

The Strongest

Chapter 951: Super-first-rate Forger

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While Shi Feng was holding a meeting with the Lifestyle players of the Candlelight Trading Firm, Heaven's Burial was also having a meeting at Star-Moon City.

Among the participants of the meeting were several middle-aged people dressed in plain clothing, aside from a large group of well-equipped expert players. The levels of these middle-aged people were only in the low thirties. The aura that combat experts usually exuded was also absent from these people. On the contrary, they gave off a dull and strict feeling.

However, nobody present in the venue looked down on these people. Rather, everyone looked at them with deep reverence.

"Uncle Seven, you are simply too amazing. I never thought that you would actually manage to recruit these people," the Cleric Flame Blood said in admiration as he looked at the middle-aged man named Seven Treasures. "With this, our Guild will definitely rise rapidly."

"You're giving me too much credit. I simply followed the Guild Leader's orders to bring them here." Seven Treasures chuckled as he waved his hand.

“It was Guild Leader who managed to persuade them? I heard that these people had rejected even the invitations of Super Guilds,” Flame Blood said, a look of surprise appearing on his face.

While he had known that Singular Burial had been secretly trying to poach the Advanced Lifestyle players of various Guilds before, he had considered it a futile effort.

Currently, Advanced Lifestyle players were like treasures to any Guild. Not only did they receive excellent benefits, but they were also subject to a series of restrictive conditions binding them to their respective Guilds. These players would not easily defect to Heaven’s Burial.

However, after seeing these few middle-aged men and women sitting before him, he now realized he had assumed wrong.

The virtual gaming world had developed for over a hundred years already. Aside from well-known experts and Super Guilds leaving their names behind in the annals of history, there were also plenty of amazing Lifestyle players. These people had relied on Lifestyle classes to become famous in the virtual gaming world, and their fame was not one bit inferior to that of top-tier experts.

Although there would be some differences between the Lifestyle classes of different virtual reality games, those capable of domination in a virtual reality game would perform mainly the same even if they switched to a different game.

Aside from that, the middle-aged men and women present were among the best Lifestyle players in multiple virtual reality games, and any professional gamer who walked the path of Lifestyle classes would know of them.

Now that Lifestyle classes were becoming increasingly important in God’s Domain, these several masters had become even more difficult to hire than top-tier experts, yet Heaven’s Burial had managed to recruit these people.

With them aboard, Flame Blood was certain of one thing...

From today onwards, things were going to change in Star-Moon Kingdom. The Candlelight Trading Firm, which had remained the dominant trading firm within the kingdom all this time, would soon be history.

Heaven's Burial had an abundance of capital. In addition, they also had a steady source of Magic Crystals. Just the number of cities the Heavenly Trading Firm covered right now already surpassed the Candlelight Trading Firm's greatly. Currently, it was only lacking in Advanced Lifestyle players and popular exclusive products when compared to Candlelight. Once the Heavenly Trading Firm dealt with these problems, becoming the number one trading firm in Star-Moon Kingdom would be a piece of cake.

"Daybreak, how is the progress of the quest on your side?" asked Singular Burial, who was seated on the Guild Leader's throne.

"We're almost done. At most, we'll need another two days' time to obtain the Shop Promotion Order," Daybreak Fog said confidently.

"Good. As long as we obtain this Promotion Order, the Heavenly Trading Firm will be able to secure its foothold in Star-Moon Kingdom. When the time comes, we'll be relying on you several masters," Singular Burial said, turning to look at the middle-aged men and women seated at a corner.

"As long as you accomplish what you've promised, we naturally won't disappoint you," the bespectacled middle-aged man seated in the lead of the group said very casually. "At that time, not only will the Heavenly Trading Firm become the number one trading firm in Star-Moon Kingdom, but it will also become the number one in the Black Dragon Empire and the surrounding countries!"

Although the words of the man sounded very arrogant, nobody present doubted his words.

After all, this man was the super-first-rate forger, Lava Heart, someone known as the Forging Lecturer in the virtual gaming world. In the real world, he was even a famous blacksmith who specialized in producing all sorts of weapons and defensive equipment for bigwigs and martial arts masters.

“Please rest assured on this point. I am a man of my word,” Singular Burial laughed.

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Inside the Candlelight Trading Firm:

After Shi Feng was done stating his demands, the Intermediate Lifestyle players, who had initially been hesitant to make a decision, started applying to take the test one after another.

The Basic Meditation Room was simply too tempting.

Despite having entered the Meditation Room for only a short time, they could already clearly feel the benefits it provided.

The Mana released into the room allowed them to maintain their calm. Their concentration while inside this room was significantly better.

Any player that produced items would know just how important concentration was.

After the fourth evolution of God's Domain, the procedures to manufacture items had become increasingly complex. The lack of fine control over one's movements when producing an item would easily result in failure. Meanwhile, having high concentration could allow players to carry out these fine movements with ease. The Meditation Room would definitely be able to help them further improve themselves.

"Are you guys really going to agree to these conditions?" an Advanced Alchemist named Flying Fish could not help but ask as he looked at his fellow Advanced Lifestyle players. "I believe that you guys should've received invitations from Heaven's Burial as well. The conditions they are offering are triple those of Candlelight's. Moreover, they've also promised to assign an exclusive Special Workshop to each of us in the future. We'll even get priority over choosing rare designs and recipes. We'll have a much better time there than at Candlelight. Why don't we all just move to Heaven's Burial's Heavenly Trading Firm?"

"Although the treatment Heaven's Burial is offering is indeed good, we get to learn extremely rare designs at the Candlelight Trading Firm. Moreover, there's even the Basic Meditation Room available now. Not to mention, if we move to the Heavenly Trading Firm, we'll have to start over from scratch," an Advanced Lifestyle player replied worriedly.

"What's there to worry about? Even if we start a new account, the technical skills we've accumulated will stay with us. Moreover, rare designs and recipes are becoming increasingly abundant. We'll be able to regain our lost development very quickly. Also, you shouldn't forget that the Heavenly Trading Firm also has those several masters. Compared to fumbling around in the dark, our chances of reaching the Master rank will improve significantly if we follow in their footsteps," Flying Fish said, yearning stirring in his heart when he mentioned those "masters."

The only reason the Candlelight Trading Firm could become as strong as it was now was the rare designs it had managed to obtain early on.

However, after the fourth evolution of God's Domain, the difficulty of making items had increased significantly. It would be very difficult for them to improve further by relying on external factors. If they could receive the guidance of those several masters hired by the Heavenly Trading Firm, their chances of becoming true Lifestyle Masters would be much higher than if they continued staying at the Candlelight Trading Firm.

"Burning, why don't you follow me as well? With those masters guiding us, I believe that you'll be able to become a Lifestyle Master very quickly. At that time, you might even get to join the upper echelons of Heaven's Burial," Flying Fish urged the tall and thin youth standing beside him.

Burning Abyss had entered the Candlelight Trading Firm just recently. Back then, he had only been an Advanced Apprentice. However, due to his great talent, he quickly managed to become an Advanced Engineer. In contrast, Flying Fish became an Advanced Alchemist only after striving for a long time.

However, Burning Abyss shook his head in reply.

Usually, aside from making items inside his Workshop, the thing he liked doing the most was reading in libraries. In addition, he would also take a look at the information gathered by Zero Wing.

From reading the gathered information, he had obtained many secrets that others did not know about, which was also one of the reasons why he had managed to improve so quickly in engineering.

Previously, when he saw Shi Feng take out the Titan City Entrance Tokens, his legs had nearly gone limp from shock.

Although Shi Feng had kept his explanation of the function of the entrance tokens brief, only stating that those who use it would get to train in Special Workshops as well as learn some rare designs and recipes, Burning Abyss knew exactly what kind of place the Holy City of Titan was.

That was a place known as the Holy Land.

Titan City even had the Research Rooms that all Lifestyle Masters dreamed of entering. The help the research materials there could provide was many times more accurate and detailed than any guidance from a bunch of players.

“Are you really planning to defect to the Heavenly Trading Firm?” Burning Abyss asked seriously as he looked at Flying Fish.

