

Strongest

Chapter 1761 – Pandora’s Rubik’s Cube

When Shi Feng examined the items he had recently picked up, he was stunned.

Did those six rob a Guild’s treasury? When Shi Feng had first seen the items Silent Eagle’s party had dropped, he nearly thought he had seen wrong. However, all the items had ‘New’ tags, which indicated that they were the latest additions to his bag space.

Silent Eagle’s party had dropped a total of seven items. Among them, six were equipment the six players had worn; five pieces were Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment, and one was a Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. To current players, these six pieces of equipment were a considerable fortune. This was especially true for the Secret-Silver Equipment. Even the various large Guilds’ Level 50-plus experts would only have a few such pieces.

However, compared to the last item he had picked up, the six pieces of equipment were inconsequential.

This was because this last item was actually an Epic ranked tool called the Pandora’s Rubik’s Cube!

This had been a well-known and highly sought after item by the various large Guilds in Shi Feng’s previous life. However, there was an extremely small number of these tools in the game, and even first-rate Guilds had struggled to acquire one.

The various large Guilds had sought this Epic tool due to the Pandora’s Rubik’s Cube’s ability to strengthen equipment.

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[Pandora's Rubik's Cube] (Epic Rank Item)

An item cursed by the Gods. Those who abuse Pandora's Rubik's Cube will face a cruel reality.

Skill 1-

Magic Refinement: Absorb a large amount of Mana, condensing it and forming high-purity Mana. (Generate one drop of Mana Water using one Magic Crystal. Generate one drop of Mana Source Water using one Mana Stone.)

Skill 2-

Demon God's Curse:

By using 10 drops of Mana Water, infuse Mana into a piece of equipment at a 10% success rate, increasing the Attributes of the targeted equipment by 15% for 12 hours if the enhancement attempt succeeds. There is a 20% chance for nothing to happen. There is a 70% chance for the targeted equipment to be cursed with the Weakened Mana debuff, decreasing its Attributes by 30% for 24 hours.

By using one drop of Mana Source Water, infuse Mana into a piece of equipment at a 15% success rate, increasing the Attributes of the targeted equipment by 25% for 12 hours if the enhancement attempt

succeeds. There is a 15% chance for nothing to happen. There is a 70% chance for the targeted equipment to be cursed with the Weakened Mana debuff, decreasing its Attributes by 50% for 24 hours.

Pandora's Rubik's Cube is cursed and will drop upon death.

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To ordinary players, the effects of Pandora's Rubik's Cube were meaningless at best. To Guilds, however, its ability was incredibly precious.

Unlike ordinary players, large Guilds had enough equipment and resources to support the expenditure and potential loss incurred from using Pandora's Rubik's Cube. They were also more than willing to take on this cost as long as they could strengthen some of their equipment. This was especially true when their members' weapon and equipment had reached their current limits. If a team's members had a 25% Attribute increase to every piece of equipment they wore, the team would have a much easier time raiding powerful Bosses.

Because of this, the various large Guilds in Shi Feng's previous life had constantly tried to obtain a Pandora's Rubik's Cube.

Shi Feng had never thought that Silent Eagle's party would actually have a super-rare tool like this.

With players' current levels, this tool should be impossible to obtain. They must've purchased it from Katie Green. It seems that I've benefited quite a bit from their efforts. Shi Feng suddenly recalled watching Silent Eagle's party purchase items from Katie Green. This Pandora's Rubik's Cube was likely one of the high-ranking items the party had obtained from the Countess.

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Lake Heart City, Candlelight Trading Firm:

After Zero Wing had taken control of Lake Heart City, Candlelight had swiftly developed in the city. It had taken no time for Candlelight's Shop to become the city's number one Shop. Including the recent increase in traffic, Lake Heart City's Candlelight Trading Firm was no less lively than the one in White River City. Moreover, in terms of quality, Lake Heart City's players were superior to White River City's players.

Meanwhile, after the recent announcement regarding the new expansion pack, the number of players that visited the trading firm had reached an all-time high.

As soon as Shi Feng left his carriage, he noticed a significant rise in traffic on the street. To secure as much of an advantage as possible in the upcoming conquest of the Ice Crystal World, the various large Guilds had dispatched many of their experts to Lake Heart City. Shi Feng quickly spotted members from two first-rate Guilds, not to mention those from second- and third-rate Guilds.

It seemed as if Lake Heart City had become the Black Dragon Empire's central hub. The various large Guilds gathered in the city in droves.

This only confirmed Shi Feng's need to hasten his plans. Immediately, he entered the Candlelight Trading Firm and visited the trading firm's warehouse.

As Shi Feng was about to enter the warehouse, Gentle Snow contacted him.

“Guild Leader, I just investigated the new expansion pack. Highlord Katie Green has already established a massive teleportation pathway in the city’s central plaza. Although players are prohibited from entering the plaza right now, a notice has been issued, stating that only Level 50 and above will be permitted to use the pathway. Meanwhile, each player will have to pay a teleportation fee of 10 Magic Crystals,” Gentle Snow said. “With our Guild’s current stock, I’m afraid that we won’t be able to send many players to the Ice Crystal World.”

Initially, she had been fiercely interested in the Ice Crystal World conquest since Zero Wing’s Branch Guild was located in Lake Heart City. With the home-ground advantage, Zero Wing would have a considerable edge when developing in this new Otherworld.

Unfortunately, not only had the system set a clearly defined level limit for players, but the teleportation fee was also 10 Magic Crystals per player. This price was simply excessive.

Just sending a 1,000-man team to the new Otherworld would cost 10,000 Magic Crystals. Moreover, 1,000 players wouldn’t be enough if a Guild truly intended to join the conquest. At the very least, they would need to send two or three thousand players. In other words, participating in this conquest would cost Guilds at least twenty or thirty thousand Magic Crystals. Even first-rate Guilds would endure a headache over this cost. Moreover, it wasn’t certain that they would make enough profits to cover the cost.

“Ten Magic Crystals per person?” Shi Feng was astonished when he heard this price. It was too cheap.

He had gone through great pains to clear the Ancient Shrine’s trial and obtain the Shrine Warrior title. However, even with the Shrine Warrior title, he still had to pay 50 Magic Crystals to travel to or from the Ice Crystal World, yet the teleportation pathway would only cost 10 Magic Crystals per player. It was infuriating.

Out of all of the Otherworld conquests he had heard about in his previous life, the teleportation fee for this conquest was definitely the cheapest. Generally, the teleportation pathways would cost around 30 Magic Crystals per person before the invading country’s army broke through the Otherworld’s defensive

net. Only after the invading country had established a city and stabilized the teleportation pathway to the targeted Otherworld would the teleportation fee decrease.

Now that the teleportation fee was only 10 Magic Crystals, more players would be able to join the Ice Crystal World conquest. The conquest would also finish faster than usual.

It seems I really need to speed things up.

Fortunately, players would only be able to truly enter the Ice Crystal World after Katie Green's army had broken through the Ice Crystal World's defensive net.

He then instructed Gentle Snow to find out more about this conquest. He also instructed her to dispatch a small number of experts to follow the army into the Ice Crystal World and notify him of the army's progress.

As for himself, Shi Feng quickly retrieved the 400,000 Ice Jade and hurried back to the Ice Crystal World.

Chapter 1762 – Cold Wind City's Number One Power

Ice Crystal World, the Snow Rift:

As Shi Feng traversed through the Snow Rift, he came across multiple Guilds and adventurer teams that were grinding and harvesting rare materials in preparation to raid the Snow Ruin, which was located in the deepest part of the Snow Rift.

As long as players conquered the Snow Ruin, a path connecting the region of Cold Wind City to other regions would open. At that time, Cold Wind City could interact with a few other cities, and players here would be able to travel to more maps and acquire more resources.

The various Guilds, however, were trying to conquer the Snow Ruin to acquire City Contribution Points, enabling them to take control of Cold Wind City as soon as possible.

After returning to Asura's Residence in Cold Wind City, Shi Feng noticed that the queue standing outside the Residence had grown.

"The Asura Hall the Asura adventurer team established is truly amazing! I never thought that it would be so wonderfully effective for training!"

"I know, right? I've heard that two expert players sparred in one of the training rooms. After just an hour, both players saw a noticeable improvement to their combat standards. They can now defeat players that were of similar combat standards to them before with ease."

"That's nothing. Previously, one of my friends in the Adventurer Alliance had been stuck at 79% with his Skill Completion Rates. After training in one of those training rooms for one hour, he had actually achieved a maximum Skill Completion Rate of 84%. He could also maintain it at 81%. The five Silver Coins he spent for that room were worth it."

"Right now, the Asura Hall is packed with players. I really regret not joining the Adventurer Alliance sooner. I could've been training in one of those rooms by now."

"That's right! Now, everyone that has joined the Adventurer Alliance is queuing up for the training rooms. If we don't join in on the action, we'll get left behind. I've withdrawn all of the Magic Crystals I've

stockpiled thus far. I've heard that if you pay in Magic Crystals, not only will it cost you four Silver per hour, but you can even rent a training room for two hours per day."

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The independent players lined up outside Asura's Residence all chatted about the Adventurer Alliance with great interest. The recently established Asura Hall had become the main topic of their conversations.

Seeing this, Shi Feng chuckled as he entered Asura's Residence.

Although he had only established the Asura Hall a few hours ago, it had already begun to serve its intended purpose.

The first thing Shi Feng did after returning to the Residence was call a meeting with Yan Ya and the other Adventurer Alliance management members.

"Commander, do you need us for something?" Yan Ya asked curiously.

She and the other managers were all swamped with work. Just registering the new applicants for the Adventurer Alliance required a lot of manpower, not to mention the exchange work for materials and points. As the various rare materials' market value fluctuated every day, the Adventurer Alliance had to adjust its prices constantly. Managing the Adventurer Alliance was many times more troublesome than managing the Asura adventurer team.

"How is the Adventurer Alliance's current situation?" Shi Feng asked.

“Hehe! Thanks to the Asura Hall, the Adventurer Alliance has become the number one power in Cold Wind City. We already have over 300,000 members, and this number continues to climb. I don’t believe it will be long before the alliance has 1,000,000 members,” Yan Ya said, smiling.

The Adventurer Alliance’s growth had completely exceeded her expectations.

If the Adventurer Alliance’s member count reached 1,000,000, nearly half of the city’s player population would belong to the alliance. It would also have more members than all of the Guilds in the city combined. With such a force, even if the Adventurer Alliance failed to gain true authority over Cold Wind City, the alliance would be the city’s absolute overlord; the alliance’s word would be law.

“So many people have already joined?” Shi Feng could not help but be surprised.

Initially, he had expected the alliance to gain 100,000-plus members at best, hitting 500,000 before things started to slow down. However, it would seem that he had slightly underestimated the value of the Adventurer Alliance’s exchange services and the Asura Hall.

“Commander, that’s not all. Many independent players have expressed interest in joining the Asura adventurer team; they’re hoping that we’ll start recruitment soon. At the same time, several of the top-ranking adventurer teams in Cold Wind City have requested that we grant them some authority in the Adventurer Alliance. If we do, they’ll join the alliance immediately and focus on supporting the alliance’s development,” Yan Ya said as she took out several contracts a few of Cold Wind City’s top-ranking adventurer teams had proposed.

Not only did the city’s top-ranked adventurer teams wield considerable strength, but they also nurtured their own Lifestyle Players. Hence, they were not particularly concerned about joining an idle power like the Adventurer Alliance.

As for the Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment and Magic Light Sets the Adventurer Alliance offered, they could simply send some of their members to join the alliance to purchase these items. They didn't need to join the alliance as a whole.

However, after the Asura Hall had opened to the public, the various adventurer teams in Cold Wind City had lost their calm. While they could take advantage of the alliance's exchange services sending a few of their members to join, all of their members needed to be in the alliance to utilize the Asura Hall's training rooms.

However, these top-ranked adventurer teams weren't willing to submit to Asura's management like the weaker teams. Hence, they wanted some authority within the Adventurer Alliance.

"Things have reached such a point already?" Shi Feng revealed a faint smile as he looked through the contracts. "Alright. Even if they hadn't asked, I had planned to set up ranks within the alliance. Since they've asked, I can use this opportunity to organize the ranks."

The Adventurer Alliance was a massive collection of adventurer teams and independent players. Although the alliance did not restrict its members' freedom, and members were allowed to leave whenever they wished, the alliance needed to provide some assurances. However, as the alliance had too many members, management would be troublesome. Managing the alliance would be no easier than managing a large Guild. Hence, the alliance's members needed to be segregated into certain ranks.

There were bound to be some people that contributed more to the Adventurer Alliance than others and vice versa. It was impossible to treat everyone equally. Otherwise, who would be willing to contribute to the Adventurer Alliance? If everyone was treated the same regardless of their contribution, then all of the players would only contribute the minimum necessary for their purposes.

Following which, Shi Feng divided the Adventurer Alliance's members into four ranks: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Epic. Each rank would enjoy a different level of authority and different benefits within the

alliance. Players and adventurer teams' ranks would be based on their individual strength and contributions to the Adventurer Alliance.

Among the four ranks, players and adventurer teams at the Bronze rank would receive a 10% discount when purchasing items and would have access to some high-ranked items that weren't available to normal members. Players and adventurer teams at the Silver rank would receive a 20% discount and every benefit Bronze members enjoyed, including the level of authority.

Gold members would similarly receive a 20% discount. The alliance would also provide a certain amount of resources and Credits to Gold members each month. Overall, Gold members would enjoy the authority and benefits that upper echelons had in the various large Guilds. Moreover, unlike Guild upper echelons, Gold members were not bound by any restrictions. In addition, Gold ranked adventurer teams would have the authority to manage one of the alliance's branches.

As for Epic rank, things were slightly different. There could only be 12 Epic ranked adventurer teams at a time. An adventurer team's qualifications for Epic rank would be based on their placement in the Gold rank. In other words, the top 12 ranking Gold adventurer teams would become the Adventurer Alliance's Epic adventurer teams. Depending on the Epic adventurer team's abilities, they would be granted the authority to operate multiple branches.

As for individual players, there was no set limit to how many individual players could reach the Epic rank. Individual players could reach Epic rank as long as they earned a sufficient Contribution Value^[1] and achieved a certain degree of strength. The Adventurer Alliance would give Epic ranked players priority when purchasing resources and other benefits that could easily rival what a large Guild's Vice Guild Leader enjoyed.

"Commander, when the various adventurer teams and independent players learn about the new ranking system, they'll go mad with joy. However, if we do something like this, I'm afraid that, aside from needing a ton of resources, we'll also need massive financial support." Although Yan Ya felt appreciated Shi Feng's plan, the Adventurer Alliance would need a ton of Credits to support the various adventurer teams and players that reached the Gold and Epic ranks.

“Leave the funding to me,” Shi Feng said as he waved a hand, indicating that there wouldn’t be a problem. “All you need to do is let every player in Cold Wind City know about this new system.”

Shi Feng needed to secure a steady foundation for the Adventurer Alliance in the Ice Crystal World swiftly. If he took too long, he’d face a lot of issues once the Black Dragon Empire’s various large Guilds entered the Ice Crystal World.

“That won’t be a problem. I’ll see to it right away.” After saying so, Yan Ya published the new regulations Shi Feng had stated on Cold Wind City’s official forums.

Chapter 1763 – Popular Alliance

After Yan Ya left the meeting room, Shi Feng had someone gather the forging players the Adventurer Alliance had recruited thus far.

If the Adventurer Alliance were to become self-sustaining, it had to have its own production team.

Hence, before he had left Cold Wind City, he had instructed Yan Ya to recruit a batch of Lifestyle Players for the alliance, and the alliance would nurture these Lifestyle Players internally.

For the 400,000 Ice Jades he had brought from Lake Heart City, selling them directly wouldn’t be cost-effective. Only after the alliance’s Advanced Forgers crafted the Ice Jades into Ice Resistance Gemstones would the material show its true value.

Although the Candlelight Trading Firm had quite a few Advanced Forgers, these Advanced Forgers had their own work to do. Candlelight simply couldn't afford to spare the time and manpower needed to handle 400,000 Ice Jades.

Fortunately, the Ice Crystal World's Lifestyle Player standard was quite high. This was especially true for forging players that crafted weapons and equipment. One could easily find and recruit Advanced Lifestyle Players.

Around ten minutes later, over a hundred forgers had arrived to the meeting room. Every one of these players wore the Advanced Forger's Insignia.

If Shi Feng led this group to Star-Moon Kingdom, it would definitely shock the kingdom's various major powers.

Even the Candlelight Trading Firm would be hard-pressed to show off over a hundred Advanced Forgers. As for other trading firms and Guilds, they had no hope of doing so. Only, the 100-plus Advanced Forgers in the meeting room were no match for the Advanced Forgers on the continent of God's Domain when it came to forging standards.

Currently, all hundred-plus Advanced Forgers waited quietly in Asura's meeting room, clearly anxious and excited. This was because they shared the room with Shi Feng, who, in their opinion, was unreachable.

Their anxiety and excitement weren't just due to Shi Feng's aura, but more so because he was the Asura adventurer team's commander and the Adventurer Alliance's creator.

One could say that Shi Feng was the true number one player in Cold Wind City!

To independent forgers like them, Shi Feng lived in an entirely different world than they did. None of them had ever expected that they'd get to meet Shi Feng in person. Once they left, they'd be able to brag about this to their friends for the rest of their lives.

“You have already signed a partnership contract with the Adventurer Alliance. From now on, you are the alliance's reserve members. You will be awarded Contribution Value based on your normal performance. Once you achieve a certain Contribution Value, you'll receive a promotion. Naturally, the higher your rank is within the alliance, the better the benefits you will enjoy in the future. It is even possible for you to enjoy treatment and benefits rivaling Vice Guild Leaders in large Guilds, but with more freedom. Whether you reach this standard or not will depend on your personal effort.”

Hearing Shi Feng's words, the Advanced Forgers were stunned, their mouths hanging open. They simply could not believe their ears.

As long as they contributed enough to the Adventurer Alliance, they would receive promotions. Moreover, they might even earn the power and benefits large Guilds' Vice Guild Leaders enjoyed if they worked hard enough.

Ordinary players like them couldn't hope to compare to large Guilds' Vice Guild Leaders. As for the benefits that came with such a position, holding the position for several years would earn them enough money that they wouldn't have to worry for the rest of their lives. They had dreamed of enjoying such benefits many times before, but they also knew that players of their caliber could never reach such heights.

Yet, now, these benefits were now within their sight. Such a dream was no longer an illusion. Why wouldn't they be shocked and excited?

And since Shi Feng was the Adventurer Alliance's creator, they knew that his words were true.

Immediately, fighting spirit flared in the Advanced Forgers. They all wanted to get to work immediately.

“Commander, tell us what you need us to do! We’ll complete the task with perfection!”

“Commander, give us our task!”

None of these players were fools. There was no way Shi Feng had gathered them here just to tell them about the new ranking system and the corresponding benefits. He had definitely called them here to do something, and they all watched him with eager gazes.

“Alright, I won’t mince words. I need you to help me refine an item,” Shi Feng said, nodding in approval when he saw the fighting spirit burn in everyone’s eyes. “However, this refinement is slightly unique. As you refine the item, you must not complete the final step. In other words, you won’t receive any Proficiency, but you will earn corresponding Adventurer Team Points and Contribution Value. If you don’t have any problems with this, you can head to the Forging Association now. We’ve already prepared Special Forging Rooms for you. We’ll send the necessary materials to you shortly.”

Refining Ice Jade was not easy. The Ice Jade itself was a rare material, and the complex refining process would take a considerable amount of time to complete. Meanwhile, the final process of turning an Ice Jade into an Ice Resistance Gemstone had a very low success rate, as well. Advanced Forgers would have a theoretical success rate of only 20%. Only a Master Forger like himself had a slightly higher success rate of 30%. Including some support tools, he should reach a theoretical success rate of 35%.

Although that was only a 15% increase, it was a massive improvement to any Lifestyle Player.

Demand for Ice Jade was growing rapidly, and Gentle Snow couldn’t collect as many as she had previously. To maximize the Ice Jades he currently had, Shi Feng decided to complete the final refining step himself.

Although having Advanced Forgers complete most of the refinement process would reduce the production success rate slightly, the small decrease would be worth the large amount of time Shi Feng would save.

Hearing Shi Feng's instructions, the Advanced Forgers charged out of the room and dashed towards the Forging Association, afraid that others would get a head start on them.

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Elsewhere, Yan Ya quickly arranged the Adventurer Alliance's new regulations and published them on the forums.

The moment the alliance's new regulations went public, they dumbfounded every player in Cold Wind City.

