

Warlord 91

Chapter 91 Second Gate?

“If you wanna come at me, don’t stop...it’s now or never!”

Dilan was able to continue fighting.

His Stamina was far from being depleted, and the injuries he had sustained were not enough to decrease his combat prowess.

To be precise, it was more likely for his strength to increase because adrenaline was coursing through his body.

He was ready to take on every kind of opponent, whether it was another Silver monster or a Tier-1 existence!

However, even before Dilan could finish his words, the presence he radiated scared away all the monsters.

They could instinctively decipher that they would die the moment they showed hostility towards Dilan.

The monsters that had been attracted by the commotion and the shed blood of the powerful beings soaking into the mud quickly dispersed.

Dilan was finally freed of most of the gazes that were fixated on him, giving him the necessary time to extract the Essence crystals from the four corpses.

This took quite a while which was mostly owed to the Earthworm. It was quite difficult to find its Essence crystal.

“So...that is how ordinary Tier-1 Essence crystals look like?” Dilan mumbled when he finally found the Earthworm’s essence crystal..

It was a grayish essence crystal that was twice the size of a Tierless Essence crystal. At the first glance, it looked just like any ordinary Tierless Essence crystal, but when he looked at it intently Dilan noticed that the crystal itself was far more refined than any other Essence crystal he had ever touched.

Sensing the Essence that coursed through it, Dilan’s eyes lit up because he could tell that it was far more potent and beneficial to him than the Silver Essence of the Lightning Shiroa rat!

This astonished him a little bit but he began to absorb everything at once.

All of a sudden the Earthworm’s Essence crystal crumbled, only to release a twinkling shimmer that levitated in the air.

While looking at it, Dilan was distracted for a moment. This was a big mistake as he realized too late that the enormous amount of the Earthworm’s Essence entered his body at once.

Every pore of his body opened right away, allowing air and mana to pave its way toward him. It was as if he was taking drugs to make himself feel high.

An excited smile emerged on his face as his entire body was invigorated, only for the sensation to disappear all of a sudden.

From feeling as if he could conquer the entire world, the bubble of euphoria dispersed as he was slapped with the reality around him in an instant.

Nothing really changed except the progression bar of the Kirak's Vassal's occupation.

Or at least it looked like nothing else had changed.

However, Dilan craved for more Essence, which was why he absorbed the other ordinary Tier-1 Essence crystal that he received from the Armadillo's corpse.

Afterward, he absorbed the Silver Essence of the Tierless Silver scale Lizard as well.

He wanted to continue and absorb the remaining Essence but waited for a moment.

"I'll just save one of the Silver Essence crystals. Maybe, I will get a present from the Gate again."

Dilan was hoping that he would receive the same discount he got for the first time he exchanged a Bronze Essence crystal with a treasure when trading the Silver Essence crystal.

The chance to receive another discount was quite low, but Dilan hoped for the best.

He stored one of the Silver Essence crystals in his backpack, just to make sure that he didn't miss out on a great opportunity.

His gaze lingered on the monster corpses for quite some time, only to end up shrugging his shoulders.

Even if he were to give his best to reorganize his backpack and make some room, there was not much he could take with him.

The only thing he was able to do was to squeeze a few silver scales in it before it would be filled to the brim.

A moment later Dilan just looked at himself and realized the extent to which his clothes and backpack were burned.

Even some of the hair he had tied back to have a clear sight had been singed.

Feeling the stings of the burns on his skin, Dilan used his Origin ability a few times in succession.

Afterward, he began to absorb mana once again while turning towards the tunnels that led deeper into the treasure trove of a mine.

"Nah, I can look at it later. There is no need to rush!" Mumbling to himself, he smiled faintly before taking a look at the colored illuminating crystals.

An idea formed in his head which was why he approached one of the two-meter tall crystals before piercing out at one.

Breaking a corner of it, he held it in his hand before examining it intently.

'Is that a firefly inside the crystal? No...it is more like a small wisp?'

Dilan was not sure what he saw within the crystal, but there was a faint reddish droplet within the semi-translucent crystal that was shrouded in a faint milky color.

It didn't look all that special and didn't glow at all. However, when Dilan inserted 0.1 Unit of mana inside the crystal the reddish droplet began to glow.

Swirling through the crystal, its glow intensified, illuminating his surrounding in a reddish hue to a certain extent.

'I wonder how long the effect lasts. If the glow wears off after a long time, and we can alter the brightness of these crystals it might allow us to go out hunting during the night!'

Dilan was quite excited about his discovery. As such, he pocketed the crystal in his half-burned pants before he thought about what he should do next.

"Will there even be real boss monsters like in dungeons of video games?" Dilan mumbled to himself. He was not sure about the answer, but it didn't really matter if he were to be honest.

In the end, he hoped that there would be many more Silver monsters and ordinary Tier-1 monsters for him to kill! The more the merrier because they would allow him to advance to Tier-1 with the occupation he would be the most compatible with.

Knowing that the depths of the cave were not as interesting as a different location he wanted to find; the place to which the horned rats carried the baskets of ores and illuminating crystals!

To prevent anyone from attacking him off-guard, Dilan rested a little bit until the stings of his burned skin had disappeared.

Afterward, he prepared himself to fight once again.

With calm steps he left the cavern entrance, just to hide in the darkness, and take cover behind the stones and little hills.

Once the horned rats and Krendels were to attack him, they would run everywhere but the place they were currently targeting.

In the worst case, they might even alert multiple stronger monsters about his presence! Dilan wanted to avoid this because he had to overwhelm his opponents in order to gain an upper hand.

This was the most important because he was not confident enough to kill several Tierless Silver or Tier-1 ordinary monsters at the same time.

Not only did he feel as if his weaponry skills were underdeveloped, but he didn't have powerful and tough equipment.

If possible, Dilan would love to obtain a whole set of an armor, new weapons, special armaments, and a device that could store objects such as a spatial ring!

His movements were slightly restricted owing to the fully filled backpack. It made things more complicated, which was a nuisance.

But even if he wished to be fully equipped with treasures, this was not as easy as he made it seem.

After all, where should he get his hands on all the treasures he wanted.

Just when Dilan thought about this question, it was as if somebody listened to his inner voice and provided him with a solution.

He had followed some ore-carrying horned rats for more than an hour after which his eyes fell on something that baffled him greatly.

A huge gate that was more than 25 meters in diameter entered his view!

However, even if the Gate's appearance astonished him, this was not everything he was able to see right now!

Chapter 92 Silver treasure

"A settlement, really?"

On the outskirts of a huge, yet also somewhat badly constructed settlement Dilan spotted a huge Gate.

Its blue color was distinct and completely different from the two Gates he had seen before.

But before focusing on the Gate, his eyes flicked to the settlement that seemed more interesting.

He could see huts and small dens that were made of mud.

However, the closer he came to the center of the settlement the more stones, wood, and other materials he came across that were used for the buildings.

This was quite interesting, even more so because not a single tree could be seen in the underground valley.

'So they get resources from the other side of the huge Gate as well!' Dilan concluded quickly.

The answer was quite obvious, and it made him curious.

After all, there might be far more powerful monsters he would have to face than he could have hoped for.

But even then the thought of encountering stronger monsters didn't scare him.

Rather, he maintained his calm as his gaze was fixated on the huge Gate..

'I need to figure out its requirements to pass through. Like that, I can roughly gauge the strength of my opponents!'

Taking the dangers into consideration, it was only obvious that he wouldn't be able to kill Silver Tier-1 monsters, let alone higher leveled Tier-1 existences.

His weapons were not even strong enough to cut through their hide, to begin with!

Dilan understood this clearly, which was why he paved his way through the darkness.

Making use of the faint gleaming illuminating crystal that shone through his pocket, he found his way to the side of the Gate that didn't face the settlement.

[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>!]

Dilan instinctively backed off after reading the note while swallowing his saliva. It was near impossible for him to hide his astonishment.

Dilan didn't think that highly of the Krendels and horned rats before but the Gate changed everything as his mind had to adjust to what he was currently seeing.

'Tier-2!' He was baffled even though he knew that the huge Gate would be different to the one he came from.

Giving himself a few seconds to calm down, he immediately took a second glance at the notification he received from the Gate's information.

'So that is the Gate that leads to their home?... Is that how it is?'

Dilan's mind was rattling as he tried to figure out a proper answer on why he didn't encounter a more powerful monster yet. The crystal and ore cave should be valuable enough for stronger monsters to guard it from trespassers.

