



GODLY HUNTER

BOOK 1

Intransient

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Godly Hunter

(超神猎人)

by

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Synopsis

With the sudden announcement of the launch of the holographic virtual network, Chen Mo, a hacker, received a special commission to hack this system in a bid to halt advancement.

To complete his task, he enters GENESIS – the holographic virtual game touted as the most secure – to look for a way to hack it. In his search, he inevitably becomes a terrifying force to behold.

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Chapter 1 – A Special Commission

A city in South China...

In an old warehouse in the suburbs.

Scattered beams of light peeked into the warehouse through the blades of an exhaust fan, barely giving it light. The beams of light revealed not piled up goods as one would expect, but cables and cables of red and green, attached to several radiators and large-screen displays.

“This holographic virtual helmet... is wholly seamless! It’s obviously made of metal but its weight is less than that of plastic. How the hell was this made? This must be some black sorcery born of technology.”

Chen Mo looked at the glowing helmet in his hands. It had a faint metallic lustre. It’s practically a work of art! A sigh escaped his lips.

“The website on the holographic virtual network is running fine and has no loopholes – looks like the only way to complete the job is to enter the game and look for vulnerabilities myself.”

Chen Mo’s gaze fell upon the monitor at his side. On the top of the screen, in large letters, was a name.

= GENESIS =

The holographic virtual network era, once considered a mere fantasy, suddenly descended under inconceivable circumstances. A month ago, nearly all the countries in the world collectively announced the emergence of holographic virtual networks, which would soon replace traditional networks.

To test and determine the stability of the holographic virtual networks, GENESIS, a holographic virtual online game, was created and will run on a global scale.

As the first holographic virtual game, GENESIS would certainly attract countless players. Even with such staggering numbers, GENESIS can still operate flawlessly. Dubbed the virtual network that has “security with no loopholes” and “absolute stability”, it is inevitable that it would rapidly replace the traditional networks.

With the advent of the era of holographic virtual networks, the people rejoiced, jumped for joy and buzzed in excitement. Everyone but Chen Mo.

As a hacker, the holographic virtual network was something that upset his livelihood. The content of the network may be wonderful, but it left Chen Mo with no means to make a living. It was not enjoyable for him at all.

Apparently, there were quite a few people with similar thoughts. Chen Mo received a special commission just recently.

The commission was straightforward – look for vulnerabilities in the holographic virtual network and stop the move to replace traditional networks.

The deposit for the commission was only USD3000 but if he could find exploitable loopholes within three months, he would get at least USD 1,000,000 as remuneration!

If someone was going to pay Chen Mo to do what he wanted, how could he refuse? However, for days, Chen Mo had exhausted his capabilities and gotten nowhere. His last option was to place his hopes on this game – GENESIS.

He couldn't find any loopholes on the regular website because a website was too simple. GENESIS, on the other hand, is a massive game with too many things involved. Even if the programming language itself was flawless, the computer program's logic could be made to fall into an endless loop.

As long as such a loophole could be found in the game, the widely advertised “security with no loopholes” and “absolute stability” would just be empty talk and the move to replace traditional networks would definitely be blocked.

Several others in his line of work had also received the commission but Chen Mo had an edge over them.

For the past few days, Chen Mo had kept a close watch online on news of GENESIS. There, on several forums, were users bragging that they had first-hand information on GENESIS.

Chen Mo unceremoniously hacked into their computers and searched their files. One of the users really did have information on the game! Where did that bugger get this nugget of information from?

There wasn't much. Chen Mo scanned the file. There were only bits of uncertain information, but, with his hacker's intuition, Chen Mo knew that one of the bits he found could surely be a lead.

After stealing the information, Chen Mo very kindly helped the bugger delete it so that he would not be disturbed by other hackers.

Ah, where else can you find a hacker as kind-hearted as Chen Mo?

GENESIS's official launch is at 6pm tonight. Chen Mo looked at the time and put on the helmet.

Once connected to the game, Chen Mo appeared right away in a room aged by time. There was no need to even login to an account.

Chen Mo was speechless. You don't even need to login to an account! Traditional network security definitely could not compare.

“The game will soon officially begin. In the meantime, Player, please create your character and choose your preferred character

class.”

There was a soft sound and character creation options appeared before Chen Mo’s eyes.

“Character name”

“Silence”

“Please choose a character class”

A series of character class figures popped up. Chen Mo looked at his options and quickly narrowed his choices to two.

Assassin. Hunter.

He was here to sabotage the game, so he can’t count on others to help him. His character class, therefore, should naturally be the Lone Ranger type.

Assassins and hunters were the best suited to be Lone Rangers.

They both have concealment abilities. Assassins can learn stealth and in stealth mode, assassins can not only conceal themselves, they could also, in the moment of exposing themselves to attack, gain a powerful attack bonus. Hunters can learn camouflage, allowing them to blend in with their surroundings. The camouflage skill was better than the sneak skill but there was a

downside. When in stealth mode, the assassin's movement speed would increase but when the hunter is camouflaged, his movement speed will be severely restricted.

Of course, concealment was just one of many skills needed by Lone Rangers. High personal combat capability is most essential.