"What's going on? Did the Asura adventurer just win the lottery?"

"How generous! Does Asura have the support of some major corporation? Even if I have to settle for Gold rank, I'll still make enough money to live without worry."

"All hail Asura!"

“Crap! These benefits are even better than what some Guilds offer! This won’t do! I need to leave my Guild and join the Adventurer Alliance right away!”

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Everyone, independent players and Guild players, was interested and tempted by the new benefits the Adventurer Alliance offered.

Not only did the Adventurer Alliance place little-to-no restrictions on its members, but it also provided benefits that could rival that of Guilds. Since that was the case, why wouldn’t they join the Adventurer Alliance?

To independent experts, these new benefits made the Adventurer Alliance even more attractive. Not only would they be free of stifling restrictions, but after they reached a certain rank, the alliance would also pay them a certain amount of Credits per month.

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

Several of Hecate’s upper echelons stood in the glorious Guild Leader’s office wearing gloomy expressions.

“Is the Asura adventurer team insane? It actually dares to offer such benefits to independent players?”

“Asura has gone so far just to win the public’s hearts. Isn’t it afraid of going bankrupt?”

The Adventurer Alliance’s new benefits shocked the upper echelons present. When the various large Guilds recruited members, particularly members that were granted a fixed salary, they would impose strict restrictions, such as requiring them to raid a certain number of Dungeons and Bosses each day. Their members had very little freedom. After all, if their Guilds did not do so, it wouldn’t earn back the funds it spent on these members.

However, the Adventurer Alliance was different. Its members had a lot of freedom, and the only real way the alliance could make money was through its exchange services. If the alliance granted its ranked members with such benefits despite such a limited income, the alliance would hemorrhage money. Only a lunatic would offer such benefits.

“Interesting. Asura is stooping to such an unscrupulous method to monopolize Cold Wind City’s rare materials?” Carnage’s expression darkened slightly. He then turned to the young woman beside him and asked, “How are the Twelve Heavens recuperating? And have we obtained the equipment from the Adventurer Alliance yet?”

“They’re already well-rested. As for the equipment, we’ve purchased enough for their use. They can move out at any time,” the young woman reported, smiling.

“Good. We’ll head over to the Snow Ruin now. It’s about time we teach the Asura adventurer team that their efforts are for naught,” Carnage hissed with a sneer.

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Elsewhere, Shi Feng refined Ice Jade like a madman.

Although his final success rate was only around 32%, Shi Feng was satisfied with it.

After working for four days straight, he had finally refined all 400,000 Ice Jades. In the end, he had forged 128,000 Ice Resistance Gemstones. He had also earned enough EXP to push him to Level 67.

Good. I'm finally done. Shi Feng was overwhelmed with excitement as he gazed at the Ice Resistance Gemstones in his bag. *It's about time to collect Cold Wind City's money.*

Chapter 1764 – Unstoppable Price

Silver sparkles of light glittered all over the dimly lit forging room. After tidying up the Ice Resistance Gemstones and storing them in his bag space, Shi Feng sorted them into groups.

Not all of the Ice Resistance Gemstones he had crafted were equal. The Ice Resistance they provided ranged between five and eight points. When he sold them, he'd have to price them accordingly. And these were only the normal Ice Resistance Gemstones.

Thanks to the Blacksteel Insignia, Shi Feng had a 3% chance of improving the Attributes on an item he forged. Each of the Ice Resistance Gemstones the Blacksteel Insignia had enhanced provided upward of 10 points in Ice Resistance. Naturally, these gemstones were worth far more than the normal ones.

While Shi Feng organized his bag space, Lifeless Thorn contacted him.

“Commander, we have an urgent situation. Hecate has found a group of extraordinarily powerful players. Before this group arrived, Hecate had been stuck on the Snow Ruin's first underground floor,

but now, they're progressing through the Dungeon rapidly. The Guild's team recently surpassed us, entering the fourth underground floor. They are only one away from the final floor now," Lifeless Thorn said, greatly frustrated that Hecate's team had surpassed his in the raid.

The Snow Ruin was like a Regional Dungeon. With each floor they descended, they would face greater challenges. Moreover, a team could only progress to the next floor after killing each floor's Guardian Boss. Despite the fact that he and his team had strived for the past two days, they still couldn't get past the third underground floor. To make matters worse, they had to watch Hecate's members descend to the fourth underground floor while they had to wait for the Guardian Boss to respawn...

"Their raid progression is so fast?" Shi Feng was slightly surprised.

He had read the reports regarding the Snow Ruin, so he knew how difficult the ruin was to raid. The third floor's Guardian Boss was already a Level 62 Grand Lord ranked Archaic Species. In addition, the Boss had Unique Skills and fought in special environments that heavily favored them. Moreover, an ancient barrier enveloped the Snow Ruin that prevented the usage of any tools. Items such as the Bible of Darkness, Summoning Scrolls, and magic arrays were prohibited. Players had to rely on their own strength to clear the ruin.

Even a 100-man team of Tier 2 players of the same level would struggle greatly to defeat the third underground floor's Guardian Boss, yet Hecate had succeeded. This outcome truly exceeded Shi Feng's expectations.

"Commander, why don't we call some of Asura's members from the main continent?" Lifeless Thorn suggested.

The team he currently worked with was comprised of 100 of the strongest Asura members in Cold Wind City. He had even included Solitary Nine and Yan Ya, who were managing the Asura adventurer team and Adventurer Alliance's affairs, in the raid. However, they still couldn't get past the third floor's Guardian Boss.

Their only option left was to mobilize the Asura members still on the continent of God's Domain. After a period of training, those members' combat standards had surpassed Cold Wind City's experts by leaps and bounds.

"Forget about it. Although doing so would increase the raid team's overall combat power, the increase would be very limited. It isn't enough," Shi Feng said, shaking his head. "Since the Boss hasn't respawned yet, you should return and rest up. Once I'm done dealing with my matters, I'll take a look at the Snow Ruin's third floor. If we can't find a way through the Boss, it won't be too late to figure out another way."

"Alright, I'll have everyone head back." Lifeless Thorn found Shi Feng's plan reasonable. It was true that although. As for Shi Feng taking part in the raid personally, Lifeless Thorn did not think that would make much of a difference, either. The Snow Ruin's Guardian Bosses had to be defeated with the power of a team. There was a limit to how much an individual could contribute to the raid.

However, Lifeless Thorn still looked forward to Shi Feng taking charge of the raid team. They might very well be able to get through the third floor with his help. As for the fourth floor, they'd have to find a way to deal with that Guardian Boss when they came to it.

If push came to shove, they could ask Zero Wing's experts for help. He was fully aware that the group from Zero Wing was far stronger than him. If these monstrous players took action, surpassing Hecate would be child's play.

However, what Lifeless Thorn did not know was that Shi Feng had never had any intentions of involving Zero Wing's members in the Ice Crystal World's struggles. Moreover, now that Zero Wing had grown so large, the Guild required manpower in many aspects. It could no longer afford to gather its top combatants.

Following which, Shi Feng spent half an hour or so categorizing the Ice Resistance Gemstones, delight filling his eyes as he did.

There were 42,651 gemstones that added five points of Ice Resistance, 37,332 that added six points, and 12,451 that added eight points.

Shi Feng also had 2,921 gemstones that provided 10 points or more...

Back on the continent of God's Domain, five-point gemstones currently sold for around 1 Gold, 50 Silver on the market. That was very close to the production cost. These were also the gemstones he had the most of, although he counted himself lucky since he had only crafted 40,000-plus five-point gemstones out of the 400,000 attempts.

Naturally, the six-point gemstones were worth more, selling for around 2 Gold. Most of the Ice Resistance Gemstones on the market were six-point gemstones.

As for seven-point gemstones, they were slightly rarer and could sell for roughly 3 Gold.

The eight-point gemstones were very rare, selling for around 5 Gold.

Meanwhile, successfully forging over 33,000 seven-point gemstones and over 12,000 eight-point gemstones was truly beyond Shi Feng's expectations.

As for the Ice Resistance Gemstones that offered 10 or more points in Ice Resistance, needless to say, they could easily sell for 10 Gold or more.

After all, Ice Resistance Gemstones would always retain their value. Even if players only had a full set of five-point gemstones, they would acquire more than enough Ice Resistance to deal with frosty environments and ice-type Bosses.

Shi Feng then brought the Ice Resistance Gemstones to Asura's Residence, placing them in the Adventurer Alliance's trade window. He even placed the entry on the catalog's first page.

However, unlike the catalog's other items, the Ice Resistance Gemstones could only be purchased with the auction system. Moreover, players had to use both Magic Crystals and Adventurer Alliance Points, with Magic Crystals having a higher priority. In other words, regardless of how many points players bid, the player that bid the most Magic Crystals would win the auction. The Adventurer Alliance Points would only be used as a tie-breaker if the top contenders bid the same number of Magic Crystals.

Meanwhile, Shi Feng set the minimum bid for the five-point gemstones at four Magic Crystals.

Not wanting to post too many gemstones at a single time, Shi Feng only posted 200 five-point gemstones.

Shortly after Shi Feng updated the exchange catalog, the players who had visited the Adventure Alliance to purchase items noticed the change. Immediately, a commotion arose in Asura's Residence.

"Ice Resistance Gemstones! The Adventurer Alliance is amazing! It actually has such an item as well?!"

"Amazing! One gemstone adds five points in Ice Resistance! That almost rivals the Ice Resistance from Mysterious-Iron Equipment!"

“Crap! If I could fully equip myself with these Ice Resistance Gemstones, I could explore the Snow Rift practically unhindered!”

“Just where did the Adventurer Alliance get its hands on such an item?”

...

Items that provided Ice Resistance were highly sought after by Cold Wind City’s players. Although the Ice Crystal World had many Ice Resistance items, none of them were like the Ice Resistance Gemstone, which would not become obsolete after a certain level.

News of the Ice Resistance Gemstones spread like wildfire among the city’s various adventurer teams and Guilds. These organizations immediately sent representatives to purchase these gemstones.

A flood of independent players also rushed to compete for the Ice Resistance Gemstones.

Although Magic Crystals were rare and hard to obtain in Cold Wind City, there weren’t many places where players could spend them. This was especially true for independent players. Most players would rather trade their Magic Crystals for Ice Resistance equipment. However, the various Guilds hoarded most weapons and equipment that increased Ice Resistance. No Guild would sell such items to independent players. Hence, now that a treasure like the Ice Resistance Gemstone had appeared, independent players had to fight for some of their own.

Shortly after, the Ice Resistance Gemstones’ prices continued to rise.

The price instantly rose to five Magic Crystals per stone. It then climbed to five Magic Crystals and 100 points, 200 points... Meanwhile, each Adventurer Alliance Point was currently worth 20 Copper Coins.

Very quickly, the price had reached six Magic Crystals. At this point, the Ice Resistance Gemstones' prices had hit the limit of what independent elite players could afford. Even so, this outcome had greatly exceeded Shi Feng's expectations.

Yet, the price increase still showed no signs of stopping...

Chapter 1765 – Frightening Profit

In less than five minutes after Shi Feng updated the exchange catalog, the five-point Ice Resistance Gemstones had reached a price of seven Magic Crystals.

The demand for the gemstones had completely exceeded Shi Feng's expectations.

He had never thought that Cold Wind City's players would be so desperate for them.

In the end, Shi Feng had earned 1,320 Magic Crystals from the 200 Ice Resistance Gemstones. In addition, the Adventurer Alliance had reclaimed a lot of the points it had awarded.

"Crap! I just got here, and they're already sold out!?"

"Why are there so many rich people? There are actually people willing to fork out seven Magic Crystals for those gemstones?"

“What? That’s it? There aren’t any more?”

“Why are there only 200 gemstones?! There aren’t even enough for all of us here!”

“Damn it! I knew I should’ve placed a bid! If I had four or five Ice Resistance Gemstones, I could even solo-tank that ice-type Great Lord I found earlier! I’d be able to earn back all of the money I spent!”

...

The crowd in Asura’s exchange hall were stupefied by the auction’s abrupt end. It had ended so quickly that the city’s large Guilds had missed the chance to bid before the gemstones had sold out. The independent experts that had adopted a wait-and-see attitude suddenly regretted their choice.

“Guild Leader, what should we do? I arrived late, and by the time I got here, the Ice Resistance Gemstones had sold out.”

“What? They’re already gone?”

“What should I do now?”

“Wait there for a little while longer. If no more show up, try to buy the gemstones from the players that purchased them for a high price. The Snow Ruin’s environment is too harsh. Without sufficient Ice Resistance, our main force members’ Basic Attributes will drop, and they won’t be able to fight at their full strength. We must obtain those Ice Resistance Gemstones!”

...

The various Guilds instructed their spies in Asura's Residence to wait for more Ice Resistance Gemstones to show up.

Meanwhile, Shi Feng didn't hurry to put up the second batch of Ice Resistance Gemstones after the first sold out. Instead, he waited roughly ten minutes for more players to gather in the exchange hall before posting another 1,000 gemstones. He altered the starting bid to five Magic Crystals this time.

The 200 Ice Resistance Gemstones had merely been bait for the general populace. Now that an adequate number of players had gathered in Asura's Residence, he could start selling the Ice Resistance Gemstones for real now.

The moment the 1,000 Ice Resistance Gemstones appeared in the exchange catalog, everyone in the hall started to place their bids in a frenzy.

The independent experts, adventurer teams, and Guilds that hadn't gotten a chance to bid earlier began to place one bid after another, and almost all of them started off with a seven-Magic Crystal bid. After around five minutes, Shi Feng earned another 7,110 Magic Crystals. He was earning Magic Crystals several times faster than even Zero Wing City.

However, Shi Feng knew that this was only the beginning.

Cold Wind City had over 2,000,000 players. A measly 1,000 Ice Resistance Gemstones wouldn't even satisfy the needs of the various adventurer teams and Guilds, let alone independent players.

Following which, Shi Feng transferred all of the five-point gemstones to the Residence's warehouse and had the system automatically upload Ice Resistance Gemstones to the exchange catalog in batches of 500 to 1,000 once every 10 or 15 minutes. As for the other Ice Resistance Gemstones, Shi Feng had no intentions of selling them for now.

For the current Cold Wind City, 40,000-plus Ice Resistance Gemstones should be just enough to meet demand. If he sold the higher-quality gemstones, he wouldn't be able to get a good price.

While Shi Feng sold the Ice Resistance Gemstones, Lifeless Thorn and the others had returned to Asura's Residence and rested.

Players' Stamina and Concentration consumption rates increased drastically in the Snow Ruin. Even if they lay down and did nothing, their Stamina and Concentration would continue to drain.

"Commander, this is the information we have on the third floor's Guardian Boss. Although raiding this Boss doesn't require a high amount of Ice Resistance, its Passive Skill, Frozen in Time, is very troublesome. This Skill targets the top 20 DPS on the team and reduces their Attack Speed by 100%. In addition, it spawns a Chieftain beside each of the affected players. These Chieftains are the same level as the affected players and have very high Attack Power, even rivaling Great Lords of the same level. In addition, the Boss has a second Passive Skill called Bloodlust. As its HP drops, its Strength, Attack Speed, and Defense increase," Lifeless Thorn said, clearly frustrated as he spoke about the third floor's Guardian Boss.

"How much HP did the Boss have by the end of the battle?" Shi Feng asked.

"Fifty percent..." Lifeless Thorn said, slightly embarrassed.

“Is the team’s average DPS not high enough?” The outcome didn’t particularly surprise Shi Feng.

The third floor’s Guardian Boss evidently required raw power to defeat. Meanwhile, the raid team only had 12 Tier 2 players. As the Boss’s Passive Skill restricted the top 20 players’ DPS, Lifeless Thorn and the other Tier 2 players couldn’t cause any damage, and the rest of the team’s DPS obviously wasn’t high enough. It was not surprising that the Boss had managed to whittle the raid team down. Even if Shi Feng joined the team, the outcome would likely be the same.

“Mhm. Everyone in the team is wearing the best equipment we have available. Honestly, though, if the team’s DPS could land every attack, it should be possible to kill it, but the Boss is very good at dodging and blocking incoming attacks. Without a sufficiently high combat standard, it is very difficult for players to damage the Boss,” Lifeless Thorn said, nodding.

“Got it. It seems that we need to improve everyone’s equipment. Collect every piece of equipment your team is using and bring it all to me,” Shi Feng said after giving the matter some thought. If one’s combat standards were lacking, they could simply make up for it with Basic Attributes. This was one of the longstanding methods God’s Domain’s players had practiced to raid difficult Bosses.

“Improve their equipment? Is that even possible?” Lifeless Thorn could not help his confusion. The raid team already wore the best equipment the Asura adventurer team had. It was basically impossible to improve the raid team’s equipment standard further.

But since the order had come from Shi Feng, Lifeless Thorn did not give the matter much thought. He immediately gathered the raid team and had them hand over their equipment. In any case, he had planned to collect everyone’s equipment to repair it all.

Once Shi Feng received the equipment, he found a normal lounge in the Residence and retrieved Pandora’s Rubik’s Cube from his bag.

The Pandora's Rubik's Cube had been so popular during his previous life because of the many Regional Dungeons and Team Dungeons that prohibited tools in the game's later stages. Pandora's Rubik's Cube was an exception to this rule.

The enhancements Pandora's Rubik's Cube provided were akin to an enchantment. If the enhancements were placed before players entered the restricted zone, it would remain with them once inside. Hence, despite Pandora's Rubik's Cube's massive detriment, it had still been highly sought after.

The only problem was that it cost a lot of Magic Crystals to use.

Fortunately, several batches of Ice Resistance Gemstones had sold thus far. After selling 3,000-plus gemstones, Shi Feng had over 21,000 Magic Crystals. This was more than enough to enhance a 100-man team's equipment.

Without hesitation, Shi Feng converted 10,000 Magic Crystals into Mana Water.

To increase his chances of success, Shi Feng had Icarus's Heart's Divine Providence as well. He had also invested 200 units of Life Force to activate the Skill, increasing the amount of Luck he received to the maximum as well as increasing the Skill's duration and decreasing its Cooldown.

He then started to strengthen each piece of equipment before him.

There were nearly 1,000 pieces of equipment waiting for him. While Divine Providence was in effect, over half of his enhancement attempts had succeeded. Fortunately, nothing had changed for most of the remaining half. Only 100-plus pieces had been cursed and couldn't be used for a short time. However, the Asura adventurer team had plenty of equipment to spare.

By the time Shi Feng finished enhancing all 100 players' equipment, he had spent a total of 18,650 Magic Crystals. If converted to Coins, that would be 5,595 Gold.

If the various large Guilds learned Shi Feng had just spent 18,650 Magic Crystals to enhance a bunch of equipment for just 24 hours, they'd curse him and call him a lunatic. He had spent as many Magic Crystals as a third-rate Guild's entire stockpile.

Shi Feng, however, did not particularly mind the cost. While he had been busy with the raid team's equipment, he had sold another 5,000 or so Ice Resistance Crystals and earned nearly 35,000 Magic Crystals. Right now, he was earning Magic Crystals faster than he could spend them...

Once he finished with the raid team's equipment, Shi Feng convened the raid team.

"Distribute this equipment. If there are no problems, we'll set out immediately," Shi Feng said as he handed the entire team's equipment to Lifeless Thorn.

When Lifeless Thorn received the equipment and inspected the items, his mind froze.

"Commander, what did you do? The equipment's Attributes have increased by so much!" Lifeless Thorn could tell that most of the items Shi Feng had handed him were the same items he had given the Swordsman earlier, yet the Attributes had undergone a massive transformation. He had never even heard of anything like this before.

"I only enhanced them slightly and gave every piece of equipment a temporary 15% Attribute increase," Shi Feng said. He had originally wanted to enhance the equipment with Mana Stones, but he hadn't had enough Magic Crystals on hand. Hence, he had to settle for the weaker version for now.

“Fifteen percent?” For a moment, Lifeless Thorn wondered if he had misheard.

If a piece of equipment were upgraded by a single rank, its Basic Attributes would improve by roughly 15%. In other words, Shi Feng had effectively increased the raid team’s overall equipment standard by an entire rank. Furthermore, the enhancement wasn’t limited to Basic Attributes. Even the equipment’s Skills had been upgraded by 15%.

When the raid team’s members received the equipment, they couldn’t help but gape at the items. They even wondered if these were the items they had worn originally.

Chapter 1766 – Asura Arrives

Cold Wind City, Snow Rift:

The Snow Rift was a mountain range that stretched for several hundred kilometers, blocking the path that connected Cold Wind City to other cities. As players ventured deeper into the mountain range, they’d encounter more powerful monsters, even Bosses over Level 100. It was not a place that current players could casually explore.