“Of course,” Flying Fish replied in a determined tone.

At Flying Fish’s reply, Burning Abyss could not help but sigh as he said, “I advise you not to go. If you defect to the Heavenly Trading Firm, you will definitely regret your decision today.”

Chapter 952: Immense Wealth

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“Burning, you sure know how to joke.”

“Burning, you can’t be reluctant to part with the Meditation Room, right? Although the Basic Meditation Room is indeed good, there are too many Advanced Lifestyle players in the trading firm. We’ll have to wait for a long time before our turn to use it comes. Not to mention, the Meditation Room simply provides very little assistance in getting us promoted to the Master rank, compared to the guidance provided by those top-tier Lifestyle experts.”

“Also, rather than the current situation where Super Guilds look down on us, once we become Masters, Super Guilds will beg us to join them.”

When the surrounding Lifestyle players heard Burning Abyss’s words, they could not help but start laughing.

Lifestyle classes were different from combat classes. The aid that external factors could provide Lifestyle players was limited; one had to rely mainly on their own techniques and experience to perform well. Meanwhile, these things required frequent practice.

During the early stages of the game, the external conditions provided by the Candlelight Trading Firm were indeed much better compared to those of Super Guilds. However, the aid from these external factors stopped when a player reached the Advanced rank. This was also the reason why Super Guilds thought little of Advanced Lifestyle players. After all, players relied on an abundance of resources to obtain that rank.

It was a different story for Lifestyle players who had reached the Master rank, which was not achievable through resources alone.

“Burning, if you don’t want to leave, so be it. Is there a need to try and scare us into staying as well?” Flying Fish’s expression darkened. Although he did not think that Burning Abyss’s words would come true, he still felt displeased after hearing them.

Regret leaving the Candlelight Trading Firm?

He refused to believe that the Basic Meditation Room could compete with guidance from those several masters. Moreover, he would receive much more attention and better treatment at the Heavenly Trading Firm.

With those several masters present, it was only a matter of time before the Heavenly Trading Firm became the number one trading firm in Star-Moon Kingdom.

“Suit yourself.” After saying so, Burning Abyss walked towards Melancholic Smile to apply for the test.

The only reason he had cautioned Flying Fish was the good relationship they usually had.

The Titan City Entrance Tokens were extremely limited. In order to nurture talents, the Guild would no doubt prioritize sending Intermediate Lifestyle players to Titan City. The number of slots reserved for Advanced Lifestyle players would definitely be very few. If Flying Fish and the other Advanced Lifestyle players left, he would have a much better chance of getting selected to visit the Holy City.

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“Guild Leader, just like you’ve speculated, four Advanced classes and over twenty Intermediate classes are requesting the termination of their contracts with us,” Melancholic Smile said as she handed a stack of withdrawal applications to Shi Feng. Frowning slightly, she asked, “Guild Leader, are we really going to let them go?”

Currently, the Candlelight Trading Firm had a dearth of Advanced Lifestyle players. If they let these people go now, it would only serve to undermine the trading firm's competitiveness.

"Don't worry about it. Candlelight's future has no need for these people." Shi Feng chuckled. "If they wish to terminate their contracts and gift us money, I very much welcome them to do so."

Zero Wing's Workshop had recently recruited a large number of people and required money urgently. Since other Guilds were willing to pay to poach these Lifestyle players, he was more than happy to oblige them.

Upon hearing Shi Feng's words, Melancholic Smile could not help but fall speechless.

Other trading firms were selling products to earn money, yet Shi Feng was actually selling Lifestyle players to earn money.

However, this was also a good outcome. To begin with, those Lifestyle players never had any intention of staying at Candlelight over the long run. Now, not only could they rid themselves of these leeches, but they could also make a huge profit off the termination fee while they were at it.

"Right, how are things on the teleportation house's side?" Shi Feng asked quietly.

"Based on the test I conducted, each individual needs roughly one-fifth of a Magic Crystal's energy to teleport from White River City to the Twin Towers Kingdom. Hence, I set the teleportation fee for White River City at 20 Silver per person. The profits we've made so far already exceeds what the entire Candlelight Trading Firm makes in a day by a considerable margin," Melancholic Smile answered, great joy brightening her face when she spoke about the teleportation house.

The Candlelight Trading Firm was the number one trading firm in Star-Moon Kingdom. The Coins it earned in a day could make even first-rate Guilds drool.

Even so, the trading firm's income still paled significantly in comparison to that of the teleportation house.

Deducting the daily management fees of the several NPCs as well as the cost of the Magic Crystals used to fuel the teleportation array, the teleportation house had already earned over 2,000 Gold after just a few hours of operation. Unfortunately, the amount of Magic Crystals they could obtain through the Guild and purchasing from others was limited; they couldn't provide players with unrestricted use of the teleportation array. Even so, based on Melancholic Smile's calculations, they could still make a clean profit of around 5,000 Gold every day. This was several times the income of the Candlelight Trading Firm.

If Super Guilds were to learn of Zero Wing's daily income, they would definitely take action against Zero Wing regardless of the cost.

After hearing Melancholic Smile's report, even Shi Feng was surprised.

Although he had expected the teleportation house to be extremely profitable, he never thought it would be *this* profitable.

If not for the limited supply of Magic Crystals, this amount would most likely be several times higher. It was no wonder so many people had gone crazy over the Ancient Abyssal Books in the past.

It seems Magic Crystals will always remain a problem. The amount we can obtain by relying on just Stone Forest Town and purchases is simply too little. Shi Feng started pondering methods to earn large amounts of Magic Crystals in God's Domain.

As players progressed further into the game, the amount of Magic Crystals they required would also increase. However, the sources of Magic Crystals in God's Domain were just too few. Currently, aside from Dungeons and certain hidden locations, the only other method to obtain a large amount of Magic Crystals was through mining Magic Crystal veins. However, the standard of current God's Domain players made it utterly impossible for them to go to that kind of place.

Sometime later, the results of those who applied to take the test inside the Meditation Room came out. Based on the ranks of each class, Shi Feng chose 50 players with the highest production success rates. Among these 50 players, only five were Advanced Lifestyle players, while twenty were Intermediate Lifestyle players, and 25 were Basic Lifestyle players.

The reason he had decided on such a distribution was his wish to nurture a large number of Advanced Lifestyle players. He had no plans of having the Advanced players strive for the Master rank at the moment. Moreover, even if Shi Feng wanted to, the current Advanced Lifestyle players were simply incapable of doing so.

As for Cream Cocoa's group of Advanced classes, who wielded the core secrets of the Guild, Shi Feng would use the Holy City's Emblem to transport them over. If he had them working in the Special Workshops of Titan City, they would be able to produce the Mounts and Strengthening Devices slightly faster.

The Holy City's Emblem could open a transfer gate to Titan City and allow up to ten people to pass through it. However, the emblem had a Cooldown of seven days.

Although it was not as convenient as the entrance tokens, which did not possess a Cooldown, it was valuable in the fact that it was reusable. It could continuously send the Lifestyle players of the Candlelight Trading Firm to Titan City.

After everyone had teleported to Titan City, Shi Feng silently departed the trading firm.

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“This is the Holy City of Titan?”

Originally, everyone had been extremely excited over the fact that they were going to get to have their own exclusive Special Workshop as well as learn rare designs and recipes. However, upon entering Titan City, they were utterly shocked by the scenery of Titan City.

Chapter 953: Holy Space

Inside Heaven’s Burial’s Residence in Star-Moon City...

“Guild Leader, I’ve just been notified that those four Advanced Lifestyle players from Candlelight have agreed to our conditions. Moreover, Candlelight isn’t forcing them to stay. As long as we send the money, they’ll let those four go,” Flame Blood reported excitedly upon receiving the news.

Advanced Lifestyle players were currently a rare commodity to any Guild. They were precious resources for Guilds in the war over market dominance. Hence, the various Guilds held onto their Lifestyle players tightly, preventing other Guilds from poaching. If a Guild wanted Advanced Lifestyle players, it would have to start by nurturing complete novices. However, doing so was time-consuming, and it would be very hard for a trading firm to gain a competitive edge in a short time.