However, the strongest monsters he encountered were not even intelligent enough to guard the mine. They simply fought against each other, just to die at his hands.

Furthermore, it didn't even look like it was uncommon for the monsters within the cave to fight against each other.

After all, most low-leveled monsters simply ignored the four monsters as they fought!

'So...why are the monsters so weak but the restrictions to leave the Underground Valley so high?'

While thinking about an answer, Dilan felt that he was missing out on a very important piece of information.

Unfortunately, there was nothing he could do right now.

His mind was a mess, which was why he chose to ease his tension by experimenting with something else.

[<Silver> grade treasures can be exchanged with Silver Essence crystal of Tierless Level 10 Vociferous large-winged bat!]

The moment his hand came in touch with the Silver Essence crystal of the Vociferous large-winged bat, he received a notification.

The notification eased his tension in an instant, which gave him the necessary determination to throw the crystal in the Gate.

He waited with a bated breath, but nothing happened for several seconds.

Instead of letting anxiety get to him, Dilan forced himself to calm down mind got clearer as he tried to make sense of the situation.

'Maybe there are differences in the Gate's restrictions on each side of the Gate?... Like from this side I have to be at Level 50, Tier-2, while the other side might have a limit for existences, which are too powerful...

Like...maybe one can only be a Tierless existence while entering the underground valley, or an ordinary Tier-1 being?

If that were to be the case, it would mean that the system or the Underground valley itself can alter the restrictions...in order to...protect the underground valley from collapsing, is that it?'

In the end, Dilan believed that the Gates' restrictions were quite difficult to figure out. After all, it was the first time for him to encounter such a situation.

In fact, it was the first time for him to be in the dimension of a Gate.

It was only obvious for him to be lacking a lot of information. However, it made sense to think that the Gate would restrict beings that were too powerful to enter this place.

Otherwise, it might collapse, or the ecosystem of the entire place would be thrown off balance.

Dilan was unable to tell if his theories were true. As such, he was more careful than ever before as he peeked out behind the Gate.

He looked at the settlement and wondered whether or not he should take a look at it.

'If I'm right, the worst I can encounter would be rather low-leveled Tier-1 monsters...maybe a Silver Tier-1 monster. That would be bad, but it's not like I can pay attention to which monsters I am going to attack...'

While thinking about the next steps of his plan, his Silver treasure fell out of the Gate, just to land on the ground with a thump.

His eyes followed the treasure and found a bunch of leather boots on the ground.

They were black in color, and looked quite simple, if there weren't the faint silver threads that spread from the center to both sides of the boots, connecting with the boots' sole.

Picking them up, Dilan turned them over and spotted some sort of cryptic letter engraved on the sole.

This made him curious which led him to inspect the boots in detail.

[[Aeris' leather boots]<Silver treasure>

[+10 Agility]

[Gale] Consumes 5 Units of Mana to turn into a gale that crosses the distance of 10 meters in an instant!
3 Uses a day, no cooldown!]

The feeling of freedom will gain a new meaning while wear Aeris' Leather boots! They grant great comfort and temperature regulation!]

"Wow..." Dilan blurted out without being able to hold himself back.

It didn't take Dilan much time to understand that he had hit a jackpot with this pair of boots.

Not only was the stat boost extremely high, but the active ability [Gale] was comparable to short-distance teleportation!

The Mana consumption might be quite high. However, even if it were to be 10 Units of mana, the advantage one could gain from a single activation of the [Gale] ability was simply tremendous.

He knew that the Silver Essence crystal was something valuable and that a Silver treasure was bound to be extremely hard to procure.

Yet, even then, Dilan couldn't help but smile brightly holding the boots in his arms as if they were his little babies.

In an instant, they had become his most valuable treasures, which was actually not that difficult to understand.

Without wasting too much time, Dilan threw away his old pair of shoes and wore the new pair of boots.

They looked way too fancy and brand new in comparison to his other half-burned clothes.

But that was not important right now as he smiled vibrantly.

He felt the tremendous enhancement of stats he received from the Aeris' leather boots, giving him the necessary confidence to fight several Tier-1 monsters at the same time.

'Maybe I should try to procure a few Tier-1 Essence crystals and exchange them with treasures as well? I guess the 'Trash' treasures, I receive will be comparable or maybe even better than Aeris' leather boots!'

Dilan knew that he was daydreaming because he needed every single Essence crystal for himself.

However, it was a fact that better equipment was directly proportional to an increase in his combat prowess.

Meanwhile, higher combat prowess would allow him to defeat dangerous monsters with more ease.

That...was a matter of fact!

Chapter 93 Gale

Dilan was still not sure about the Gate's requirements. However, he couldn't sense a single powerful existence near him.

Since he began to increase his control of mana, it became much easier for him to figure out whether a monster was a threat to him or not.

Maybe it was just his senses that had been refined over time, or his ability to perceive danger which had gained more experience during the last 10 days.

Regardless of the reason, it was a fact that he could tell if a monster was dangerous to him, or if it was something useful for him!

This was something one could label as an unrefined technique because he would have to see the monster first in order to tell whether it was dangerous or not.

And if he were to be honest with himself, Dilan was not 100% certain if it was possible to determine the level of threat to him from monsters that could restrict their thirst for blood and strength!

With slow steps, Dilan thus walked around the huge Gate.

He kept paying attention to every single monster around him and figured out that all of them were low-leveled.

Most monsters approached either the huge Gate to pass through it with a basket of ores or crystal on their back, or a specific building that bordered the outskirts.

It was probably the Krendels' warehouse that was built of wood, mud, and stones.

The longer Dilan looked at all the structures around him the more intrigued he was about the Krendels.

They were far more intelligent and socializing monsters than he first presumed.

However, this didn't hold him back from desiring everything that ought to belong to them, whether it was their life, body, or simply objects!

Catapulting himself ahead, he passed through a small path without even a single monster nearby. The entire settlement was lit up with torches, the illuminating crystals he had found, and some other sources of light.

As such, it was quite difficult to stay unnoticed..

But even after 30 minutes passed not a single monster seemed to notice him.

Dilan didn't radiate any bloodlust, and the stench of blood belonging to different kinds of monsters that wafted when he passed by was not something new for the beasts to pick up on.

That was why no monster noticed that anything was off, even though a black flash passed through the settlement.

It was quite interesting to use his tremendously high Agility stat to his advantage in order to scout the settlement that belonged to the Krendels.

There were far more powerful monsters than expected with most of them being either Silver monsters or ordinary Tier-1 monsters.

If he was not wrong, there should have been a higher leveled Tier-1 monster as well.

Maybe it was a Bronze Tier-1 monster, but Dilan could tell that he didn't have a chance to kill it.

At least not without attracting too much attention.

The monster he meant to target was a War Krendel with a height of over five meters.

Its physique was lean yet tightly packed with muscles.

Fur covered the muscles which didn't hide the two black horns that protruded out of its head.

A simple look at it was enough for Dilan to understand that he was not able to kill it.

However, even then, he was still unwilling to give up.

He had yet to figure out more information about the Gates, let alone how to prevent a third wave.

Dilan believed that most restrictions of the Gates were something that prevented otherworldly existences from infiltrating the home of other races.

As such, Dilan had to reach a higher level and Tier before meeting the requirement to enter the huge Gate, to begin with.

Thus similar requirements should be in place to enter the small gate that led to the Rian mountainside hospital.

'I should have looked at the Gate's information after entering the underground valley!' He was cursing himself for being stupid.

Unfortunately, this didn't really help him.

On the contrary, he felt angered by his own stupidity which lead him to take a look at the evolved version of the War Krendel with a glint of wrath.

He wanted to let himself loose, which was why he went closer to the center of the settlement.

His distance to the Higher War Krendel, which was the name he gave the monster he targeted, reduced to a mere hundred meters.

This was something he could cross in no time.

[Thunder Step]!

After activating his active ability, Dilan's Agility was enhanced by 30%.

Pushing his feet off the ground, a distance of more than a dozen meters was crossed in an instant.

Just a moment later he further reduced the distance by another ten meters.

His speed accelerated by another notch as he sho towards his opponent.

Unfortunately, he was unlikely to figure out his maximum attainable speed in this fight.

A distance of 100 meters was simply too little to give Dilan the chance to make use of everything he had up to his sleeves.

The rather narrow lanes in the settlement made things further difficult.

