

Warlord 161

Chapter 161 Living Hell

In less than 20 minutes, the massacre caused by Dilan had painted the entire street red.

Small streams of blood flowed down the street but Dilan's eyes looked at all of this with an odd sense of detachment that unnerved him.

'Am I still human?' That was the only question that flashed through his mind.

He was actually not sure why he didn't feel remorse after killing several hundred monsters. It was only fortunate that he didn't feel excited with all the blood around him.

Nonetheless, it was not as if he was disgusted either. Blood had become a constant companion to Dilan.

Usually, one would feel weird at the sight of hundreds of liters of blood but Dilan had collected the Essence crystals of all monsters while merely ensuring to not slip on the ground as if it was muddy water and not corpses he walked over.

His backpack was overflowing with his spoils of war, while his surrounding looked worse than the most terrifying Chamber of Torture.

Not a single monster dared to cross Dilan's path, knowing that he wouldn't hold back from harvesting their lives as well.

It was a new sight for him to not see even a single monster around him. Dilan nearly smiled at this sight, only to recall that he shouldn't smile like a small child after having caused a bloody massacre.

[The strong decide over life and death!]

That was the most important factor one could state about Milarn after the Primordial Ascension had begun.

If Dilan wouldn't kill the monsters around him, it would not be possible for him to become stronger and he would end up dead after turning into prey of stronger monsters.

The monsters he had just killed would have not hesitated to shred humans into thousands of tiny pieces to get what they wanted.

Such a thing was the 'new normal' in the new Era that had begun a little bit more than two weeks ago..

However, for everyone to understand and digest this, a little bit more time had to pass as even Dilan seemed to struggle to accept his own mindset occasionally.

But as he was perfectly fine right now, it was no problem for him to leave behind the battlefield without feeling the guilt of having ended numerous lives.

There had been a reason for him to massacre as well. Owing to the special effects of Essence crystals, it was possible to invigorate living beings, who were closer to death than life.

As long as they were still breathing, it would be possible to invigorate them. Whether they would survive or not rely on their will to live, and the severity of their state.

However, Dilan knew that humans who had been wronged and subjected to harassment could be saved as long as they absorbed Essence.

Thus, in order to save fellow humans, he sacrificed hundreds of monsters.

This was more than enough reason for him to kill without remorse.

Walking down the main street, Dilan disappeared in a side alley not long after before entering an inconspicuous building.

He opened the metal door by using some force before taking a look around.

The smell of stale air reached his nostrils, followed by all kinds of other unpleasant odors one would never want to smell together.

It reeked horribly but that was something Dilan had long since expected.

After all, the place he had just entered was one of the bigger human shelters he had found a few days before. It was one of the areas he had marked on the map of Rian and the first place he wanted to visit to start his rescue mission.

Walking down some metal stairs which began to rattle the moment his boots fell on the steps, Dilan gained a lot of attention right off the bat.

Seeing a human wielding a blood-smudged saber was already more than enough to cause a big impact on the few survivors, who saw him first.

However, upon seeing that the stranger had an ice-cold expression and the fact that his entire face and clothes were also blood-stained with fresh blood trickling down the floor, nobody was able to move.

Fear struck in the hearts of every single survivor who saw him, and even if they wanted to run for their life, nobody was able to, not even the few Ascenders, who had dared to fight against the terrifying monsters on the surface.

It had been their last desperate effort to get their hands on some food, to kill monsters and consume their raw meat.

But their attempt had gone horribly wrong and too many survivors had died while trying to procure food, and only a handful of survivors had returned.

They had managed to kill only three monsters but had lost more than 50 survivors in a gruesome manner, all of whom had been torn apart in front of their own colleagues.

The fear of death had lodged itself deep in their minds while the hope of surviving turned bleak.

Was there even the need to survive? Would it make things better? Was it even worth being to be alive after all the terrifying monsters appeared out of nowhere?

Maybe...just maybe...dying was better than desperately trying to stay alive in a world that was worse than Hell itself!

Numerous thoughts like these had been running through the mind of the survivors, who had been hiding underground.

They had barely enough water to not die of thirst. However, sooner or later, they would starve to death, turn insane and attack each other, or kill themselves.

A few survivors had already killed themselves because they didn't see a future worth living in this new world.

However, that was not even the worst by far.... Fueled by hunger, some survivors had even considered eating the bodies of the survivors, who had committed suicide.

In the end, nobody had dared to be the first to eat the flesh of a raw human but there had been many, who had thought about it.

That was how desperate some humans had become which made them even consider becoming cannibals after barely eating anything for two weeks!

Dilan was not able to recreate the train of thoughts of all these human survivors but he could see the fear, desperation, helplessness, and numerous other emotions within their eyes.

The building's basement was quite ordinary. Dilan took a look around as if he was inspecting a potential real estate property he wished to purchase.

He was calm and didn't bother looking at the skinny survivors around him.

Their stench was overpowering, but it was as if Dilan didn't even notice that.

The basement was a rather ordinary rectangular room. However, its size was several times larger than the cafeteria.

Dilan presumed that its size was around the same as the first floor of the Rian mountainside hospital.

This was crazy and astonished Dilan quite a bit.

"Is that one of the city's shelters?"

He knew that there was a factory nearby but Dilan doubted that he had entered the factory's underground warehouse.

It was possible but quite unlikely. Dilan's attention was on the gigantic room in the basement and he merely glanced at the humans around him.

Because it had not been too long since he killed the last monster on his way to the group of survivors, Dilan's presence was still comparable to that of a bloodthirsty and ferocious monster.

Nobody dared to stand in his way and the survivors instinctively backed away from him, crouching in the corners and huddling together by the walls.

They didn't even notice it but their gaze followed the newcomer and a trace of hope emerged within them.

This was truly unexpected because there was no reason for them to feel hopeful. Dilan's appearance should make the survivors believe that he was merciless and that he would kill them without hesitation.

However, this was exactly what gave some survivors hope.

'He can defeat them!'

That was what was on their mind- The newcomer was able to defeat the terrifying existences on the surface!

The survivors in the underground shelter were not able to think about anything else but the fact that Dilan might be their savior.

Despite the fear that had been prying their minds and weakening their resolve, the eyes that followed him held also traces of desperation and hope.

Dilan noticed this but he first wanted to gauge how many survivors were currently hiding in the shelter.

'More than a thousand?' Almost half an hour passed before he halted in his tracks.

He had taken a good look and collected more than enough information to know what he had to do. The situation was more troublesome than expected because many old survivors and young children had fallen ill.

They needed more nutrition and medicines to get well. Using healing abilities was also possible but that was not important right now.

Nearly everyone was starved, and he perceived only a handful of Ascenders in the entire group of a thousand plus survivors.

'Was nobody brave enough to fight or did the brave survivors die upon their first encounter with monsters?'

Dilan knew that a Zoo was near but what he was oblivious to was the fact that the brave Ascender's first encounter with monsters had been none other than the Blue Tiger!

The Blue Tiger had evolved during the Primordial Ascension and it had fled from the zoo before it began its slaughter.

When it found out that Essence crystals nourished its body, and strengthened it, the Tiger had instinctively begun to attack more and more monsters, with humans being the highest-grade delicacy and easy prey all around it.

After all, each Essence crystal of a human being provided not only Essence but also status points!

That was why merely five survivors survived their encounter with the Blue Tiger nearly two weeks before Dilan found them.

No survivor from the underground shelter had dared to approach the surface, and the only times they opened the reinforced metal door was to let in more humans.

They had hoped that some human survivors they rescued would turn out to be their hero, their knight in the shining armor.

To their dismay, only their numbers had increased, and along with it the numbers of useless survivors, who couldn't do anything but fear death while hiding in the underground shelter like a coward had increased too...

Dilan didn't know anything about that but he understood that not a single survivor could be labeled courageous, let alone powerful.

However, that was no problem as the more Essences one absorbed, the less frightened they would be at the sight of monsters.

This was also why he calmly smiled as he approached the center of the underground shelter.

Clearing his throat after taking a deep breath, he spoke in a loud voice that boomed through the entire shelter.

"Who wants to survive?"

Chapter 162 Young Fighter

"Who wants to survive?"

Dilan's voice was loud enough for everyone to hear him, however, it lacked the empathy one would expect to hear when asked such a question.

For several seconds the survivors were unable to say anything. They had hoped that Dilan would become their savior but in the end, they didn't dare to believe that their prayers had finally been answered.

Thus, nobody dared to lift their hand, let alone open their mouths to say something.

Dilan didn't think that none of the present survivors wanted to say something. Yet, upon seeing the fear and uncertainty in their eyes, he merely nodded his head.

'Looks like I'm scarier than presumed...well, maybe, they're just conflicted?'

He could tell that everyone in the underground shelter wanted to stay alive. His question had been a rhetorical one that didn't need to be answered, in the first place.

But Dilan still wanted to hear some sort of answer, receive some kind of response.