Hence, Singular Burial had used those several masters and offered irresistible benefits.

Flame Blood had not expected Singular Burial's strategy to be effective enough to poach four Advanced Lifestyle players. This would significantly weaken the Candlelight Trading Firm.

Moreover, even though these Advanced Lifestyle players' Proficiency had been reset and they had lost the designs and recipes they had learned, they still retained their experience and technical skills. With Heaven's Burial's resources, it would not take long for these players to recover the losses. This was far more cost-efficient than simply nurturing Advanced Lifestyle players from scratch.

"Black Flame really is quite interesting. While other Guilds are keeping a tight leash on their Advanced Lifestyle players, he generously allowed four to walk away. It seems he is relatively confident in the Candlelight Trading Firm." The corners of Singular Burial's mouth twitched when he heard this news, and he could not help but admire Shi Feng.

They were talking about four Advanced Lifestyle players!

After investing plenty of resources into its trading firm, Heaven's Burial had only nurtured five Advanced Lifestyle players thus far. Among them, three had only recently achieved their promotion.

Yet, the Candlelight Trading Firm had abandoned four such individuals without hesitation.

“Guild Leader, will these players be a problem?” Daybreak Fog asked worriedly from the side.

“They shouldn’t be. I spoke with all of them in secret earlier. Their item production techniques and success rates are genuine,” Singular Burial said, shaking his head. Chuckling, he continued, “Since Candlelight is so generous, we don’t need to be courteous with them. Uncle Seven, deal with this matter right away. We can’t let another Guild steal these people from us.”

With these four Advanced Lifestyle players and the five masters in the Heavenly Trading Firm, it wouldn’t be long before the position of Star-Moon Kingdom’s top trading firm switched owners.

Once the Heavenly Trading Firm surpassed the Candlelight Trading Firm, Heaven’s Burial would have a stable source of income. At that time, Heaven’s Burial could officially begin its conquest of Star-Moon Kingdom.

“Guild Leader, rest assured; I’ll head over right away,” Seven Treasures said. He immediately departed the meeting room and dashed towards Star-Moon City’s Teleportation Hall.

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On the streets of Titan City, the city’s dense Mana intoxicated Melancholic Smile and her companions.

The Mana density in this city is even higher than the Basic Meditation Room! Melancholic Smile grew breathless when she felt the city’s Mana.

Although the difference in Mana between the Basic Meditation Room and the Special Workshop seemed small, it was precisely this small difference that made it far easier for Intermediate Lifestyle players to reach the Advanced rank.

Lifestyle players gained Proficiency in a slightly different way from combat players who only needed to gain EXP by killing monsters.

Take Intermediate Forgers who were trying to become Advanced Forgers for example. When their Forging Proficiency reached a certain degree, even if they only produced ordinary items befitting their rank, they would not gain any Forging Proficiency. They would have to produce rare items befitting their rank to raise their Proficiency.

Soon, even rare items would not provide any Proficiency, at which point, Intermediate Forgers would have to produce items that were one rank higher to improve.

One could just imagine how abysmal an Intermediate Forger's success rate with producing Advanced items would be.

If one could not complete the forging procedures flawlessly, they would waste an astonishing amount of materials. Moreover, Intermediate Forgers would be producing advanced merchandise, which required rare materials. Even Super Guilds would not waste their rare materials so recklessly.

Guilds mainly nurtured Lifestyle players to make money. Although they would have to invest, this investment was not limitless. There was definitely a cap.

In the Candlelight Trading Firm, rare materials were extremely limited. The trading firm did not have the leeway for everyone to produce higher-rank merchandise limitlessly. Hence, the trading firm would conduct a quality check every now and then, using the opportunity to determine how many rare materials to allocate to each person.

Those with high production success rates received a larger supply of rare materials. This way, they could gain more Proficiency each day, increasing their promotion speed.

This was precisely the reason that...

The Basic Meditation Room's Mana density was extremely important. The dense Mana in the air could allow players to maintain a calm mind and high concentration. This way, they wouldn't make errors as easily when crafting. If they could cut down on unnecessary mistakes, their production success rate would increase. Their promotion speed would also increase.

This was why the various large Guilds were more willing to pay a huge price to poach Advanced Lifestyle players rather than nurture their own.

Following which, Melancholic Smile led everyone to the Titan Lifestyle Association.

As Shi Feng had requested, she rented Special Workshops for everyone for three days. Including the cost to purchase designs and recipes, she had spent over 4,000 Gold.

This expenditure dumbfounded Cream Cocoa and the others.

Even first-rate Guilds would be hard-pressed to collect more than 4,000 Gold.

None of them had ever imagined that the trading firm would spend so much on them.

They finally understood why the trading firm had required them to sign such a strict contract.

In fact, if not for the money earned through the Teleportation House, even Melancholic Smile's heart would've stopped by now.

Coming here to raise one's Proficiency and techniques was the epitome of luxury.

However, upon entering the Lifestyle Association's Special Workshop, her opinion changed.

Although the Workshop here was only half the size of the Candlelight Trading Firm's Special Workshops, the Mana density was three times that of the outside world. Inside this room, she experienced a mental clarity like never before.

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Moreover, aside from its high Mana density, there was a large amount of research materials available inside this Special Workshop.

After a cursory search for information on the Strengthening Device, Melancholic Smile compiled a few dozen pages' of information. Among them were production videos from Master Forgers and key crafting points.

"Master-ranked production videos?" Melancholic Smile clicked on the video out of curiosity.

Chapter 954: New World

The moment Melancholic Smile clicked on one of the Masters' production videos, a tall, robust figure appeared inside the room, which was the size of a basketball court. The man had tanned skin and a long beard.

"What?! This is a hologram?!" Melancholic Smile was shocked when she saw the bearded man.

While there were production videos of many capable individuals on God's Domain's official forums, one could only watch them on a flat screen. At the end of the day, one could not experience their production process.

Moreover, compared to this holographic Master Forger's techniques, every forging player throughout God's Domain was practically garbage.

"A Master Forger is impressive. So, I can use this method to forge the Strengthening Devices as well."

After watching the holographic video once, Melancholic Smile was aware of her flaws. Particularly, her rune-drawing techniques needed work.

The bearded man's rune looked natural on the Strengthening Device. Moreover, he completed the rune with one smooth motion.

The original Strengthening Device design only offered a simple introduction and a few basic demonstrations. It did not contain any forging techniques to speak of. Melancholic Smile had no choice but to experiment.

After watching the Master Forger's video, Melancholic Smile felt as if doors to a whole new world had opened for her.

"If this is what the videos are like, what are the key production points?" After calming herself, Melancholic Smile shifted her attention towards the key points of production, clicking on one of the several available links.

As soon as Melancholic Smile clicked on it, she heard a system notification.

System: Production Annotation Mode activated. Energy is required to activate this mode: Magic Crystals. One Magic Crystal will last one hour. Do you wish to continue?

"It even needs Magic Crystals?" Melancholic Smile could not help her surprise.

The Master Forger's holographic video had not required any payment. Seeing as energy was required to annotate the key points of production, this function should be far more valuable than the videos.

Melancholic Smile did not take long to consider her options. As she had come to produce Strengthening Devices, she had plenty of Magic Crystals on hand. Wasting one wouldn't matter.

Following which, Melancholic Smile clicked "Accept," and a single Magic Crystal disappeared from her bag.

System: Production Annotation Mode activated. Loading Strengthening Device Template Number 017. You may now produce the Strengthening Device.

"That's it?" Melancholic Smile had not noticed anything different about herself, and nothing new had appeared in the room.

However, since the system had said as much, she decided to start forging the Strengthening Device.

In any case, Shi Feng had stated that they needed to produce a large quantity of Strengthening Devices as quickly as possible.

As Melancholic Smile took out the necessary materials and prepared to smelt them, various images and data appeared before her. The information consisted of semi-transparent holograms and wouldn't affect her production directly.

When Melancholic Smile looked through the images and data, she was shocked.