At this stage of the game, the only viable way to travel from Cold Wind City to other cities was to enter the Snow Ruin and activate the teleportation device there. The teleportation device was connected to a teleportation array on the other side of the Snow Rift.

To get a head start and reach other regions before others, the various adventurer teams and Guilds in Cold Wind City had dispatched teams to the Snow Ruin and were frantically raiding it.

Frost Apes occupied the Snow Ruin's surroundings all-year-round. Not only were the Frost Apes nimble, but they also knew how to arm themselves and fight like humans. Including the fact that they were used to the cold environments, they possessed very high combat power. Moreover, the weakest Frost Ape around the Snow Ruin was a Level 55 Chieftain, with Lords taking up the majority. The leader of each Frost Ape patrol squad that wandered the Snow Ruin was even at the Great Lord rank.

As the Snow Ruin's area was a Frost Ape nest, a very large number of Frost Apes could be found around the ruin. Moreover, as players approached the Snow Ruin, they'd encounter stronger Frost Apes. An ordinary 100-man elite team would have almost no chance of even getting close to the Snow Ruin, which even the Frost Apes considered a forbidden land, let alone challenge the Dungeon.

Meanwhile, a short distance away, a 100-man team rapidly approached the Snow Ruin. Dozens of Frost Apes charged at the team, including five Great Lords and over a dozen Lords, yet despite such a force, the 100-man team pushed the monsters aside and continued with ease. Seeing this, the other 100-man teams some distance behind the advancing team could not help but grow envious.

However, even though the other teams were jealous, they could do nothing about it. This was because the advancing team was Centurion Dynasty's main force. Every member was equipped with a minimum of Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment, with over half of their equipment consisting of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. A few of the leading figures even wore a few pieces of Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment.

In contrast, the other teams barely had a handful of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment among their players, not to mention Fine-Gold Equipment.

"These Frost Apes are really persistent. They're always like this whenever we come here. Even after we kill one of them, another one just takes its place. Just getting into the Snow Ruin costs us a considerable amount of Stamina and Concentration," a Level 53, Tier 2 Shield Warrior complained. Currently, the Shield Warrior used his dark-gray tower shield to hold back three Level 57 Great Lord ranked Frost Ape Captains.

Although the Shield Warrior complained, his feet never stopped moving. He constantly maintained his aggro on the three Frost Ape Captains, preventing the Great Lords from breaking past his team's defensive line and damaging to the rear line players.

"We're almost at the entrance! Ranged unit, prepare to open up a path! Everyone else, prepare to move! We can't waste too much Stamina dealing with the Frost Ape Chieftain this time! Today, we must get through the first underground floor!" a Level 53, Tier 2 Berserker wielding a massive, silver greatsword shouted as he fought a Frost Ape Captain on his own. Under the might of his Tier 2 Skills, the Great Lord was forced to retreat.

The players around the Berserker were in awe of the strength he displayed.

This Tier 2 Berserker was none other than Sky Slicer, Centurion Dynasty's Guild Leader and one of Cold Wind City's top 10 experts.

Meanwhile, roughly 500 yards away from Centurion Dynasty's team, a Frost Ape that was twice as large as the others watched the fight. This gigantic Frost Ape wore tattered armor and wielded twin sabers.

...

[Frost Ape Chieftain] (Humanoid Creature, Grand Lord)

Level 58

HP 64,000,000/64,000,000

...

The Frost Ape Chieftain was the Snow Ruin's unofficial gatekeeper. The Grand Lord would attack any player that tried to approach the Dungeon. Due to the Frost Ape Chieftain, many teams' expeditions to the ruin had been terminated before they got to it. Even the various Guilds' main forces disliked dealing with the monster.

As an ancient magic array, which increased Stamina and Concentration consumption, enveloped the Snow Ruin's surroundings, players would lose a considerable amount of these resources if they fought the Frost Ape Captain. Even if they defeated the Grand Lord without complications, they would have a harder time challenging the Snow Ruin. Hence, the various Guilds always tried to avoid the Grand Lord and reduce any unnecessary Stamina and Concentration consumption to focus on the Dungeon.

As Centurion Dynasty's main force moved within 100 yards of the Frost Ape Chieftain, the Grand Lord roared and charged at the team. Nine Great Lord ranked Frost Ape Guards followed closely behind.

"Quicksand, hold the Chieftain! The other MTs, take care of the Guards! Ranged unit, use everything you have to repel the Guards! Everyone else, charge into the ruin!" Sky Slicer hurriedly shouted.

With a battle cry, Quicksand, the Level 53, Tier 2 Shield Warrior, raised his shield to receive the Frost Ape Chieftain's approaching slash, the muscles of his arms bulging.

Boom!

Quicksand was immediately forced to retreat by five steps, a damage over -10,000 appearing above his head. Meanwhile, the Frost Ape Chieftain's charge had abruptly halted. Though, seeing that its first

attack had failed, the Grand Lord swung its other saber. Reacting quickly, Quicksand slanted his shield and deflected the attack, mitigating a significant portion of the force.

At this time, the other MTs and Sky Slicer charged at the approaching Frost Ape Guards.

Under the combined bombardment of the team's ranged players, the team broke through the Frost Ape Guards' blockade and opened a path into the Snow Ruin.

After about two minutes, the team finally shook off the Frost Ape Captain and Guards and entered the Snow Ruin. The team's entry also forced the Grand Lord and Great Lords to give up their chase.

Seeing this, awe and envy overwhelmed the other teams that were preparing to enter the Dungeon. They doubted that they could get past the Frost Ape Chieftain so easily, and they knew that they'd incur some casualties if they tried.

"Everyone, rest up. We'll enter the first underground floor in one minute!" Sky Slicer commanded as he swept a glance over his team members. Every member of the team had lost a considerable amount of their HPs and Mana during that fight.

Hearing this, Centurion Dynasty's members breathed a sigh of relief. They were also delighted that they had gotten past the Frost Ape Chieftain much easier than the last visit. Now, they'd have a greater chance of clearing the first floor.

While Centurion Dynasty's players rested, they heard multiple explosions from outside of the Snow Ruin. Moreover, the sound grew louder as the seconds ticked by.

“Is another bunch of ignorant newcomers trying to take advantage of our efforts to get in?” Sky Slicer, who rested on the ground, cracked open an eye as he sneered. This was not the first time their team had encountered such a situation.

Although their team had revealed a gap in the Frost Ape Chieftain’s defense as they entered the Dungeon, the Grand Lord’s failure to stop the intruders would eventually enrage it. While enraged, the Frost Ape Chieftain’s Strength and speed would increase significantly. The Frost Ape Guards would also receive a strength boost.

This had undoubtedly increased the difficulty of breaking into the Snow Ruin.

The correct way to enter the Snow Ruin would be to wait until the Frost Ape Chieftain and Frost Ape Guards calmed down.

“These ignorant newcomers are in for a big surprise.”

“I’m guessing that they will team-wipe. Even Boss Quicksand can’t stand against the Frost Ape Chieftain after it goes berserk.”

“This should teach those people a lesson. Didn’t they see the other teams outside sitting around and waiting, rather than charging into the ruin after us?”

While the Centurion Dynasty’s members discussed the newcomers, the sounds of battle outside of the Snow Ruin grew more intense. After 30 seconds, though, silence returned to the Snow Ruin.

“It seems they’ve wiped.”

“The battle sure ended quickly.”

As the area fell silent, some of Centurion Dynasty’s members expressed pity, while others laughed in ridicule.

“Alright, let’s get ready to set out!” Sky Slicer said once he noticed that his team had mostly recovered.

Just as the team members began to stand and head into the first underground floor, a team walked through the Snow Ruin’s dilapidated entrance.

Contrary to the raid team’s expectations, however, these newcomers had lost barely any HP, let alone looking miserable. Moreover, the team still had all 100 of its members...

“What’s going on?” Sky Slicer stared at the intact 100-man team with wide eyes.

Centurion Dynasty’s other members also gaped at the newcomers. They simply couldn’t believe their eyes. That was the enraged Frost Ape Chieftain they were talking about...

“Who are these people?”

“Hold on, isn’t that Asura’s Lifeless Thorn?”

“It’s the Asura adventurer team?”

Meanwhile, after glancing at Centurion Dynasty's members, Shi Feng and the others moved past them into the Snow Ruin's first floor, leaving the stupefied Guild members behind them.

Chapter 1767 – Hero Mode

In the quiet, dilapidated hall, Centurion Dynasty's members only snapped out of their daze after Shi Feng and his team had entered the first underground floor.

“So strong! They actually managed to enter the ruin despite going up against the enraged Frost Ape Chieftain! It's no wonder why they can reach the third underground floor!”

“Why are they here again? Didn't they just head back to rest some time ago?”

“That's Asura's commander leading the team! It seems that Asura plans to go all out in the raid.”

“This is going to be interesting. I've heard that Hecate has also started raiding the Snow Ruin with everything they've got and has reached the fourth floor already. I wonder how Asura's raid team will fare?”

“Although Asura is powerful, this is the Snow Ruin, where a team's overall strength matters more than the individual. I've heard that Hecate's main branch dispatched quite a few of its experts to ensure the Guild's success in the raid. In terms of overall strength, Hecate's raid team should be far superior to Asura's. Asura will likely have a difficult time restoring its lost reputation.”

“Indeed. The Snow Ruin’s difficulty multiplies with each floor. Asura’s team has been stuck on the third underground floor for several days now. Even if Asura’s commander joins the raid, they’ll probably still fail to beat the third floor’s Boss.”

...

Centurion Dynasty’s members debated as they watched Asura’s members depart. Although the Asura adventurer team had displayed frightening strength thus far, it was still only an adventurer team. Its foundations couldn’t compare to Hecate’s.

“Asura plans to compete with Hecate for First Clear?” Sky Slicer revealed a smile as he watched Shi Feng’s group disappear. “It seems that we’ll have to take advantage of this situation.”

Sky Slicer shared the opinion that Asura was no match for Hecate in the struggle for the Snow Ruin’s First Clear. This was because he had already acquired some internal information regarding Hecate, so he knew just how powerful its current raid team was. The team had 19 Tier 2 players alone, and the Guild had gathered the majority of its top combatants for the raid.

Meanwhile, including Shi Feng, Asura’s raid team had 13 Tier 2 players. Among them, three had only recently been promoted. Just in terms of Tier 2 combatants, Hecate had quite the lead over Asura.

It was safe to say that the Asura adventurer team had no hope of catching up to Hecate.

However, Asura wasn’t entirely out of options if it wished to catch up. It could increase its count of Tier 2 experts, but that was impossible to do in a short time. The only other way to increase its Tier 2 player count was to seek external aid. Meanwhile, Centurion Dynasty had the second-highest Tier 2 expert

count in Cold Wind City, with a total of three. The other Guilds and adventure teams didn't even have one.

Asura would definitely seek cooperation with Centurion Dynasty to increase the number of Tier 2 players in its team. Naturally, Hecate would do the same. After all, if Asura gained the help of three additional Tier 2 players, the adventurer team would pose a significant threat.

...

Once the Asura adventure team entered the Snow Ruin, Carnage, who currently fought on the fourth underground floor, received news of Asura's return.

"They've convinced their commander to help to restore their reputation" Carnage could not help but laugh when he read the report his subordinate had sent. "Unfortunately, the Asura adventurer team no longer has a chance! Hecate will claim the Snow Ruin's First Clear!"

Raiding the Snow Ruin was not an easy task. Players would face different challenges on each floor and would have to find different ways of progressing. Moreover, as players descended into the ruin, not only would they face stronger Guardian Bosses, but the Bosses' respawn rate would also grow longer.

The Bosses on the first and second underground floors would respawn in one and two hours respectively. On the third floor, however, the respawn time would increase to four hours. Since the fourth floor was one away from the last, its Guardian Boss would require 48 hours to respawn.

The system had set such long respawn times to prevent other teams from disturbing the raid. In addition, the Snow Ruin's Final Boss was incredibly tough and required a lot of time to raid

Meanwhile, Hecate's team had reduced the fourth-floor Boss's HP to 50% already. They basically had this raid in the bag and would almost certainly progress to the fifth floor.

Even if Asura reached the fourth floor, the adventurer team's efforts would be a waste. Not only would Asura fail to learn about the fourth-floor Boss, but it would also have to waste a full day for the Boss to respawn. During this time, Hecate's team could research the Final Boss and find a way to defeat it.

In other words, Asura's raid progress would lag behind Hecate's by at least two days. This was not an easy gap to bridge. Furthermore, some of Hecate's experts, who had left to challenge their Tier 2 promotions, should finish their Promotion quests and return to the Guild before the team raided the Final Boss. Then, Hecate would have even more Tier 2 players on its team.

...

Meanwhile, Shi Feng and his companions stood on the only teleportation array in the teleportation hall on the Snow Ruin's first underground floor.

"Esteemed adventurers, some of you already have the third underground floor's mark. You may teleport directly to the third underground floor. However, the Guardian Boss has yet to respawn. Do you still wish to head to the third underground floor?" a translucent elder's soul, who stood beside the teleportation array, asked Shi Feng's group.

"It still hasn't respawned?" Shi Feng frowned slightly. He then continued, "Then, send us to the third underground floor's Hero Mode!"

Shi Feng's declaration stunned his team members.

“Commander! That’s the Hero Mode!” Lifeless Thorn could not help but panic when he heard Shi Feng choose the Hero Mode.

The Snow Ruin was a special Regional Dungeon that had two difficulty settings: Normal and Hero. The two modes were independent and players would be sent to different spaces depending on the mode they chose. However, players only needed to clear the Normal Mode to reach the next floor. Aside from the better drops, Hero Mode didn’t offer any benefits. However, this mode was far more difficult than Normal Mode. Most importantly, players would be barred from challenging the difficulty for a full week after each attempt...

But before Asura’s members could dissuade their commander, Shi Feng confirmed the teleportation to the third underground floor’s Hero Mode.

In the blink of an eye, the team arrived on the Hero Mode’s third underground floor.

Looking around, the team didn’t spot any monsters roaming around the floor. Instead, a single, eight-meter-tall, six-armed Frost Ape quietly stood in the center. The ape wielded a longsword in each of its hands. Meanwhile, a magic barrier had sealed off the gate to the fourth underground floor. This was nothing like Normal Mode.

...

[Frost Ape Warlord] (Humanoid Creature, Specialized Archaic Species, Grand Lord)

Level 63

HP 160,000,000/160,000,000

...

Gasps slipped from the players when they saw the Frost Ape Warlord's Attributes.

The Hard Mode Frost Ape Warlord was much stronger than the Boss in Normal Mode. In Normal Mode, the Frost Ape Warlord was only a Level 62 Grand Lord ranked Archaic Species. It only had 120,000,000 HP and four arms, as well. However, not only was the Frost Ape Warlord before them a Specialized Archaic Species, but it also had six arms and 160,000,000 HP...

Of the players present, only Shi Feng maintained his composure.

Other players might be intimidated by a Hero Mode Regional Dungeon, but Shi Feng, who had raided Otherworlds' Hero Mode Regional Dungeons in the past, knew that there wasn't much of a difficulty difference between this mode and Normal Mode. The combat power of the monsters inside the Dungeon would increase by roughly 20% to 30% only. Their HPs as well would increase between 30% to 50% only.

Now that his team's Basic Attributes had increased by 15%, clearing the Snow Ruin's Hero Mode wasn't exactly impossible. Furthermore, he had originally wanted to raid the Snow Ruin's Hero Mode. He was accelerating his plans.

A Specialized Archaic Species? After glancing at the Frost Ape Warlord, Shi Feng took out a bunch of weapons and passed them to his team members. "From now on, everyone is to use the weapon I give you and listen to my instructions. If you don't listen and use the weapons casually, I'll banish you from the adventurer team!"

Hearing Shi Feng's determination, his companions couldn't help but shudder.

However, upon receiving the weapons, aside from Lifeless Thorn and the other members who had visited the continent of God's Domain, these players gasped in astonishment. The Attributes on the weapons Shi Feng had just given them were simply amazing. These new weapons were much stronger than their current weapons.

As they watched Shi Feng hand out the weapons, Lifeless Thorn and the others, who had been quite anxious, beamed.

Others might not realize exactly how powerful these weapons were, but they knew. These Mana Weapons could dramatically boost their combat power and allow them to exert power that could transcend tiers. Now, they'd even be able to take on a Mythic monster without fear, much less a Grand Lord ranked Specialized Archaic Species.

Unfortunately, since Mana Weapons weren't indefinite, they couldn't be used casually.

"Alright, now that everyone has a Mana Weapon, let's get to work! Solitary, you'll start the raid!" Shi Feng commanded once everyone was properly equipped.

"On it!" Solitary Nine licked his lips as he excitedly charged at the Frost Ape Warlord.



Chapter 1768 – Sockham’s Blade

“Roar!”

As Solitary Nine came within 150 yards of the Frost Ape Warlord, the Grand Lord abruptly opened its eyes and let loose an angry roar that echoed throughout the third underground floor. Even the ground trembled at its bellow.

Without waiting for Solitary Nine to reach it, the Frost Ape Warlord advanced, its body transforming into a powerful gale as it charged at the Shield Warrior.

In the blink of an eye, the Ape Warlord arrived before Solitary Nine and swung one of its longswords at the Shield Warrior.

Reacting quickly, Solitary Nine raised his shield slightly and deflected the Ape Warlord’s longsword, sending the weapon crashing into the ground beside him. Immediately after, he tightened his grip around his one-handed axe and swung it at the Ape Warlord, silver divine runes appearing on the head of the axe as it moved.

Tier 2 Skill, Angry Blow!

In the next moment, the one-handed axe sneaked past the Frost Ape Warlord’s defenses and landed on its body. Upon getting struck, the Grand Lord shrieked in pain.

-51,854!

Everyone present was dumbfounded at this damage. This number was too absurd. Previously, when going up against the Normal Mode Frost Ape Warlord, Solitary Nine could deal only a little over -20,000 damage when using a Tier 2 Skill. Now, despite going up against the Hero Mode version, he actually more than doubled that damage.

After getting struck, the Frost Ape Warlord became enraged. This time, it fiercely swung two of its longswords at Solitary Nine. Upon seeing this, Solitary Nine executed a spiral jump. At the same time, his shield gave off a dazzling glow. Both longswords the Ape Warlord swung then involuntarily shifted to cut at the shield.

Tier 2 Defensive Skill, Attack Redirection!

When activated, Attack Redirection forced a target to land all of their attacks on the user's shield. At the same time, the user's Defense would be increased by 100%, and the damage received, reduced by 50%. Attack Redirection was a very rare Defensive Skill.

When both longswords landed on Solitary Nine's shield, two damages of -2,600 appeared above his head. After the Shield Warrior reached Level 55, his HP exceeded 65,000. This amount of damage was nothing to him; one healer would be enough to keep him alive and healthy.

While Solitary Nine was still in midair, he used the opportunity to land another blow on the Frost Ape Warlord.

-49,431!

After this attack, the Shield Warrior had thoroughly pulled the Ape Warlord's aggro to himself. Now, only Solitary Nine existed in the Ape Warlord's eyes.

“Good! Everyone else, join in the fight!” Shi Feng commanded.

Following Shi Feng’s command, everyone in the team surged forward.

Taking the lead, Lifeless Thorn executed Thrusting Assault and stabbed his glowing Tier 3 Mana Spear at one of the Ape Warlord’s joints, the blow forcefully redirecting the Ape Warlord’s movements. A damage exceeding -90,000 also appeared above the Grand Lord’s head.

Meanwhile, Cleansing Whistle, Yan Ya, and the other Tier 2 players also triggered their respective Mana Weapons’ abilities, their attacks wreaking over -80,000 damage each. They dealt much higher damage than MTs like Solitary Nine and Dark Madness. Even without using their Mana Weapon’s ability, they could still mete out over -40,000 damage.

As for the Tier 1 players in the team, when they activated their Tier 2 Mana Weapons, they could inflict over -30,000 damage with their attacks. If their weapons were in their passive state, they still dealt over -10,000 damage with each attack.

This situation made everyone in the team feel as if the Hero Mode Frost Ape Warlord was actually easier to deal with than the Normal Mode one.

Following which, the Ape Warlord’s HP fell rapidly, reaching 90% after just a short moment. When its HP hit 90%, its two Passive Skills took effect. Immediately, the top 20 DPS of the team had their Attack Speed reduced by 100%. At the same time, the Grand Lord’s Attack Power and Defense rose.