He waited patiently without saying anything further and without moving a single inch.

His gaze was unwavering and Dilan merely turned to his right when he heard a huffed noise from that direction.

"I..w..w-want to survive!" The weak but shrill voice of a small child reached Dilan's ears. He looked at a malnourished young girl, whose clothes were torn apart. Patches of dirt and grime covered her revealed skin.

At the first glance, one might think of her as a beggar but that appearance was nothing out of the ordinary in the underground shelter.

What surprised Dilan the most were the girl's eyes. They shone with the intent to survive and overcome all kinds of struggles.

Nobody he had looked at inside the underground shelter had been able to maintain eye contact with him, let alone mustered courage to express their desires..

As such, Dilan smiled lightly before he took a few steps forward. A moment later he bent down while his eyes were still fixated on the little girl.

"You're a little fighter, right? What is your name?" Dilan ignored everyone else in the surroundings as he focused on the little girl in front of him.

She was, at most, 10 years old, but the last two weeks had forced her to act like a grown-up. The things she had seen since the Primordial Ascension had begun were terrifying, to put it simply.

Dilan could not even imagine how a young child must have felt after the beautiful and innocent world they had known all their life was transformed into something vicious and bloodthirsty. Milarn had changed in its entirety but the child in front of him seemed to adapt better to the new situation than anyone else.

She was also the first one to realize that Dilan wouldn't act like the knight in his shining armor, which was what the other survivors had hoped for.

A single glance at him had told the little girl that Dilan had his own motives for coming to the underground shelter and to act like a 'savior'.

To the little girl, this realization meant that she had to make a lasting impact and to show Dilan that she was ready to follow him.

"My name is Esla, Sir!"

Esla, the young girl, had lost both of her parents and her brother on the first day after the Primordial Ascension.

She had cried for days until her eyes ran dry and no more tears trickled down her cheeks. Despite being alone, and becoming an orphan overnight, Esla wanted to keep living.

Esla knew that this was a selfish thought but recalling how her dying mother had told her to survive, while her zombified brother tore their mother apart, she could only grit her teeth and do everything necessary to keep living.

In the end, Esla found herself in the underground valley with everyone else. There were fewer survivors than she had expected and it was a shame that nobody dared to fight.

But it was not like she was able to fight either. She had always been physically weak and couldn't even hold an iron pipe properly in her defense. So how was she supposed to fight even if she wanted to?

Various emotions raged within Esla which was something Dilan was clearly able to perceive.

'I've really found a fighter,' he thought with a faint smile on his lips.

"You're a brave girl, Esla. This is a small present for being courageous enough to step forward!" Dilan took a Bronze Tierless Essence crystal out of his backpack and handed it to Esla.

'I hope the Essence's potency won't be too much for her to handle.'

Dilan wanted to give her a Tier-1 Essence crystal but he held back because Esla was still a child, a malnourished one at that and she looked as if she would collapse at any moment.

With quivering hands, Esla held the Essence crystal Dilan gave her. She recalled how her zombified brother had torn a similar Essence crystal out of their father.

It had crumbled in her zombie brother's hand before he had moved forward to kill their mother.

Recalling that horrifying scene brought tears to her eyes once again. It had been two weeks since she had shed tears and didn't want to cry.

However, she was unable to hold back the emotions that emerged from the depths of her consciousness.

Dilan was dumbfounded by Esla's behavior but he didn't say anything. He merely patted her head in awkwardness.

"Everything will be fine now. Once you're ready, just think about absorbing the Essence within the crystal."

Dilan noticed the numerous gazes around him. Nearly everyone knew what Essence crystals were. They had seen some of them in the hands of the Ascenders, who had been hunting on the surface.

Others had seen them after their family, friends, and colleagues had been killed by zombies and other monsters.

As such, they wanted to get their hands on Essence crystals as well, despite not knowing what use they had.

If monsters killed each other for these Essence crystals and Dilan handed them out like a treasure, they had to be valuable!

"I want to survive as well!"

"Me too, Me too!"

"I as well want to survive"

"M-Mee too"

While nobody except Esla had dared to reveal their desire to survive before, everyone was slowly joining the crowd of survivors after the little girl had taken the first step.

Some were led by the desire to procure an Essence crystal but their reasoning to speak up was not something Dilan could be bothered about.

He had a different plan in mind instead of spoon-feeding more than a thousand survivors. That was something he never did, even when his group had only hovered around the number of 60!

“I can save all of you, but don’t think that I won’t demand anything in return.”

Even if that was something everyone should have expected, Dilan’s words which he uttered in a cold voice made them hesitant to approach him.

The survivors had planned to follow Dilan from that day onward but halted the moment he spoke about demands.

‘He didn’t even save us yet, but wants to demand something from us already?! Isn’t that too much?’

Similar thoughts like this flashed through the minds of nearly everyone. A trace of anger could be seen in the eyes of a handful of survivors but that was not something Dilan was concerned about.

The corners of his lips curled upward when he noticed the commotion his words caused.

‘This is even better than expected.’

Dilan nearly chuckled because the plan he had come up with on a whim seemed to work out perfectly.

“I want you guys to fight.”

These words stupefied most of the survivors.

If they had the courage or strength to fight by themselves, they wouldn’t be hiding underground, waiting to be rescued by some sort of savior.

Dilan’s words were confusing and nobody truly understood what was on the mind of the newcomer.

He was just too much of an oddball...

“Against each other or what...do you mean?? We are not barbarians...not yet...”

One of the survivors, who was standing close to Dilan, mumbled to himself the moment a weird possibility formed in his mind.

He was already too tired to think straight but the survivor still imagined the chaos and bloodbath that would have ensued if Dilan were to demand what he had just mumbled.

“Of course not against each other...why would I even waste my time saying that I want to save everyone, if I start a survival of the fittest contest or something like that?”

Dilan was not sure what was going on in the mind of the survivors from the underground shelter but all of them were extremely suspicious of him, despite the hope, which had flared up within them.

“I want you guys to fight for your own survival. This involved fighting against monsters as well... though not everyone will have to fight!”

The moment Dilan finished speaking, the entire underground shelter went eerily silent.

This confused him a lot but when he looked at the faces of the survivors, Dilan felt that they had misunderstood the reason for his arrival.

'Do they think I will take them in and turn them into meatshields or a suicide squad? I have better things to do than that!!'

While Dilan grumbled to himself, he noticed only now that a commotion was created as hundreds of voices reverberated through the underground shelter.

"What...do you mean?"

"W-w-we will die...no please not..."

"I don't want to fight monsters... I will die! ARGHHH!"

A woman sobbed while pleading, " Please don't force us to fight monsters..."

Dilan knit his brows while hearing everything. He took a deep breath and tried to stay calm, just to sense a big headache crawling up his head.

'I guess it won't be as easy as expected...'

Chapter 163 Faster...

Dilan wondered about the best way to handle the large group of survivors properly.

Despite being labeled the leader of a group with more than 600 survivors, he never really had to spend his time creating a pep talk filled with motivating words.

He was a simple and ordinary human being and certainly far from being a leader. That was Dilan's opinion about himself. He didn't feel the need to make use of his charm or charisma enough to convince others to follow him.

Letting his fists speak for him was much easier and less troublesome. Dilan knew that his group only worked because of each individual's efforts.

They gave their utmost to make the group work and served as the backend support, while Dilan was fine with doing all the hard labor.

He did the tasks nobody else was able to solve without neglecting to become stronger.

It was his strength that allowed him to control the people below him and to make them abide by the rules he had set up.

Before the Primordial Ascension, strength wouldn't have been enough to make him a good leader but right now, it was one of the most important factors as it determined the survivability of a group.

Dilan figured that he was lacking a lot, which was why it took him some time to come up with a solution to the problem in front of him.

The first thing Dilan did was to switch his Title to [Subduer] because his Charisma was enhanced while wearing this title.

Even if he didn't believe that it was necessary, before, Dilan still used the title, just to be safe...

At first, Dilan didn't notice any changes in him but after a second he quickly noticed that the gazes on him had changed a little bit.

'I'm not imagining things, right?'

For a moment he doubted the effect of the [Subduer] title because he didn't sense a difference within him.

Rather, he felt weaker as the title [Beyond the Stars] had been deactivated.

Clearing his throat, Dilan amplified his vocal cords with mana, quieting down everyone in the underground valley.

"I don't want to beat around the bush. First of all, I won't force anyone to follow me. Everyone can choose for themselves.

About fighting monsters, I won't throw anyone at monsters before you have received sufficient nourishment. In our group, we have compulsory training that includes combat practice.

The only time you will have to fight against monsters is to kill one monster aka your first kill. This is something everyone, who wants to join our group will have to do! But there is no need to be afraid because we will have adequate safety measurements in place so that nobody will sustain an injury.

After killing one monster, everyone is free to choose an occupation they want to pursue. This is what we did until now."