But this was more of a problem for the Higher War Krendel.

After all, it merely got wind of his existence owing to the thunderous noise his active ability released.

Some might have argued that the execution of his ability was a fatal mistake, but Dilan thought that the attention he gained was exactly what he wanted.

With the Higher War Krendel's attention on him, Dilan simply continued his charge.

His speed had long since crossed 100 km/h and was nearing 150 km/h.

And that was despite the uneven ground he was running on!

Roaring out, Dilan released all the anger and frustration bubbling inside him, further agitating the Higher War Krendel that began to move toward him.

It was not even wielding a weapon, but the way its 50-centimeter-long claws glinted in the low light, there was no way that Dilan would believe that it was unarmed.

The Higher War Krendel began its charge toward him as well.

Without hesitation, it let out garbled noises before crossing a distance of close to ten meters at once.

‘As expected!’

The corners of Dilan’s mouth curled upward the moment he assessed the Higher War Krendel’s Agility.

With a higher Agility and a longer period to accelerate, Dilan knew that his chance of victory had increased a tiny bit.

However even though he could tell that his Agility was higher than the Higher War Krendel’s, it was pretty obvious that the monster’s Strength was much higher.

This was easy to decipher from what Dilan could see in the common distribution of a War Krendel’s stats.

In less than three seconds both Dilan and the Higher War Krendel were standing less than ten meters away from each other.

[Gale]!

Using up five units of Mana in an instant, the Aeris’ leather boots began to gleam faintly.

All of a sudden, Dilan was shrouded in a gale that covered him entirely.

At that moment he pushed himself toward the left side just to be boosted ten meters ahead in an instant.

The sensation of crossing a distance of ten meters in an instant fogged Dilan’s mind, but it didn’t even take him a moment to realize that he was next to the Higher War Krendel!

Making use of the fact that his opponent was still advancing ahead, Dilan’s smile turned devilish.

‘Even if your body is hard as steel, if your bottom is the same, I won’t believe in God anymore... not that I do, to begin with!!’

Screaming in his mind, Dilan used all his strength and the accumulated momentum at once to pierce out with the Captain’s Sword.

It was still a little bit slippery because of the weird secretion of the Earthworm, but that was only to Dilan’s advantage because the spot he attacked was none other than the Higher War Krendel’s buttohole!

While he thrust the longsword out, Dilan could clearly see that the Higher War Krendel was trying to forcefully halt in its tracks.

The pressure which it exerted on its legs made its ankles crack while cracks appeared on the ground around the Higher War Krendel's feet.

Simultaneously, with its attempt to slow down the Higher War Krendel twisted its entire body to an uncomfortable degree which led to numerous shrill cracking noises.

Unfortunately, all of its attempts to grasp and kill Dilan were what led to the Higher War Krendel's doom because the Captain's Sword smoothly pierced through its buttocks mere moments before the monster had begun to move rapidly.

Its rapid movement was what turned the rather mild injury Dilan had inflicted, into a grave injury.

Within seconds, the Higher War Krendel began to shed liters of blood, without feeling the slightest pain as its entire existence was fully focused on killing Dilan

Enormous amounts of adrenaline course through its body as well.

This was what allowed it to focus on Dilan, only to realize that he was not behind it anymore.

Dilan had used [Gale] once again and disappeared from the spot, just to catapult himself towards the turned head of the Higher War Krendel after he appeared in front of it once again.

Dilan was right in front of its huge head just a moment later.

His sky blue eyes gleamed brightly as he shaped both of his hands into a knife before he aimed at the Higher War Krendel's eyes.

The Higher War Krendel took note of Dilan a fraction too late, only to look into the eyes of the existence that was the last face it would ever see.

'Devil...'

And a mere second later blood splattered on Dilan's face as both of his hands pierced through the Higher War Krendel's eyes, reaching deep into his head, where he found what he had been looking for.

"Gotcha!"

Chapter 94 Countdown

[<Bronze> Essence crystal of Tier-1 Level 4 Soaring War Krendel has been absorbed!]

<Kirak's Vassal> [5.30065%]

'Damn, an increase of almost 3% at once...'

Dilan was quite baffled by the final result.

He was resting awkwardly against the dead Soaring War Krendel that had crashed to the ground when Dilan had mashed its brain.

Taking a few deep breaths, he tried to calm down his wildly beating heart.

The combination of the Aeris' leather boots' boost in Agility, followed by [Gale] and his active ability [Thunder Step] was simply too powerful.

As long as he had a proper weapon and enough mana, there shouldn't be a single monster capable of killing him in the underground valley.

After all, the Soaring War Krendel had been the strongest!

But even if he had just killed the strongest monster in the underground valley, Dilan didn't have much Mana left.

'I should be more careful now. I have released my stress, so I should leave now, I guess.'

Dilan could tell that he wouldn't be able to find any more information from the settlement.

The little intel he procured about Gates was already quite intriguing.

Unfortunately, it didn't really help him answer specific questions such as how to delay another wave of monsters from flooding the second floor of the Rian mountainside hospital!

The small Gate that led back to the hospital should provide him with an answer, which was why he chose to return.

'But before...a little bit more trouble is fine! I have still a few Units of mana left, after all!'

After fighting the Soaring War Krendel, Dilan was still eager to keep fighting.

The increase in the Kirak's Vassal progression bar had been extremely high.

Thus, not knowing when he would return to the underground valley, it was only obvious for Dilan to feel like reaping more benefits.

Dilan also knew that he had caused a commotion while fighting the Soaring War Krendel.

That was even more reason for him to leave because he could already sense that quite a few monsters were on their way toward him.

He was forced to leave the moment he pulled the Captain's Sword out of the Soaring War Krendel's butt.

With a single push, he catapulted himself several meters ahead. Accelerating his speed further, Dilan tucked the longsword into his belt.

This allowed his hands to be fully free, which was everything he required to reap a few lives while running through the settlement.

Following a specific path Dilan had come up with, he encountered quite a few powerful monsters that he had detected while touring through the settlement.

Even after killing them in a matter of seconds, Dilan didn't absorb even a single Essence crystal.

He stored them away with the thought of exchanging the Essence crystals with treasures.

This was, at least, what he was trying to do, only to realize that the huge Gate was not exactly safe for trades.

“At least 10 Tier-1 monsters...maybe I’m still a little bit too full of myself. Looks like the Soaring War Krendel was not the strongest one!”

Understanding that the huge Gate was not ought to be his next destination, Dilan left the settlement with fast strides.

He dashed through the outskirts and quickly disappeared from the sight of dozens of monsters that pursued him.

Tracing back the same path he had come in through, Dilan reached the cavern entrance to the mine in no time. He didn’t slow down or bother hiding from any monster which made it easier for him to dash through the tunnels.

Only a handful of monsters in the underground valley were able to reach his speed, to begin with, and the majority of them stayed in the settlement!

Thus while trying to find his way back to the small Gate to return to Milarn, Nial made a short stop to get his hands on a batch of the different types of ores that he took from the basket carrying horned rats.

With a basket of ores and illuminating crystals in his arm, he rushed through several dozen tunnels before finally finding himself back at the mine once again.

More than four hours passed before he found himself back in the small cavern hall where he found the small Gate that led back to Milarn.

He was exhausted due to the numerous fights, and the long time for which he ran through the underground valley.

It must be early in the morning for the others as well.

Thus, Dilan didn’t want to waste much more time by staying in the underground valley.

However, even then, there was something he had to figure out, which was why he approached the permanent Gate with a determined expression.

Putting down the two baskets, he took a Silver Essence crystal, and a Tier-1 ordinary Essence crystal out of his pockets.

Holding them tightly, Dilan approached the Gate, and read the first messages he received from it.

[<Silver> treasure can be exchanged with Silver Essence crystal of Tierless Level 10 Four-armed War Krendel]

[Tier-1 Level 0 Essence crystal of Titan horn rat has been detected! Cannot be exchanged with <Trash> treasure! Gate’s permission and level are too low!]

After reading through the first notification, a bright smile emerged on Dilan’s face.

However, there was something that bothered him about the message. Dilan was not sure what it was, but he felt as if the mana fluctuations of the small Gate were not as 'responsive' as the huge Gate's.

This might have been a misconception, but the second message was something that made things a little bit more obvious.

'So the Gates have levels as well? I guess I could exchange the Titan horn rat if I were to try it at the huge Gate...but then, would it cost me one Essence crystal or multiple?