“Everyone, attention! Use your weapon’s Skill only when you are certain you can hit the Boss. If you’re not 100% certain, just attack normally. Dark, you and Solitary take turns attracting the Boss’s attention! Prioritize killing the mobs that appear!” Shi Feng instructed through the team chat.

Although their Attack Speed had been reduced, that did not mean that their Attack Power had declined. So long as they could land their attacks on the Boss, they could still deal damage.

Following which, Shi Feng activated Abyssal Curse, lowering the Boss's Attributes by 10%, giving his team an easier time against the Boss.

Due to the Mana Weapons, although the Frost Ape Warlord's two Passive Skills had taken effect, the Tier 1 players in the team were still able to deal over -10,000 damage with their attacks; they were not much weaker than an ordinary Tier 2 player. As a result, the Boss's HP still decreased at a rapid pace.

80%... 60%... 30%...

Despite the Grand Lord becoming increasingly powerful as its HP diminished, it still failed to cope with Asura's team, which effectively rivaled a 100-man team of Tier 2 players.

When the Ape Warlord's HP fell to 20%, it abruptly raised its six longswords into the air and started gathering a large amount of Mana around the weapons. It was clearly planning to use a powerful team-wipe Skill—something that the Normal Mode Frost Ape Warlord did not possess.

"Everyone, gather at my location!" Shi Feng did not grow flustered in this situation. After all, he had dealt with Hero Mode Bosses plenty of times in the past; hence, he expected the Frost Ape Warlord to possess a team-wipe Skill.

Everyone present was an expert. Upon hearing Shi Feng's command, they speedily gathered around him.

However, as the Ape Warlord's Skill had a short channeling time of only three seconds, not everyone managed to get to Shi Feng before the Boss's Skill activated. In the next moment, the Grand Lord rapidly brandished its six longswords simultaneously, sending energy blades flying in all directions. The power contained within those energy blades shattered even the sturdy stone floor. Meanwhile, the energy blades flew up to 100 yards before they disappeared.

Three players that failed to get within range of Shi Feng's activated Absolute Domain were killed instantly.

The frightening destructive power of the Boss's team-wipe Skill had everyone alive gasping. However, after using its team-wipe Skill, the Frost Ape Warlord fell into a sluggish state, its Movement Speed decreasing significantly. This situation allowed Asura's members to land attacks on it more easily.

In less than two minutes, the Frost Ape Warlord fell under Shi Feng's Divine Providence-enhanced attack, dropping a bunch of items around its corpse.

Seeing the Frost Ape Warlord dead, everyone could not help but sigh ruefully. They never thought that the Hero Mode Boss would be so easy to deal with. Even when Hecate's raid team challenged and defeated the Normal Mode Frost Ape Warlord, the team had lost over half of its members. On the other hand, they had defeated the Hero Mode version at the cost of only three lives. If not for the Boss's team-wipe Skill, they might have even managed to clear the floor without suffering a single casualty.

"Resurrect the fallen. Once everyone's recovered, we'll head down to the fourth underground floor," Shi Feng instructed. He then proceeded to collect the Boss's loot.

Although he had activated Divine Providence, at the end of the day, the Frost Ape Warlord was still a monster of the Ice Crystal World. Practically all of the items it dropped were materials, albeit Epic

ranked ones. Only two items were equipment: Level 50 Fine-Gold ranked mage robes and a Level 50 Fine-Gold ranked two-handed axe. Even so, this loot still made many of the team's experts drool.

Among the 30-plus items that dropped, only one managed to catch Shi Feng's attention—the Sockham's Blade Forging Design. Sockham's Blade was a Level 50 Dark-Gold Weapon. To the current God's Domain that had a severe scarcity of top-tier Level 50 weapons and equipment, a Level 50 Dark-Gold Weapon was an item beyond most players' reach.

After tidying up the loot, Shi Feng noted that his team had already recovered fully. He then led his team down to the fourth underground floor.

The fourth underground floor was a maze that was littered with traps, which made traversing the floor extremely difficult.

After spending over an hour exploring the maze, the team arrived before a spacious hall.

"Sure enough, there aren't any mobs here, either?" After arriving at the end of the maze, Shi Feng noticed that the situation here was similar to that on the third floor. There were no wandering mobs here at all. There were only two four-winged gargoyles standing at the entrance leading down to the next floor.

...

[Stone Guardian] (Archaic Species, Grand Lord)

Level 64

HP 130,000,000/130,000,000

...

“We need to deal with two Bosses on this floor?” Shi Feng smiled as he looked at the two gargoyles. “Solitary and Dark, each of you take on one of these Bosses. We’ll split the team into two groups of fifty and raid the Bosses separately!”

Other teams might find dealing with two Bosses simultaneously to be headache-inducing, but the two Stone Guardians were not a problem for Asura’s current raid team. As Refinement Realm experts, both Solitary Nine and Dark Madness were more than capable of tanking a Grand Lord ranked Archaic Species all by themselves. As for DPS, although the team’s damage dealers would be split between two teams, they could still cope with the Stone Guardians, thanks to the Mana Weapons.

In the end, just like Shi Feng had expected, before even twenty minutes had passed, both Stone Guardians had fallen to Asura’s raid team, dying under Shi Feng’s swords. In total, the two Bosses had dropped over 30 items, none of which managed to catch Shi Feng’s attention. The only noteworthy items in the loot were three pieces of Level 50 equipment; two pieces were Fine-Gold rank, while one was Dark-Gold ranked leather boots.

After resting for ten minutes or so, Shi Feng led the team down to the fifth underground floor, which was also the final floor of the Snow Ruin.

At the same time as Asura’s team was descending to the final floor, a system announcement suddenly rang in everyone’s ears.

Chapter 1769 – Hero Mode First Clear

Cold Wind City Region System Announcement: Congratulations! Hecate Guild has defeated the Snow Ruin's Stone Guardian and completed the "Stone Heart" quest. Guild Popularity increased by 2,000 points. Rewarding Snow Ruin's Blessing.

...

The system announcement repeated three times, its contents echoing in every player's ears in the Cold Wind City Region.

"Didn't Hecate recently reach the fourth underground floor? Could they have defeated the fourth floor's Guardian Boss?"

"Hecate is too amazing! Not only did its team reach the Snow Ruin's fourth underground floor on their first try, but they also defeated its Boss!"

"As expected of a first-rate Guild. Other Guilds and adventurer teams really can't compare. Now that Hecate's raid team has completed its Guild Quest and obtained the Snow Ruin's Blessing, the team will have a much easier time raiding the Snow Ruin."

"It seems Hecate is sure to obtain the Snow Ruin's First Clear this time. The Asura adventurer team is pretty pitiful. Despite its efforts to expand the Adventurer Alliance and collect rare materials, Hecate is still the more powerful organization!"

...

The general public marveled at Hecate's achievement. The various powers that still challenged the Snow Ruin even considered giving up on contesting for the Dungeon's First Clear. At the same time, they expressed their sympathy for the Asura adventurer team.

...

"Damn it! How did things turn out this way?" Sky Slicer frowned as he read the system announcement.

He had thought that Hecate only had a slight advantage over the Asura adventurer team. He hadn't expected the Guild's raid team to be powerful enough to reach the final floor in a single attempt. Moreover, Hecate had completed the Epic Guild Quest "Stone Heart."

The Centurion Dynasty had this Guild Quest, as well. However, the quest's initial phase was extremely complex. Even now, the Centurion Dynasty had yet to complete the initial collection quest.

Yet, not only had Hecate completed the initial phase so quickly, but it had also slain the fourth floor's Guardian Boss and obtained the Stone Heart.

Now that Hecate had completed the "Stone Heart" quest, every member of the Guild would receive the Snow Ruin's Blessing. With the Snow Ruin's Blessing, not only would Hecate's members receive an 8% increase to their Basic Attributes when inside the Snow Ruin, but they would also receive 10% less damage when hit. Their Stamina and Concentration consumption would reduce by 10%, as well. With this, Hecate would have a much easier time dealing with the Snow Ruin's Final Boss.

...

Meanwhile, on the Normal Mode Snow Ruin's fifth underground floor...

Unlike the previous floors, players were led straight to an ancient shrine immediately after descending from the fourth floor. A six-meter-tall skeletal giant waited in the shrine's center to greet visiting players. Sacred, golden armor was draped over the giant's bones, and a greatsword, emitting a faint glow, had been thrust into the ground before the Guardian Boss. Although the skeletal giant stood there, doing nothing, it radiated an indescribable sense of majesty and power.

...

[Skeleton King] (Undead, Specialized Archaic Species, Grand Lord)

Level 65

HP 220,000,000/220,000,000

...

Currently, a group of players stood outside the shrine with resolute expressions. This group was none other than Hecate's main force.

"Good! Now that we've completed our quest, and the Snow Ruin's Blessing is in our hands, we'll proceed according to plan. We'll prioritize defense and study the Boss's movement patterns and Skills

first. Once we have a clear idea of what we're dealing with, we'll raid it with everything we've got!" Carnage said, smiling as he looked at the system announcement.

"Vice Guild Leader, you're being overly cautious. We just got an 8% boost to our Basic Attributes and a 10% damage reduction. Although the Boss is a Specialized Archaic Species, it is only a Grand Lord," a two-meter-tall, robust Shield Warrior said, flashing the Skeleton King a contemptuous look.

The eleven players around the robust man nodded in agreement. They were not taking the Skeleton King seriously whatsoever.

However, the other Hecate members broke out in a cold sweat as they listened to the Shield Warrior.

Only Hecate's Twelve Heavens would dare to make such a claim. Anyone else would likely be terrified of challenging the Skeleton King, much less make light of the Boss.

However, Hecate's Twelve Heavens were indeed qualified to make such a claim. Not only were all twelve of them Tier 2 players, but they also wore dazzling equipment. The most inferior piece on them was Level 50 Secret-Silver rank, with the majority consisted of Level 50 Fine-Gold rank. Some even wore Epic Equipment.

As for their levels, all twelve were Level 55. Their combat standards were also ridiculously high, and even a Refinement Realm expert like Vast Heaven could not last more than twenty moves against them.

It was also due to the Twelve Heavens that Hecate had qualified to begin its path towards becoming a super-first-rate Guild.

“It’s better to be safe than sorry. I don’t want to waste too much time on the Snow Ruin,” Carnage responded indifferently. He was very familiar with the Twelve Heavens’ strength. All twelve were Hecate’s apex combatants. “Alright, let’s start the raid!”

As soon as Carnage gave out the command, the Twelve Heavens charged forward with everyone else following closely behind them.

The moment the Twelve Heavens set foot in the shrine, emerald fire flashed in the Skeleton King’s hollow eye sockets. The skeletal giant then turned to the approaching players.

“This is the world of the dead. The living are not permitted here!” the Skeleton King bellowed. It then removed the greatsword from the ground and swung it at the three Tier 2 MTs leading the charge.

Purple flames burst forth from the Skeleton King’s greatsword, threatening to devour the players.

However, just before the purple flames reached the Tier 2 MTs, a Tier 2 Elementalist at the rear line chanted an incantation and pointed her staff upward.

Tier 2 Defensive Spell, Frost Barricade!

In the next moment, a translucent barrier of ice formed before the three Tier 2 MTs, blocking the path and preventing the purple flames from reaching them. Only after the purple flames dissipated did the Tier 2 Elementalist forcibly remove the Frost Barricade.

When the Frost Barricade disappeared, the three Level 55, Tier 2 MTs took action simultaneously, sneaking three Tier 2 Skills past the Skeleton King’s defenses and striking the Grand Lord directly. Each

Skill dealt over -20,000 damage. The round of attacks also solidified the three MTs' hold on the Skeleton King's aggro.

Once the other Hecate members were in position, they bombarded the Skeleton King with their own attacks.

The Skeleton King's single-target attacks were far more powerful than those of the previous Guardian Bosses. Even its normal attacks could push a Tier 2 MT backward by over a dozen yards and cause over -26,000 damage. Moreover, this was after the Tier 2 MT had blocked the attack with their shield. If the Tier 2 MTs received one of the Boss's single-target Skills with their shields, they would lose over -50,000 HP. If the MTs failed to block a Skill attack, it was safe to say that they would die instantly.

Moreover, every time the Skeleton King's HP fell past a certain threshold, the Boss would summon a large group of Skeleton Warriors. If these Skeleton Warriors were not defeated within a certain time, the Skeleton King would convert them into HP.

To make matters worse, the Skeleton King would randomly cast Hell Flame, an AOE Spell. The Boss aimed this Spell at random targets each time it cast it, not the three MTs. If players came into contact with the Hell Flame, even an MT would not last more than two seconds. Overall, the Skeleton King was a very tough Boss to raid.

However, every member on Hecate's raid team was an expert. This was especially true for the Twelve Heavens' three MTs. The three Tier 2 MTs would systematically rotate in and out of battle, taking turns tanking and landing hits on the Boss. Their timing and positioning were extremely accurate, and this just barely allowed them to face the Skeleton King head-on.

Only, doing so was a considerable burden on the rear line healers. Not once had the healers stopped casting their Spells since the raid had begun. Moreover, the healers had to avoid the Skeleton Warriors and Hell Flame attacks from time to time.

In such a way, Hecate's raid team whittled down the Skeleton King. When the Skeleton King's HP fell to 50%, the Grand Lord went berserk and emerald fire wrapped around its greatsword.

Seeing this, Carnage commanded every player with a Berserk Skill to activate it.

By the time the emerald flames faded, less than 70 players remained standing. Fortunately, all three Tier 2 MTs were still alive. However, this reduction in combat power made defeating the Skeleton Warriors far more difficult for Hecate's members.

As both sides fought, both the Skeleton King's HP and Hecate's member count continuously decreased.

20%... 10%... 5%...

By the time the Skeleton King collapsed, less than 20 players remained of Hecate's 100-man team; only seven of the Twelve Heavens had survived. The outcome had been gruesome.

...

Cold Wind City Region System Announcement: Congratulations to Hecate for obtaining the First Clear on the Normal Mode Snow Ruin. Rewarding 2,000 Guild Popularity Points and 300 Cold Wind City Contribution Points.

...

“We did it!”

“Vice Guild Leader, as we predicted, we only needed 500 Contribution Points to take control of Cold Wind City. Now, we just need to complete a few Epic ranked City Quests to earn the remaining 200 Contribution Points!”

The Hecate members that were still alive could not help their excitement upon seeing the system announcement. Even Carnage’s eyes glowed as a pleasant feeling warmed his heart.

...

Meanwhile, news of Hecate’s success shocked Cold Wind City’s players.

After this, Hecate’s dominance over Cold Wind City was inevitable. In the future, Cold Wind City was bound to become Hecate’s territory.

However, as everyone expressed their surprise over the news, another system announcement reached their ears.

...

Cold Wind City Region System Announcement: Congratulations to the Asura adventurer team for obtaining the First Clear on the Hero Mode Snow Ruin. Rewarding Hero’s Key and 500 Cold Wind City Contribution Points.

Chapter 1770: Cold Wind City's Ruler

As the system announcement rang out again, the members of Hecate's raid team, who were originally celebrating their attainment of the Snow Ruin's First Clear, fell into a daze.

"Did I hear wrong? Hero Mode's First Clear?"

"There must be a mistake. How could anyone possibly clear the Hero Mode at this stage of the game?"

"Right. Previously, Asura's raid team couldn't even beat the third-floor Boss. How could it possibly beat the Hero Mode's Final Boss?"

As Hecate's members stared at the latest system announcement, they could not bring themselves to believe what they were seeing was true.

The Hero Mode Snow Ruin's difficulty was significantly greater than the Normal Mode version's. If a team did not gather enough good equipment from the Normal Mode Snow Ruin, challenging the Hero Mode was practically impossible.

Meanwhile, Asura's raid team wasn't even capable of clearing Normal Mode before. So, just how could it possibly clear Hero Mode?

“Hero Mode?” Carnage’s expression darkened at this sudden turn of events.

He had never thought that Asura would actually challenge the Hero Mode. However, the fact that Asura had cleared the Hero Mode Snow Ruin was still not the most important part. The crucial point was that Asura had gained 500 Cold Wind City Contribution Points.

Currently, the minimum requirement for an organization to take control of Cold Wind City was to have 500 Contribution Points. In other words, the Asura adventurer team had already taken control of Cold Wind City and become the city’s ruler. For the following month, Asura would hold a certain amount of authority over Cold Wind City. Only after one month had passed would the system conduct a re-evaluation and designate the player organization with the highest Contribution Points as the new ruler of the city.

During this one month, Asura would gain plenty of benefits as the ruler of the city. If Hecate wished to overtake Asura in terms of City Contribution Points, then the Guild would have to put in many times the effort it was putting in now.

While Hecate’s members were reeling from Asura’s clearing the Hero Mode Snow Ruin, Cold Wind City was in an uproar.

“All hail Asura!”

“Amazing! Asura managed to secure the First Clear of the Hero Mode Snow Ruin! Just how strong is Asura’s main force?”

“Hecate is truly pitiful. Shortly after it got the First Clear of the Normal Mode Snow Ruin, its achievement immediately got overshadowed by Asura’s.”

“However, with this, we independent players will have a great time in Cold Wind City. Since the Adventurer Alliance belongs to the Asura adventurer team, the Adventurer Alliance will definitely develop into an even better organization. In the future, it might actually be possible to exchange for Level 50 Dark-Gold Equipment from the alliance.”

The system announcement of the Asura adventurer team claiming the Hero Mode Snow Ruin’s First Clear brought endless joy to Cold Wind City’s independent players. Now, many of them wished to join the Asura adventurer team. As for the various Guilds of Cold Wind City, this news signaled the beginning of their nightmare.

Had Hecate been the one to take control of Cold Wind City, the Guild would have definitely placed heavy pressure on the Asura adventurer team and the Adventurer Alliance. At that time, the independent players of Cold Wind City would have been made to realize the strength of Guilds. However, now that Cold Wind City had fallen into Asura’s control, more players would feel that joining the Adventurer Alliance was better than joining a Guild. If that happened, then Guilds would have even less living space in Cold Wind City.

Meanwhile, Sky Slicer of the Centurion Dynasty was also dumbfounded when he received the system announcement.

He simply could not fathom how the Asura adventurer team had accomplished such a feat.

That was the Hero Mode Snow Ruin they were talking about! Even Hecate’s raid team, which had nineteen Tier 2 players, did not dare to challenge Hero Mode. Yet, Asura had managed to clear it with just thirteen Tier 2 players in its team. No matter how he looked at it, this had to be a joke from the system.

With this, his plans to take advantage of the situation to gain some benefits for his Guild were ruined. To make matters worse, his Guild's living space in Cold Wind City would even get further constricted.

While the outside world was in an uproar over the latest system announcement, inside the Hero Mode Snow Ruin's fifth underground floor, Shi Feng was currently collecting the Skeleton King's loot. As for everyone else in the team, they were lying on the floor and panting in exhaustion.

In Hero Mode, the Skeleton King was a bona fide Level 65 Mythic monster. If not for Solitary Nine and Dark Madness constantly activating their Tier 3 Mana Weapons and taking turns tanking using their Berserk Skills, the team would've been annihilated.

As for the Hell Flame the Skeleton King used, it was basically a large-scale destruction Spell. Whenever the Skeleton King used Hell Flame, the team had to rely on Shi Feng's Absolute Domain to survive.

When the battle was over, the team had less than 40 survivors. Close to the end of the battle, even Solitary Nine and Dark Madness had died under the Skeleton King's flaming greatsword. The rear line healers couldn't keep up with the Skeleton King's DPS at all. Fortunately, after Shi Feng activated his Berserk Skill, the team had managed to make it through the final stretch and defeated the Skeleton King.

Meanwhile, the Skeleton King's death brought everyone two big surprises. The first one came in the form of a massive amount of EXP; the surviving members of the team received EXP equivalent to an entire day's worth of grinding. The second one was the appearance of a jackpot. The Skeleton King dropped so many items that just picking them all up took Shi Feng quite a lot of time.

In total, the Skeleton King's jackpot had over 200 items. Among them, more than 180 consisted of rare materials, Mana Stones, and Magic Crystals. As many as five Mana Stones had dropped. Quite a few of the rare materials were the main materials required to produce Level 50-plus Dark-Gold Weapons and Equipment. Every material was worth a considerable amount of money.

Among the remaining items were one weapon—an Epic ranked greatsword named Incineration Blade—and seven pieces of equipment. The weapon was none other than the greatsword the Skeleton King had used, which was not only very powerful but also very stylish. As for the equipment, they were either Level 50 Dark-Gold Equipment or Level 55 Fine-Gold Equipment. The sight of these eight items caused everyone's eyes to sparkle.