Instead of uttering gibberish, Dilan chose to speak straightforwardly. He was not a fan of talking around the bush and wasting time.

He might be eyed weirdly and in confusion but all of this could be handled later.

"Why is it necessary for us to kill one monster?"

Even if Dilan had expected a few questions, he was a little bit dumbfounded to receive this particular doubt.

He looked in the direction of the few Ascenders, and frowned a moment before flicking his head back to the survivors.

"Didn't your colleagues tell you what benefits you'll gain from killing your first monster? I can see that we have 6 Ascenders here. All of them should have killed a monster already or absorbed an Essence crystal. Either way, some of them will have an ability. They gained it after killing their first monster."

Realization dawned upon many survivors and many stared daggers at the Ascenders, who could only helplessly shrug their shoulders.

They had no idea what Dilan meant, which led him to figure out that the Ascenders had picked up the Essence crystals of deceased monsters and that they didn't actively hunt any monsters.

'That is not right either...'

Dilan could perceive the slight change in the body language of the two Ascenders. They tried to act confused but it was quite easy for Dilan to determine that they were lying.

That was not important for Dilan because he would probably act in a similar manner if someone were to expose their secrets.

Being in possession of ability didn't mean that it was a powerful one. Even if that were to be the case, if one didn't want to fight, even the strongest combat ability would be useless.

Because Dilan thought that the two Ascenders wanted to hold onto their secret, he started to speak once again, attracting everyone's attention.

"The reasons for us to demand everyone to kill a monster are a few...but that shouldn't be anyone's concern. Just know that we won't force anyone to kill more than just that one monster."

Dilan's voice was not exceptionally loud but everyone could hear him clearly.

"I won't repeat this, but all of you should have realized by now that the outside world is dangerous. That means if you guys don't want to rely on others, fighting is the only way to survive.

Explaining every little change the world has undergone would take too long and, to be honest, we're not omnipotent as well. We don't know everything.

Nonetheless, more information will be provided when you guys follow me to your new home...that is for the survivors, who're willing to follow me! As for the others, there is no need to be frightened. I won't expose the underground shelter to the others, nor will I kill you guys!"

Dilan noticed once again that he was not very good at public interaction, let alone convincing enough. Thus, he could only sigh inwardly.

Fortunately, his charisma and the [Subduer] title made up for everything he was missing.

He stood in front of everyone with his broad shoulders and his chest pushed out, wearing blood-smudged clothes, while the Gray Slayer was still in his hand.

If Dilan wanted to kill anyone, he could have done so easily by now. It would be pointless for him to lie about anything.

He could just do whatever he pleased...that was what Dilan's presence told the survivors in the underground shelter.

But this was also why they started to feel a little bit weird about the reason behind Dilan's actions.

Why was he helping them?

If they were to know that it was because of the ability crystals they were bound to obtain by killing their first monster, most survivors would be even more confused.

After all, how useful could this 'ability' be?

They knew little to nothing about the true value of abilities, and what kind of terrifying existence one could turn into as long as one had a powerful ability.

'If even half of them follow me, we will get our hands on 500 ability crystals. Out of that, at least 50 of them will be useful to us'

Currently, Dilan didn't care about using ability crystals for himself. He was having more than enough issues controlling the abilities which he had obtained from his occupation.

The most important for Dilan was to increase his group's defensive measures, and with 50 useful abilities, 50 new potentially powerful Ascenders would be born!

"Everyone, who follows me...no, the survivors, who have the highest probability of facing death, will be allowed to absorb one Essence crystal each. They will invigorate you, provide lots of status points and probably level you—... well that doesn't matter for now.

By absorbing the Essence crystals, you guys will be able to survive as long as your fighting will is still strong enough!"

There were way too many survivors to provide each of them one Essence crystal. That was why Dilan had to slightly tweak his plan.

He knew that it might be stupid to accept every survivor in his group, especially because some of them might have gone crazy during the last two weeks but it was not like the survivors back at the Rian mountainside hospital were less crazy.

Some of them might even be mentally ill for all he knew. As such, there was no need to discriminate for now. He could help them to survive and figure out more about their mental health later.

If someone was dangerous to his group, they would have to leave but until he would be sure about this, Dilan or someone he trusted had to get to know them better.

Until then, he wouldn't push away the humans, who needed his help. With more survivors, the group would attract more dangers but Dilan was also aware of the value and importance of every single survivor.

Not only could they become powerful Ascenders as long as they were nurtured properly but if even one of them would procure a powerful ability after killing their first monster, the entire group's chances of survival would increase drastically.

Dilan knew how powerful abilities could be. That was another reason why he was eager to get his hand on more survivors.

It was possible for one or multiple survivors to have Origin abilities. Of course, this was not something Dilan could be certain about but he hoped to find a few hidden gems in the group of survivors he would save in the following days.

'We need to become stronger...faster...much faster!!'

Chapter 164 Expanded

Dilan felt a little bit desperate.

It was as if humanity's time was running out and they were helplessly watching dangers approach them and their loved ones.

If he wanted to save more humans, he needed more powerful Ascenders; Ascenders that were as powerful as he was right now.

However, the more humans he saved the more space his group would require. This meant that they would have to expand their territory to provide everybody a safe space to inhabit.

For now, this didn't seem to be a big problem because the Rian mountainside hospital was still fine but a small group of boars had already been enough to damage the building's walls without too much of an issue.

The hospital was not a fortress with strong defenses, and only a handful of Ascenders had reached Tier-1 until now.

Adding 1000 Survivors in the group, which already exceeded the figure of 600, the tower they used as their temporary camp was bound to fall short of space.

But the number of Survivors was not the only problem that weighed on Dilan's mind. Everyone required food, water, and other basic necessities.

It wouldn't be easy for 1600 strangers to live with each other harmoniously either.

Unfortunately, Dilan couldn't pay much attention to this for now.

'I will have to apologize to the others for creating more trouble.'

Dilan smiled faintly at the thought, not realizing that he didn't even ask himself why it was necessary to save more humans...

Even if it didn't help him in becoming stronger, he was actively searching for human shelters and giving his best to rescue the survivors.

He might get some benefits by rescuing them but the gains were certainly not enough to make up for the efforts he had to put in.

Dilan knew this but despite that, he kept talking to the survivors in the underground shelter to convince them to visit the Rian mountainside hospital.

The hospital was currently the safest place, after all.

It was truly against his usual behavior to act like a leader, to feel the need to save each and everyone around him. This might even harm him in the future but Dilan couldn't think about that for now.

His current mindset was a mess owing to numerous factors, including his past memories that had resurfaced.

Dilan was not sure how to tell wrong from right in this state. Thus, he simply did what he presumed to be correct while trying to make sense of the jumbled thoughts in his mind.

"Are you sure we will not be attacked on the way to the hospital?"

It was Esla, who asked this question suddenly. She felt that her body and mind were slowly changing, and adapting to the Essence she had just absorbed.

That was also why she was not as afraid of Dilan as she had been in the beginning. Of course, Dilan was still a frightening individual, even more so because both his appearance and presence overlapped, further intimidating everyone in the surrounding area.

However, his words and actions were a stark contrast to his looks and presence. That was why Esla found the courage to ask Dilan a question after she had finally gotten her emotions in check.

“I will lead groups of 20 individuals to the hospital at a time,” Dilan answered in response.

“So...you will walk back and forth more than 50 times...just how long will that take??” A rather timid survivor mumbled, feeling that it was a highly risky plan and could go horribly wrong.

It was always like this...the moment something good happened, an incident would occur and shatter everyone’s hope.

But Dilan just smiled at this comment.

“I will send my people to help me later. Don’t worry, we’ll be done before midnight as long as everyone listens to me!”

Everyone was eager to leave, which was why many survivors were worried to be pushed back by Dilan.

The current situation was still surreal for many survivors. As such, they felt as if they were dreaming, which prevented them from asking all kinds of questions that they would love to get to know the answers to.

As none of them knew Dilan well, it was only obvious for the frightened and suspicious survivors to feel that his offer was too good to be true.

But that was only obvious because they couldn’t detect the gains Dilan would make by saving them.

Dilan spent some time answering various questions because he understood the doubts that were flashing through their minds.

However, after half an hour passed, they reached a consensus and Dilan finally left the underground shelter with the first group. His backpack had been emptied of all ordinary Tier-1 Essence crystals and the Tierless Essence crystals.

They had been used to treat the weakest survivors. Some of them had been in life-threatening conditions in which every breath could be their last one.

With Dilan’s actions, more than 200 survivors turned into Ascenders, a feat that they would not have even dreamt of achieving before his arrival. All of them had reached, at least, level 1, while gaining a third of the status points one would procure by hunting a monster on their own.

In the end, they were not only pulled back from death’s door but had also tasted the first sweet sip of an Essence.

Even if one didn't like to say it, Essences provided an addictive sensation simply because the feeling of regaining vigor and getting stronger was something worth experiencing again.