After all, this information guided her through producing the Strengthening Device. All she needed to do was overlay her actions with the holographic images and observe the smelting process. The data displayed also provided specific hints for carrying out these actions.

The Production Annotation Mode was like a copybook that provided ideal forging procedures, and all she needed to do was familiarize herself with these procedures. Learning how to forge the Strengthening Device this way was many times more effective than simply watching a Master Forger at work.

As Melancholic Smile forged the Strengthening Devices according to the hints provided, her forging success rate and speed steadily rose.

Originally, Melancholic Smile's success rate with the Strengthening Device had been around 40%. After using the Intermediate Mana Source Ore, her success rate increased to roughly 50%. However, she rarely achieved a 50% success rate when actually crafting them. Before arriving in Titan City, she usually succeeded four of ten tries, and sometimes less.

After an hour inside the Special Workshop, however, she could now stabilize her output to four or more out of ten tries. Many of her uncertainties when forging the Strengthening Device had also vanished, and now, her actions were more decisive. This resulted in a faster forging speed. She was practically as fast as she had been before God's Domain's fourth evolution.

She was overjoyed.

With the videos of the Master Forgers and the key production points, her forging techniques improved with each second she spent in the room. Her growth was at least ten times faster than when she had been in the Candlelight Trading Firm's Basic Meditation Room.

Melancholic Smile felt that the 4,000-plus Gold they spent was worth it. After such a short time here, she was confident of trying for the Master rank. As for the firm's other Lifestyle players, rising from Basic or Intermediate rank to Advanced would be a piece of cake.

Melancholic Smile wasn't the only one excited about Titan City's Special Workshops. All those who experienced the Special Workshops instantly fell in love.

Everyone felt that, if they could stay here, they could easily become Masters.

Unfortunately, this was only a misconception. After all, techniques and high success rates were not the only requirements to become a Master. One also needed extensive knowledge of materials. Without sufficient knowledge, creating an item of their own would be impossible.

"If Flying Fish and the others knew about this, they'd go mad." Burning Abyss, who resided in his own Special Workshop, could not help but sigh when he thought of Flying Fish and the other Advanced Lifestyle players.

Before coming to Titan City, although he had known that the city was the Holy Land for Lifestyle players, he had not expected it to be *this* amazing.

Titan City definitely deserved to be called a 'Holy Land.'

It now seemed that, in his search of a shortcut to become a Master, Flying Fish had suffered a huge setback. Even if those several masters were extremely skilled in other virtual reality games, at the end of the day, those games were not God's Domain. How could those masters' guidance possibly compare to God's Domain's true Masters?

Furthermore, there were the Research Rooms.

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Star-Moon Kingdom, White River City's Teleportation Hall:

Due to the new teleportation house, large groups of players flooded into White River City. Among them, a majority consisted of Guild players; only a small minority were independent players.

After Shi Feng finished sorting out his matters, he arranged to meet with Bloodsucker and the others at the Teleportation Hall.

When Shi Feng discovered Bloodsucker among the crowd, he also noticed an unfamiliar man beside Bloodsucker. The other party noticed him as well.

Although this man hid his appearance with a Black Cloak, Shi Feng felt his piercing gaze. It was the gaze of a predator. Shi Feng was not comfortable being its target.

Meanwhile, Bloodsucker and the others obviously treated this man with great respect. Kirin and Masked Angel, who stood beside the man, did not even dare to breathe loudly.

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"You must be Ye Feng, right?" the unfamiliar man said after looking at Shi Feng. Coldly, he continued, "Before you meet our Guild Leader, the Guild Leader has said that he wants to show you something."

"Show me what?" Shi Feng asked curiously.

“Strength!” The man laughed.

Chapter 955: Raven’s Background

After the unfamiliar man spoke, he shifted his gaze towards Bloodsucker.

“Blood, follow me. Everyone else, return to the Guild.”

Kirin and the others nodded to the man’s commanding tone, reverence filling their eyes when looked at him.

This surprised Shi Feng.

During the entrance trial, Shi Feng had discovered that that Kirin was a Void Realm expert. Throughout Zero Wing, only he could trump over the Assassin. Both Fire Dance and Violet Cloud were still weaker than him in terms of combat standards. Though, if it came to an actual fight, Fire Dance would defeat Kirin easily as the difference between their equipment was massive.

Regardless, with Kirin’s combat standards, he would be an apex expert in any Guild.

Yet, the unfamiliar man had clearly expressed that they were heading somewhere where an expert of Kirin's caliber wasn't qualified to be. Among the party, only Bloodsucker was allowed to accompany them.

"Brother Blood, where are we going?" Shi Feng sent Bloodsucker a private message. He was very curious about their destination.

"I don't know. This is only my third time meeting one of the Guild Leader's Dark Guards.

Although he was a part of Raven's upper management, he was not qualified to meddle with Raven's core.

In addition, Raven's internal affairs were kept hidden. As a Dark Guild, Raven did not prioritize killing monsters or developing cities. Instead, Dark Guilds killed players and plundered cities for a living, and everything they did demanded secrecy. After all, NPCs desperately wanted to eliminate them.

Hence, even an upper manager like Bloodsucker knew very little about the Raven Guild. He was only responsible for managing his area's bounties.

As for the Guild's core secrets, he knew nothing.

The Dark Guards were the Guild Leader's trusted aids. Every one possessed extremely high combat standards; even he admired them. The Guild Leader almost never revealed himself during his various tasks. He even left crucial matters for his Dark Guards to handle.

“A Dark Guard?” Shi Feng glanced at the cloaked man, shocked.

He had heard about Raven’s Dark Guards before.

Raven had become one of the Six Great Dark Guilds in God’s Domain due to its Dark Guards. These Dark Guards possessed inhuman combat standards. There were also many of them. Moreover, as they constantly covered themselves with Black Cloaks, nobody outside of Raven knew of their identities.

Initially, many people had wondered if a Super Guild had established Raven.

However, facts had proven that Raven was not related to any Super Guild in God’s Domain. Every Super Guild in God’s Domain had been under the care of Raven’s Dark Guards at some point. Despite the Dark Guards robbing them of many riches, none of these Super Guilds had any real method of dealing with the Dark Guild. This was because Raven had no fewer top-tier experts than a Super Guild.

Meanwhile, Shi Feng could clearly feel that the Dark Guard before him was even more impressive than Bloodsucker.

Of course, ‘impressive’ did not refer to combat techniques. Rather, it was the Dark Guard’s aura that impressed him. He felt more like a machine, cold and emotionless, than a human.

Bloodsucker was a Dark Player. He could build a mountain with the corpses of the players he had killed, yet he could not feel as intimidating as this Dark Guard. Like a soulless robot, this Dark Guard revealed neither joy nor sadness.

After Kirin and the others had departed, this indifferent Dark Guard led Shi Feng and Bloodsucker through numerous teleportations, traveling far from Star-Moon Kingdom and arriving in a remote town in the Dawn Empire. Following which, the trio rode their Mounts for several hours before finally arriving in a seemingly-uninhabited town.

Unlike NPC towns, this town had plenty of NPC guards patrolling its borders.

A captured town? After seeing the town's situation, Shi Feng could not help but admire Raven.

Various large Guilds hungered to capture their own town.

However, capturing a town was easier said than done.

He had only managed to capture Stone Forest Town because the town was slightly unique. He had also been able to use hundreds of thousands of players as bait.

Although players had reached higher levels and their Attributes had increased significantly, capturing a town was still very difficult. Even Super Guilds needed to plan long-term to do so. They couldn't afford any mistakes. Otherwise, the consequences would be extremely dire. There was even less need to mention other Guilds.

On his way here, Shi Feng had noticed that the surrounding monsters were all above Level 40. With this, the town's original NPCs should have been Level 60 at least.

It was no longer possible to capture a town by relying on players' strength. One needed powerful external assistants such as Tier 3 Summoning Scrolls or a small army of Personal Guards. They could also use siege weapons. However, without any of that, capturing a town of this level was impossible.

As for Bloodsucker, who was a member of Raven, he wore a dumbfounded expression. He could not believe his eyes.

