he could not see the masked Assassin's figure clearly, he could still grasp the Assassin's general location fairly easily. Moreover, with Omniscient Eye's 100-yard perception range, it was simply impossible for a Level 50, Tier 1 Assassin to hide from him.

Now that the final fly has been dealt with, it's about time I left this place.

After taking one last glance at the tree the masked Assassin had hidden behind, Shi Feng promptly decided to hightail it, not even bothering to loot the item the Assassin dropped. At this time, the NPC soldiers were already running toward his direction. As he did not notice anything special about the item the Assassin dropped, he decided not to waste any more time here. He immediately activated Space Movement and departed from Lake Heart City.

Meanwhile, some players were currently standing a few hundred yards from Katie Green's mansion with bewildered expressions on their faces.

"Who's that person? Isn't he a little too amazing?"

“Crap! He managed to kill multiple Level 50 experts in just a few seconds! Is that guy a monster?”

“Too amazing! Not only did he kill multiple players inside the city, but he also managed to escape with his life. Even the peak experts of Super Guilds wouldn’t be capable of such a feat.”

These players had witnessed the process of Shi Feng slaying Silent Eagle’s party and the masked Assassin from start to end. Very quickly, they spread the footage they recorded around the Black Dragon Empire’s official forums.

An amazing individual appears in Lake Heart City! Slays several experts in the city and leaves safely!

When news of this battle spread, a huge commotion arose in Lake Heart City. The players of the city had never thought that anyone could achieve such a feat. At the same time, this situation also brought home to players that NPC cities were not as safe as they took them to be.

Meanwhile, by this time, Shi Feng, the perpetrator of this incident, had already changed to another appearance using the Demon Mask and reentered Lake Heart City. He then nonchalantly hailed an advanced horse carriage and rode it to the Candlelight Trading Firm.

With nothing better to do, he started inspecting the loot from Silent Eagle’s party.