Dilan clearly understood this, which was why he had to hide his sly smile as he walked up the metal stairway.

Glancing at the group of survivors, whose entire attention was fixated on him, Dilan knew that everything would be fine.

'Even the other survivors sensed the potency of Essence crystals. We will get at least 300 more Ascenders soon!!'

Because Dilan was deep in thoughts, he didn't hear what the 20 survivors behind him had been saying.

"The reinforced door..." One of the young female survivors spoke in shock, pointing at the bent safety valve of the reinforced metal door.

The other survivors were also shocked when they realized what she meant but Dilan could only smile dryly when he heard this. In response, he casually commented,

"I accidentally used too much force..."

While it was important to become stronger, it was even more important to learn how to use one's strength properly and accurately.

This was probably Dilan's biggest problem right now as his strength had increased by leaps and bounds in only a few weeks.

He had to regain control over his power and learn to utilize it optimally, otherwise, he might hurt his own people accidentally.

When the group of 20 survivors heard Dilan's comment, they looked at him in shock, their eyes nearly popping out of the eye sockets.

If they thought that Dilan was just proficient in wielding a saber, and could kill the ferocious monsters owing to that, they saw him in a new light when he casually said that he had bent the safety valve, accidentally at that.

For a moment, some survivors were scared about this but they quickly realized that Dilan had taken them under his wing.

He was now their leader and protector. The stronger he was, the better it was for them!

In less than an hour, Dilan and the others reached the Rian mountainside hospital.

It took longer than he had expected but that was owed to the bad physical condition of the survivors.

That being said, Dilan ordered all of his Ascenders to move the survivors in small groups.

Despite being powerful and capable of fending off most monsters, if existences such as the Blue Tiger were to attack even Dilan would have issues protecting his people.

Thus, the Elite Combat unit and the other Ascenders of Dilan's group did not waste time and moved the survivors from the underground shelter to the Rian mountainside hospital.

In the meantime, Dilan kept a watch over the path between the shelter and the hospital.

Numerous monsters had been attracted by the sudden appearance of so many humans but not a single monster was able to reach the proximity of moving humans to attack them.

Dilan, Kathrine, Williams, and the other Tier-1 Ascenders finished off every single monster that showed interest in attacking the survivors, whose condition was worse than Sven and the others had expected.

They knew of Dilan's plan to save more survivors, and everyone agreed to it.

Whether they did it out of kindness, or simply due to the fact that they had too few Ascenders with powerful abilities didn't really matter.

The most important fact was that almost everyone agreed to expand their group and include more members.

"I don't think a lot of survivors understand how much value the human race holds to all kinds of existences." Dilan merely mumbled as he was looking over the last batch of survivors, who were brought to the Rian mountainside hospital.

It was almost midnight, and a total of 1053 Survivors joined their rows, with only slightly more than 50 rejecting Dilan's offer to join his group.

They didn't want to join Dilan owing to multiple reasons, including that they wanted to search for their family.

Dilan was not sure how they would achieve that while looking like skeletons with just a layer of skin sticking to their bones but it was their decision and he respected that.

They might die, or become powerful existences. He didn't care about the outcome and wished the best for them as long as they didn't interfere in his business!

Chapter 165 Blazing Serpentine Blade

After Dilan brought back the first group of survivors, many things changed.

Six days had passed since then and Dilan's group had now increased to a total of 2800 survivors!

Dilan was unable to stop after he rescued the first group of survivors. He spent quite some time searching for more human shelters.

But before that, he took a good look at the other places, where Dilan had presumed human survivors to be located to be certain that he did not accidentally leave behind any survivors.

There had been signs of humans searching for a shelter but most of them had moved, or been killed.

In the end, Dilan could only find a few more groups, which he brought back to the hospital.

Other groups of survivors and Ascenders joined Dilan when they noticed what Dilan had been doing in the past few days.

It was nearly impossible not to hear and see the ruckus Dilan created by killing numerous monsters.

He moved like a cheetah among his opponents, ended their lives with a single strike, and kept advancing.

Even the most powerful Silver Tier-1 monsters were unable to face Dilan the moment he unleashed his entire strength.

There were certain scenarios in which Dilan was forced to use the combo of his [Thunder Step] ability with both [Bearer of Pain] and [Bracing Pain].

But the weakened state Dilan entered was not noteworthy because [Berserk Mana] was not activated.

With his power, it was not a problem to face all kinds of opponents, even something as dangerous as an unscathed Blue Tiger.

Unfortunately, Dilan didn't come across the Blue Tiger, let alone other monsters with a combat prowess comparable to Tier-2 existences..

Dilan believed that they had already moved to the Shikan plains because the city was void of noteworthy prey.

Only humans were worth hunting but that was probably something most powerful monsters from the mountain had yet to realize.

They were not around when most humans had still been alive. Now that the number of human survivors had dwindled to a ridiculous low number, learning about the value of a human's Essence crystal was not something the mountain's monsters had learned in recent days.

That was also why Rian looked more like an abandoned city than anything else.

Only a few powerful monsters were left behind with most of them living near the city's center.

Dilan avoided Rian's center simply because he didn't want to hunt Tier-2 monsters yet, and a monster at Tier-2 or a monster on par with such an existence was certainly lurking in the center of the city.

He had more than enough tasks to do, including looking after the survivors, who joined his group.

From a total of 2800 survivors, 1000 had been willing to join the combat forces. Given the huge number, it was impossible for Ailee to train them by herself.

She was the most proficient in archery but had no idea about proper spear-wielding, how to fight with longswords, let alone battle-axes.

That was why Oliver chose to help Ailee in teaching the Ascenders. Oliver alone was not enough but it was better than nothing.

After Dilan chose to help out as well, everything became much easier. Dilan could teach the Ascenders about every type of weapon owing to his versatile passive ability [True Weapon specialist].

But Dilan had only begun to help out because it was the most important to strengthen the Ascenders. They had to turn into merciless monster slayers, which was something Dilan achieved quite well thanks to his ruthless training method.

He faced the young Ascenders all by himself and restricted his strength before starting a merciless fight.

Dilan had learned a lot as well in the prior six days. He could finally control his strength in a seemingly perfect manner but that was only natural after fighting against thousands of monsters and participating in hundreds of spars.

Thanks to everyone's efforts, a total of 150 Ascenders advanced to Tier-1, with a total of 100 Ascenders having advanced by choosing a Rare occupation!

Dilan told his people to focus on advancing with stronger occupations.

At first, some Ascenders were skeptical about Dilan's decision but their worries disappeared quickly.

He, Williams, and Kathrine showed off their strength by revealing a few abilities which they had gained from their occupation. This was everything needed to convince his people to follow his instructions.

That was also why there were still over 800 Tierless Ascenders in his rows. All of them were giving their utmost to meet the requirements for Rare occupations to finally advance and become stronger.

Even if it looked like the situation in Rian went smoothly, the truth was that everyone felt restless.

It was quiet in the surrounding area...too quiet. Since the Primordial Ascension had begun, there was no day when the survivors had not felt death breathing down their necks.

That was also why the eerie silence was comparable to the foreboding of terrifying events.

Even Dilan couldn't help but feel extremely bothered. His stats didn't change in the slightest despite hunting numerous monsters.

However, that was not exactly weird as Dilan had saved up all the valuable Essence crystals he collected.

On the other hand, he exchanged the less valuable Tier-1 Essence crystals with infected Essence crystals. To train the Ascenders he, Oliver, and Ailee had picked, they had been sent to the other towers of the Rian mountainside hospitals.

By now, all towers had been cleared, with only a few zombies having been left behind. The remaining zombies had been isolated and locked in rooms to act as a training dummy for new survivors to procure their first ability crystal!

Dilan didn't help the others in hunting because he wanted the Ascenders, including Oliver and Ailee to act independently.

Thus, he merely provided some benefits by exchanging his Essence crystals with the 'useless' tierless Essence crystals of all kinds of zombies.

Dilan absorbed more than 3000 Tierless Essence crystals of zombies, including more than 200 Bronze Tierless Essence crystals.

This had been more than enough to upgrade his passive [Immunity] ability twice!

[Immunity] was now a Tier-0 ★★★ without the two-star bonus from Dilan's Divine occupation.

Coupled with the enhancement Kirak's Vassal provided, his Immunity ability was simply too powerful!

[[Immunity (Passive)] Tier-0★★★??

Gains immunity against poisons and infections below Tier-1 Level 15! Immunity includes scratches of zombies, restricted to 100 scratches/bites a day (100/100)

But his upgraded ability was not the most interesting thing that happened during the last six days.

Dilan possessed more than enough high-quality Essence crystals to do everything he wanted to. But this achievement was nothing in comparison to Old Jeff's creation of the modified Serpentine Blade, and Yvonne's advancement to Tier-1!

Old Jeff had been forging for the last six days. He had created several Tierless weapons for new Ascenders. Simultaneously, he had been trying to get back to his peak condition before he began to forge the Serpentine Blade.