Are the exchanged rewards directly related to the difficulties one faced while procuring them or do they vary for each Gate?'

Quite a few questions coursed through Dilan's mind, but he knew that he wouldn't be able to get an answer.

"I'm missing something...well either way..."

He shrugged his shoulders and chose to take out two more Silver Essence crystals while absorbing the four ordinary Tier-1 Essence crystals he had been able to procure after killing the Soaring War Krendel.

Meanwhile, he threw the three Silver Essence crystals in the Gate that responded well to his demands of procuring more treasures.

'I should not hurry to exchange the Bronze Essence crystals for the time being. I don't have enough space, let alone a set of extra hands to carry everything as it is!'

There were close to 50 Bronze Essence crystals in his backpack, but instead of exchanging them with some Bronze treasures, he rather looked at the other notifications he received from the Gate itself!

[Permanent Gate to (Rian Mountainside Hospital, Milarn). Special condition met!]

[Next Gate Breakout will occur in <480 hours>! Gate's restriction will be loosened for 3 hours! Altering the timer is possible with Essence crystals!]

Everything Dilan wanted to know was answered by the information he read, including the time left for the third wave, or Gate Breakout, which was how the system labeled it.

"Looks like there is a lot to tell the others later!" Dilan muttered amusingly as the three Silver treasures emerged out of the bluish liquid of the Gate.

However, what Dilan saw frustrated him to no end.

"A backpack, a piece of paper...and a hedge shear?! What kind of joke is happening right now?!"

Chapter 95 Back

Dilan couldn't help but frown deeply at the sight of the three Silver treasures.

He had already expected the Aeris' leather boots to be superior to the treasures he would obtain from the small Gate.

However, even then, it was hard to digest what he saw right now.

A leather backpack, a piece of paper that looked quite old, and a hedge shear with a wooden hilt and blades made of a bluish-dark metal appeared in front of him.

Dilan didn't think that it was possible to get worse things than what he saw in front of him.

But it looked like his expectations had been way too high.

[Yalo Gardening Shear] <Silver treasure>

Beautiful hedge shear. Perfect for Gardening.

Slightly enhances all botanical abilities while being wielded.

Even if Dilan didn't like to accept it, the Yalo Gardening Shear could have some use in the future.

It was unexpected, but it was truly useful to have the gardening shear. Even more so because Mira had the passive ability [Green Finger]!

'I should give her the Gardening Shear. Maybe, it is time to search the mountain for some herbs containing mana? I bet there will be more gardening treasures in the future...at that time, it would be advantageous if her ability has already been upgraded a few times!'

The more he thought about it, the better his opinion of receiving the Yalo Gardening Shear became.

With that in mind, he looked at the next notification.

[Featherlight Backpack] <Silver treasure>

With this stylish leather backpack hiking will become a dream.

Inscribed with Tierless Bronze rune <Weight reduction>. Decreases weight of stored objects by 25%!..

The backpack was actually not something he truly required. The ores and other objects were quite heavy, but with a Strength stat of 20, it was not necessary to have the Featherlight backpack.

But that was not the case for the others. Furthermore, his backpack was half-burned, and partially torn at places owing to the heavy weights it had to carry.

As such, instead of replacing his old backpack with a new ordinary backpack, Dilan thought that he could just use this one.

He didn't expect the Yalo Gardening Shear to be of more use than the Featherlight Backpack.

'Will the shear have the most use for me?' Dilan suddenly wondered as he picked up the old-looking piece of paper.

[[Tierless <Trash> Mana replenishment potion'] <Silver treasure>

<Ingredients>

-5g powder of Tierless Level 5 Essence crystal(uninfected)

-30ml clear water (Ph neutral)

-3g Tierrat sand/Lumina crystal powder/Mials soil

<Recipe>

First step...]

Dilan was baffled when he read through the piece of paper that was, in fact, a parchment containing a potion recipe.

This astonished him so much that he stopped moving as he read through the ingredients and the description on the concoction process several times in succession.

The potency of the final product was not written on the recipe, but Dilan was utterly dumbfounded.

“If we can concoct this potion, lack of mana won’t be a problem, at all!”

Saying that the recipe was a Godsend was an underestimation!

Even if the effectiveness of the potion was not great, every single active ability required mana. They had, at least 15 Ascenders in their group with active abilities.

If none of them had to pay attention to their mana consumption while fighting, their combat prowess would skyrocket.

And for that, it didn’t matter whether the Tierless Trash mana replenishment potion filled up one, five or ten units of mana!

Dilan had no idea where to get his hands on the Tierrat sand or Mials soil, but after taking a look at the illuminating crystal he had pocketed, Dilan was pretty sure that it was worth a try!

‘Even if it’s not the correct crystal, who says that it won’t work! Giving it a try will prove its worth either way!’

His mood was sky-high. As such he carefully pocketed the recipe before picking up everything.

Afterward, Dilan stepped through the small permanent Gate before emerging on the second floor of the Rian mountainside hospital.

Taking a few deep breaths, the air around him was stale.

Less than a day had passed since he had entered the Krendel’s Underground Valley.

However, to Dilan it felt as if so many things had changed.

His strength had reached new heights, and numerous pieces of information squirmed in his mind.

There was a lot for him to think about, but Dilan wanted to return to the cafeteria first.

He had a lot to tell the others, and there were still 50 Bronze Essence crystals that had to be exchanged with 10 Bronze treasures!

While stepping out of the left corridor, Dilan saw that the corpses from the second wave had already been disposed of.

At the same time, he noticed that the sun was already rising, which told him that more than half a day had passed since he left.

This meant he had taken less than expected, but he would certainly not grumble about it.

Walking down the stairs, he saw one of the younger Ascenders.

It was a young man, who didn't seem to have reached the age of 20 yet.

He was holding one of the Kobold spears in his hand.

His back was fully drenched in sweat from training hard to perfect himself by repeating certain movement sequences over and over again.

Dilan liked the fact that the young man was giving his best so early in the morning.

Thus he nodded his head at him with a faint smile on his face, just for the young man to stiffen for a moment.

However, when he realized who Dilan was, the young man quickly approached him.

"H-hello Sir, welcome back!" The young man even gave him a salute, while trying to hide his heavy breaths while standing erect and maintaining his posture.

If it would have been possible for him, Dilan would have waved off his hand to tell the young man that it was not necessary for him to act like this.

Unfortunately, his hands were trying to not let anything fall off.

Seeing this, the young man rushed to help in an instant.

"Sir, may I help you carry your belongings?" After seeing the distinct glint of respect in the young man's eyes, it was impossible for Dilan to reject his help.

As such, Dilan handed over a few things. He was already tired and felt quite relieved to receive some help.

"Thanks. By the way, what's your name?"

The young man was already on his way towards the cafeteria while carrying as much as his arms could hold when he turned around upon hearing Dilan's voice.

"Mason, Sir. My name is Mason!" A smile covered his entire face, making it seem as if Mason was innocent.

For a moment Dilan even thought that Mason might have never seen, let alone fought a monster because his smile was simply too innocent for him to comprehend.

However, Dilan shook his head only a moment later before he smiled as they approached the cafeteria.

It didn't seem to be locked, and one could already hear quite a few noises coming from the cafeteria as well.

In fact, the lights inside were on as well, which was quite a surprise.

'They found the hospital's emergency generator?'

Surprisingly, only the lights in the cafeteria were on.

If the electricity supply of the entire hospital had resumed, every single light should be turned on, and attract unwanted attention, whether it was monsters or hostile humans.

But Dilan simply presumed that Kathrine and the others had found a solution and made everything work.

Thus, he entered the cafeteria with a calm mind.

What entered his sight were several fridges and freezers that were located next to the kitchen.

Several women had turned into butcherers, wielding polished Kobold weapons to dismantle several huge War Krendels.

“Did you guys already start testing the War Krendel’s meat?” Dilan asked, slightly dumbfounded.

Bianne was much faster than he expected. Mason just nodded his head before he began to praise Bianne’s cooking skills.

“The meat is really tender and is perfect for a meat broth. Bianne is such a good cook. She told us that we should be able to replenish our mana faster if we consume the meat of higher leveled monsters as well!

Bianne is just a Culinary Goddess!! I’m happy to taste and eat the food cooked by her every single day!”

Mason looked like he would salivate just at the thought of food prepared by Bianne.