Monsters rarely dropped weapons and equipment in the Ice Crystal World. Let alone Dark-Gold rank, even Fine-Gold Weapons and Equipment were extremely rare. As for Epic Weapons, those were practically myths in Cold Wind City.

However, Shi Feng had no intention of distributing the weapons and equipment to any specific person. Instead, he intended to place them in the Asura adventurer team's exchange catalog and allow Asura's members to exchange for them. These items would serve as an incentive to motivate Asura's members to work harder. Meanwhile, for the team operation this time, he also granted everyone their deserved Contribution Points, which could be used to exchange for the items they wanted.

The remaining dozen or so items included three Master ranked potions, two Tier 3 Magic Scrolls, a design for Level 50 Dark-Gold ranked cloth armor robes, and a design for Level 50 Fine-Gold ranked plate armor armguards. There was also one item in particular that surprised Shi Feng.

And that was the Hell Chariot Design!

When Shi Feng picked up the ancient tome, which was even twice as thick as a dictionary, and read the name "Hell Chariot Design" written on the cover, for a moment, he actually thought he was hallucinating.

A war chariot!

This was a weapon meant for large-scale battles. It possessed not only frightening destructive power but also the ability to ferry large numbers of players across long distances. A high-ranking item that could be used to conduct ambushes and field battles, it also had excellent siege and defensive capabilities.

Compared to a war chariot, the Miniature Ballista was no different from garbage.

The Miniature Ballista moved very slowly and took a very long time to load. It also had no defensive capability and, hence, could be destroyed easily. In contrast, a war chariot was very fast and boasted powerful defensive capabilities. A war chariot could ensure that the players riding inside did not receive any damage from attacks—somewhat similar to the ships at sea.

Shi Feng had never imagined that the Snow Ruin's Final Boss would drop such an item.

In terms of value, all the other items the Skeleton King dropped combined were not even worth one-fifth of the Hell Chariot Design.

After taking a few deep breaths and calming himself down, Shi Feng activated Omniscient Eyes and appraised the Hell Chariot Design. He wanted to know what rank the Chariot Design was exactly.

Chapter 1771: Hell Chariot

As Shi Feng used Omniscient Eyes on the tome in his hands, a loading bar appeared before him, needing 10 seconds to fill completely.

“Ten seconds?” Shi Feng’s heartbeat quickened when he saw the loading bar.

The longer the appraisal time, the more valuable the appraised item was.

War chariots could be categorized into Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, Master, and Grandmaster ranks, the chariot’s value increasing with each subsequent rank. The war chariot’s abilities were also stronger with each rank.

A Basic War Chariot possessed enough combat power to deal with a Great Lord, but only a fool would use it against a monster. War chariots truly shined in siege battles and combat between players. Using a war chariot to deal with monsters was overly extravagant.

Unlike normal weapons and tools, repairing a war chariot required more than just Coins; players would also have to supply the materials.

If a war chariot were used to grind monsters, the income wouldn’t even be enough to cover the repair costs. Moreover, the required materials were very rare and hard to obtain.

Once the loading bar was full, the Hell Chariot Design’s details appeared before Shi Feng.

[Hell Chariot Design] (Intermediate Design) Can be used to produce the Hell Chariot. [Hell Chariot]

Maximum capacity: 20 people Increases Movement Speed by 180%. Possesses Tier 2 defensive capabilities. Durability 400/400 Additional Skill 1-

Magic Shield: Constructs a Tier 3 magic barrier that can absorb up to a maximum of 2,000,000 damage for 20 seconds. Each use costs 20 Magic Crystals.

Cooldown: 10 minutes Additional Skill 2-

Hell Cannon: 1,500 range. Deals a devastating blow at the Tier 3 standard to a 30-yard radius. Each use costs 100 Magic Crystals.

Cooldown: 15 seconds Additional Skill 3-

Flame Spears: Creates 12 Flame Spears. Each Flame Spear carries power at the peak of Tier 2 and has a 150-yard attack range.

Cooldown: 3 seconds

What a powerful war chariot. Shi Feng's eyes glowed with excitement as he read the Hell Chariot's Attribute Panel.

He had seen many Intermediate War Chariots in the past, but the Hell Chariot's Attributes could even rank among the top Intermediate War Chariots. Normal Intermediate War Chariots only had 300 points of durability and only increased Movement Speed by 160%, which was roughly the same as a Mysterious-Iron Mount, yet the Hell Chariot increased Movement Speed by 180%. That was on par with the increase of a Secret-Silver Mount.

However, the Skills had to be the best part about this Hell Chariot. Ordinary Intermediate War Chariots only provided a Tier 2 Magic Shield that could reduce damage from Tier 2 attacks by 70% and Tier 3

attacks by 40%. Meanwhile, the War Chariot's Tier 3 Magic Shield could reduce damage from Tier 2 attacks by 80%, Tier 3 attacks by 70%, and Tier 4 attacks by 40%. With such a powerful Magic Shield, even a Tier 4 Mythic monster wouldn't be able to destroy the Hell Chariot within a short time.

As for the production requirements, they weren't particularly demanding. Only three Master Engineers and one Master Forger were needed to produce the Hell Chariot. The only troublesome part was the main material—Titan Ore. A single Hell Chariot required 500 pieces of Titan Ore, a super-rare ore that was even hard to find in the Storm Empire, which was famed for its production. This was because Titan Ore was one of the main materials for Epic Equipment.

It seems that I'll need Melancholic to focus on collecting Titan Ore. Shi Feng started plotting as he gazed at the Hell Chariot Design in his hands.

It wouldn't be impossible for the Candlelight Trading Firm to gather three Master Engineers and a Master Forger. The materials were the only other problem. Once they solved that, they could mass-produce the Hell Chariot

If Zero Wing had a tool like the Hell Chariot, its members could easily venture deep into neutral maps to grind and explore. The Guild's members wouldn't need to compete with other Guilds for nearby maps. In that case, Zero Wing's members would acquire more resources for the Guild and themselves.

A war chariot wasn't just a weapon of war; it was also a powerful transportation tool, much better than a Mount. This was because players would not lose Stamina and Concentration when traveling in a war chariot. Moreover, war chariots could regenerate players' Stamina and Concentration. Although, its ability to do so wasn't as good as a normal NPC city.

The most important point was that war chariots could hold simple repair tools. This allowed players to repair their weapons and equipment without visiting a smithy. Only, the repair fees were extremely high, three times a city's prices. Also, there was a limit to how many repairs a war chariot could conduct. The simple repair tools that could be loaded onto an Intermediate War Chariot could only repair up to a maximum of 10,000 points of durability. However, to expert teams that valued time over money, this was a wonderful perk.

Following which, Shi Feng carefully stored the Hell Chariot Design and inspected the Hero's Key, which he had acquired for securing the First Clear of the Hero Mode Snow Ruin.

[Hero's Key (Snow Ruin)] (Dark-Gold Rank Item)

Can be used to activate the Snow Ruin's Primordial Teleportation Magic Array. Can teleport up to a maximum of 500 players to the other side of the teleportation array.

Cooldown: 144 hours (3 natural days)

As expected of the First Clear reward for Hero Mode. The system actually gave out such an item. Shi Feng was astonished as he read the Hero's Key's Attribute Panel.

Unlike on the continent of God's Domain, traveling between cities in any Otherworld was not an easy task. If Otherworlds' players wished to visit other cities, they had to acquire an entry permit. The teleportation function between two cities would only activate after a certain number of players had secured entry permits.

Before this requirement was fulfilled, players with a Teleportation Entry Permit would physically have to travel to the city specified in the entry permit or use some secret passage. There was no other way for players to travel between two cities.

Meanwhile, after killing the Skeleton King, a golden chest had appeared in the shrine, containing Teleportation Entry Permits.

When raiding the Normal Mode Skeleton King, players would only gain between 100 and 150 entry permits. Meanwhile, Hero Mode provided between 200 and 300 entry permits. Moreover, once players cleared the Snow Ruin, regardless of which mode they challenged, they would be prevented from challenging the Snow Ruin again for seven days.

However, the Hero's Key could teleport 500 players to a different region directly. Moreover, it only had a 3-day Cooldown.

To the various Guilds and adventurer teams that were trying to find a foothold in a different region as quickly as possible, this was a godly tool.

"Commander, there are a total of 265 entry permits in the golden chest. What should we do with them?" Yan Ya could not help but ask as she retrieved the entry permits.

Currently, throughout Cold Wind City, only Asura and Hecate possessed entry permits to other cities. Meanwhile, these entry permits would only bind to players after use. In other words, they could be sold or traded.

For Cold Wind City's players, traveling to another region was a golden opportunity. Many of these players dreamed of acquiring an entry permit, especially the city's various Guilds.

If they sold the entry permits they had right now, they could definitely make a fortune.

"For the time being, our priority is to expand our development to other cities," Shi Feng said, shaking his head. "Head back to Cold Wind City immediately and find some experts and trustworthy management individuals that are willing to develop in another city from the adventurer team. Have them gather in the Residence. I'll head over to meet with them once I've finished my task."

The Black Dragon Empire's various large Guilds were preparing to travel into the Ice Crystal World. To secure more of this Otherworld's resources for Zero Wing, the Asura adventurer team had to occupy more cities in the Ice Crystal World. Otherwise, once the Black Dragon Empire's various large Guilds arrived in the Ice Crystal World's cities, it would become far more difficult for Asura to secure a foothold in those cities.

After all, both Asura and Zero Wing were far from a match for the empire's large Guilds in terms of resources and manpower.

"We're expanding our development to other cities?" Yan Ya's eyes sparkled with excitement upon hearing Shi Feng's words.

She was painfully curious about the Ice Crystal World's other cities. Cold Wind City was only a minor city, not one of the Otherworld's main cities.

Following Shi Feng's command, Yan Ya promptly left the Snow Ruin to gather the Asura adventurer team's expert players.

As for Shi Feng, he made his way to Cold Wind City's City Hall.

Chapter 1772: Acting City Lord

After Shi Feng entered the City Hall, he noticed that quite a few Hecate members stood at the front desk to pick up city quests. It was evident that Hecate had no intention of giving up on Cold Wind City and was preparing to compete for the city's authority once again. The Guild had even picked up two of the top five most difficult contribution quests available.

There were many contribution quests available in Cold Wind City, but they were all very difficult and could not be completed by ordinary experts. As for the top ten most difficult contribution quests, each of them could rival Epic Quests. After completing these Epic Contribution Quests, one would acquire roughly 50 City Contribution Points. Each of the top five contribution quests awarded 100 CCPs or more.

In addition, players had to pay a hefty deposit when picking up these contribution quests. In the case of the top five contribution quests, the deposit was 500 Gold plus 5,000 Magic Crystals. If players failed to complete the quest, they wouldn't get their deposit back.

Yet, Hecate had picked up two of the top five quests at the same time. A thousand Gold might not be much for a first-rate Guild like Hecate, but 10,000 Magic Crystals was no small amount. After all, the Ice Crystal World was an Otherworld that had low production of Magic Crystals.

However, Shi Feng did not give the matter much thought as he followed the NPC senior administrator straight to the office of Cold Wind City's Magistrate to receive a portion of authority over the city.

Bookshelves filled with books lined the peaceful office's walls. Currently, a young man in noble garb sat behind a desk, reading through some documents. Upon seeing Shi Feng, the youth set aside his work.

This youth was none other than Frotte, Cold Wind City's Magistrate and a Level 180, Tier 4 Sky Knight. It was very rare for one to become a Tier 4 Sky Knight at such a young age, so it was clear how much talent and potential Frotte had.

"Adventurer, you're here," Frotte said as he looked at Shi Feng.

“Greetings, Lord Magistrate. I have come here today as a representative of the Asura adventurer team. I wish to become the Acting City Lord and help contribute to Cold Wind City,” Shi Feng respectfully declared.

“I have heard of your deeds. Your Asura adventurer team is quite capable. You have opened the Snow Ruin that has been sealed for many years and the path to other cities. If your adventurer team possesses such strength, I believe that letting you manage Cold Wind City should be a wise decision,” Frotte said, nodding in approval after observing Shi Feng for a moment. He then took a silver token from one of his desk’s drawers, placing the eagle-shaped token on the table and said, “This is the

Acting City Lord’s Token. With this, you’ll command a portion of authority over Cold Wind City. However, I must warn you that if someone more capable comes to me, I will take the token back and give it to that person. Hopefully, you will utilize this token properly and help Cold Wind City develop!”

Saying so, Frotte passed Shi Feng the Acting City Lord’s Token.

Upon receiving the token, triumph filled Shi Feng’s heart.

With this token, he would be considered Cold Wind City’s ruler and possess Advanced authority over the city. He could now turn the entire city into the Asura adventurer team’s headquarters.

After becoming the Acting City Lord, he would gain access to several empty plots of Land in Cold Wind City’s central district. These plots were specifically reserved for the Acting City Lord to build Advanced Constructions, such as Advanced Smithies, Advanced Restaurants, Advanced Shops, and Advanced Magic Stores.

Advanced Shops, in particular, could even be used to host large-scale auctions, in which more than just players could participate. NPCs would be able to auction items as well. Only, these large-scale auctions could only be hosted once a week.

In addition, becoming an Acting City Lord granted him the authority to construct a Teleportation Plaza in the central district. He could establish teleportation gates that transported players to Cold Wind City's border fortresses. These border fortresses were very far from Cold Wind City itself, and most of them occupied Level 60-plus high-resource maps. These maps contained many resources unique to the Ice Crystal World.

However, if players tried to reach these border fortresses on foot, they would have to pass through multiple Level 90 or above maps. Aside from the extreme danger, the journey was very time-consuming. Hence, traveling there via Teleportation Gate was the best option.

The Acting City Lord managed these teleportation gates, and both the teleportation fees and the currency used would be left to their discretion. Of course, the system would impose a maximum and minimum amount. Meanwhile, the Acting City Lord would receive 20% of the income from the teleportation gates. This was the greatest benefit of being an Acting City Lord.

Thinking up to this point, Shi Feng headed to a VIP lounge on the City Hall's second floor and began to discuss the teleportation gates' construction with the NPC senior administrator.

The sooner he built the teleportation gates, the more the Asura adventurer team would benefit.

"My lord, this is the information on the teleportation gates you have requested. From Small to Large Teleportation Gates, everything is on this list," the senior administrator said as he handed Shi Feng a list of available teleportation gates.

How expensive! It's no wonder why the Guilds that had taken control over Otherworld NPC cities in the past hadn't constructed teleportation gates early on! Shi Feng was utterly astonished as he read the construction costs.

Just constructing a Small Teleportation Gate cost 10,000 Gold and 80,000 Magic Crystals. Meanwhile, a Small Teleportation Gate only allowed travel to three fortresses and would only teleport a maximum of 50 people at a time.

Meanwhile, a Medium Teleportation Gate cost 20,000 Gold and 200,000 Magic Crystals to construct. It allowed teleportation to six fortresses, with each teleportation transporting a maximum of 100 people. Though, the Mana cost for each teleportation was the same as the Small Teleportation Gate. In other words, a Medium Teleportation Gate could generate more profit.

As for the Large Teleportation Gate, it cost 40,000 Gold and 300,000 Magic Crystals to build. It allowed teleportation to ten fortresses, and each teleportation could carry up to 200 people. Similarly, the teleportation cost of the Large Teleportation Gate was equal to that of the Small Teleportation Gate.

Of course, since a teleportation gate would be very beneficial to Cold Wind City's development, it would also award Shi Feng a considerable number of City Contribution Points. He wouldn't just be spending his Coins and Magic Crystals to allow his successors to take advantage of his effort.

Building certain Advanced Constructions would award CCPs as well. Only, the amount varied depending on the type of construction. This was also the reason that once a player became an Acting City Lord, it was very difficult for others to surpass them.

"My lord, as you are the first adventurer to be chosen as the Acting City Lord, we can offer you two special teleportation gates. Here is the information for these gates," the senior administrator said as he passed two more lists to Shi Feng. "Once you have made your decision, you may notify me at any time."

Of the two new lists the senior administrator had provided, both recorded information on Small Teleportation Gates. However, unlike the normal version, these two gates each had an additional function.

The first gate allowed teleportation to four border fortresses, but the construction price was 10,000 Gold and 100,000 Magic Crystals.

As for the second gate, it still only allowed teleportation to three border fortresses, but it also included teleportation to the main hall of the Snow Rift's Snow Ruin. Like the first gate, its construction price was 10,000 Gold and 100,000 Magic Crystals.

How fraudulent! One additional teleportation point increases the cost by 20,000 Magic Crystals! Shi Feng could not help but inwardly curse at the system as he read the list. However, after giving the matter some thought, he found this pricing to be reasonable. After all, these options were only offered to the first Acting City Lord. The next Acting City Lord wouldn't have this benefit. He then said, "I wish to construct a Teleportation Gate that is connected to the Snow Ruin."

While having the connection to an additional border fortress was valuable, he could gain more benefits in the shortterm if he allowed teleportation to the Snow Ruin. After all, teleporting between the Snow Rift and Cold Wind City would be helpful to players who wanted to venture to other cities. This was especially true for the Asura adventurer team. Furthermore, it would be some time before players could grind in the maps around the border fortresses.

After saying so, Shi Feng took out the Magic Crystals he earned from selling Ice Resistance Gemstones.

While he had been away in the Snow Ruin, he had sold another 16,000 Ice Resistance Gemstones and earned 110,000 Magic Crystals. Although the Magic Crystals he had weren't enough to construct a Medium Teleportation Gate, constructing a Small Teleportation Gate shouldn't be a problem.

Chapter 1773: Unifying Cold Wind City

After Shi Feng paid the 10,000 Gold and 100,000 Magic Crystals, a magic barrier formed in Cold Wind City's central plaza. Players caught within the barrier were immediately teleported out of the central plaza.

“What’s going on?”

“Why can’t anyone get into the central plaza?”

“Is that even possible?”

“It’s true! I can’t get into the central plaza! I can’t even see what’s going on inside!”

The players standing around the pitch-black barrier that had enveloped the central plaza could not help their growing curiosity about the new development.

A short moment later, every player in Cold Wind City heard the ring of a system announcement.

Cold Wind City Region System Announcement: The Asura adventurer team has constructed a teleportation gate in the central plaza. Players can now use the teleportation gate to travel to the connected border fortresses. More detailed information will be posted on the central plaza’s notice board.

The system announcement repeated three times.

“What’s going on? A teleportation gate? We can actually teleport to other regions now?”

“That doesn’t seem to be the case.”

“Anyone over at the central plaza right now? Mind updating us on the situation?”

“I just read the notice! The Asura adventurer team is amazing! The new teleportation gate Asura has constructed allows us to teleport to two Level 60-plus maps! Moreover, this teleportation gate is linked to the Snow Ruin! If we want to explore the Snow Rift or Snow Ruin, we can just teleport there now! We won’t have to run all the way anymore!”

“Damn! Doesn’t that mean it’ll become much easier to travel and grind there now?”

For a time, Cold Wind City’s independent players excitedly celebrated the new construction. To them, players who were doomed to live long-term in Cold Wind City, nothing could be more troublesome than physically traveling to maps.

Practically half their time in the game was spent on travel. Now that there was a teleportation gate that could send them to the Snow Rift directly, they could spend more time grinding. This, in turn, would increase their leveling speed.

In contrast to the independent players' reactions, the upper echelons from the city's various Guilds wore gloomy expressions when they heard the news.

Independent players might not have a clear idea of what kind of authority an Acting City Lord possessed, but this information was not foreign to the various Guilds. It took only a little investigation to find out

The various Guilds had believed that they still had a chance of wrestling the position of Acting City Lord away from Asura within the next month, but now, their hopes had been dashed. The Asura adventurer team was invincible in Cold Wind City.

The teleportation gate's activation meant that Asura could start collecting teleportation fees and earn a massive amount of income. With these funds, Asura could commission more Advanced Constructions and earn more City Contribution Points...

Meanwhile, their Guilds would hold less influence in Cold Wind City as time went on. From now on, the Asura adventurer team would make the rules in Cold Wind City.

"Vice Guild Leader, what should we do?" Vice Heaven, who occupied the Snow Ruin's first-upper-floor hall, turned to Carnage when he saw the latest system announcement.

Now that Asura had built a teleportation gate, Hecate would have a very difficult time trying to compete with Asura even if it completed several Epic Contribution Quests.

"Interesting. It seems that I have underestimated Asura's commander," Carnage said, smiling.
"However, if Asura thinks it can compete with Hecate just because it has secured Cold Wind City, then it has made a massive mistake. Notify the Vultures and have them take action."