The first few attempts were a failure and only after three days had passed was Old Jeff able to create the first Serpentine Blade.

However, he had not been satisfied with the result, which was why he continued to forge the ordinary Serpentine Blades.

Only on the 5th day did Old Jeff dare to start forging the Serpentine Blade with the Silver Tier-1 Essence crystals and the Orb of Pyromancy.

It took him lots of time and a mountain of materials, but the final product exceeded Old Jeff's expectations.

The Blazing Serpentine Blade, Old Jeff had created, was a masterpiece in his eyes. It was the best work Old Jeff had created in his entire career as a blacksmith.

However, instead of overflowing with confidence, Old Jeff had been contemplating something when handing over the Blazing Serpentine Blade to Dilan.

"Treasure the weapon as long as you can use it...I will become better and forge you a new weapon whenever you need one!"

Old Jeff understood that the Blazing Serpentine Blade was not a weapon he could use to kill powerful Tier-2 existences.

He was not even sure if the materials used were strong enough to pierce through the hide of the weakest Tier-2 monster.

That was why Old Jeff couldn't help but contemplate.

The weapon he deemed as his masterpiece and his best work was merely enough to allow Dilan to wield it until he would ascend to Tier-2!

It was only a matter of time before it would have to be replaced once again...

However, Dilan absolutely adored and treasured the Blazing Serpentine Blade. It's fierce appearance, the silverish-red coat of the longsword, and the ability to control the metal threads connecting the scale-like blades was simply overpowering.

Calling the Blazing Serpentine Blade OP would be an understatement for its capabilities.

Of course, one could only call it overpowered as long as one was able to wield the Blazing Serpentine Blade properly.

Controlling the serpent-like blade by releasing the blades that looked like he was wielding a blazing red snake was far from easy.

But as long as one's mana control was accurate it would be possible to achieve this.

Yet, adding the pressure of controlling the Blazing Serpentine Blade during a life-and-death fight, followed by the difficulty of maintaining the flames summoned by the Orb of Pyromancy made things even more difficult.

The flames manifested by the Orb of Pyromancy engulfed the entire Blazing Serpentine Blade, except the hilt.

The weapon Dilan would wield, was far from being a plaything everyone was capable of using.

Even Dilan knew that he would have to be careful, otherwise, he might accidentally cut himself in half, let alone the people around him.

Thus, he had been very serious when Old Jeff had given him the Blazing Serpentine Blade.

But even after he comprehended how terrifying the Blazing Serpentine Blade was as it could probably tear through the defenses of every single existence at Tier-1, the occupation Yvonne chose to advance was even more shocking!

Chapter 166 [Fallen Angel]

Even if Dilan had accepted the Blazing Serpentine Blade in an overjoyed manner, he was still somewhat concerned about Yvonne's advancement to Tier-1.

Old Jeff had told him to come to the workshop as early as possible. That was why Dilan had arrived in front of Old Jeff's smithy early in the morning on the 6th day since he rescued the survivors of the underground shelter.

After Dilan received his new weapons, he was told to test it out. Thus, both Dilan and Old Jeff were standing outside the workshop, looking at the Serpentine Blade that was engulfed in blazing flames.

It moved around like a viper that was ready to pounce at its opponents and slice them apart.

It was possible to wield the Serpentine Blade like an ordinary flame-engulfed longsword but also like a bladed whip.

This was quite interesting but Old Jeff quickly noticed that Dilan's mind was somewhere else.

‘Just what is he thinking about?’

Old Jeff knew that Dilan had been the most excited to obtain the Blazing Serpentine Blade. It was only obvious that Old Jeff felt that something was off when he saw the young Leader.

What Old Jeff didn’t know was that Dilan was still thinking about Yvonne’s Tier-1 advancement.

She had merely advanced the day before, which was why Old Jeff didn’t know anything about it. He had been toiling in the smithy the entire day after all!

Yvonne’s advancement to Tier-1 took an entire day, clearly showing that many changes were occurring in her..

Initially, Yvonne wanted to choose the [Necromancer] occupation, which she could have chosen from the available occupations, just like Dilan.

However, before she reached the necessary Essence, the legendary occupation [Necromancer] disappeared from her ancient paths of advancement.

Someone else picked Necromancer as his occupation to advance to Tier-1, resulting in the limited choices available to her and others to choose from.

That was why Yvonne had to switch to a different legendary occupation which she unlocked not long ago.

After accumulating the Essence of numerous Tier-1 monsters, Yvonne was the second in their group to choose one of the strongest existing occupations.

Only Dilan’s occupation was stronger if one were to look at it from the occupation’s potential and extraordinary characteristics point of view.

Nonetheless, Yvonne’s occupation was unique because it provided her with a unique special trait.

Her occupation was called [Fallen Angel] and the special trait she received was none other than [Wind of the Fallen Angel]!

Black feathered wings with a wingspan of more than six meters would grow out of her shoulder blades when she made use of it, allowing her to fly through the air.

This provided her with a huge advantage in the battlefield as she could start aerial fights while ordering undeads from the ground with her Origin ability [Angel of Death].

It was possible for Yvonne to retract her wings, which she chose to do to prevent attracting too much attention.

However, even then, Dilan was a little bit bothered.

‘Fallen Angel and Angel of Death...is that just a weird coincidence, or something more?’

Yvonne had wanted to choose Necromancer as her occupation to advance to Tier-1 because she wanted to become a one-man-army who could control numerous undeads with both her occupational ability and her Origin ability.

But she was forced to change her choice, which left her with the Fallen Angel occupation.

Dilan was not sure why he was so bothered about this but something deep within him told Dilan that he had to be a little bit more careful.

After he made up his mind, Dilan was finally able to free his mind of all the worries.

He continued to test out the Blazing Serpentine Blade that soared through the air while he firmly gripped the hilt.

His mana control was precise and as long as he didn't move, he could pick up the slightest movement of the Blazing Serpentine Blade.

Dilan chose to train to fight with the Blazing Serpentine Blade. But before he would join life-and-death battles, Dilan's focus was on moving around and getting adjusted to wielding the Serpentine Blade.

The longer Dilan moved while swinging the Blazing Serpentine Blade around, the brighter his expression became.

He was exhilarated at every sequence he was able to unleash with the strongest weapon he had ever held in his hands.

Calling the Blazing Serpentine Blade a powerful weapon was an understatement because Dilan was pretty sure that he wouldn't find a better Tier-1 weapon in the near future.

His heart skipped a beat whenever he made a small mistake because he was not even sure whether his body was strong enough to survive injuries caused by the razor-sharp Serpentine Blade.

However, the challenge his new weapon posed was something Dilan gladly accepted!

Half an hour had passed since Dilan began to wield the Serpentine Blade at a faster pace. Thanks to the [True Weapon specialist] passive ability, Dilan had it much easier to learn wielding new weapons.

Not only was this passive ability great to have a basic mastery over most weapons but it was even able to increase one's comprehension while wielding a new type of weapon.

This was exactly what was currently happening, allowing Dilan to wield the Blazing Serpentine Blade around as if he had been training with it for several days straight.

The serpent-form, which was what Dilan chose to call the enlarged form of the Serpentine blade, lunged out, enveloping him in a huge radius, and creating a huge ball of fire and razor-sharp blades around him.

Moving while enveloped like this was extremely difficult because every action had to be perfect, otherwise, he would accidentally cut off his legs.

However, moving was not important in this state because Dilan didn't want to use this move to attack. Rather, it was an aggressive defensive tactic that prevented others from attacking him.

Dilan tested out a few more movements with the Blazing Serpentine blade, and only when his mana was completely drained did he stop moving.

The Serpentine Blade went limp, forcing Dilan to use a trace of mana the moment he recuperated some of it, to retract the serpent form.

Once he was done, Dilan lay down on the ground, ignoring the fact that he was in the middle of the street, that monsters might jump at him all of a sudden, or that Old Jeff looked at him like he was seeing a little monster.

“Is he really a human?” Old Jeff mumbled to himself.

‘How the hell is it possible for a human to become so proficient in wielding such a complex type of weapon in a matter of hours?!’

From the outside, it might have looked like Dilan was struggling for quite a while. However, the difficult movements Dilan practiced, followed by the fact that he was completely unscathed and smiling while wielding the Blazing Serpentine Blade were more than enough for Old Jeff to feel like Dilan was merely playing around.

The other Serpentine Blades were far easier to control than the one Dilan wielded. That was not only owed to the Orb of Pyromancy that had to be controlled precisely to prevent an accident from happening, but it was also because of the weapon’s material.

At the first glance, one might not notice it, however, it was a fact that the Molten Essence of Silver Tier-1 monsters was several times more potent than the Molten Essence of Bronze Tier-1 monsters.

Through this distinct difference, Dilan’s Blazing Serpentine Blade was a true monster, whether it was its lethality, power, or difficulty to control properly.