Dilan thought that her cooking skills were really good, but it was not like she was a professional cook. As such, he felt that Mason was just a little bit hyper, and excited which was why he exaggerated a little bit.

‘Well, I’m happy to have a cook here as well. So it shouldn’t be bad to praise her occasionally.’

Shrugging his shoulders, Dilan kept looking through the rows of people.

Ailee and Yvonne seemed to be missing, which was a weird combo. But even before he could ask Mason what was going on, Kathrine and Oliver found him.

“Dilan!! You’re back!” The moment his name was shouted out, everyone turned toward him.

His appearance was anything but clean. However, that was not something anyone cared about because they knew that he had been fighting with his life on the line, for their sake, at that!

Just one look at his clothes was enough to tell them that he had been in a lot of action.

His clothes and hair were in extremely bad condition. This was actually not hard to understand, and considering that some parts of the skin on his face looked freshly healed, nobody even thought about asking Dilan if he found something interesting in the Krendel’s Underground Valley.

This was even more so the case for the Ascenders that were ready to risk their lives every single day. They wanted to know how secure it was to enter the Krendel’s Underground Valley, and how useful the permanent Gate would be for them.

But the longer one looked at Dilan, the more obvious was the fact that he got much stronger than he had been before!

Less than 24 hours had passed, and it felt as if he had improved by leaps and bounds.

Yet, while only a handful of Survivors believed that this might be dangerous because Dilan might abuse his power, the others were overjoyed by the fact that he improved so fast in the Krendel's Underground Valley!

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Chapter 96 Hostile?

"Bring the Yalo Gardening Shear to Mira, please. Afterward, I can give you some materials to create a more powerful spear than the Kobold's spear!"

Dilan liked Mason quite a bit. He was easy to get along with and didn't hide his true emotions.

An easygoing, slightly naive human was hard to come across in times like these.

Thus, Dilan wanted to help him out a little bit.

When Mason heard that he could receive a reward he rushed toward Mira, giving Dilan the time to speak to Oliver and Kathrine.

"Where are Ailee, Sarah, Bianne and Pierre? I think they should be present when I report everything. Repeating myself over and over again is a little bit annoying."

Dilan's face was serious, clearly showing that his trip to the Krendel's Underground Valley had been anything but easy.

However, Kathrine's expression worsened when she heard the four names Dilan mentioned.

Even Oliver couldn't look in Dilan's eyes, which meant that something was wrong.

"What happened?"

Dilan was dead-tired just a moment ago..

But the possibility that something might have happened to the others wiped out his tiredness in an instant.

Yet, when Kathrine and Oliver looked behind them warily, Dilan frowned slightly before he suggested,

"Let's go outside for a moment." As an afterthought, he added the next words in a slightly louder voice, "It would be best if I show you two directly what I found at the Gate!"

Afterward, Dilan turned around to leave the cafeteria without even looking back at the Survivors who stared at him in confusion.

But their opinion and confusion were not something he could care about right now. After all, it seemed that Kathrine and Oliver had something to say that they did not want other Survivors to get to know for now.

When they were well out of earshot, Dilan slowed down before repeating his question once again,
“What happened?”

They threw another glance backward, only for Kathrine to start telling him what had happened during the last few hours.

“As you might have noticed we fixed the problem with the emergency generator of the hospital. Unfortunately, we were a bit late in turning off all lights except the one in the cafeteria.

At midnight the entire Rian mountainside hospital was lit up like a bright torch, the only source of light in the dark surrounding. Of course, this attracted the attention of humans and monsters alike.

Until just a few minutes ago, all of us were hunting down the weaker monsters that dared to hunt us!

Pierre was severely injured when someone attacked him. We haven’t even seen who attacked, but a crossbow bolt was stuck in his thigh.

We also heard the voices of some humans in the darkness, so we can be quite certain that hostile humans are currently roaming around the Rian mountainside hospital.

It is not impossible for them to have found a way inside the hospital as well. After all, there are multiple entrances!

Because Ailee felt too weak, she chose to start clearing a different tower...and Yvonne followed her.”

Kathrine frowned deeply with worry gleaming in her eyes.

She seemed to have a lot more to say but Dilan just lifted his hand.

“So nobody died, right?”

Both Kathrine and Oliver shook their heads. They were still worried about Ailee and Yvonne, but luckily nobody had died.

Sarah seemed to be fine as well, but she was likely to look after Pierre right now.

This was more than enough for Dilan to calm down.

He knew that Kathrine and Oliver were forcing themselves to stay in the cafeteria because they had to protect the other Survivors.

It was obvious that this was a difficult decision for both of them as they would have loved to be with the people they held dear.

As such, Dilan couldn’t even smile right now.

‘Either they’re too naive, or simply are the kind of people that are too good for this world...’ He sighed inwardly, quickly regained his composure, and spoke something entirely different.

“I will exchange a few Bronze Essence crystals with Bronze treasures. If anything is to use for you two, Ailee or Yvonne, just take it. Afterward, you two should look out for these two restless women!”

Dilan knew that it was important to share the information he had procured inside the Krendel's Underground Valley, but staying alive was far more important right now.

With that in mind, Dilan quickly threw a total of 50 Bronze Essence crystals inside the small permanent Gate the moment they reached it.

Upon seeing the large number of Bronze Essence crystals, Oliver and Kathrine looked at him in doubt.

They didn't know that the Bronze Essence crystals didn't have much value for Dilan anymore.

As such, they presumed that he exchanged the 50 Bronze Essence crystals with treasures for their sake.

Not long after, a total of 10 Bronze treasures were thrown out of the Gate. Most of them were related to weapons. There was one leather armor, three daggers, a pair of Clawed Gloves, an earring, and four other treasures.

Dilan had hoped that, at least, one treasure would be of use to him.

However, the only thing that was slightly interesting was the Leather armor that provided protection from monsters up to Tier-1 Level 0, and a [+3 Health] boost!

But actually, even that was not something Dilan was overly interested in.

Thus, he picked up the things the others didn't want before returning to the cafeteria.

Kathrine and Oliver rushed past the cafeteria, all the way through the huge first floor as fast as possible.

'They should know, right?' Dilan thought as he took a glance at Pierre's mattress.

Two nurses tended to his wound, while some Survivors looked at Pierre's wound with a trace of fear in their eyes.

Being secretive was not exactly Dilan's forte, and he didn't like to lie to others either.

As such, he cleared his throat the moment he received help in carrying the remaining Bronze treasures to the small area that looked like a weapon shop selling weapons belonging to the Middle age.

There were several 'shelves' filled with polished and sharpened weapons.

Most weapons Dilan saw were daggers that had been made from the horns of the horned rats.

The rat horn daggers were something they wouldn't have long use for anymore because they required far more powerful weapons...and a lot more weapons as well!

After all, it looked like the era of peace had finally ended, if one could call the last 10 days as such.

"Everyone, please listen to what I have to say!!" Dilan suddenly announced, his voice resounding through the entire cafeteria that was loud enough to attract everyone's attention.

"It looks like our situation has improved a lot. We have enough meat to eat for a very long time.

However, it seems like we attracted some attention from other Survivors. If they were to be amicable this would be no problem.

On the contrary, it would be great, but it looks like they're hostile! That means we have to prepare for everything...even if that means we would be required to kill other humans!

After all, if we're not ready to kill, we might be killed instead!"

Chapter 97 Retired

Of course, Dilan had yet to see his opponents, let alone figure out more about them.

The amount of information that was presented to him was minuscule and didn't give him much to go on.

But he trusted his gut feeling, and what he could sense in order to understand that the issue with hostile Survivors was somewhat complicated.

'If they have rifles or other types of modern weapons, my body won't be able to block such bullets...I guess?'

Dilan was not sure about this, but it was better to be safe than sorry.

However, even if he was strong enough as an individual, he was not alone anymore.

There was a group of low-leveled Ascenders. Some of them had not even reached level 1 yet, and a few among them never would.

To them, a single bullet might lead to their death!

'I have to gather more information!'

Tiredness overcame Dilan once again, but he forced himself to stay up a little bit longer.

He emptied his pockets, and the old, half-burned backpack to take a look at the treasures he had collected.

Spreading out everything in front of him, Dilan began inspecting them as multiple Survivors gathered around him to take a look.

"Crystals, ores, Silver scales, more claws and horns..." One of the older women said without much interest before leaving the group of onlookers.

Many were not interested in the things Dilan procured, while others clearly showed their interest.