“Have the Vultures take action?” Vast Heaven’s eyes sparkled upon hearing the order. “I’ll notify them right away.”

In one of the City Hall’s VIP lounge...

Once Shi Feng had paid the construction fee, The Senior Administrator, Merckhans, gave Shi Feng a detailed form relating to the Small Teleportation Gate to fill out.

The form would allow Shi Feng to decide the teleportation’s pricing and ranking systems.

In God’s Domain, the smaller a teleportation gate was, the greater its operating cost would be and vice versa.

Hence, the system had determined that the minimum teleportation fee for traveling to the Snow Ruin was 1 Silver, 50 Copper, and it’s maximum could be set to 5 Silver.

In the end, Shi Feng had decided to set the teleportation fee for the Snow Ruin at 2 Silver. While this price might be a little high for current ordinary players, it was affordable for elite players. With the amount of time players could save, they could easily earn back the 2 Silver and more.

As for the ranking system, Shi Feng had settled on three ranks: Basic, Silver, and Gold. At the Basic rank, players would not receive any discounts when using the teleportation gate, players at the Silver rank received a 10% discount, and players at the Gold rank received a 20% discount. At the Gold rank, players only needed to pay 1 Silver, 60 Copper to use the teleportation gate, which was only 10 Copper more than the minimum price.

For the Adventurer Alliance, members would enjoy access to Silver rank discount when using the teleportation gate as long as they reached Silver rank in the alliance, and Gold ranked members would enjoy the Gold rank discount when teleporting. In the Asura adventurer team, elite members would get access to the Silver rank discount, while core members could use the Gold rank discount.

After this rule was set, not only would it tempt more of Cold Wind City's players to join the Adventurer Alliance, but they'd also contribute more to the alliance to raise their ranks. After all, the teleportation gate was an incredible convenience for players. Players would use the teleportation gate frequently since just traveling to a nearby map like the Snow Rift would save them 20 to 40 Copper, depending on their rank in the Adventurer Alliance. As for teleporting to the three border fortresses, which were even further away from Cold Wind City, players would be able to save even more money. In the long term, the 10% to 20% discount would save players a huge amount of money.

At that time, the Adventurer Alliance's development in Cold Wind City would skyrocket.

When Shi Feng finished with the teleportation gate, he left the City Hall and returned to Asura's Residence.

Constructing the teleportation gate was only a small matter to Shi Feng.

He still had much larger problems, which were his original purpose for visiting the Ice Crystal World—collecting Soul Dissolving Flowers.

Despite exhausting all options, he had only collected six Soul Dissolving Flowers thus far. He was still far from reaching his goal of twenty stalks. Moreover, he had been in the Ice Crystal World for such a long time already. This meant that he had already obtained all of the available Soul Dissolving Flowers in Cold Wind City. He wouldn't be able to acquire more within a short time.

If he wanted to acquire the twenty Soul Dissolving Flowers quickly and complete the Philosopher's Hand quest, he had to visit the Ice Crystal World's other cities.

Upon entering the courtyard of Asura's Residence, Shi Feng was greeted by the sight of many high-spirited players. When these Asura members noticed Shi Feng's return, they promptly greeted him with joy and respect. "Commander, you're back."

"Greetings, commander!"

Seeing a crowd rapidly form around him, Shi Feng did not dare to tarry. After responding with a few nods, he sped into the Residence.

"Commander, I've gathered the people you asked for. Aside from 500 experts from our Asura adventurer team, we've also selected 200 Advanced Lifestyle Players from the Adventurer Alliance. We have a total of 700 players ready to depart," Yan Ya said as she gestured to the rows of players in the lobby. Smiling, she continued, "Even if we visit another NPC city, we won't be much weaker than its well-known adventurer teams."

It was not easy for Guilds and adventurer teams to secure a foothold in other NPC cities since they had to compete with the local Guilds and adventurer teams. However, with 500 expert players, the Asura adventurer team should be capable of contending with a large-scale adventurer team with around two or three thousand members. Including the 200 Advanced Lifestyle Players, even if Asura's new branch couldn't trade for with the local Guilds or adventurer teams for any good equipment, it could produce its own high-quality equipment using the materials it earned from killing monsters.

Moreover, as long as this first deployment endured, the Asura adventurer team could send reinforcements from Cold Wind City.

"Fortunately, I've grown quite a bit stronger recently and got myself a piece of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. Otherwise,

I wouldn't have met the conditions to take part in the expansion expedition. Now, I'll get to fight alongside the commander in another city."

"I know, right? We're even earning 50% bonus Contribution Value for this expedition. We'll also earn 15% more points. By the time the others visit the new city, we might have already reached Bronze rank in the alliance."

When the team members saw Shi Feng, they chatted quietly amongst themselves.

"Good! Since everyone's here, let's move out," Shi Feng said after glancing at everyone's excited expressions. He then led the group to the central plaza.

Chapter 1774: Initial Appearance in a Foreign Region

Since NPCs were in charge of building the teleportation gate at the central plaza, after Shi Feng paid the necessary fees, construction took less than ten minutes.

As the pitch-black barrier enveloping the central plaza disappeared, a six-meter-tall stone gate inside came into view. The ground around the gate had all sorts of divine runes and magic arrays carved into it, which increased the Mana density at the central plaza slightly.

Currently, a large number of players had gathered around the central plaza, their eyes filled with interest as they looked at the teleportation gate. Some adventurer teams couldn't hold back their curiosity and directly teleported to the three border fortresses the teleportation gate connected to.

When Shi Feng's expedition team arrived at the central plaza, it immediately attracted the attention of every player there.

Now that Asura had become the master of Cold Wind City, no power in Cold Wind City dared oppose the adventurer team anymore. Only those seeking to halt their development in Cold Wind City would go against Asura now.

Following Shi Feng's arrangement, Asura's expedition team started teleporting to the Snow Ruin in batches.

"What's Asura trying to do with so many players?"

"Didn't you see that they teleported to the Snow Ruin? Moreover, there are quite a few low-leveled Lifestyle Players in the team. I guess that they plan to develop in another region's city."

"Crap! Asura is too amazing! It's already trying to expand to another city?! With this, the Guilds of Cold Wind City will fall even further behind Asura!"

"I know, right? I heard that some of the smaller Guilds have already disbanded in order to join the Asura adventurer team."

“Asura’s recruitment standard is very high. Although I’ve reached the Trial Tower’s fourth floor already, I was still deemed too weak when I tried applying. Right now, I can only slowly improve my ranking in the Adventurer Alliance.”

While the bystanders at the central plaza were discussing the Asura adventurer team, Shi Feng’s group had arrived at the Snow Ruin’s main hall. Once everyone was present, Shi Feng used the Hero’s Key and teleported 500 players to the other end of the Primordial Teleportation Magic Array. As for everyone else, they teleported there using the Teleportation Entry Permit.

When everyone opened their eyes again, they had already arrived inside an abandoned shrine. The shrine was so dilapidated that snowy-white clouds peeked through the many holes in the roof. Meanwhile, this shrine was located at the other end of the Snow Rift.

...

System: Congratulations! You have arrived in the Frozen City Region.

...

“We made it over, just like that?” When everyone heard the system notification, they had a sense of unreality; it felt as if they were still in the Cold Wind City Region.

“Alright, everyone, get ready! We’re setting out for Frozen City!” Shi Feng commanded.

Although they had teleported to another region, they were still inside the Snow Rift, which remained a forbidden land for players. Needless to say, there were definitely plenty of monsters here.

However, before the expedition team even got 1,000 yards away from the abandoned shrine, a group of players suddenly surged out from the snow-capped forest on both sides of the team. Very quickly, these new arrivals not only blocked off the expedition team's path of advance but also formed an encirclement around the team.

With a glance, Shi Feng and the others could easily tell that this group of new arrivals comprised at least 30,000 players, every one of them wearing Hecate's Guild Emblem. From the sneers and killing intent these Hecate members displayed, these Guild players obviously held bad intentions towards them.

Before Shi Feng and the others could do anything, the sky above them suddenly darkened. A moment later, everyone in Asura's team gained a debuff that prevented them from using teleportation tools and Teleportation Skills for three hours.

The Tier 3 Magic Scroll War Blockade? Shi Feng could not help but frown as he looked at the debuff on him.

"Commander, this is bad. They clearly came prepared. Right now, we can't even use Instantaneous Movement Magic Scrolls to leave this place," Yan Ya said, an ugly expression on her face as she looked at the Hecate members surrounding them.

Their opponent outnumbered them by too much. Moreover, these Hecate members were all very well-equipped. Even the weakest piece of equipment on them was Level 50 Mysterious-Iron rank. As for their levels, they were all at least Level 53. Quite a few of them also radiated a chilling aura. These players were evidently experts that had fought on many battlefields. Most likely, they were not the slightest bit weaker than herself and the other Tier 2 experts of Asura. Meanwhile, the 20-plus players standing at the forefront of the Guild's line-up even felt lethal to Yan Ya.

As Hecate's army drew closer, Asura's members grew anxious.

At this time, a Berserker clad in dark-blue armor walked out from Hecate's army. Looking at Shi Feng and the others, the Berserker laughed loudly, "Hahaha! Aren't you people from Asura very amazing? Why are you getting afraid now?"

This Berserker was none other than Vast Heaven.

"It is normal for them to be afraid. After all, we have a total of 40,000 elites and experts gathered here. What could they

possibly do with their measly 700 players?" said a slim man clad in dark-gray mage robes, standing beside Vast Heaven, chuckling. "However, the Vice Guild Leader sure has a high opinion of them to have actually sent so many of us here to stop them."

The eleven Tier 2 players standing beside him nodded in agreement with the gray-robed man's words.

"The Vice Guild Leader has told me to remind you all to be careful of Asura's commander. That man is very strong," Vast Heaven said as he fixed his gaze on Shi Feng.

"That person is Asura's commander? He doesn't look like much at all! Regardless, since the Vice Guild Leader has already said so, leave that person to us. We'll leave the small fries to you," the slim man said as he glanced at Shi Feng, a hint of playfulness in his eyes. "Blade, I'll attack first later on. You ambush him from the side. We'll give this brat a taste of what it feels to be utterly helpless."

"Sure."

The Level 55, Tier 2 Assassin standing beside the slim man replied indifferently before disappearing from where he stood.

“Alright, I’ll go deal with those small fries,” Vast Heaven said, a hint of disappointment in his voice as he watched the Tier 2 Elementalist and Tier 2 Assassin moving out.

The Tier 2 Elementalist walking straight toward Shi Feng and the Tier 2 Assassin that just disappeared were both part of the Twelve Heavens. They also ranked number one in their respective classes in Hecate. The Elementalist was Cold Brew while the Assassin was Blade Hand. Either of them could defeat him easily. Working together would amplify the combat power they could display by multiple times; hence, instantly killing a Tier 2 player would be child’s play for them.

At this point, Hecate’s other members had also started slowly closing in on Asura’s members.

Facing such a force, even Yan Ya, who was a Tier 2 player, could not help but gulp. As for the other experts of Asura, they were already breaking out in a cold sweat. After all, this was the first time they were going up against such a massive force. Resisting the horrific aura and pressure Hecate’s army projected was deeply ingrained, yet in such a situation, they could only watch the Guild players draw near.

“We’re doomed!”

“Hecate is too ruthless! We have only 700 people on our side, yet they actually dispatched so many elite and expert players to deal with us.”

The members of Asura’s expedition team panicked as Hecate’s members closed in on them.

When less than 100 yards separated the two sides, Cold Brew smiled as he looked at Shi Feng. He then chuckled and said, “You guys were pretty good at the Snow Ruin before, to have actually claimed the Hero Mode’s First Clear and snatched our Guild’s Cold Wind City. It’s a pity that, instead of meekly staying and ruling that backwater city of yours, you even dared to come running over to this place. Well? Tell me how you want to die.”

“Everyone relied on their own capabilities to struggle for Cold Wind City. Is there a need to call it snatching?” Looking at Cold Brew slowly approaching him, Shi Feng smiled and said, “Moreover, in Cold Wind City, it was clearly you guys that started attacking us first. During this time, you people from Hecate have even ambushed and killed over 400 members of our adventurer team, causing us to suffer severe losses. Today, I’ll use this opportunity to claim full compensation from you!”

“Hahaha! You want to take revenge on us?” Cold Brew laughed loudly. “Our Guild had countless enemies. Unfortunately, we annihilated every one of them in the end. How will your Asura adventurer team take revenge on us?”

As soon as Cold Brew said so, the large group of experts behind him sprang into action. Like a pack of fierce tigers, they surged towards Asura’s members.

“We’ll take revenge like this!” Shi Feng replied, plucking a scroll and the Evil God’s Eye from his bag. He then unfurled the Tier 3 large-scale destruction Magic Scroll Purgatory Flames and used the Evil God’s Eye’s World Power on it. “Burn! Purgatory Flames!”

Chapter 1775: Nightmare’s Beginning

As Shi Feng completed the Tier 3 Magic Scroll's incantation, three crimson magic arrays appeared beneath and circled Shi Feng's feet. Immediately after, the ground started to tremble, extending forward and away from Shi Feng.

Even Hecate's members, who stood over 50 yards away, felt the intense quaking.

"Damn it! It's a large-scale destruction Spell! Everyone, dodge!" Cold Brew panicked when he noticed a torrent of Mana surge toward Shi Feng.

However, the Magic Scroll Shi Feng had used had a very short channeling time. By the time Hecate's members had noticed it, the three crimson magic arrays' formation had completed.

In the next moment, a gigantic, flaming phoenix, with a wingspan of easily over 100 meters, appeared above Shi Feng. The heat the phoenix radiated melted the snow around it.

Boom!

With a screech, the phoenix flapped its wings once and disappeared, sundering the space it had occupied. In the blink of an eye, the phoenix arrived before Hecate's army.

Seeing the approaching avian, horror flashed on the faces of Hecate's members. At the same time, thoughts of escape flooded their minds.

However, compared to the phoenix's speed, Hecate's members were little more than snails. Wherever the phoenix passed, a sea of fire followed...

When Vast Heaven, who led the charge against Asura's members, saw the flames, his eyes widened in shock. With a frustrated gaze, he turned towards Shi Feng as the fire devoured him, his HP falling to zero instantly as his body turned to ash. After Vast Heaven disappeared, an item took his place.

If these flames even killed a Tier 2 player like Vast Heaven upon contact, Hecate's Tier 1 players didn't have a chance of survival. Agonized screams echoed throughout the valley.

"Asura!"

Cold Brew's expression darkened as he glared at the phoenix as it flew past him.

Due to the valley's narrow terrain, the single attack had claimed more than 3,000 Hecate members. Four of the Twelve Heavens, who weren't adept at protecting themselves, had died as well. The loss Hecate just suffered was egregious.

"Everyone, charge! Let's teach Hecate's members that if they target our adventurer team, they'll have to pay in blood!" Shi Feng commanded through the team chat as the phoenix disappeared. "Asura will fully compensate you for any losses you suffer today!"

Against an army of 40,000 elite and expert players, even a 100-man, Tier 2 team would fall. After all, players had limited Stamina. Furthermore, Hecate had come prepared for this ambush. The Guild had all kinds of Magic Scrolls and tools for this battle. Even if the 100 Tier 2 experts could maneuver around the battlefield and dodge incoming attacks, some hits were bound to land.

All these players could do was try to flee. Fighting was simply suicide.

Originally, Purgatory Flames was an AOE Spell that dealt fire damage to an area of 20*100 yards, but with World's Power's enhancement, it's range had grown to 400 yards. It was just enough to open a path through Hecate's army.

As long as they could break free from this encirclement, they would have a chance of survival.

"Right! At worst, we'll just die once! Isn't that just one piece of equipment? Let them have it!"

"We follow the commander's orders!"

"Nice! I've been itching for some payback!"

Hearing Shi Feng's words, Asura's members burned with fighting spirit, their fear of Hecate vanishing.

"Good! Let's charge!"

As his team brimmed with fighting spirit, Shi Feng nodded approvingly. He then took out the Bible of Darkness and summoned a Tier 3 Demon to remove anyone in his way. He then followed after the Demon.

"Kill!"

"Kill these bastards from Hecate!"

Asura's members flowed into a defensive formation, with the experts around the perimeter and the Lifestyle Players in the center, and followed after their commander.

When he saw Hecate's members start to fill the gap in their army's formation, Shi Feng used Flame Domain to reopen his path, instantly slaying another several hundred players.

"Do not let them escape! All ranged players, attack with everything you've got!" Cold Brew shouted as Asura's members tried to escape. He then cast the Tier 2 Spell, Frostflame Bullet at Asura's members.

Frostflame Bullet had a very strong penetrating ability. Even if players blocked the Spell with their weapons or shields, they would receive a significant amount of damage.

The eight Frostflame Bullets that appeared instantly killed two of Asura's experts that had stood along the edge of Asura's formation.

The Hecate members who stood along the valley's sides began to launch their own attacks, raining Spells and arrows down on Asura's members. Although Asura's members did their best to block these attacks, there were just too many, and some got past their defenses, plowing into these players.

Asura's expedition team had lost over 30 players after a single intense bombardment from Hecate's players. The difference in strength was clear for all to see.

As Hecate's members prepared to launch a second wave...

Yan Ya displayed her strength. As a Tier 2 Druid, her combat power might not be a match for other Tier 2 players, but when it came to defensive and healing capabilities, she was extremely powerful.

Tier 2 Spell, Song of the Forest!

Suddenly, a light-green dome with a 50-yard radius formed around Yan Ya. When Hecate's attacks entered the light-green barrier, their power drastically decreased. In addition, the Asura members inside the barrier recovered 2% of their HP every second. Although it wasn't much, this helped to alleviate the burden on the other healers.

Due to Song of the Forest, only a dozen or so Asura members died in the second wave of attacks.

Seeing the Spell's powerful effects, Cold Brew gnashed his teeth and retrieved a precious Tier 3 large-scale destruction Magic Scroll. He activated it, aiming for Asura's expedition team, but as the Spell was about to take effect, Shi Feng blocked the attack by activating Absolute Domain. In the end, the Spell failed to damage any of Asura's team.

Shi Feng proceeded to slaughter Hecate's frontline. He dispatched every melee player that approached his team as fast as possible. He also activated Heavenly Dragon's Power to enhance his combat power further.

Thundering Flash!

Lightning Edge!

Shadow Blade!

Aside from the players with powerful Lifesaving Skills, the Tier 1 players that stood in Shi Feng's path couldn't last more than one hit against the Swordsman. Like the Grim Reaper, Shi Feng harvested the lives of Hecate's members, one after another.

To ensure that none of Hecate's members could get past him to target his allies, Shi Feng abandoned his defense. He focused on killing as many enemies as possible, taking some hits in the process.

There was no lack of expert players among the Hecate members who charged at Shi Feng, and not only did these experts have incredible aim, but they also had an excellent grasp of timing.

While Shi Feng focused on carving a path of blood, Spells and arrows skillfully flew towards Shi Feng's blind spots to strike the Swordsman.

-2,387.00

-1,657.00

-1,346.00

-2,046.00

Seeing the damages above Shi Feng's heads, the attacking Hecate members gaped, their eyes nearly falling from their sockets.

“Impossible! My attack only did a little over a thousand damage?!”

“Is he even human?”

“He received so many attacks, yet his HP has barely moved?”

Hecate’s players were horrified as they watched Shi Feng take little-to-no damage from their ranged allies’ attacks as they charged towards Asura’s team.

Shi Feng slew practically every player in his path with a single attack, and expert players were no exception. He easily maneuvered past their defenses, landing direct hits and killing them instantly. Only expert players that had activated a Berserk Skill had lasted a few more hits. In contrast, their attacks were little more than raindrops to this Swordsman. Even after landing several dozen attacks, they had only managed to drop Shi Feng’s HP to 80%. Meanwhile, Asura’s healers only needed a split second to restore Shi Feng’s HP to full.

This was a nightmare!

However, things were not looking so good for Asura’s members, either. Although Shi Feng easily held on, attacks from all sides bombarded his teammates, and they suffered one casualty after another. To make matters worse, more of Hecate’s members were drawing near.

Just before Hecate’s melee unit reached Asura’s members and surrounded them...

A gigantic magic array appeared above the battlefield before a powerful force swept down from it. Under this force, Hecate's members felt their bodies grow heavy as their Attributes and physiques started to wane.

In contrast, Asura's members suddenly felt lighter, a surge of power flooding in their bodies. Even their minds cleared considerably.

"What's going on?" Cold Brew could sense that the battlefield's Mana density had increased, boosting Asura's Attributes.