Yet, Dilan made it seem as if it was easy to wield the Blazing Serpentine Blade. Thus, Old Jeff was quite intrigued when he saw a batch of three humongous boars appearing from an alley on the side!

“Dilan! Can you see the huge boars there? How about you use them to show me how great this masterpiece I crafted truly is?”

Dilan had closed his eyes to enjoy the snowflakes that were melting on his face.

But after hearing Old Jeff’s comment, his body shot upward. He looked in the direction Old Jeff pointed at before a smile blossomed on his entire face.

“They’re strong, maybe they are Silver Tier-1 monsters...perfect!!” Dilan exclaimed, getting up from the ground while activating [Bearer of Pain].

‘3 Units of Mana should be more than enough for me to deal with them!’

Chapter 167 Powerful Weapon or Wielder?

“What the hell...”

Old Jeff couldn’t believe his eyes. He looked at Dilan feeling utterly dumbfounded.

When Dilan said that the three boars were extremely powerful, Old Jeff had become a little bit worried.

However, seeing that Dilan didn’t even bother to activate a single ability was even more baffling.

Everyone knew that their Leader was powerful. But even he usually used various abilities in order to overwhelm Silver Tier-1 monsters.

In a fight against a single Silver Tier-1 monster, he still activated [Thunder Step] or [Gale] to be certain of winning the battle.

After all, it was impossible for him to know the exact strength of his opponents.

One could only faintly perceive how strong someone else was. This was without a single ability activated and merely considering one's brute strength.

And from what Old Jeff perceived, he could tell that each of the three humongous boars was stronger than Dilan!

That made things even worse for Old Jeff as he saw that the three humongous boars noticed Dilan. They didn't hesitate for long before charging at him, their two-meter-long tusks pointing at him.

Dilan should have begun to run from that point onward, whether it was toward the boars or away from them. Yet, instead of dashing in either direction, he slowly made his way toward the three opponents, whose speed exceeded 150 kilometers per hour..

Old Jeff had wanted to warn Dilan but the bright smile on the young man's face prevented him from doing anything.

To him, it looked like Dilan went looking for fights like the one that was about to happen at any moment; dangerous fights, where life-and-death played hide and seek with each other.

The excitement that flashed through Dilan's eyes and the adrenaline that coursed through his body was more than enough for him to be overjoyed.

It had been a while since he had felt like that.

As such, Dilan enjoyed every single moment of it. With a total of three Units of Mana within him, Dilan could easily activate the Orb of Pyromancy, engulf the whole Blazing Serpentine Blade with it, and control the serpent-form for 10 minutes.

In Dilan's opinion, a single Mana unit would have been enough to defeat the opponents in front of him.

However, he wanted to make sure that nothing went wrong, which was why he used [Bearer of Pain] to recuperate three units of mana.

Tightly grasping the Blazing Serpentine Blade, Dilan held it in front of his chest.

A moment later he slashed out to his right, providing the Blazing Serpentine Blade with enough space to unleash its entire length of 20 meters.

While unleashing the serpent-form its blade was engulfed in blazing flames.

This attracted the humongous boars' attention as they could tell that the flames were quite lethal and would burn through their thick hide in an instant

Usually, that would be enough for the boars to change their means of attack.

However, after having been tossed around in Rian from one place to another for several days, they didn't want to back off anymore.

They had faced more than 20 groups of stronger opponents and lost many of their brethren in the last six days.

Thus, they were unwilling to back off at the moment, even less if their opponent didn't seem to pose any threat to them.

Despite being a rather intelligent species, the boars were unable to decipher that Dilan was not the one they should be scared of.

It was the weapon he wielded they should be focusing on. After all, it was something they should be terrified of.

But their ignorance about the lethality of external weapons was the cause of their misery. Dilan smiled brightly when all three humongous boars came within the range of his weapon.

His eyes gleamed in determination as he shook the Blazing Serpentine Blade before brandishing it in front of himself.

Dilan issued a seemingly ordinary slash, however, what only Old Jeff realized was that the height at which Dilan's blade lunged out was way above the humongous boars' upper body.

Dilan's attack focused on crippling the humongous boars, all at once at that.

However, what even Dilan didn't expect was that the Blazing Serpentine Blade was mighty enough to cut and burn through the first humongous boar's legs.

His attack cut off two of its legs at once without losing its momentum.

While a painful roar reverberated through the entire street, Dilan's eyes widened in excitement.

He felt exhilarated to see that the Blazing Serpentine Blade was fully under his control and working as he had hoped.

Not only did he cut off two limbs of the first humongous boar but he had also injured the other two boars.

Their legs had been burned and cut as well.

Yet, contrary to the first boar, their legs were still intact, just injured a bit.

But that was not something Dilan was concerned about.

He kept smiling like a madman as he used the momentum to pull back the serpent form.

Retracting the Blazing Serpentine Blade left a second impact on the humongous boars as Dilan didn't leave out a single chance to attack his opponents.

In a mere second, Dilan had already severely injured one humongous boar, while its other two brethren were inflicted with mild injuries.

To their misfortune, their injuries wouldn't stay mild for long.

The blade danced like a ferocious viper in his hands that shot straight toward one of the mildly injured boars.

Without any resistance, the blade pierced straight through the boar's neck before penetrating deeper into its huge body.

Retracting the weapon from this point was slightly more troublesome but by increasing the flame's heat with the use of more mana, the blades' resistance was barely noticeable.

Moving backward, Dilan retracted the Blazing Serpentine Blade, only to see that the second boar had collapsed on the ground.

One was dead, one was severely injured and one was mildly injured.

Dilan smiled faintly before he advanced to the humongous boars with rapid speed for the first time. With a simple move he emerged more than ten meters to the right side of the mildly injured boar.

It had noticed him but the rapid speed with which it was running and its large turning radius prevented it from evading the sudden attack of the Serpentine Blade that cut off its head at once.

The mildly injured boar was not even able to let out a whimper before its head rolled over the street.

The thumping noise of a heavy body collapsing on the ground followed suit.

But Dilan didn't pay any attention to this. He turned to the severely injured boar, who had already collapsed on the ground.

With only two legs left, it was impossible for it to move, forcing the mutated animal to helplessly watch its brethren's death.

It could only scream in anger and fright as Dilan appeared in front of it, thrusting his longsword into the boar's heart, and ending its life for good.

The humongous body of the boar twitched for several seconds and only when it stopped moving was Dilan ready to pull the Blazing Serpentine Blade out of its body.

He looked at the weapon with gleaming eyes as if he was holding the nation's treasure. In fact, he truly felt as if he was holding an invaluable treasure in his hand and that he was lucky to be able to wield it.

"What a powerful weapon...!" Dilan was baffled as he smiled at the weapon that lay like a beast that was resting after having massacred a horde.

Meanwhile, Old Jeff could barely swallow his saliva.

'Powerful weapon...my ass...This is just a weapon wielded by a demon!!'

Chapter 168 Scam

Dilan collected the Essence crystals of the three humongous boars before absorbing them directly.

[3 <Silver> Essence of Tier-1 Level 11 Giganon Long-tusk Boars have been absorbed → +0.7 Strength, +0.5 Health, +0.9 Agility]

Dilan didn't level up but that was to be expected. Thus, he returned his attention back to Old Jeff with a faint smile.

"You're not proficient at handling leather professionally, are you?"

Old Jeff didn't expect this question but he answered Dilan after a moment.

"Even though I'm a blacksmith and my expertise is in forging, I can still create leather armors, if that's what you want to know."

While looking at the boar corpses, it was not difficult to figure out what Dilan wanted from him. Thus after hearing Old Jeff's answer, Dilan smiled again and replied,

"That's great. I'll ask Kathrine to send over a butcher to dismantle the boars. Afterward, you can play around with its hide."

Dilan was in a good mood, which was why he played around a little bit.

Old Jeff could only roll his eyes, not believing that the bloodied person in front of him was capable of joking around at the moment.

He just waved his hand, feeling an impending headache while looking at Dilan, only to send him away.

"I have to forge hundreds of weapons, so please leave...Take good care of the Blazing Serpentine Blade!"

"Thanks for this great weapon, I'll treasure it!" Saying so, Dilan turned around to leave Old Jeff.

With his speed, it didn't take him long to reach the hospital, where he told Williams to send a few Elite Ascenders to the smithy to protect the old man and safeguard the boar corpses.

Meanwhile, he told Kathrine to send a few butchers along with the Elite Ascenders.

'Ordinary Tier-1 monsters and all kinds of Tierless monsters will not be able to penetrate the Giganon Long-tusk Boar's hide. Armors made out of their hide will be great for new Ascenders, and also Oliver, Ailee, and other Ascenders, who need to move smoothly without any disturbance.'

Body parts of monsters were currently much better suited to craft weapons and protective garments simply because the Jadetite and Silver Iron Ore mined from the Krendel's Underground Valley was of bad quality and grade.