"It would be great to have a smithy or something like that here...all kinds of armaments could be easily forged that way."

An older man ignored the others while picking up the various ores and crystals. He seemed to be greatly interested in the raw materials rather than the claws.

After inspecting everything carefully, the older man sighed deeply before another old man patted his shoulder.

"Old Jeff, don't be like this. You're already too old to think about starting to forge once again. You retired years ago!!

We ended up in the hospital because we're old and our body doesn't support us as it used to in our prime, don't forget that!"

From the looks of it, the two old men were in their late 70s. But their age was not something Dilan was truly interested in.

Rather, Dilan's interest was in Old Jeff, who seemed to be a retired blacksmith.

"Even if I'm old, my condition is much better than it had been during the last few years!! You must feel it as well, Gerd!!" Old Jeff retorted in a hoarse voice, while his face turned into a grimace.

The more Essence one absorbed the more energized one felt. That was why Dilan could tell what Old Jeff was talking about.

He presumed that the more Essence old men absorbed, the longer they could live without major health issues. Maybe one's life expectancy could be increased as well?

But that was not something Dilan knew for sure.

"Mr Jeff, I don't want to interrupt your discussion, but do you think it will be possible to forge proper weapons with these materials? Or even better armors using the Silver Scales?"

Old Jeff had forgotten about Dilan and he had been just staring at the materials longingly. But he stepped back the moment he heard the young man's voice.

Even if Dilan was much younger than him, Old Jeff knew that it would be bad to get on his wrong side.

However, upon seeing the faint smile on Dilan's face and the way his eyes shone with expectation, the old man calmed down quite quickly.

"The Lumina crystals can be turned into lightsticks or something similar to that. As long as Mana or Essence is provided to them they can continue to glow for a very long time. However, to forge armaments, the Tierless Bronze ore called Silver iron is quite good.

On the other hand, the Jadetite is a Tierless Trash ore that is quite good for anything but protective armors! It breaks easily but is razor-sharp. So if a weapon is forged from it, you can use it well, but it will break after colliding with the hide of Tier-1 monsters!"

The more Old Jeff spoke, the bigger the eyes of the people around him got.

Even his old, good friend Gerd couldn't help but look at Old Jeff for several seconds.

'How does he know?!' Dilan just thought in confusion. His first prediction was that Old Jeff had some sort of ability.

But what he didn't know was that Old Jeff owned not only an active ability called [Material Inspection] but also a passive ability called [Basic Blacksmithing Mastery].

The passive ability was something that was generated when the Primordial Ascension occurred.

His talent and knowledge as a former blacksmith made this possible.

On the other hand, [Material Inspection] was something Old Jeff obtained after bartering the ability crystal he had received by killing his first monster.

Nobody wanted this active ability as it would use up one of two slots. But that was no concern for Old Jeff, whose love for blacksmithing didn't die down even after he retired due to health problems.

Even if Dilan's plan was something different, he couldn't help but look at Old Jeff as if he had luckily spotted an invaluable treasure.

"Do you want to become a blacksmith once again?"

When Old Jeff heard Dilan's words, his eyes gleamed brightly. But just a moment later he recalled his condition which dampened his spirits.

"Well...yes, but I cannot..."

Dilan just nodded his head before adding,

"I will provide you with some more Essence crystals soon. If your condition improves, and you're confident of enduring extreme heat and the heavy weight of a forging hammer, you can reconsider it. We don't have a smithy nearby, either way!"

Saying so, he averted his attention to something else.

Some Survivors were a little bit bothered about Dilan's earlier comment.

They feared fighting against monsters, but the thought of killing other humans was even worse to them.

But even then, by looking at Pierre, while recalling the memories of the last 10 days it was obvious that they had to change something.

Even the laziest people understood that they could be killed at any moment if they didn't up their game...and if they understood the given situation, then everything was far more dangerous and complicated than initially thought!

Chapter 98 Weakest link

Instead of going to sleep immediately, Dilan spoke to the other Ascenders and Survivors for quite some time.

They had to be reassured that everything would be fine.

Dilan's confidence was more than enough to achieve this as he was by their side.

But even then, some individuals believed that it was time for them to become stronger as well. Thus, they kept looking at the numerous weapons in the corner of the room.

"For now, I allow everyone to take the weapons of your choice. This even includes the claws of the Lightning Shiroa rat and the Bronze treasures.

However, if anyone goes outside the cafeteria please reconsider that a single zombie scratch will be your death! Underestimating your opponent will be the first but also last mistake you make in a life-and-death situation."

Dilan didn't have anything against ambitious Ascenders.

He wanted to provide them with the necessary treasures to become stronger as well.

Yet, Dilan wouldn't go hunting for them, just to make leveling up easier.

It would be better for them to face dangerous opponents to improve their fighting style and become stronger.

Thus, he showed his generosity while lecturing the others to be careful before he chose to rest for a few hours.

After he woke up from his well-deserved rest, Dilan got up from the mattress before eating something..

By the time he was done eating, Kathrine and Oliver returned with Ailee and Yvonne.

The four of them looked very exhausted, but that was less important than the fact that their strength had increased.

Kathrine had reached level 10, thereby opening her Ancient Paths of Advancement.

She had quite a few occupations to choose from, but Kathrine didn't tell anyone about the different occupation choices she received.

Meanwhile, the others had leveled up quite a bit as well.

Despite that none of them reached level 10.

The others were quite slow in Dilan's opinion, but that was fine because the increase in strength seemed to be exponential.

Tier-1 monsters would provide quite a few status points, even more so stronger monsters.

"Here take this. It should help you aim better." Dilan said when he reached Kathrine, handing her the horn of the Lightning Shiroa rat.

Afterward, he told her that everyone should rest for a bit before he chose to leave the cafeteria.

"Thanks, but where are you going?" Kathrine asked, wondering what Dilan wanted to do.

She had been waiting for him to tell them what happened in the Krendel's Underground Valley, and to provide them with more information.

Dilan noticed her confusion, which was why he smiled lightly.

"I will scout the area around the hospital. Don't worry too much, I will take care of everything.

Ahh, also I wrote a small report about everything you guys have to know. It's not much, but it should be quite helpful!"

Saying so, Dilan left the Rian mountainside hospital, without a weapon in his hand.

Dilan left the Captain's Sword behind, knowing that it would only hold him back. It was simply too inefficient to run around with this sword.

He didn't even have a scabbard to sheath it when not in use, which made it a hassle to carry it around.

Furthermore, his Clawed Gloves were more than enough for now.

Leaving without worrying too much about the other's well-being, Dilan cleared his chaotic mind by taking a few deep breaths of fresh air.

'I should collect a few Essence crystals for Old Jeff, and to create the mana replenishment potions. To think that the crystals I brought back are truly Lumina crystals. What great luck!'

Dilan didn't know that the Gates only handed out rewards that were directly correlated to one's location; to the place, the Gates had created a connection with.

As such, it was not his luck that the Lumina crystals were the same as required in the recipe he procured, but it was intentional.

It didn't really matter if it was his luck or simply coincidence that the crystals were what he was looking for, but it made Dilan feel as if he was finally on a lucky streak, which was quite motivating!

That made it easier for him to feel less worried about numerous things that tormented his mind.

Dilan thus regained some confidence as he began to run through the surrounding streets.

With high Stamina, little consumption and a terrifically high Agility stat, Dilan could run at a 'moderate' speed for several hours.

He took down a few monsters that appeared in his way with ease before storing away most Essence crystals in the Featherlight backpack.

His backpack was slowly being filled with Essence crystals of various monsters as he kept moving ahead.

However, even after Dilan scouted the surrounding area for three hours, he didn't find any new signs of a small human base.

Feeling slightly frustrated by the fact, he calmed down by killing a few more powerful monsters he encountered.

'I didn't expect to encounter so many Tier-1 monsters here...' Dilan couldn't help but mumble.

He was not in the outskirts of Rian anymore, which was great. After all, he had already encountered more than five Tier-1 monsters.

None of them was a Bronze, let alone a Silver monster, but they were still quite powerful.

'Isn't that way too fast? Or is it usually that easy to advance to Tier-1?'

Advancing through 10 levels, and choosing a lower-ranked occupation was certainly not difficult. That was also why most ordinary Tier-1 monsters in his surroundings were even easier to defeat than the ones he encountered in the Krendel's Underground Valley.

But even then, ordinary level 10 Ascenders wouldn't be able to defeat them, which was exactly why Dilan felt that the Primordial Ascension progressed way too fast.