Chapter 1776: Asura's Sword

After Shi Feng spent 7,000 Magic Crystals to activate the Ring of Gospel's World Projection and Ring of Brilliance, the Attributes of Asura's members increased, and the those of Hecate's members decreased. The change immediately alleviated the pressure on Asura's members. Now, Asura's ranged members were able to repel Hecate's melee members with greater ease. Even when their attacks struck the enemy MTs' shields, the impact pushed the MTs back, stopping their advance momentarily.

After a single round of attacks from Asura's ranged members, the offensive formation of Hecate's MTs shattered. When the second round of attacks descended, over 30 Hecate MTs died. For a moment, Hecate's melee unit couldn't close the distance between itself and Asura's expedition team.

"Hahaha! The commander's move is awesome! With this, these bastards can't even come within melee range of us!"

The Asura members that had begun to despair felt their hopes rekindle.

They might be able to cope with Hecate's ranged attacks by blocking and dodging, but if they allowed Hecate's melee members to come in close and personal, they would definitely be in a bind. If they were pinned down for too long, Hecate's ranged members would make quick work of them.

Thanks to World Projection and Ring of Brilliance, Asura's advancement had increased considerably. Now, with the exception of Hecate's Tier 2 players, Asura's members held their ground against the incoming attacks. Hecate's Tier 1 players could no longer break their formation.

Meanwhile, Shi Feng, who opened a path for his team, was like a killing machine.

Despite Shi Feng having only advanced one-quarter of the way through Hecate's blockade, more than 400 players had died by his swords.

In addition, Shi Feng's Tier 3 Demon disrupted Hecate's formation from time to time. This prevented Hecate's members from slowing Shi Feng down, and Hecate's members could only watch as Shi Feng made his way through their ranks.

"Blade, go, stop him with the Vultures! We must not let these people get away!" Cold Brew said, gnashing his teeth as he watched Shi Feng plow through Hecate's army unhindered.

Shi Feng played a crucial part in this battle. If he hadn't torn a hole in their encirclement, Asura's members wouldn't have had a chance of breaking through.

Moreover, too many Hecate members had died at Shi Feng's hands. Shi Feng left only corpses in his wake. If they did not remove the man from the battle now, they would suffer immense losses.

“Got it!” Blade Hand, who had hidden a short distance away from Asura’s expedition team, replied through the team chat He then led the six Assassins around him and snuck toward Shi Feng.

The Vultures was a party of Assassins Hecate had specifically nurtured to eliminate important figures in other large Guilds. The Vultures had successfully assassinated the upper echelons of super-first-rate Guilds in the past.

When the Vultures were within 30 yards of Shi Feng, the six Assassins each took a Magic Array Scroll from their bags.

When they were within 25 yards, they used Shadow Steps and instantly appeared beside Shi Feng.

“Seal!” The Vultures moved extremely quickly and simultaneously unfurled the Magic Array Scrolls in their hands.

However, Shi Feng’s response was also swift. He instantly knew what these newcomers intended to do. Immediately, he began brandishing his swords.

Sword’s Orbit!

Dazzling stars bombarded the six Assassins, one after another.

With both hands occupied, the Vultures couldn't defend themselves. Hence, they promptly activated Wind Steps, utilizing the brief invulnerability the Skill provided to block Shi Feng's strikes while they continued to activate their Magic Array Scrolls.

Suddenly, a magic array formed beneath Shi Feng's feet. He then felt a powerful gravitational pull as chains emerged from the magic array and wrapped around his body, reducing his Basic Attributes, Movement Speed, and Attack Speed by 60%. Moreover, a magic barrier formed around him, Blade Hand, and the Vultures, sealing them off from the outside world. No Attack Spells or Healing Spells would be able to get through this barrier.

"Die!" Blade Hand appeared behind Shi Feng, slashing his two daggers at the Swordsman while he activated his Berserk Skill.

Similarly, the six Vultures activated their Berserk Skills and used Absolute Strike, the Assassin class's strongest Tier 1 Skill.

Since the attacks had been launched from such a close range and Shi Feng's Attributes and speed had been drastically reduced, he couldn't defend himself in time. As a result, all seven attacks hit their mark at the same time.

"Commander!" Anxiety and concern overwhelmed Yan Ya as she watched Shi Feng take the hits.

Facing one Tier 2 Assassin and six Tier 1 Assassins with activated Berserk Skills, even Shi Feng, who had activated Heavenly Dragon's Power, would likely fall.

He's finally dead! Cold Brew could not help but breathe a sigh of relief when he saw the attacks strike Shi Feng.

With Shi Feng dead, the remaining members of Asura were fish on the chopping block. Moreover, the fact that they had killed Shi Feng, the Asura adventurer team's commander, more or less justified the large number of casualties they had suffered.

However, unlike Cold Brew, the Vultures and Blade Hand, who were inside the magic array, expressed neither joy nor relief. Instead, they stared at Shi Feng with grim expressions.

This was because their weapons had not struck Shi Feng at all. Rather, a translucent barrier enveloping Shi Feng's body had stopped their weapons.

What a powerful assassination technique. For a moment, even I thought I was dead meat. After taking glancing at his seven tense assailants, Shi Feng took a look at the Void Shield he had activated. His Void Shield had already lost more than 30% of its energy. If he had failed to activate the barrier in time, he definitely would have died.

"It's only a protective shield! I refuse to believe it can last forever!"

After recovering from his shock, Blade Hand altered his daggers' trajectory and launched another attack. Similarly, the six Vultures launched their own assault. The seven Assassins remained cold and unmoving as they attacked Shi Feng's protective shield in a frenzy, disregarding any cost.

While inside the magic array, their Basic Attributes surpassed Shi Feng's. They were also faster than the Swordsman. Meanwhile, Skills that generated protective shields could only absorb a limited amount of damage. As long as they broke through the protective shield, Shi Feng would die all the same.

Daggers and short swords rapidly struck Shi Feng's Void Shield.

Dang! Dang! Dang!

Shi Feng executed Sword's Orbit to defend himself, but each time he blocked an attack, his arms would tremble slightly. In terms of Strength, he was no match for the Seven Assassins. Meanwhile, the Assassins' coordination prevented him from blocking all of their attacks. As a result, his Void Shield's energy continued to deplete.

60%... 50%... 30%...

While Void Shield's energy drained, the expedition team's situation had taken a turn for the worst. Since Asura's members had halted their advance for a time, Hecate's members were able to land more attacks. As a result, Asura lost members rapidly. Seeing this, Shi Feng could not help but sigh. Immediately, he activated Blade Liberation, his aura's intensity skyrocketing.

The instant Blade Hand and the Vultures came into contact with Shi Feng's Killing Ray, they felt their arms go numb. The impact sent them flying and crashing into the magic barrier, which rippled under the force.

How did he recover his Strength? Blade Hand's expression darkened further as he watched Shi Feng, who stood proudly in the center of the magic barrier. He could not understand how Shi Feng's Attributes had increased by such a large margin.

However, Shi Feng had no intention of giving Blade Hand's group any time to think as he took the initiative to attack.

Dang! Dang! Dang!

Shi Feng's Attack Speed was so high that even Tier 2 players had a hard time keeping up with his swords. Although Blade Hand and the Vultures were Assassins, not even they were a match for this Swordsman's speed. They had to rely on their instincts to block Shi Feng's swords.

The seven Assassins knew that they were pushing themselves to their limits.

Yet, every time their daggers or short swords came into contact with Shi Feng's swords, an intense feedback coursed through their arms. The resulting impact was so powerful that they were even forced to retreat by several steps. Eventually, they could no longer keep up and were forced to use Vanish, temporarily negating Shi Feng's attacks. Using the brief invulnerability, they launched a suicidal attack.

The reckless assault instantly shattered Shi Feng's Void Shield and slightly lowered his HP.

Seeing that they had finally dealt damage, Blade Hand and the Vultures regained a little hope. Immediately, the seven Assassins disregarded defense and launched another reckless assault. However, just as their attacks were about to strike Shi Feng, their target split into two identical copies.

Phantom Kill!

Blade Hand and the Vultures were dumbfounded, but since their brief invulnerability was still active, they thrust their blades at the two copies.

However, with the seven Assassins' attacks divided and the fact that Shi Feng had an absurd amount of HP and Defense, the Assassins failed to kill either of Shi Feng's copies.

When the seven Assassins' temporary invulnerability ended, Shi Feng and his doppelganger simultaneously activated Shadow Blade, sending 20 strikes flying at the Assassins. There was little space for players to move around inside the magic barrier, and as a result, five of the seven Assassins were killed instantly. Shi Feng and his doppelganger then executed Purgatory Pentaslash, each bombarding the two remaining Assassins with five slashes. The power of each slash grew stronger than the last, and by the time Shi Feng and his doppelganger landed their fifth hit, their opponents were paralyzed.

Suddenly, a streak of blue light cut down Blade Hand and the last Vulture.

This time, the two Assassins were powerless. When the streak of light cut through the two Assassins' leather armor, both were thrown into the magic barrier, staring with widened eyes as they died. They simply could not bring themselves to believe that some commander of a measly adventurer team had turned the tables on Hecate's Vultures, who were powerful enough to make the various large Guilds tremble with fear.

Although Blade Hand wanted to say something, his HP had reached zero. His vision faded to black as his body transformed into a streak of light and disappeared, leaving behind a piece of equipment. Shortly after, the magic barrier around Shi Feng shattered and vanished.

Chapter 1777: Scourge

Along with the magic barrier's disappearance, Hecate's members, who were slowly closing in on Asura's members, could not help being stunned.

Everyone in Hecate knew of the Vultures. The group was second only to the Guild's pride, the Twelve Heavens, in terms of strength. When it came to fame, the Vultures were far more renowned than the Twelve Heavens because the Vultures had killed many people in the upper echelons of first-rate Guilds before and even someone in the upper echelon of a super-first-rate Guild.

Moreover, Blade Hand, Hecate's number one Assassin, had even led the assault on Shi Feng this time.

Yet, after fighting for just a little over ten seconds, all seven of the Vultures actually got killed.

"He's not dead, even after all that?" A hint of fear flashed across Cold Brew's eyes as he watched Shi Feng collect the items dropped by Blade Hand and the Vultures. Although he had long since known that Shi Feng was very strong, he hadn't thought the Swordsman was this strong. Gritting his teeth, Cold Brew immediately commanded, "Everyone nearby, listen up! Stop Asura's commander at all costs! He has already used up all his trump cards! We cannot let him get away, no matter what! I will reward four pieces of Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment or one Level 50 Dark-Gold Weapon to whoever manages to kill him!"

With such strength, if they allowed Shi Feng to develop freely, he would undoubtedly become a scourge on Hecate in the future. Only by killing Shi Feng once now and damaging his vigor would they be able to disrupt Shi Feng's development. Moreover, it wasn't very easy to hunt down and encircle players out in the field. They had succeeded this time only because Shi Feng had not been prepared. After today, they definitely wouldn't find another good opportunity like this to strike at Shi Feng in the future.

Anyhow, the sudden boost in Shi Feng's Attributes definitely wouldn't last long. Once they outlasted its duration, victory would be theirs for the taking.

"Kill!"

Meanwhile, when Hecate's members heard the reward Cold Brew was offering, their eyes promptly turned bloodshot. The Guild had precious few Level 50 Fine-Gold Weapons, much less Level 50 Dark-Gold Weapons. If they could get their hands on one, it would definitely boost their combat power significantly.

Following which, the Hecate members that were previously drawing closer to Asura's members suddenly changed course for Shi Feng.

Dozens of melee players swarmed Shi Feng simultaneously. Spells and Skills also flew at him one after another. Seeing this, Shi Feng swung Killing Ray lightly.

Summon Lightning!

Suddenly, with Shi Feng as the center, countless streaks of lightning spread out into his surroundings. As he was still under the effects of Twofold Berserk, every player that came into contact with the lightning strikes were killed, their bodies becoming piles of ash on the ground. Before the might of this attack, Hecate's members, who were fired up with bloodlust, instantly cooled down, their charge coming to an abrupt halt.

Sure enough, there are still too many people. Shi Feng paid no attention to the Hecate members that had stopped approaching him. Instead, he shifted his gaze to his teammates, who were currently fighting a heated battle. Although the Ring of Gospel's Skills had helped Asura's members significantly, the disadvantage in numbers was simply too massive. Now, less than half of the Asura expedition team remained alive. Shi Feng then turned to look at the snow-capped forest a little over a thousand yards away. I have no choice but to try.

Just as Cold Brew had expected, Shi Feng was already running on fumes right now. Twofold Berserk was his final trump card. Once he activated it, either his enemies died or he did.

If he could get his team into the forest and utilize the terrain, hiding would be a snap. At that time, Hecate's members would no longer be able to surround them easily.

Following which, Shi Feng used his final trump card, Forbidden Domain!

Suddenly, gray fog spread out from Shi Feng's body and enveloped the path ahead of him, extending to the snow-capped forest.

"What's going on? Why can't I use my Spells?"

"That's not right! I can't even use my tools now!"

The Hecate members caught within Forbidden Domain quickly realized that something was wrong and panicked. After all, players relied mainly on Skills and Spells to do combat. Not being able to use these things was akin to a tiger that had lost both its teeth and claws. Most importantly, the healers could no longer heal themselves or their allies.

"Everyone, charge forward together with me!"

Upon seeing Hecate's members rattled, Shi Feng quickly gave the order through the team chat and charged at the human wall before him. He then swung Killing Ray at the shields of the MTs blocking his way.

With Twofold Berserk in effect, Shi Feng was basically a humanoid monster. Just one attack was enough to send several MTs flying over a dozen yards away. Then, he followed up with Dragon Breath, tearing open the path that Hecate's members had refilled just recently.

Although Hecate's members did their best to reorganize their formation, having been Silenced, they were no different from paper before Shi Feng. Every player that stood in his path would be sent flying before transforming into a streak of light and disappearing. Nobody could stop him at all.

Asura's members became hot-blooded at the sight of Shi Feng harvesting the lives of their enemies so effortlessly. They followed after him with renewed vigor.

Although Hecate's members tried to prevent the adventurer team from advancing, the difference in combat power was simply too massive. Without any healing, Hecate's melee players fell quickly to Asura's members in just two or three moves. In the end, the Guild players could only watch as the remains of Asura's expedition team entered the snow-capped forest.

"Boss Brew, Asura's members have escaped into the forest. Should we continue giving chase?" a Level 54 Ranger asked as he looked at the nearby forest.

"No, we're retreating. The terrain inside the forest is too complex. Launching a search there will be too difficult. We might even get ambushed by them if we charge in recklessly," Cold Brew said, shaking his head. He then sent a fierce glance at the forest Shi Feng had disappeared into as he said, "We have plenty of time to deal with them in the future. Frozen City isn't a place they can easily survive in!"

Following which, Hecate's members all used their Return Scrolls and returned to Frozen City.

Meanwhile, news of Hecate's failed encirclement soon entered the ears of the various Guilds of Frozen City and set off quite a commotion among the upper echelons of these Guilds. Many Guilds in Frozen City even held emergency meetings over this matter.

"Hahaha! This Asura adventurer team sure is amazing! It actually managed to make Hecate eat a loss!"

"This adventurer team is quite good. Have someone try to make contact with it."

For a time, the various Guilds of Frozen City did their best to find out more about the Asura adventurer team. Hecate was the ruling Guild of Frozen City. Although the Guild had yet to actually take control of the city, nobody in Frozen City dared to oppose the Guild. Now that an adventurer team capable of inflicting such a huge loss on Hecate had appeared, how could the various Guilds not feel shocked by this matter?

Aside from Frozen City's Guilds, the top-ranking adventurer teams of the city also obtained news of Hecate's failure through their own sources.

A Level 54 Assassin suddenly entered one of Frozen City's high-class bars with hurried steps.

"Commander, something big just happened! Hecate dispatched 40,000 elites and experts to ambush an adventurer team!" the Level 54 Assassin announced as he took a seat in front of a middle-aged man, who was currently enjoying some wine in a corner of the bar. This middle-aged man was Brilliant Heaven, the commander of the Frost Lion adventurer team, Frozen City's second-best adventurer team. With great enthusiasm, the Level 54 Assassin continued, "What do you think the outcome was?"

"What else could it be? With a force of 40,000 elites and experts, you can even wipe out some of the large Guilds in Frozen City," Brilliant Heaven replied disinterestedly.

"You guessed wrong! Hecate failed. I also heard that Hecate lost several thousand members as well," the Level 54 Assassin said, shaking his head.

"Several thousand? Which adventurer team did Hecate target? Even White Soul, the current number one adventurer team, doesn't have this kind of capability!" Brilliant Heaven could not help but be surprised by the Assassin's words.

“No. Based on some insider information from Hecate, it seems this adventurer team came from another region,” the Level 54 Assassin said.

“Another region? What’s it called? How many people did they send over? Several tens of thousands?” Brilliant Heaven’s curiosity was now piqued despite himself.

“It seems the adventurer team is called Asura, and it sent roughly 700 people over this time,” the Level 54 Assassin said after taking another look at the message he received previously. “Moreover, I heard that Asura’s commander killed the Vultures and Blade Hand all by himself.”

“Seven hundred? And their commander killed the Vultures and Blade Hand by himself?” Upon hearing the Assassin’s words, Brilliant Heaven could not help wondering whether the Assassin was drunk. However, the Assassin had spoken very clearly and seriously. “If that is true, then I’m afraid Frozen City will soon have a new ruler.”

Chapter 1778: Famous

After Shi Feng got his team away from Hecate, he split the surviving Asura members into small groups and had them enter Frozen City while wearing cloaks, to start collecting information regarding the city.

As for Shi Feng himself, he and Yan Ya made their way straight to Frozen City’s City Hall.

“Commander, this city is flourishing! It can already rival the capitals of kingdoms back on the continent of God’s Domain!”

Yan Ya was very surprised as she looked at the street outside through the advanced horse carriage's windows.

As they made their way to the City Hall, she saw plenty of players hawking their wares on the sidewalks. Unlike Cold Wind City, though, the majority of these hawkers were Lifestyle players. These players sold Level 50 weapons and equipment, and the weakest piece of equipment was Bronze rank, while the better ones were even Secret-Silver rank. Such a scene could not be found in Cold Wind City. Also, plenty of player-operated Shops lined the streets. Frozen City's prosperity could definitely rival that of a kingdom's capital.

Moreover, compared to the level and equipment standard of Cold Wind City's players, the players here were obviously superior. Most of the players on the street were Level 52 and were fully geared in Level 50 Mysterious-Iron Equipment.

There were also quite a few Level 53 experts sporting multiple pieces of Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. Yan Ya even spotted some independent players in Level 50 Fine-Gold Equipment.

"This place is indeed well-developed. If comparing purely in terms of Lifestyle player standards, Frozen City is far superior to the capitals of kingdoms." As Shi Feng looked at the Lifestyle players on the sidewalks, he discovered that these Lifestyle players were not wearing any Guild Emblems. Despite not being a member of a Guild, they were capable of producing Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment. The forging standard of the Lifestyle players in Frozen City was much higher than that of the Lifestyle players on the main continent. For example, inside Star-Moon Kingdom, only the Lifestyle players of the Candlelight Trading Firm could produce Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment at a feasible cost. "By the looks of it, Frozen City should be one of the Ice Crystal World's main cities."

"Main city?" Yan Ya repeated. This was her first time hearing this term.

“That’s right, a main city. You can think of Otherworlds as a kingdom or an empire. Although Otherworlds have not been unified, some cities are the counterparts of kingdom capitals and imperial capitals. These cities are known as main cities. They function as an intersection for neighboring regions. However, Otherworlds do not have only one main city. Depending on the size of an Otherworld, it can have around three to seven main cities. A city as large and as prosperous as Frozen City should be a main city,” Shi Feng explained.

Based on the investigations Asura’s members had conducted, Frozen City’s player population exceeded 8,000,000, which was much higher than Cold Wind City’s. In fact, Frozen City’s player population exceeded even White River City’s slightly, which was simply impossible for an ordinary city. In addition, Frozen City had opened a path to two other cities just a little while ago. At the same time, the Frozen City region had multiple maps leading to other regions. All this proved that Frozen City was a main city in the Ice Crystal World.

Originally, Shi Feng had expected to arrive at an ordinary city similar to Cold Wind City. He had never imagined that he would actually land himself in a main city. This came as a pleasant surprise.

The importance of an Otherworld main city was much greater than that of a kingdom capital or imperial capital on the continent of God’s Domain. The reason for this was access: players in most ordinary cities in Otherworlds had to transit a main city in order to travel to other ordinary cities. On the other hand, players on the continent of God’s Domain could teleport freely between cities belonging to the same kingdom or empire.