Despite being one of the Guild's upper echelons, he had no clue that his Guild had its own town...

"Is this the Strength Guild Leader Bloodfang wants me to see?" Shi Feng asked the Dark Guard leading them.

Currently, among God's Domain's various powers, those capable of capturing a town of this caliber could be counted with one's fingers.

However, after entering the town, Shi Feng realized something.

The town was extremely poor. Aside from a Guild Residence, the only other buildings were a hotel and a smithy. There was nothing else...

Although the town was extremely poor, the several hundred players in the town were far from ordinary.

Not only were they all Level 38 or above, but they felt like ferocious beasts. The chill in their eyes was similar to the Dark Guard's; there was not a shred of emotion in their gaze. They seemed even less human than high-intelligence NPCs. If not for the green, diamond marker above their heads, Shi Feng would've wondered if these players were the town's NPCs.

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When Shi Feng arrived before the town's only hotel, three cloaked men emerged from the dilapidated building. The auras around these men were the same as the Dark Guard who had led them here, and they felt just as dangerous to Shi Feng.

"Guild Leader has said that only Ye Feng may enter. Bloodsucker, wait outside."

After hearing the Dark Guard's command, Bloodsucker had no choice but to wait. As for Shi Feng, he boldly waltzed into the hotel. He was very eager to learn just what kind of person Raven's Guild Leader was.

Chapter 956: Priceless Town

Inside the tattered hotel, aside from a man dressed and cloaked in black sitting on a windowsill and the two Dark Guards standing beside him, there were no players inside the establishment.

There were only two NPCs inside the hotel: a bartender and a waiter.

It was difficult to call this establishment a hotel.

From the moment he entered to the moment he stopped before the black-cloaked man, the two Dark Guards watched Shi Feng's every movement. If he made any sudden movements, they would eliminate Shi Feng immediately.

They both felt like well-trained bodyguards.

This is their hotel. Why are they so nervous? The Dark Guards' behavior confused Shi Feng. Their behavior furthered his interest in the man named Bloodfang.

In his previous life, Bloodfang had never once revealed his true appearance to the world. He had been a complete mystery, even more secretive than the legendary Flower of Seven Sins.

Although many people had looked into Bloodfang's background, no one ever learned anything.

Bloodfang's identity was so obscured that nobody even knew whether he was a man or a woman. After all, there were many items in God's Domain that could disguise a player. Moreover, Bloodfang wore a Black Cloak constantly. Even if one used an advanced Identification Skill, they would learn nothing. The only thing everyone knew was that Raven's members referred to their Guild Leader as "Bloodfang."

"Care for a drink?" Bloodfang asked after Shi Feng sat. "The beverages here are very good."

Unlike the Dark Guards, Bloodfang's voice was not void of emotion. Only, his tone was somewhat gravely.

“No need. Just tell me what you want. You didn’t invite me all this way just for a drink, right?” Shi Feng declined, shaking his head.

“Indeed, just as Bloodsucker had said, you really are straightforward.” Bloodfang chuckled. Pointing to the town outside the window, he continued, “I’ll just get straight to the point. What do you think of this town?”

“It is very shabby. However, the fact that your Guild has captured this town shows that there must be something of great interest to your Guild here,” Shi Feng said honestly.

The Dawn Empire was very far from Star-Moon Kingdom. Teleporting from Star-Moon Kingdom to the Dawn Empire cost 4 Gold, 24 Silver. Even current expert players would be reluctant to pay this price.

In the past, Shi Feng’s activity had always remain centered in Star-Moon Kingdom. Hence, other than knowing their general location, Shi Feng did not know much about distant kingdoms and empires.

Of course, he still had some knowledge of major incidents.

Although he had never personally visited these countries, the Secret Pavilion often reported major incidents that occurred in God’s Domain’s various kingdoms and empires.

However, as far as he could remember, nothing significant had occurred in the Dawn Empire at this stage of the game.

“Your senses are sharp. Indeed, as you’ve said, this town is quite shabby. However, Raven has paid a huge price to capture it. We’ve almost invested everything we’ve accumulated since joining God’s Domain to do so,” Bloodfang said, sighing. “I’m ashamed to say this, but although Raven has accumulated a lot of resources so far, constructing this town is too expensive.”

Shi Feng revealed a surprised expression as Bloodfang explained the situation.

He was very familiar with a town’s construction. The construction’s early stages required a hefty investment. However, to a power like Raven, it should not pose a problem.

“I don’t expect you to believe me. However, I am not lying. This town is somewhat special. Although it looks like this now, this town was initially flourishing. What you’re seeing is our second reconstruction.” Helplessness tinged Bloodfang’s voice as he spoke.

“The second time? Had the town been destroyed?” Shi Feng’s shock grew.

It was common knowledge that a newly constructed city could hire NPC guards to protect it for 15 days. To current players, Level 150 NPC guards were invincible. Even if the surrounding Level 40-plus monsters sought to cause trouble, Raven could take care of them easily. This town was indestructible.

“That’s right. This town has been destroyed once before. Even after hiring so many guards, in the end, we failed to defend it. Raven has invested too much into this town during its early stages. As a result, we can’t afford the reconstruction. Hence, I sought to cooperate with Zero Wing, hoping to convince your Guild to invest into this town and develop it with us,” Bloodfang said, nodding sternly. Confidently, he continued, “No other Guild knows about the town’s true value. I only discovered it after reading through an Ancient Document. If Zero Wing invests 100,000 Gold, your Guild will receive 20% of the town’s income.”

“Guild Leader Bloodfang, you’re talking about 100,000 Gold, not 100,000 Copper. With that kind of money, you can rebuild this town six or seven times over, or construct six or seven other towns, yet you’re only offering 20% of this town’s earnings. Even if there were a literal Gold Mine here, this town would never be worth that much money,” Shi Feng said, shaking his head.

After hearing Bloodfang mentioning the words “Ancient Document,” Shi Feng more or less understood that this town was different.

However, he could construct a city’s basic structure with 100,000 Gold, much less a town.

Even if this place had a Gold Mine, harvesting the ore would require tons of resources and manpower. Furthermore, they would have to smelt the ore into actual gold before they could sell it. Even if the harvest were high, if he only got 20% of the profits, who knew how long he would have to wait just to earn back his initial investment? He could not afford to throw what Coins he current possessed at this town.

“Elder Ye Feng, don’t reject the offer so quickly. I have yet to explain why this town is so special.” Shi Feng’s refusal did not seem to surprise Bloodfang.

“Special? What’s special about this place?” Shi Feng asked.

“There is a Manatite vein here. One can also obtain Magic Crystals alongside the Manatite Ore. Although the vein does not yield much, I believe that it does yield more than Stone Forest Town’s daily income. This could certainly benefit the Candlelight Trading firm,” Bloodfang said, chuckling. “How about it? Do you think my offer is worth consideration now?”

“It’s no wonder why Guild Leader Bloodfang is so confident. However, why Zero Wing? Wouldn’t it be better to work with Super Guilds? With the financial strength and manpower of a Super Guild, you would have more than enough to develop the town,” Shi Feng said. He had to admit that the offer was tempting.

Manatite was one of God's Domain's particularly rare minerals. As Manatite Ore contained dense Mana, Magic Crystals formed as a byproduct in a Manatite vein. Although one could collect more Mana Crystals by grinding monsters in the Stoneclaw Mountains, there was one benefit to harvesting Magic Crystals from a mine: the absence of danger. As long as they had a sufficient Mining level, any player could mine Magic Crystals. Moreover, the higher their Mining level was, the greater their chances were of obtaining Magic Crystals.

Chapter 957: Defense Turret

Chapter 957 – Defense Turret

In God's Domain, many players used Mining and Herb Gathering to get rich.

Ordinary players had very few income options. Generally, players relied on quest rewards as Common monsters rarely dropped Coins. Only Elite rank and higher monsters had any chance of dropping money. Even so, the chances were only around two or three percent. Moreover, they dropped Copper Coins.

As for monsters dropping materials, the chances were even lower...