Most human Survivors were still trying to adjust to the fact that the world was changing.

However, the monsters would not wait for weaklings to catch up.

Instead, they tried to reap every single benefit they could gain from the incompetency of the weak.

Recalling this, Dilan accelerated the way in which he fought.

'I have to advance to Tier-1...as quickly as possible!!'

But in the end, it was not only Dilan, who had to advance but the others as well. Alone, he might survive as an individual, but their entire group of slightly more than 60 Survivors had to become stronger in their entirety.

And...a group was only as strong as its weakest link!

Within Dilan's group, the weakest link was the Survivors that didn't do anything and simply expected to receive hot and fresh food for free.

They were also the most likely to betray him.

However, that was something he was already aware of. But it hadn't bothered him until now.

Luckily, the barbaric world outside the cafeteria had put some sense in them which was why they finally started to do something after getting to know that their life might be endangered if they were too weak.

But even then, Dilan was worried about the changes most Ascenders underwent after feeling the addictive sensation of Essence.

It led to a change in behavior within most Survivors, which was the easiest to see in the new Survivors.

He had rescued them from the fourth floor and they had been traumatized and some had even been on the brink of death not too long ago.

However, right now everyone was working hard, and striving for more strength so as to be of use to Dilan.

Their loyalty to him was odd, but it shouldn't be in relation to the fact that all of them absorbed Essence, most of them even several times!

But what Dilan and most of the others had yet to understand was that Essence did far more than just invigorate one's body, and mind, while slowly negating the fear of blood!

It fundamentally changed much more within one's body and mind, far more than one could fathom at first glance!

Chapter 99 Rejuvenated

After spending some more time combing through his surroundings, Dilan noticed that it was already afternoon by the time he returned to the Rian mountainside hospital.

He had come across a few clues, but the entire city was way too quiet for him to find out more.

It was quite weird because Dilan had expected to encounter several human groups.

There were commotions in different areas on Rian's outskirts, but even in the other districts one could occasionally see powerful monsters, and spot a few possible locations of shelters.

But even then, he didn't think of approaching the survivors directly.

If they chose to leave their group alone it was for the best because he was pretty sure that not many were able to increase their strength as quickly as he did.

Of course, that didn't mean Dilan was overconfident in his capabilities.

He knew when to attack, and when to retreat. This was what differentiated a warrior from a mindless killer.

After returning to the cafeteria, Dilan took his backpack off his shoulder before emptying it on the table where the ores and Lumina crystals were lying.

The sound of more than a hundred Essence crystals rolling over the table attracted everyone's attention.

Seeing that Dilan was standing beside the table and was patiently sorting the crystals, nobody moved but they had their gazes fixated on what he was doing.

"Old Jeff, Sarah can you guys come over?" He suddenly asked, while still looking at the Essence crystals.

He segregated them into ordinary Essence crystals at Level 5 or slightly above, higher leveled ordinary crystals, and Bronze Essence crystals.

Sarah and Jeff approached Dilan with slight hesitation, unsure of what to do..

"Eh...Dilan, what do you want from us?" Sarah asked quite bluntly.

She knew that it was not necessary to speak formally with Dilan, which was why she went straight to the point.

But even after she asked, Sarah didn't receive an answer from Dilan.

Instead, Dilan was rummaging in his backpack where he pulled out an old piece of parchment.

"If you have some free time, please use this! You can take the low-leveled Essence crystals, some water, and the few Lumina crystals which I brought back from the Krendel's Underground Valley.

There should be test tubes, a gas burner, a grinder and other things in the hospital. You can ask some of the Survivors to help you if you were to need their support."

Dilan didn't trust many people in their group. At least not to the extent that he would give them the recipe for the mana replenishment potion!

As such, there were only a handful of people he trusted which were Kathrine, Oliver, Pierre, Ailee, Sarah, and Bianne.

Unfortunately, all of them were either overly busy or occupied with something else.

Sarah wanted to look after Pierre, which meant that she wouldn't leave the cafeteria to go out hunting for several hours a day.

Dilan took this into consideration before giving her the recipe and the necessary ingredients to concoct the potions.

With the first step of his mission solved, he handed her a handful of Bronze Essence crystals, telling her to absorb them before he looked at Old Jeff.

He seemed somewhat uncomfortable because there was no reason for Dilan to call him to the front.

Old Jeff didn't like attention and was unhappy to see that more than a dozen pairs of eyes stared straight at him.

Dilan saw his weird expressions but instead of commenting on it, he pushed the Essence crystals toward Old Jeff.

"Absorb them...all of them!"

"Huh?" Old Jeff blurted out in confusion. Meanwhile, everyone else looked at Dilan and Old Jeff with surprise.

Not long ago, Dilan told them that everyone should work for their own Essence crystals.

However, right now he provided Old Jeff with more than 50 Essence crystals of high-leveled monsters, just like that! There were even 15+ Bronze Essence crystals among them."

"Why??" That was the question on everyone's mind. Even Kathrine and the others were unable to understand what Dilan was planning.

"I have several reasons, but the most important is that I want to know if your condition will get even better if you absorb more Essence!

After all, I want you to become our first blacksmith. I saw two rather large workshops on Rian's outskirts that you could make use of. There will probably be a smithy as well, right?"

Smiling lightly, Dilan asked the old man who was still unsure of what to answer next. He wanted to figure out the value of Essence crystals in terms of extending the lifespan as well as the improvement of one's condition.

Both he and Yvonne were healed of something that should have killed them during the Primordial Ascension. It was a miracle, to put it simply.

However, extending one's lifespan didn't seem weird when looking at the events that had occurred during the last 10 days!

In the end, the Essence crystals he procured by hunting would only provide a small fraction of Essence in comparison to what one would usually gain by hunting monsters on their own.

But even then, the Essence one could absorb was quite useful as one could level up, and gain 5 status points for each level.

After reaching level 10 one had 5.0 Status points to distribute. If assigned properly, Old Jeff might even be able to hunt monsters all by himself in order to make up for the status points he didn't obtain yet.

Yet, this was not the reason for Dilan's 'act of generosity'. He wanted to have a Blacksmith in his group, who knew what he was doing.

Someone with several decades of experience and a passion for his job was everything he required.

As such, Dilan pointed at the Essence crystals once again with a gentle smile on his face.

"If everything works out, we can start mining ores, improve our equipment, and then go out hunting in large groups!"

Clearing the entire hospital for his team of Ascenders would be possible even without his help. Leveling up would be much easier as well, and everyone's condition would improve.

What Dilan had lacked the most in the beginning, and possibly even now were good armaments such as weapons that could cut through everything.

Even now he was severely restricted owing to his weapons!

This was already more than enough reason for him to provide Old Jeff with dozens of Essence crystals.

However, there was one more important reason, which one could only find out by paying attention to Old Jeff before, while, and after he absorbed the Essence crystals.

When Old Jeff grasped the first Essence crystal, it crumbled in his hand. Vigor gleamed in his eyes and a faint smile emerged on his face as he mumbled,

"So potent..."

Barely two minutes passed in which Old Jeff absorbed one Essence crystal after another until his small mountain of Essence crystals had been emptied.

His eyes gleamed brightly in vigor as he looked at Dilan with a grateful expression.

"I think...I'm ready to enter a smithy again? How is that even possible?"

Clenching his hands, Old Jeff couldn't believe the current state of his body and the energy thrumming in his veins.

He felt as if his body had aged backward to his 30s.

It was ridiculous, even more so because he had yet to use the 4.0 Status points he received from leveling up to level 8!

Dilan just smiled before he answered,

"The more Essence you absorb the stronger you will feel.

You didn't receive any additional stats from the Essences I hunted, so you should be able to imagine how much of a difference it would be once you kill on your own and start receiving the Essence of a monster, and their status points!"

Just a quick glance through the cafeteria told Dilan that he had attracted everyone's attention with the small show he had initiated.

Old Jeff was one of the oldest Survivors in their group, but even his voice seemed to have grown younger and energetic in contrast to what his old and feeble body would allow him.

Through him, Dilan wanted to impress upon many Survivors subconsciously that they had to become stronger as well.

This was the final push everyone required to feel like going out of the cafeteria, and doing more things to procure Essences!

After all, longevity was quite enticing, even more so if the average age of humans on Milarn was around 75 years before the Primordial Ascension!