The Serpentine Blade could be considered to be the best weapon one could create with the resources extracted from within the underground valley.

It was a great weapon but that could only be said for a few people and a short-term.

Not many Ascenders would be able to wield the Serpentine Blade properly without injuring anyone, and the ordinary Serpentine Blade was not powerful enough to kill Peak Tier-1 monsters either.

Thus, by connecting the dots one could tell that the Krendel's Underground Valley's value was slowly decreasing in the eyes of Dilan and his group.

But that was not the case for everything because Dilan still had to enter the permanent Gate.

This was not for the Stonemonkey Devial plant, which had been carefully removed by Mira or to search for other treasures.

Rather, it was the huge Gate, which he reached only a few minutes after he had emerged in the underground valley.

[Permanent Gate to (Blood Ratmen Kingdom, Kirak). Conditions to enter not met! -All stats <150+>, Tier-2 Level [50]! Special permission granted to <Horned rats>, <Krendels>]

When Dilan reached the large permanent Gate its information popped up right in front of him.

"Reaching Tier-2 level 50 should be more difficult for me than all stats reaching 150...sigh..."

He could only smile, clearly remembering that his progress had been severely restricted. Even 3 Silver Tier-1 Essences of Level 11 monsters provided him with mere 2.1 status points, let alone a level up.

Kathrine and the others were not able to defeat such monsters, which was why he felt even more frustrated whenever he thought about the Blessed Curse he had received upon advancing to Tier-1.

But even then, Dilan could only shrug his shoulders because there was one particular secret his group had comprehended about Essence crystals.

-The stronger your opponent is, the more Essence and status points you will receive upon absorbing their Essence crystals!-

This was the sole reason for Dilan to receive 'so many' status points. They would be worth 21 units of status points without his Blessed Cure.

However, that was only in his case as he was the one to have defeated Silver Tier-1 monsters that were even 8 Levels above him!

Unfortunately, this did little to comfort Dilan. After allowing his mind to go astray for a few minutes, Dilan emptied the contents of his backpack in front of him.

A total of five Silver Tier-1 Essence crystals and 109 Bronze Tier-1 Essence crystals lay between him and the large Gate.

No monster was in his proximity as they immediately retreated upon sensing Dilan's power and terrifying presence.

They could instinctively tell that it would be suicidal to attack Dilan, which was why they hid as far as possible from him.

But that was not something Dilan noticed. He was focused on the azure screens that popped up in front of him.

[<Bronze> Tier-1 grade treasures can be exchanged with 50 <Bronze> Tier-1 Essence crystals of the same type!]

[<Silver> Tier-1 grade treasures can be exchanged with 25 <Silver> Tier-1 Essence crystals of the same type!]

“What a fucking scam...” Dilan nearly choked on his own saliva when he read through the information.

It was already hard enough for him to collect 5 Silver Tier-1 Essence crystals of the same type. Where the hell was he supposed to find 25 Silver Tier-1 monsters? It was not as if such existences were easily found near Rian, to begin with.

His mood plummeted the longer he thought about where he had seen a large group of powerful monsters. What he could recall was that the biggest hordes of monsters he had seen were Bronze Tier-1 monsters, which was actually where he got his hand on the 109 Bronze Tier-1 Essence crystals.

Other than that, the Silver Wolf pack could be considered to have been the biggest group of Silver Tier-1 monsters Dilan had encountered until now.

“So, that means I can give up on the Silver Tier-1 treasures...what a shame!”

The reality was frustrating but Dilan could only accept it with a deep sigh.

“So be it, 2 Bronze Tier-1 treasures are better than nothing, I guess...”

After he said this, Dilan threw most Bronze Tier-1 Essence crystals inside the large permanent Gate. He only left nine on the ground before he issued another sigh.

“Please throw something useful...”

Even if Dilan didn't need many things right now, it was a fact that he was not up to date with the happenings inside or around Rian.

The mountainside was a place nobody dared to go, and there was no new information about the Sun temple.

Dilan sent Xenia to keep a watch over the Sun temple whenever she had time. However, there was not much to see because the two intelligent races seemed to do nothing but expand their base.

They were building a city, slaughtering the beasts around and it even looked like they had begun to create farmland around the Sun temple.

Dilan was convinced that the races were truly intelligent and that they acted similar to the human race. They may even be more intelligent but that was not something he knew for sure.

However, what Dilan was sure about was that their strength was several times higher than the average strength of his people.

He was not even sure if he could defeat a single one of them...and that was a problem because it meant that a single one of them could annihilate his entire group if desired!

Even Dilan felt uneasy with the mysteries that revolved around the mountainside and the Sun temple. Thus, he desperately hoped that the two Bronze Tier-1 treasures would be helpful in any way!

It took several minutes until the large Gate finished the exchange of his Essence crystals with the treasures that ought to be helpful.

In the meantime, Dilan had absorbed the remaining five Silver Tier-1 Essence crystals and the nine Bronze Tier-1 Essence crystals.

And this...was still not enough for him to level up!

'So fucking annoying...'

Chapter 169 Valuable Treasures

'So fucking annoying...'

[5 <Silver> Tier-1 Essences, and 9 <Bronze> Tier-1 Essences have been absorbed → +0.9 Strength, +0.3 Health, +0.2 Stamina, +0.1 Agility, +1.9 Mana]

Dilan simply glossed over the additional status points he received by absorbing the 14 Essence crystals before averting his attention back to the large Gate.

'My Essence pool is filled by three quarters. That's fine then, I guess.'

It was not as if Dilan needed to level up right now. The only gain he made by leveling up were additional status points either way.

There were still 8.5 status points he had yet to allocate.

Not leveling up was thus not exactly a problem as he was already struggling with how to properly distribute the 8.5 status points.

Nonetheless, it was frustrating that so many high-quality Essence crystals had suddenly turned useless for him.

He could have nurtured new Survivors straight to level 10, with more than enough Essence to choose a Rare occupation with the Essence crystals he absorbed today, after all!

Smiling faintly to hide his pain, he issued a muffled sigh of relief when the two Bronze Tier-1 treasures dropped out of the Gate.

With a swift movement, Dilan picked them up. The items looked inconspicuous but a bright smile emerged on Dilan's face when he realized what types of items had dropped.

One was an ability crystal, and the other item was a pouch!

[Botanica Lexica Magica(Active)] Tier-0 ★★★★★.

[[Penta Item Pouch] <Bronze Tier-1> treasure

Engraved with numerous ancient runes, the Penta Item Pouch can store an unlimited amount of five items!]

The description of the pouch was simple, but the meaning behind that one sentence was more than enough for Dilan's former frustration to be washed away.

He smiled foolishly as he kept looking at the pouch that appeared quite ordinary.

Not feeling like wasting any time, he used a trace of his mana to access the Penta Item Pouch before he attempted to store the Blazing Serpentine Blade inside it.

Under normal circumstances, it should be impossible to store the Serpentine Blade inside a pouch that had the length of an adult hand.

However, the moment the pouch opened, the inside of it looked like one would stare into the sky on a cloudless stary night.

Not even a second later the Blazing Serpentine Blade disappeared into the pouch.

But it was not hard to pull it out of the pouch as he could reach for it easily though that was not what Dilan planned to do.

He threw the ability crystal inside the pouch as well, before he started to collect some soil from the gorund.

After he stored it in the Penta Item pouch as well, Dilan's smile turned even brighter.

"So... 'unlimited' was truly not a lie? That's fantastic! And the filter that differentiates items is not that strict either!"

The soil he stored in the pouch was coarse, and pebbles of various sizes had been mixed in it.

Yet, from the looks of it, the soil took up only a single spot in the five slots of the Penta item pouch!

"Storing hundreds of monster corpses of a single type should be possible now, right?"

Dilan's mind was rattling with the possibilities. He considered storing Essence crystals in his pouch, his weapon and other valuable things.

In fact, if it was possible to procure more Penta Item Pouches, there wouldn't be a problem with storing all kinds of things.

Just thinking about it was enough for a vibrant smile to emerge on Dilan's face.

Dilan took quite some time to come back to his senses. He recalled how difficult it was to find a large horde of Bronze Tier-1 monsters. As such, collecting a large number of Penta Item Pouches was not feasible.

Nonetheless, he was happy to have procured such a great item. Without hesitation, Dilan attached it to his clothes before expelling the soil he had stored within it.

Afterward, he recalled the ability crystal that had dropped from the Gate as well.

'To think that I can procure ability crystal in exchange for Essence crystals...interesting!'

It was not a reliable way to procure ability crystals but it was certainly an interesting way.

Dilan made a mental note about it while reading through the description of the ability crystal.

[[Botanica Lexica Magica(Active)] Tier-0 ★★★★★

[+5% Mana]

-Abilities related to the growth of plants, life and gardening are amplified by 10%!

Only the wisest of the wise know nature's value. Nature will always reign supreme until the end of time.