After first joining God's Domain, players could mostly afford their repair fees with their earnings from grinding Common monsters. However, as their levels increased and the quality of their equipment rose,

the money they earned from Common monsters wouldn't be enough to maintain their items. Usually, they had to grind Elite monsters to cover their costs. If they were lucky and obtained a Bronze Weapon or piece of Equipment, not only could they afford a day's worth of repair fees, but they might also have something to save.

Unfortunately, that had only been the case after God's Domain had first launched.

Every time God's Domain evolved, the Main God System lowered weapon and equipment drop-rates. Now that the game had undergone its fourth evolution, even Elite monsters rarely dropped Bronze Weapons and Equipment. One usually had to obtain such items from Field Bosses or Dungeons.

It was precisely this reason that Lifestyle classes had become popular.

Meanwhile, the Lifestyle classes' development relied on various materials.

As players moved through maps, they usually paid attention to their surroundings. However, they were not only doing so to avoid player or monster ambushes, but to find ores and herbs.

A gathering player who was familiar with the environment could earn more money by selling the raw materials they gathered than what Guild elite members could earn from fighting monsters.

In the past, Shi Feng had frequently heard about gathering players obtaining excellent weapons and equipment solely by gathering ores and herbs. Many Guilds and trading firms had signed contracts with expert gathering players. As long as these players fulfilled their monthly quota, not only could they sell their materials at market price, but they would also gain bonus Credits.

Hence, for players in God's Domain, both Mining and Herb Gathering were usually very high-leveled.

If there truly were a Manatite vein beneath this town, they only needed to higher players with high-level Mining Skills. They could certainly earn far more Magic Crystals than Stone Forest Town. After all, Stone Forest Town only earned Magic Crystals from players repair and hotel fees. The town didn't earn nearly as much as players did in the Stoneclaw Mountains.

"My initial plan was to earn a large sum in the Dark Arena. However, Zero Wing's abilities have surpassed my expectations. While I have considered cooperating with Super Guilds before, they are simply too powerful; they might just take the town from Raven. Moreover, even if we form a partnership, with Super Guilds' appetite, Raven won't obtain much.

"Although there are a few more powers aside from Super Guilds that we could approach, these powers cannot provide as many Coins as Zero Wing.

"How about it? By cooperating with Raven, not only would Zero Wing not lack Magic Crystals, but the Candlelight Trading Firm would also have plenty of Manatite Ore. You will certainly earn more than 100,000 Gold."

Bloodfang believed that the conditions he had proposed were quite generous. There was simply no reason for an upstart Guild like Zero Wing to reject his offer.

Currently, Zero Wing did not have many assets in God's Domain. However, it was extremely difficult to invest in the real estate in other kingdoms and empires. The local Guilds had long since claimed the available Lands. As for kingdom and empire's main cities, although some golden Lands were still available, without sufficient Reputation in those cities, purchasing those lands was impossible.

By the time someone from Zero Wing obtained the required Reputation, others would have claimed those Lands.

In other words, Zero Wing should have a lot of money lying around right now, yet it could not effectively utilize the Coins, spending money to make money.

However, this could not be helped. After all, Zero Wing was merely an upstart Guild. Its income couldn't even compare to a veteran second-rate Guild, much less a super-first rate or Super Guild.

If Zero Wing continued to hold on to its funds, it would eventually depreciate.

This was also why, despite earning boatloads of Gold, Super Guilds had very little liquid funds. This was because these Super Guilds had long since invested the money into something more valuable, particularly various city's Lands with high potential.

If Zero Wing invested its excess Coins into Raven, it could kill two birds with one stone.

"Guild Leader Bloodfang, as I've said before, 100,000 Gold Coins are not 100,000 Copper Coins. Even Super Guilds can't hand over such a large amount, not to mention Zero Wing," Shi Feng said, shaking his head. "And again, you're only offering 20%. It will take ages to earn back our initial investment. God's Domain changes each day. Zero Wing cannot make such a huge gamble. Why don't we change our method of cooperation?"

Bloodfang shook his head, responding, "If you wish to invest manpower, forget it. Current players cannot defend this town. With the number and level of monsters attacking this town, we can only rely on NPCs to defend it; in fact, we need a small army. We also need to construct extremely powerful magical arrays and Defense Turrets before the 15-day protection period is over, all of which requires a large sum of Coins."

If not for his urgent need for money, he wouldn't have considered cooperating with Zero Wing at all. He very much preferred to have the town's profits to himself.

There was not a single power in God's Domain that would complain about having too much money, not to mention an essential item like the Magic Crystal.

As expected, these monsters must be unusual. Hearing Bloodfang's words, Shi Feng could faintly discern the true reason the town had been destroyed, and he could not help the corners of his lips curving up.

In the past, towns with rare mineral and herb fields nearby were often harassed by the local monsters.

Needless to say, a town with Manatite would be assaulted once every few days.

During God's Domain's early stages, the various large Guilds had headaches over these towns. After all, most of the money they earned had to be spent on the town's defense, with some towns needing additional investment.

As Bloodfang had said, constructing one Tier 3 defensive magic array to defend a town would cost 32,000 Gold. Although the magic array would block any monsters below Tier 4, Level 200, it required a lot of Mana to operate.

As for the Defense Turret, each one cost 7,000 Gold to construct.

Generally, monsters would come from all directions when raiding a town. Even if they placed only one Defense Turret at each of the four cardinal points, they needed at least four Defense Turrets. Moreover, the Turrets' artillery shells were very expensive. At market price, each shell cost 5 Gold, with higher-quality ones costing dozens.

Furthermore, a single Defense Turret at each corner wasn't nearly enough. They would need at least two.

With this, the total cost was around 88,000 Gold.

It was no wonder why Bloodfang wanted a 100,000 Gold investment.

However, players' wisdom was infinite. In the past, after the various large Guilds had experimented countless times, they had finally found a method to not only save on the high construction cost, but also resist against the swarms of invading monsters.

Chapter 958: Inconceivable Zero Wing

"If you can't make a decision right now, you can return after discussing it with your Guild Leader. However, I can only give you a day to consider," Bloodfang did not believe that there was another option for cooperation. He believed that Zero Wing could not afford to hand over that much money in such a short time. "One hundred thousand Gold is no small amount. I do not believe that Zero Wing can collect that much money in so little time, either; you can pay 40,000 Gold upfront and the remaining 60,000 in the next five days."

Raven was currently broke. They had used almost all of their money to reconstruct the town and hire the necessary NPC guards.

However, these NPC guards were still not capable of standing against all those monsters.

If they wanted to defend the town, they needed to construct the defensive magic array. With the magic array and the NPC guards, they should survive through the 15-day protection period. As long as they constructed the Defense Turrets during the protection period, they could begin mining the Manatite vein without issues.

“Guild Leader Bloodfang, 100,000 Gold is just too much. Even Zero Wing can’t spend that much money,” Shi Feng again rejected Bloodfang’s offer. “Why don’t we try a different method of cooperation? Zero Wing will be responsible for protecting the town. However, you will pay us 30% of the vein’s income.”

He still needed a large sum to construct his own city. How could he possibly give Raven his Coins?

Moreover, even without the defensive magic array and NPC guards, it was possible to prevent monsters from trampling the town.

He could simply head to Blackwing City and purchase a Monster Repellent Scroll.

The Monster Repellent Scroll was an item that could disperse monsters within a certain area, preventing low-intelligence monsters from actively approaching. Although the effect was temporary, the scroll was very cheap. Each scroll only cost 5 Gold. It was much more cost-effective than constructing a defensive magic array or Defense Turrets.

In God's Domain, the defensive magic array and Defense Turrets were mainly used during monster raids. When dealing with players, however, they were not as effective as NPC guards, yet they cost far more.

Rather than wasting money on that particular plan, Shi Feng would be better off investing his money into his own Guild or somewhere else.

Generally, the monsters that raided towns and cities possessed very low intelligence, so the Monster Repellent Scroll could chase them away. As for using the scroll against the Abyss Invasion, very few abyssal monsters possessed low intelligence. Hence, the scroll wouldn't be as effective.