Slowly, Dilan felt as if the group was moving towards one particular goal- to become stronger.

He felt that this was great because it made things much easier as the period in which he would have to continually keep coaxing and persuading the others to go and hunt seemed to have been crossed successfully!

Though the thought made Dilan smile brightly, Kathrine appeared behind him with a deep frown on her face.

She leaned toward him just to start whispering,

“It is great that you motivate everyone to become stronger, but it’s useless to allow the Survivors that didn’t even receive the most basic training to go out hunting...alone!”

Even though her voice was low, Kathrine seemed to be in a quite bad mood.

Dilan thought that she wanted to talk about the report on the Krendel’s Underground Valley.

As such, he didn’t expect her to hear this.

And by looking through the rows of Survivors, Dilan noticed that three to four young Survivors were missing.

Even if Kathrine didn’t say anything else, it was not difficult for him to comprehend what happened.

“Who died?”

Chapter 100 Timing...

“They didn’t care about fighting the ‘weak’ zombies on the fifth floor...they thought that it would be easy to kill the monsters outside the hospital as long as they wielded the Bronze treasures you provided...”

The moment Dilan heard this he knew that all of them had died.

This was something he could easily tell based on Kathrine’s expression.

“How many did we lose?” Dilan altered his question, while his expression was stoic.

He could already tell the answer but somehow, Dilan wanted to confirm it with her.

“Four...Four Survivors died. All of them around our age...”

Kathrine felt guilty because she had allowed the Survivors to go out of the hospital and do whatever they wanted to.

Dilan didn't really think that it was her fault. Rather, it was he who had motivated all Survivors to go outside, and to give their best to fight and learn to survive.

"Four Survivors died...and I just fueled their desire to fight...fuck it!!" Pushing back his hair in frustration, Dilan took a look at everyone.

More than half of the present Survivors were eager to leave the cafeteria with the weapons Dilan had provided.

This was good, but only if one were to consider that they would strengthen their group's prowess instead of dying needlessly because they overestimated themselves.

Now that he had learned about the recent deaths, Dilan couldn't help but frown deeply before he thought of something.

Using all of his strength, he clasped his hands, making a thunderous noise resound through the cafeteria.

Once the sound subsided, Dilan was able to speak freely..

"I have one more thing to say. I found clues about several human groups outside the hospital. Unfortunately, I have yet to find out which group is approachable and which group we should avoid for now.

As such, I hope everyone can avoid going outside for longer periods for the time being. Of course, I won't hold anyone back from leaving, but for your own sake use the zombies inside the four towers of the hospital to your advantage if you want to practice!"

Dilan wanted the others to gain more combat experience, Essences, and Status points. The easiest way to do it was within the Rian mountainside hospital.

With his short speech, it was possible for him to prevent most people from going outside. His words had been for their own safety, to begin with.

After he finished speaking, he turned to Kathrine, whose expressions were still not better.

"Even if I'm the leader, and I give you or others some responsibilities, that doesn't really mean we owe their lives.

They can do whatever they want as long as they abide by the loose rules I have enforced. We inform them about the dangers and allow them to make their choices with the intel they receive.

We can help them to survive in some situations as well, but there is only that much we can do!"

They were not the nannies of their group, and neither responsible for their lives or survival outside the hospital.

Even in the cafeteria, Dilan could only set up rules in the hope that his authority was enough to force everyone to abide by them.

If nobody would listen, he could either accept it, kill everyone, or leave if he was no longer required.

But they needed him now more than ever before.

That was why Dilan was not really worried about being betrayed by one of his own.

Kathrine just nodded her head even though she was not sure if he was correct.

She wanted to guide the others, and lead them to a better future.

It sounded like a grand dream but if that was required to protect her sister, Kathrine was willing to do everything.

Meanwhile, she felt like Dilan took the news of the death of the four Survivors way too easily.

He was not attached to them, at all. This was something Kathrine didn't like about him, even if it looked like he was trying his best to protect his people with his utmost effort.

Dilan spent his time improving the living conditions of their entire group, followed up by strengthening their combat prowess to the best of his capabilities.

That was already enough for most, but Kathrine expected more from Dilan.

She was not sure why she thought so, but it was as if she could see that he had more potential and that there was more he could do even if it was just a tiny bit.

'I'm probably just thinking too much,' Kathrine told herself in the end, before seeing that Dilan approached the weapon corner and picked up the sharpest dagger.

Using some strength, he cut himself lightly, as fat droplets of blood trickled down his forearm.

'So my skin is not hard enough yet. Seems like I need to stay focused!'

Dilan smiled faintly and began thinking of a solution to overcome this obstacle.

As long as he could still cut himself, inflicting deadly injuries to himself was still possible.

With a smooth movement, Dilan took off his burned robe, the upper part of the tracksuit he was wearing, and the shirt he wore below.

Standing in just his jeans, he took a deep breath before stabbing himself with the Bronze treasure.

Gritting his teeth, he pushed the dagger deeper into his flesh as an unbearable burning sensation swept through him.

This feeling got even worse when he pulled the dagger out. Dilan could only see red while looking down.

It looked like a flood of blood spurted out of the self-inflicted injury.

However, Dilan had steeled himself to not be affected by the sight of his blood and simply took a deep breath to ready himself for the next attack.

He aimed at a different spot to inflict a second injury.

An awkward silence filled the cafeteria as everyone watched him in a daze as Dilan pulled out the dagger just to inflict himself yet again.

Afterward, Dilan started to sweat profusely. He was taking deep breaths just to use all his strength to pull out the dagger once again.

His entire abdomen was severely injured by the three deep cuts that he had inflicted upon himself.

But even then, Dilan's eyes were ice-cold as he stared at his body.

The last time Dilan injured himself the wound had stopped bleeding after a few seconds, but now he injured himself three times in succession, and his wounds didn't seem to be healing at all.

Despite that, Dilan was unruffled and just closed his eyes while activating the [Regeneration] ability over and over again.

Every 10 seconds he activated it once more.

Dilan repeated this a total of 10 times which was enough to stop the bleeding and to initiate the healing process of three deadly injuries.

[[Regeneration]- Tier-0 ★★★

1) Survive <8> Deadly injuries have been attained!

2) Health of <20> has been reached!

Upgrade to Tier-0 ★★★★★]

What followed this message was an upgrade of his Origin ability.

From an enhancement of [+9 Health], it went up to [+14 Health].

An increase of five full units was extremely valuable as it increased the gap between ordinary Tierless existences and him!

Even valuable equipment could only increase someone's stats to a specific degree. They were also limited.

But that was not the case with Origin abilities!

However, to upgrade his Origin ability, Dilan had to face unbearable pain.

'Even if I used [Regeneration] ten times in a row, I still have not gotten used to the itchiness during the healing process....Well it's not like it is any better without the Origin ability being activated. I can still feel my body recuperating with every passing second.'

Dilan could only smile lightly while telling himself to save up on using his Origin ability too often in succession. He was not sure about this, but Dilan felt that it might be too much of a burden for his body, even more so because he was currently lacking nutrition!

If it hadn't been for the circumstances they were in, he would have given himself some more time to inflict one deadly injury upon himself after another.

Unfortunately, time was of the essence, and Dilan had to be as strong as possible.

He could tell that he had to be in his best shape tomorrow.

And this was possible with the use of his enhanced Ability.

Slowly moving from the position he had been standing for more than ten minutes, Dilan put aside the Bronze dagger before taking a look at the kitchen.

“Bianne, I heard that the meat of the War Krendels is really tasty. Is there something left for me?”

His eyes searched for Bianne, only to find the shocked woman in her late 20s looking at him as if he was insane.

When she noticed that Dilan made eye contact with her, Bianne felt embarrassed about her horrified expression which was why she hurried into the kitchen.

A few minutes later, she walked towards him with several slices of bread and a meat broth made out of the War Krendels most nutritious meat!

Dilan thanked her and started a small conversation in which he wanted to find out how everyone reacted to having the meat.

At the same time, he almost swallowed everything without even chewing it properly.

Thus, Bella brought him a second helping.

However, the moment she came back to him, Bianne’s smile froze as her gaze was fixated on the entrance of the cafeteria.

And turning his head, Dilan could only frown as he saw more than a dozen armed men and women standing at the doors of the cafeteria, aiming at all Survivors with their rifles and shotguns.

“Hello my little sheeps, your shepherd has finally arrived!!”

‘Just how bad can my timing be?!’