With the constant use of Mana, a tome consisting of the knowledge of a thousand gardening experts from all over the Universe can be acquired!]

Even if the ability was certainly not useful for him, Dilan couldn't help but feel that the ability crystal was perfect.

"As long as Mira learns this ability, and procured more information about the Stonemonkey Devial plant it might be possible to grow the plant again."

Dilan couldn't stop smiling. He even imagined that Mira might be able to go one step further and strengthen the Stonemonkey Devial plant with the knowledge she would get her hands on by using the Botanica Lexica Magica.

The gains he made from the exchange with the Gate were certainly satisfying.

They might not be useful in terms of revealing the secrets of the mountainside and the Sun temple but that was something Dilan could take care of in different ways as well.

Thus, he averted his gaze from the Gate and turned to a specific direction.

Several Krendels and horned rats, who had evolved several times, looked at him with uncertain expressions.

They were debating with themselves whether to attack him or not. Dilan had sensed their gazes and their killing intent a while ago.

He merely smiled in their direction, while the Blazing Serpentine Blade's hilt emerged from the Penta Item Pouch.

Grasping it tightly, Dilan pulled it out of the pouch, while starting to run to his prey.

[Thunder Step]!

From running calmly, Dilan turned into a purple flash. The ground gave in under his feet as he crossed several hundred meters in an instant.

He appeared in front of the closest five-meter-tall Warlock Krendel before slashing out with the flame-engulfed Serpentine Blade that expanded all of a sudden.

Not even a second later the Blazing Serpentine Blade had coiled around the huge Warlock Krendel like a living serpent.

The serpent's hissing was replaced by the flames that sizzled loudly.

A moment later, Dilan moved his hand back to pull back the Blazing Serpentine Blade, which resulted in the coiled serpent-form squeezing the Warlock Krendel.

Cutting through its hide and flesh hundreds of times in a second, the blade ate away at its flesh and it began to bleed severely at once.

The monster's arteries had been cut and so were its muscles, preventing it from towering above Dilan.

It slumped to the ground, bleeding out in the following seconds.

However, Dilan had already disappeared from his former location while reaping the lives of the other monsters that had been hiding in the darkness.

It was their misfortune to have revealed their intention to kill him, while simultaneously expecting him to be unable to spot them in the darkness.

Dilan had turned into the Grim Reaper, who decided over the life-and-death of the monsters he ended, only to disappear a moment later.

Several minutes passed, and every single best in his proximity succumbed to the fate they had chosen by not retreating and staying in his blade's radius.

His entire body was drenched in blood that trickled onto the ground, while the Blazing Serpentine Blade sizzled, evaporating the blood that touched its blade.

No excitement could be seen on Dilan's fully focused expression, but his heart was beating wildly.

'I almost killed myself!'

While fighting the last batch of monsters, he had overestimated his capabilities.

With a seemingly simple strike, Dilan had planned to kill a total of 30 monsters at once.

The 20-meter-long serpent form of the Blazing Serpentine Blade was more than capable of achieving this as long as it was controlled properly.

However, in his excitement to show off his control skills, Dilan had nearly cut off his left leg. It was a near brush and only a few millimeters would have made him go down in history as the one-legged idiot.

It was his fortune that nothing serious happened but even then Dilan reminded himself to act more carefully.

To calm his jittery nerves, he started methodically collecting the Essence crystals before storing them inside the Penta Item Pouch.

"So it's like that? What a shame..."

Chapter 170 Leaving Rian?

As long as he inserted a trace of mana inside the Penta Item Pouch, Dilan knew how many items were stored within the pouch and how high the quantity of the items stored within was.

“So it does differentiate between the quality and Tier of Essence crystals.” He merely mumbled, while perceiving that there were dozens of Ordinary Tier-1 Essence crystals in his pouch, all of which were considered as one item.

On the other hand, another item was Bronze Tier-1 Essence crystals.

‘Truly a shame...if ‘Essence crystals’ wouldn’t be split up, it would be possible to store thousands of various types of Essence crystals, taking up merely one spot...’

Dilan sighed a few times, feeling that it was a shame because he could not find a loophole on how to exploit the Penta Item Pouch.

But he quickly realized that he was overthinking. The gains from a single Penta Item Pouch were already great, so there was no use complaining about it.

“Now that I think about it, it would have been even better if the Penta Item Pouch would split up the same Essence crystals according to the type of beast the crystals hail from.”

Dilan didn’t want to waste Essence crystals and absorb them if they didn’t even provide him status points.

He had already received so little Essence from Essence crystals that only status points were somewhat valuable to him.

However, once again, Dilan had expected too much from a Bronze quality treasure, which was why he returned to the hospital.

There, he searched for Mira and handed the [Botanica Lexica Magica] ability crystal to her..

Mira, the youngest Nurse in their rows, had been talking with her friends before she jumped up the moment Dilan approached them.

He left after giving her the ability crystal, not saying anything about the fact that she was currently slacking off.

‘What is wrong with him?’

Mira was not sure what was going on with Dilan but he was much more relaxed than the days before. This was truly odd because most survivors were worried about the Sun temple and the unknown dangers from the mountainside.

By now, everyone had heard about the Sun temple and the foreign races that had appeared out of nowhere and were currently residing in it.

Even Dilan didn’t know that the survivors were aware of the foreign races because he had kept everything under wraps to prevent mass panic.

If he were to know that everyone had found out about the Sun temple, he would be quite confused about the rather calm behavior of all survivors.

He would have definitely expected some survivors to lose their sanity and to run for their life.

However, in the end, there was nowhere to run. It was quite obvious that being under Dilan's protection provided the highest chances of survival to them.

Thus, nobody considered running for their lives, simply because it would be a death sentence.

Seeing that Dilan was much calmer by now, not only Mira was baffled but also the other young Nurses, who had been rescued from the other towers.

They were Mira's friends, whom she had started her apprenticeship with.

A few days ago, when the hospital's towers had been fully cleared by the Ascenders, they had found nearly 100 Survivors spread through the hospital.

Nearly all of them were on the verge of death but they had survived with the use of several healing abilities and the surplus of Essence that had invigorated their body.

Afterward, they had been accepted in Dilan's community. All Survivors had been strengthened and given the chance to do whatever they wanted to.

Many survivors wanted to search for their families, including the old Survivors and Ascenders, who had been staying with Dilan for quite a while already.

When Dilan heard this for the first time, he was quite proud of his people because they still cared about their family, despite all the chaos, which had wreaked havoc on Milarn.

In his opinion, it had been quite late for them to start thinking about their family, simply because it had already been two weeks since the Primordial Ascension had occurred.

However, when he had considered that the last few days had been the first rather peaceful days, Dilan understood that nobody had time to think about others as their own life had been on the line.

To protect others one needed to be alive first. This logic was quite simple and Dilan could tell from the expressions of some of the Ascenders that they were simply too afraid to ask Dilan for his help.

Of course, Dilan wouldn't help them search for their family. He had to take care of a group with close to 3000 Survivors.

If he were to help everyone search for their family, it would take decades to find them, whether alive or dead.

He had allowed everyone to leave to search for their family and to return with them. But in all honesty, Dilan didn't have much hope for the Ascenders and the others to find their family alive.

Even finding their corpses should be quite difficult.

This realization was something that had hit the teenagers the most because they had been dragged out of their ordinary life, and separated from their loved ones, only to be struck with the reality that their family was most likely dead by now.

In the end, this was why Dilan didn't say anything to Mira and her friends, despite knowing that they slacked off a little bit.

He had sensed their tension, fright, and sadness, and knew that his complaints would only worsen their mental state.

'As long as they can console each other it will be fine..' He concluded before entering the cafeteria.

There, he filled his stomach with a few dishes, just to get up and leave the cafeteria once again.

"Tell the others that I will leave Rian until the evening. I might even take until tomorrow to return if I'm busy."

The moment he finished the line, Dilan had already reached the cafeteria's doors.

"Wait!! What do you mean 'leave Rian'?? Where are you going?"

Bianne had clearly heard Dilan and a shocked expression appeared on her face. She let go of all the pots and pans she had been holding as all of them clattered to the ground with a loud bang but that was not something Bianna could be bothered about.

In an instant, she rushed after Dilan, who had already stepped outside the kitchen.

"Don't worry, I'm just taking a stroll over the Shikan plains."

He sounded calm but when Bianne looked straight into Dilan's sky-blue eyes, she realized that she shouldn't ask more.

The seriousness in his eyes told her where he was headed to. Thus, she could only bite her lower lip in worry.

"Take care of yourself, alright? ...We need you here..."

Bianne had almost said 'I need you' but it was only fortunate that she realized what her messed-up mind was doing. Her cheeks turned red in embarrassment and she sighed in relief because she had escaped a catastrophe just now.

"I know, I'll be back soon."

Saying so, Dilan disappeared from Bianne's sight. He left the hospital not long after and rushed out of Rian with a single target in his mind.

This target was none other than the Sun temple!