"Let Zero Wing defend the town?" Bloodfang could not help but laugh at Shi Feng's proposal. "It's not that I am looking down on Zero Wing, but rather, these monsters are over Level 100. There are thousands of them. With players' current strength, it is impossible to defend against such an onslaught. And even if you succeed, why should I give you 30% for defending the town when I can ensure its safety for 100,000 Gold? Wouldn't that be more of a loss? If this is your offer, I would rather contact several other major powers. I believe that they will be more than willing to cooperate."

Zero Wing was not Bloodfang's only option. The only problem was that none of the major powers could afford a 100,000-Gold investment. However, he did not necessarily need 100,000 Gold. As long as he had the initial 40,000 Gold, he could construct a sufficient number of hotels during the 15-day protection period. With a place to replenish their Stamina in, his subordinates could mine for Magic Crystals continuously. He could earn enough money to construct the required Defense Turrets before the protection period ended.

However, Raven would have to be particularly frugal during this period.

"If so, I have another suggestion. For each monster raid Zero Wing stops, Raven will pay 6,000 Magic Crystals. What do you think of that?" Shi Feng casually suggested.

“Are you serious?” Bloodfang asked in surprise.

If they utilized this method, the town’s income would belong to Raven fully. As long as they could begin their mining operation, Raven wouldn’t have any financial problems. They could quickly construct a powerful defense. Only, the initial period would be the most difficult.

He hadn’t expected Shi Feng to be interested in such an exchange.

Had Shi Feng simply handed over 100,000 Gold, he could have received 20% of the town’s income. As time passed, he would earn far more than 100,000 Gold, yet for short-term profit, he had given up on a future goldmine. Bloodfang found it hard to believe that a large Guild’s upper echelon would make such a rash decision.

“Of course, I’m serious. I’ve already discussed this with my Guild Leader, and he has approved. Now, it is up to you whether or not to accept this condition.” Shi Feng chuckled.

“Alright, I agree to work with Zero Wing. I just hope that you don’t regret this decision,” Bloodfang said. Even after watching Shi Feng for a long time, he did not understand the man’s thoughts. He could not figure out what Black Flame, Zero Wing’s Guild Leader, was thinking, either.

The only reason he had agreed to offer Zero Wing a share of the town was because he had worried the Guild would not be willing to fork over the money. That Zero Wing had refused the shares, only asking for some Magic Crystals, was good news for Raven.

The monster raids did not occur every day. Generally, they only attacked every other night. Even if Zero Wing defended the town from ten attacks, he would only spend 60,000 Magic Crystals. When the town’s defenses were complete, he would not need Zero Wing’s assistance.

Based on the current market price, each Magic Crystal was worth 25 Silver. Even if Zero Wing defended the town for twenty days, he would only spend 15,000 Gold. No matter how he looked at it, he would profit from this trade.

Following which, Shi Feng signed a contract with Bloodfang. As long as Zero Wing helped Raven defend against a monster raid, Raven would pay 6,000 Magic Crystals. Moreover, the payment could only be made in Magic Crystals. If Raven could not pay up, it would have to pay five times the value of the Magic Crystals with Coins or other products. Aside from that, Raven must also allow Zero Wing to construct a Guild Residence in the town so that Zero Wing's members could travel here easily.

Of course, if Zero Wing failed to defend the town, it would have to pay Raven a reconstruction fee of 30,000 Gold.

"It is highly likely that the next raid will happen tomorrow night, but I can't say for sure. I hope that you will be prepared before then." Although Bloodfang had signed the contract with Shi Feng, he was still worried. Could Zero Wing really defend against that many monsters?

"Rest assured. Once Zero Wing's Residence has been constructed, you won't have to worry about monsters," Shi Feng replied confidently.

Now that they had signed the contract, he was in a great mood.

Although it seemed as if Raven had just secured Zero Wing's help, dealing with the Dark Guild's biggest concern, Zero Wing would gain far more than 20% of the town's income. However, Bloodfang didn't know this.

While the Monster Repellent Scroll was very convenient, it also had a huge flaw.

The scroll could only chase monsters away, not exterminate them. As they fled, the monster army would grow. When players stopped using the Monster Repellent Scroll, the subsequent raid would be intense, even horrific.

As long as the army grew four or five times, the town would fall even if they had thirty turrets...

Chapter 959 – Spirit Seal

Shi Feng had no intention of telling Bloodfang about the Monster Repellent Scroll's flaws.

They were collaborators, not friends. They were simply obtaining what they needed from each other.

Whether or not Raven could fend off the monster army was none of his concern. After all, he only needed to pay a small price for Raven to endure through the early phases of the town's construction. Moreover, it would be a waste if he did not rip off a Magic Crystal tycoon like Raven.

White River City's teleportation house urgently needed Magic Crystals. As long as he had enough Magic Crystals, he could turn them into Coins. Once Zero Wing had its first city, it would have a safeguard of its own.

As the Main God System had administered the contract between them, both parties felt reassured.

Shi Feng had initially planned to leave using a Return Scroll. However, Bloodfang suddenly stopped him.

“A moment!” Bloodfang held Shi Feng back. Smiling, he continued, “I still have information that I think will be of use to Zero Wing.”

Saying so, Bloodfang took out a black envelope and passed it to Shi Feng.

Shi Feng raised his brows when he saw the envelope.

Although the envelope looked normal, it was actually an encrypted message. No one would be able to read the message aside from the intended player. Moreover, after the message was read, it would self-destruct. Even recording the message would not be possible.

“A video message?” After opening the envelope, the message came in the form of a video file. Following which, Shi Feng clicked to open the file.

When he finished watching the video, however, he was shocked.

In the video displayed numerous players encircling a one-horned humanoid creature that loomed over three meters tall and wore a black robe. Numerous crimson runes, resembling flames, decorated this humanoid creature’s body. Moreover, the humanoid creature exuded black fog from its body, and players shuddered when its crimson eyes turned towards them.

Aside from this monster’s level and HP, the video showed nothing about it.

Neither the monster's level nor its HP was very high at Level 40 with just over a million HP. With a rough guess, Shi Feng surmised that the monster was only Chieftain rank, yet even it had massacred several hundred elite players.

However, rather than the deaths of several hundred Level 35-plus elites players, the one-horned monster's extraordinary actions were the key points of the video.

The monster's combat style was similar to a player's.

Moreover, whenever this monster killed a player, not only did it recover some HP, but its Attributes also rose slightly. Most importantly, Shi Feng noticed something familiar on the monster's body.

The Spirit Seal used to absorb Immortal Souls!

Sharlyn had only marked the Spirit Seal on the back of his hand so that he could complete his quest, and this Spirit Seal would only shine silver when absorbing an Immortal Soul.

The same Spirit Seal had been imprinted on the humanoid monster's chest. Every time the monster killed a player, the Spirit Seal radiated a faint silver glow. From an outsider's point of view, the glowing Spirit Seal throbbed like the monster's heartbeat.

A passing expert Assassin had recorded this video. As this Assassin had maintained his distance from the battlefield and stayed in Stealth, they had been hard to detect. Hence, this video was a record of the entire battle.

After the one-horned monster finished killing the elite players, something even more astonishing happened.

Usually, monsters didn't pay attention to the items players dropped when they died unless they were quest-related items, yet after killing the players, the one-horned monster looted the drops.

Before the monster left the area, several other figures appeared. Among these figures, a few looked like the monster. Not only were they tall, but a single horn also grew from their foreheads. Surprisingly, a player stood among them. However, as this scene had been recorded from far away and due to the player's Black Cloak and mask, Shi Feng could not even discern the player's gender, much less their identity.

Yet, Shi Feng was certain that it was a player due to the green, diamond marker about their head. The marker was unique to players.

The Assassin expert had tried to follow the monsters. However, he had been discovered. Although the Level 38 Assassin expert tried, with all his might, to flee, in the end, he failed to escape the one-horned monsters.

How can there be such monsters? Shi Feng inwardly shuddered as he watched the monsters kill the Assassin.

In terms of combat techniques, the Assassin could reach the Trial Tower's sixth floor with his standards. He would be a considerably powerful expert, even in a first-rate Guild. After all, the general public recognized players as experts once they had reached the fourth floor.