Moreover, regions housing ordinary cities had access to only one main city. One could travel to other main cities only via the main city they were connected to.

Due to these reasons, the main cities of Otherworlds were very important. At the same time, the difficulty of taking control of a main city was also much greater. However, once players successfully seized control of a main city, they could monopolize a sizable portion of an Otherworld’s resources—which also made main cities prime targets for the various large Guilds.

Now that Shi Feng had managed to arrive at Frozen City ahead of the Black Dragon Empire's various large Guilds, he had a much better chance of taking control of the city.

After riding on the horse carriage for about 20 minutes, Shi Feng and Yan Ya arrived at Frozen City's City Hall.

Currently, merchant players crowded the main lobby. Some of these merchant players were standing before the front counter and browsing through the Shops available for purchase in the city. Others were sitting in the lounge and chatting while waiting for their turn.

"Did you hear? Hecate ambushed an adventurer team in the Snow Rift just recently. In the end, however, not only did Hecate lose several thousand elite and expert players, but it even let nearly half of the adventurer team get away."

"Of course, I've heard about it. I also know that the targeted adventurer team is called Asura and that it's an adventurer team that came from Cold Wind City, a city that Hecate is trying to occupy."

"This Asura adventurer team sure is amazing. It actually managed to deal such a grievous blow to Hecate."

"I also heard that Asura's commander is an absolute monster that's three meters tall and has arms several times thicker than my thighs. He managed to wipe out the Vultures and kill several thousand elite and expert members of Hecate all by himself. Even Tier 2 experts are like tofu before him."

"What a monster! It's no wonder even the Vultures got annihilated."

“Commander, they seem to be talking about you,” Yan Ya, who overheard the conversation of some resting players, giggled as she sneaked a glance at Shi Feng.

“Am I that gigantic?” Shi Feng could not help being flabbergasted by the conversation of these players. The rumors about him were growing increasingly ridiculous.

Hecate’s ambush this time had indeed dealt a severe blow to Asura’s expedition team. However, Asura had also gained a considerable harvest from the ambush, and this harvest came in the form of free promotion. After all, Hecate had caused quite a commotion when it dispatched an army of 40,000 players to hunt a single adventurer team. The fact that the Guild returned in failure only served to garner even more attention from the general populace. At this point, practically every player in Frozen City had heard about the Asura adventurer team already.

After Shi Feng arrived on the second-floor hall of the City Hall, he revealed his City Protector title.

“Lord Protector, how may I be of service to you today?” An NPC senior administrator promptly walked over to greet Shi Feng.

“I wish to purchase a plot of Land in the city,” Shi Feng said.

“Alright These are the available Lands in our city right now,” the senior administrator said as he took out a map of Frozen City. Green and red markers dotted the map, with the green markers signifying ownerless Lands, and the red markers signifying owned Lands.

Looking at the city map, Shi Feng could not help but smile.

Sure enough, the Lands around that street are still untouched, Shi Feng thought as he looked at a section of the city that was all green. Labeled the Old City District, this section was located in the outer area of the city, and it would seem that nobody was interested in purchasing the Lands there.

After all this time since the launch of God's Domain, the important Lands of NPC cities, whether on the main continent of God's Domain or in Otherworlds, had already been bought by the various Guilds. No good locations would be left unclaimed.

However, the NPC cities in Otherworlds were slightly different, particularly the Old City Districts of the main cities.

In Otherworlds, only main cities had access to other main cities. This was like how teleportation between countries was limited to the capitals. Players needed to travel to the capital in order to teleport to another country.

However, the way this access was gained wasn't by opening up a path in a particular map but by activating the air routes between cities. Once the air routes were activated, players could then ride a Flying Ship from one main city to another. These Flying Ships would dock at the main cities' Old City Districts, where the main cities would construct an airport.

In the past, the various large Guilds had been ignorant of this fact. As a result, some merchant players that had gambled their money on the Lands of the Old City Districts ended up making a fortune for themselves.

Currently, practically all the Lands around the area reserved for the future airport were ownerless. This was a massive business opportunity for Shi Feng.

"Lord Protector, may I know which plot of Land you wish to buy? I can also give you a detailed introduction of the Lands available here," the senior administrator asked when he saw Shi Feng remaining unresponsive for quite some time.

“No need for introductions. I want every plot of Land in this area,” Shi Feng said as he pointed at the several streets of the Old City District.

Chapter 1779: Difference between Cities

“Everything?” the NPC senior administrator couldn’t help but ask, flabbergasted. “Lord Protector, there are a total of 14 plots of Land on these streets. Are you sure you want all of them?”

Even Yan Ya gave Shi Feng an astonished look, her jaw dropping. She simply could not fathom what Shi Feng was trying to do.

Although the Lands in the Old City District were much cheaper than the Lands in the central district, purchasing all 14 plots would still cost a fortune. Moreover, the Old City District was in a remote area of the city. Even now, nobody had bothered to purchase any of those Lands. One could easily see just how poor the location was. Just finding a tenant might be impossible.

“That’s right. I want all of them.” Shi Feng nodded.

“Alright, the total for the 14 plots of Land comes to 31,500 Gold!” After making sure that Shi Feng wanted to buy Old City District’s Lands, the senior administrator excitedly calculated the total price and handed Shi Feng a list.

Examining this list, Shi Feng noticed that the cheapest plot cost over 2,000 Gold. These Lands were slightly more expensive than those in the outskirts of a kingdom's capital city.

However, once the air routes between main cities opened to the public, these Lands would become dozens of times more valuable. Even if he didn't have a use for these Lands, he could rent them out and make a fortune. Naturally, he couldn't miss the opportunity to purchase these Lands.

After ensuring that everything was in order, Shi Feng completed the payment.

At this stage of the game, 31,500 Gold was a massive sum even to a first-rate Guild. To Shi Feng, however, this amount was nothing. Shi Feng had already sent Solitary Nine with the rare materials, which the Asura adventurer team and the Adventurer Alliance had gathered, to the Candlelight Trading Firm. On his return, Solitary Nine had brought back plenty of items from Candlelight, such as Stamina Potions, Ice Resistance Armor Kits, and other items that could not be found in Cold Wind City to sell or put up for trade for the Adventurer Alliance.

Cold Wind City's players preferred to purchase their items with Coins rather than trade rare materials for items. Hence, he had earned quite a lot of Coins recently.

Thus far, Solitary Nine had made two trips to White River City. His first trip had netted them over 20,000 Gold. On his second trip, which had been several days later, Candlelight was far more prepared as it had obtained the massive stock of rare materials. As a result, the items Solitary Nine had returned to Cold Wind City with on his second trip had netted them over 60,000 Gold in profit

Now, Shi Feng's pockets were heavy with Coins. It was a pity that Asura and Zero Wing couldn't afford such shipments every day. After all, there were only so many players in Cold Wind City. There was a limit to the market's appetite. By Shi Feng's estimates, it would take the city's players at least four to five days to digest all of the items. In other words, he could only earn a fortune once every four or five days.

Before Shi Feng had left Cold Wind City, he had spent 10,000 Gold on the teleportation gate's construction. He had also left 10,000 Gold behind for Asura and the Adventurer Alliance's development. He still had over 60,000 Gold on hand.

However, while 60,000 Gold might seem significant, it wasn't enough for Shi Feng to accomplish anything. He needed a lot more than this paltry amount. Aside from Cold Wind City's development, Shi Feng was responsible for the development costs of Zero Wing's Branch Guild, Silverwing Town, and the Lost Town in the Boneless Land, all of which required a massive amount of funds.

This was especially true for Silverwing Town and the Lost Town. Silverwing Town was located beside a Primordial Divine Ruin that was connected to Primordial City. It was a strategic location that could constantly bring in combat techniques and resources, which could aid players in their Promotion Quests. As for the Lost Town, it was a holy land that could help players grasp the Realms of Truth. It would help Zero Wing nurture countless experts for the future.

These two towns were the foundations necessary for Zero Wing to become a Super Guild, and they needed to be fortified as soon as possible. Otherwise, once the various superpowers realized the value of these two towns, they would do everything they could to steal them from Zero Wing. This was also why Shi Feng had told no one about the Lost Town.

With how large Zero Wing had grown, there were many spies within the Guild. The risk of leaking information was too great. In God's Domain, the strong preyed on the weak. On the off chance that the various superpowers discovered the Lost Town's ability, Zero Wing's current strength wouldn't be enough to defend the town from the claws of multiple superpowers.

It was absolutely necessary that Shi Feng fortify the two towns as soon as possible, and the fastest way to do so required spending money to earn even more.

Purchasing these 14 plots of Land was his plan's first steps.

After purchasing these 14 plots of Land, Shi Feng chose the largest one and spent 3,000 Gold to build a luxurious Adventurer Residence, which would serve as Asura's base in this city. He then selected another five plots of Land and spent a total of 5,000 Gold to build high-end Shops. Shi Feng intended to use these Shops as temporary warehouses.

Frozen City had far more residential players than Cold Wind City, and the resources these players possessed were doubtlessly superior to those in Cold Wind City in both quantity and quality.

After making the necessary preparations, Shi Feng went onto Frozen City's official forums and published a post as the Asura adventurer team's commander.

The Adventurer Alliance is currently recruiting in Frozen City. We offer excellent benefits with no restrictions! Strong, capable players can even join the Asura adventurer team directly!

The moment this post went public, many players that were interested in the Asura adventurer team clicked on it out of curiosity.

"Amazing! Truly amazing!"

"What?! We can even purchase Level 50 Fine-Gold Set Equipment?!"

"Quick, look! We can actually purchase combat techniques in the Adventurer Alliance! There are also Ice Resistance Gemstones among the exchangeable items!"

“This Asura adventurer team is too generous! Does Asura plan to gather strength for a war against Hecate?”

“Is this for real? If it’s true, I’ll join the Adventurer Alliance right away!”

“Magic Light Set, here I come!”

The post Shi Feng had uploaded contained information that introduced the Adventurer Alliance’s benefits. To attract more players to join, he had even used the Magic Light Set and combat techniques as bait

Of course, not only did items like the Magic Light Set require a large number of Adventurer Alliance Points, but they also required a sufficient number of Soul Dissolving Flowers.

Shortly after Shi Feng’s post went live, the independent players throughout the entire Frozen City went into an uproar. Every one of these independent players rushed toward Asura’s Residence. Although the majority of them did not have Soul Dissolving Flowers, they were still curious to find out whether the Asura adventurer team’s claim was true, wanting to confirm the situation with their own eyes.

Before ten minutes had even passed, over 10,000 independent players had crowded around Asura’s Residence, seeking to join the Adventurer Alliance; they packed the street outside the Residence, forcing Asura’s members to step up and maintain order.

When Frozen City’s independent players joined the Adventurer Alliance and saw the exchange list in the main lobby, they were ecstatic. The Magic Light Set was on the list, as promised, and there were actually three available!

After getting their fill of the Magic Light Set, the independent players in the lobby turned their bloodshot eyes toward the Ice Resistance Gemstones that increased one's Ice Resistance by five points. They immediately began to bid on the gemstones.

Frozen City had far more resources than Cold Wind City, especially when it came to Magic Crystals. This was because Frozen City had an Asura Mode Regional Dungeon in its area. Players could visit the Regional Dungeon to harvest the Magic Crystals they needed. Hence, Frozen City's players had slightly more Magic Crystals in their possession than Cold Wind City's players.

Very quickly, the prices for the Ice Resistance Gemstones shot up to seven Magic Crystals, with some even reaching eight

Magic Crystals. Roughly 30 minutes later, the 5,000 five-point gemstones Shi Feng had brought from Cold Wind City had sold out. Frozen City's appetite for the Ice Resistance Gemstones was many times stronger than Cold Wind City's.

The sales had also earned Shi Feng over 35,700 Magic Crystals. Realizing that demand for the gemstones was so high here, Shi Feng posted 10,000 six-point gemstones for sale as well, with their minimum price set at seven Magic Crystals. However, instead of selling batches of 1,000 at a time, as he had before, he only sold the six-point gemstones in batches of 200 and 300.

To Shi Feng's surprise, all three Magic Light Sets had sold roughly three hours after he had established the Adventurer Alliance in Frozen City, netting him 18 Soul Dissolving Flowers...

Despite all of his efforts to collect the Soul Dissolving Flower in Cold Wind City, he had only collected six stalks, yet he had secured 18 stalks only three hours after arriving in Frozen City. The difference between the two cities was greater than he had imagined. Although the Magic Light Sets had likely been purchased by players from large Guilds, potentially adding to these Guild's strength, Shi Feng didn't care.

After all, he had finally secured the 20 Soul Dissolving Flowers.

After Shi Feng withdrew the 18 Soul Dissolving Flowers from Asura's warehouse, he nearly lost himself to his excitement and clicked to remove the curse on the Philosopher's Hand. Fortunately, he managed to suppress his elation and found a private room in the Residence. Only after ensuring that he was alone did he retrieve the crystalline hand from his bag.

System: It has been detected that you have 20 Soul Dissolving Flowers. Do you wish to remove the curse on the Philosopher's Hand?

Seeing the system notification, Shi Feng clicked "Accept" without hesitation.

Chapter 1780: Initial Unsealing of a Legendary Item

The instant Shi Feng chose to remove the curse, the crystalline, skeletal hand released a purplish-gold glow that lit up the entire room.

The Mana density in the room also started to rise at a rapid rate.

Amazing! So, this is the power of the Philosopher's Hand? Shi Feng was unprecedentedly calm as a white mist surrounded him.

Shortly after, the mist-turned Mana gradually took liquid form. A globe of Liquid Mana then formed before Shi Feng.

A moment later, a scene began to play in the Mana globe.

The footage showed a world enveloped in fire. The world's sky was covered in dense, dark clouds, and from time to time, a tower of flame would rise into the sky. Meanwhile, white flames danced on flowing, white-hot magma in this world's center. The flames were so hot that they even distorted space around them.

However, Shi Feng could faintly see a gigantic gate in the center of the white-hot flames. In addition, a massive, crimson figure paced inside the flames. The figure wielded a trident that seemed to be the ruler of the surrounding flames.

After one minute of the footage, it disappeared. The room gradually returned to its original state, and the Philosopher's Hand quietly hovered before Shi Feng. However, the item was now decorated in carved, divine runes.

The Philosopher's Hand's Attributes had also undergone significant changes.

[Cursed Philosopher's Hand] (Legendary Rank Item)

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. As Soul Dissolving Flowers had been used on the Philosopher's Hand, the creator's soul had received Soul Guidance. As a result, the curse has been weakened slightly.

Additional Skill-

Philosopher's Soul: Offers players guidance for 1 hour when crafting items.

Cooldown: 3 hours

What an amazing Skill! I've only partially removed the curse, yet the Philosopher's Hand has gained such a heaven-defying Skill. It's no wonder why it had been known as an alchemy treasure. Shi Feng was astonished when he saw the updated Attribute Panel.

Most likely, the effects of Philosopher's Soul could rival even the value of a Meditation Potion. However, the materials needed to produce the Meditation Potion were incomparably valuable, and the potion itself was impossible to mass-produce. Philosopher's Soul, on the other hand, was a Skill that could be used indefinitely. Although the Skill could only be used to help Lifestyle players craft items, not to learn combat techniques like the Meditation Potion, it was still a precious resource. If the public discovered this Skill, Guilds throughout the game would hunt Shi Feng down to steal it

In God's Domain, players had to invent items, which involved a process of trial and error to become Lifestyle Masters. It would take a very long time for a Lifestyle player to reach the Master rank. However, if one had some guidance, then inventing an item would become easier. This would help Lifestyle players, who were just a small step away from becoming a Master, cross the final threshold.

After just partially dissolving the curse on the Philosopher's Hand, it offered such a powerful Skill. It was no wonder why Kingdom's Sword had developed its trading firm to the forefront of the Dark Night Empire within a short time. After all, Lifestyle Masters were the core competitive power of a trading firm.

This outcome made Shi Feng even more eager to complete this Epic ranked Main Storyline Quest and obtain the complete Philosopher's Hand.

However, the World Forest's location is a big problem. As Shi Feng recalled the scene the Mana ball had displayed, frowning.

Current players were likely unfamiliar with the flaming world and would take a very long time to find it, but the moment Shi Feng, who was incredibly familiar with God's Domain, had laid eyes on the world of fire, the massive crimson monster, and the trident it wielded, he knew where it was.

The Flame Demon's Valley!

It was a neutral map that was home to Flame Demons. The gigantic monster in the recording was, in fact, the Flame Demon King, the Flame Demon's Valley's Final Boss.

As the Flame Demon's Valley was rich in Magic Crystals and Source Fire Ore, it had been highly contested over by the various large Guilds in the past. The Flame Demon King, in particular, was one of the few World Bosses available at this stage of the game. The Flame Demon King's First Kill awarded Fragmented Legendary items and Guild Residence Promotion Orders. As a result, God's Domain's various superpowers had dispatched large armies to raid it. Unfortunately, every Guild that had tried to raid the World Boss had returned in failure.

The Flame Demon King had only been Level 83 back then, the various superpowers' expedition team members had, on average, been over Level 80. The expedition teams also consisted of Tier 2 players, yet they hadn't been powerful enough to stand against the Flame Demon King's strength. Every expedition team had been annihilated. Only after players had reached Level 100 and obtained their Tier 3 classes did they finally defeat the Flame Demon King.

Meanwhile, the main reason that Level 80-plus players had failed to defeat the Demon King was the Flame Demon's Valley's intense environment. The area the Flame Demon King occupied was so hot that players would rapidly lose HP even in full Fire Resistance equipment and with Advanced Fire Resistance Potions. When a team battled the Flame Demon King, the team's healers constantly had to heal every member of their team. One could easily imagine the results of such a disadvantageous battle.

However, not only would players Basic Attributes and physique improve considerably after reaching Tier 3, but their Resistances would also undergo a qualitative transformation. This was also the greatest difference between Tier 2 and Tier 3 players.

This was why players had been able to defeat this Boss after reaching Tier 3.

Although Shi Feng's goal only consisted of traveling to the World Forest and activating the World Gate, not killing the Flame Demon King, the area's scorching fire was no laughing matter. Even if he consumed an Advanced Fire Resistance Potion, he wouldn't last more than 20 seconds in the severe environment without a healer. Furthermore, the Flame Demon King wouldn't just sit by and watch him approach the World Gate.

If he factored in the Flame Demon King's interference, he wouldn't survive for more than a few seconds. Then, how was he supposed to activate the World Gate?

It seems that I'll have to find a way to increase my Fire Resistance.

No matter how Shi Feng thought about it, the only way he could activate the World Gate and complete his quest as soon as possible was to raise his Fire Resistance. Moreover, just increasing his Fire Resistance wouldn't do. He needed to help improve enough players to form a 20-man team at the very least. Otherwise, he wouldn't accomplish anything even if he was immune to the map's heat with the Flame Demon King harassing him. He needed others to distract the Flame Demon King while he activated the World Gate.

At the moment, Shi Feng could only think of three methods to improve a player's Fire Resistance.

The first method was to wear Fire Resistance equipment, the second involved Fire Resistance Potions, and the last required raising one's tier. The last option was unrealistic. Hence, he could only rely on the first and second method.

Creating Advanced Fire Resistance Potions was not a problem for the Candlelight Trading Firm. The problem now lay in how to acquire a large stock of Fire Resistance equipment. Moreover, the Fire Resistance equipment in question had to provide a significant amount of Fire Resistance. Otherwise, players wouldn't be able to survive in the Flame Demon King's abode.

Trying to secure a large stock of powerful Fire Resistance equipment within a short time was unrealistic at this stage of the game. This was because mainstream players were just starting to cross the Level 50 threshold. Team Dungeons that dropped Resistance equipment were still extremely rare. Hence, Resistance equipment was very rare at this level, much less excellent Resistance equipment.

Only after players reached Level 70 and above would Resistance equipment start to become available in greater quantities.

There's no other choice. I can only return and have Aqua Rose and Gentle Snow prioritize Team Dungeons that drop Fire Resistance equipment. Shi Feng sighed.

Following which, Shi Feng stored the Philosopher's Hand and called Yan Ya over to discuss the works that needed to be done in Frozen City after he left the Ice Crystal World. He then filled his bag with the 60,000 Magic Crystals, which he had earned through the Ice Resistance Gemstones that provided +6 Ice Resistance, and a large amount of rare materials he had acquired from Frozen City and Cold Wind City. He then used a Guild Transfer Scroll and teleported back to the continent of God's Domain.