Yet, the monsters' combat standards were stronger than the Assassin's. Unfortunately, due to a lack of combat footage, Shi Feng could not discern the one-horned monsters' true capabilities. Even so, Shi Feng roughly guessed them to be near the Half-step Refinement Realm at the very least...

If they had been NPCs, Shi Feng would not be surprised if they had reached this standard. After all, he had encountered NPCs with much higher combat standards than that. However, for God's Domain's monsters to fight like this, their intelligence must be extremely high; even Great Lords didn't fight like this.

"The Assassin who recorded this video is a Red Player and a slightly famous one at that. It had been two days since he had died, but even now, he cannot log into God's Domain," Bloodfang informed Shi Feng. "Very few people know about this. From what this player has said, these monsters are extremely powerful. Before these monsters dealt with that elite team, they were roaming the area, killing Field Bosses. These monsters were also capable of increasing their Attributes by killing both monsters and players. Moreover, their intelligence is very high.

"The Assassin reported that, when he had faced those one-horned monsters, it had felt as if he had been fighting expert players. They were so intelligent that they could easily predict his movements and implement the appropriate countermeasures."

"What does this have to do with Zero Wing?" Shi Feng asked.

Although he agreed that these monsters were extraordinary, there were many bizarre situations in God's Domain. It might be some sort of in-game event. Furthermore, he was already swamped with his own matters. He did not have the time to concern himself with someone else's business.

"This video was taken in Star-Moon Kingdom, only a short distance from Stone Forest Town. Although these monsters are not yet a threat to the NPCs protecting the town, I believe that the town's safety will be a problem once the protection period ends. After all, nobody can say for sure just how powerful those monster can become," Bloodfang said, chuckling.

Chapter 960 – Evil God Appears

“They are near Stone Forest Town?” Shi Feng fell quiet as he pondered the situation.

He could not remember such monsters in Star-Moon Kingdom in his previous life. This was the first time he had ever seen such a thing.

If they were Mutants, they wouldn't let any creature live. And they might allow a payer to tag along.

They were somewhat similar to Mutants in that they could grow stronger by killing other monsters and players

Indeed, just as Bloodfang had said, while there was nothing to worry about right now, as the monsters grew stronger, they would become very dangerous.

“Before I sent Bloodsucker to negotiate with you, I sent him to investigate. Based on Bloodsucker's report, not only was every Field Boss in the area dead, but he couldn't find a single Common monster either. Moreover, he discovered a similar situation in the nearby Level 60 map,” Bloodfang said. He then shared several pictures with Shi Feng. “Bloodsucker took these images in the Level 60 area. With the monsters' growth rate, it won't be long before they're a threat to Stone Forest Town or NPC towns.”

When Shi Feng saw one of the pictures, he could not believe his eyes.

The originally lush forest had become a scorched land pocketed with craters. Bloodsucker had also captured the corpse of a Level 63 Great Lord that had been over thirty meters tall. The corpse had withered like a mummy.

What was more frightening was that Common monsters stopped spawning in the locations the one-horned monsters had visited. This was the equivalent of crippling an entire map. Although the effects were barely noticeable right now, if this continued, there wouldn't be any leveling spots left in Star-Moon Kingdom.

"Thank you for your information, Guild Leader Bloodfang. I have some matters to deal with, so I'll be leaving." Shi Feng frowned deeply as he finished looking through the pictures. After saying his goodbyes, he retrieved a Return Scroll and activated it.

After Shi Feng transformed into a streak of white light and disappeared, Bloodfang turned towards one of the Dark Guards beside him and commanded, "Tell Bloodsucker to pull out our men from Star-Moon Kingdom and relocate them in the Black Dragon Empire temporarily."

"Guild Leader, our business is doing relatively well in Star-Moon Kingdom. If we pull out of the kingdom now, we will lose a significant amount of income. Moreover, those monsters are only around Star-Moon City right now. Do we need to be this cautious?" the Dark Guard asked in surprise.

"Do you really think those monsters are that simple?" Bloodfang eyed the Dark Guard. "There's one thing that I didn't mention to Zero Wing. I recently received a report from the Thorn Shadow Team, stating that they've discovered the one-horned monsters' whereabouts. Do you know what else they discovered?"

The Dark Guard shook his head.

“Those monsters are currently based in an NPC town in a Level 50 map. They have nested in the town. The previous reports counted less than ten monsters, yet now, there are hundreds. Moreover, the lowest level among them is Level 50, while the highest are over Level 80. With their development speed, something is bound to happen in Star-Moon Kingdom sooner or later. It is best if we bow out now. Don’t forget that every player that those monsters had killed still can’t log into God’s Domain,” Bloodfang said. Chuckling, he continued, “Moreover, I’ve received news that the bastards from the Blackwater Corporation have decided to make their move in Star-Moon Kingdom. It is best that we avoid them for now.”

“What?! Blackwater Corporation has finally joined God’s Domain? Why are they starting with Star-Moon Kingdom?” When the Dark Guard heard Bloodfang mention the Blackwater Corporation, his indifferent expression changed as fear flashed in his eyes.

“I’m not sure. However, my guess is that it is likely due to this new class. After all, throughout God’s Domain, it is the easiest for players to obtain the new class through Star-Moon Kingdom. A batch of players with this new class would benefit their development in the game,” Bloodfang said, shaking his head. “Among the many major corporations, I hate Blackwater the most. They always use unscrupulous means to achieve their goals, and they never follow the rules. Zero Wing will have to rely on its own power to weather this coming storm.”

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Shortly after Bloodfang issued his command, although the command confused Bloodsucker, he began to move the several hundred Raven members hidden throughout Star-Moon Kingdom, shifting their operations to the Black Dragon Empire. As for Shi Feng, rather than traveling to Blackwing City to purchase the Monster Repellent Scrolls, he visited Star-Moon City instead.

Star-Moon City had visibly changed over the past few days. Many of the players roaming the streets were from other kingdoms and empires, all hawking their weapons and equipment. The city had also experienced an increase of their noncombat players. These players were relatively low-leveled, with some even below Level 20. However, they were all very rich; these people were Merchant players.

In cities, it was extremely difficult for ordinary players to obtain their own Shops. There were also fixed times when players could set up stalls in the free market. As for using the Auction House, the handling fees were too high for ordinary Merchant players. Hence, these players generally peddled their items on the streets. If they found an interested buyer, they would conduct a trade.

Although doing so was somewhat time-consuming and strenuous, every Coin an ordinary player earned counted. Merchant players who dealt weapons and equipment, in particular, could earn a nice income.

After reaching Level 10, Merchant players roamed between various cities and countries, purchasing items from players in one city and reselling those items elsewhere. After all, every city and country's prices were different. Merchants could earn a lot of money due to this difference.

As these players had chosen the Merchant class, they received a discount on teleportation fees as they traveled across God's Domain. Moreover, like Lifestyle classes, Merchants were divided into ranks. The higher their rank, the higher their discounts were on teleportation fees.

In the past, many players had earned enough capital from their travels to construct Shops in NPC cities. Otherwise, if one relied on an ordinary combat player's income, they could never afford a plot of Land, even after a lifetime of saving.

Following which, Shi Feng followed the main street to Grand Duke Hartfield's mansion.

The NPCs guarding the mansion didn't stop Shi Feng, allowing him to enter the Grand Duke's home.

However, Shi Feng had not come here for the Twilight Treasure Chests this time, but for the one-horned monsters.

Shi Feng had not initially recognized the one-horned monsters' origin. However, from what he had learned from the pictures and Bloodfang, he was certain of one thing.

Those one-horned monsters were somehow related to the Evil God's Temple.

Across the continent of God's Domain, abyssal monsters weren't the only threat to humans. There were other dark powers at play. Among these dark powers, the most dangerous was the Evil God's Temple. Unlike the War God's Temple, which specialized in resisting Abyss Invasions, the Evil God's Temple focused on destroying God's Domain. Moreover, the temple thirsted for the destruction of all life, unlike the abyssal monsters, who only aimed to conquer.