Needless to say, an assassin's combat capability is high. As long as you have the gear and right skill set, your assassin will be a killing machine. If one learned a strong skill in the assassin skill class in-game, the assassin could become an existence to be feared.

However, the hunter class is not to be underestimated either. In terms of long-term combat power, the hunter ranks higher than the assassin.

Traps and poison arrows are the two most prominent skills for hunters. More importantly, hunters can contract beasts to fight for them.

“Assassin and hunter... assassins are more suitable for PKs while hunters are perhaps more suitable for going up against powerful monsters.”

Although he had not yet seen the combat capabilities of the two character classes himself, Chen Mo had already drawn some conclusions based on the class information the system displayed.

He was here to look for loopholes in the game so he should have

more interaction with monsters and NPCs than with players. The hunter would suit him very much but Chen Mo did not choose it.

Hunters have few skills early in the game and Chen Mo wasn't sure if he could do what he needed to in-game with the hunter class. He'll think about it later after getting used to the game as an assassin.

If it wasn't for the commission, Chen Mo could possibly have chosen to be a hunter.

In the game, the player's character would level up and have several class promotion stages. At each promotion, the character can learn class specific skills and, according to skills learnt, have its class title change.

According to the system introduction, in late-game, hunters can be promoted to Bounty Hunters and Fortune Hunters. Ha, a fortune hunter! It's like what he's doing in real life!

Assassins, naturally, were not bad either. In the late-game, assassins can be promoted to Eternal Night Lord, Lord of the Night and other profession titles.

Too bad he wasn't here to play but to destroy. For the sake of completing his commission, Chen Mo chose the character class with a higher chance – Assassin.

“Please create a character”

After Chen Mo confirmed his choice as assassin, a game character appeared out of thin air. Chen Mo looked it up and down and was surprised to find that the character had almost the same look as himself. He had to do some basic modifications to his character. Simple things, not too complicated.

Chen Mo was not considered a very handsome man but by modifying his features just a bit, he was still decent. He had never been dissatisfied with his looks but he was entering the game with bad intentions so of course he couldn't just enter with his original face.

After modification, the character still had a trace of his real appearance but unless it was someone close to him, most people wouldn't be able to recognise him.

“Character creation successful!”

“The game will begin shortly. Before you begin, we have a survey for you. Would Player Silence participate in the survey? Depending on your answer, you will earn useful equipment and items when starting at the beginner village. The system strongly recommends that you participate in this survey.”

“Nope” Though the system strongly recommended it, Chen Mo rejected it without a second thought.

It is very easy to analyse the answers of human character and behaviour in surveys like this. People in his line of work never

participate in such surveys.

Time passed quickly and it was soon 6pm. A faint white light enveloped Chen Mo, and he disappeared from the room.

The scenery before his eyes soon came into focus. He looked about at his surroundings and hesitated.

What's going on? When players first enter the game, don't they appear in the beginner village?

Chen Mo found that he had appeared in a red-soiled valley with a radius of tens of metres. Behind him was a cliff and in front of him in the valley were dozens of Black Goblins, scouting the area with fierce eyes.

He would have to get past the goblins to get out of the valley.

Chen Mo was a man who had been through many things. He found it odd that he had appeared in the wilderness instead of in the beginner village but he managed to stay calm and not rush forward.

Though he did not know why he appeared here, it wasn't important. What he should do is think of a way to leave this place and get back to the beginner village. Killing monsters will not help him complete the job.

Looking at his character stats, Chen Mo discovered that level one

characters was as described online. Strength, Stamina, Agility, Intelligence and Spirit all have three points for each attribute. Chen Mo chose the assassin class so for every Stamina point he adds, he gains 20 HP. His current HP was 60HP.

Chen Mo looked in his backpack and found a “Rusty Dagger” with basic physical attack 1~3. He also found a skill book with the “Stab” skill.

System Prompt: You have learnt the skill “Stab”!

Stab (Novice level): When using a dagger to hit the enemy, the damage is increased by 120%! Skill cooldown time is 10 seconds.

“Damn it, having this weapon and skill hardly makes any difference!”

Looking at the attributes of the Rusty Dagger and Stab, Chen Mo could not help but grumble.

The Black Goblins in the valley before him were level 4. Chen Mo knew that his reaction speed was higher than regular people as an assassin but with pitiful level 1 stats, facing off with level 4 goblins was a huge problem. Could he even take on one goblin?

However, if he wanted to leave this place, he had to try. He heard that low-level monsters will not initiate attack. Maybe he could just stroll out this place.

Turned out Chen Mo was daydreaming. When he crept close to two Black Goblins in front of him, hoping to bypass them, the two goblins suddenly turned their heads in his direction and started to wave the clubs in their hands menacingly. They rushed towards Chen Mo in a fury.

“Damn it! No warning of attack and two of them too!”

Chen Mo hurriedly retreated. Having to fight one goblin was bad enough but two! He’d definitely die!

Chen Mo tried to flee, but to his dismay, the Black Goblins were just too quick. There were a few rocks around him but they posed no obstacle to the Black Goblins’ advance.

After just a few metres, the Black Goblins caught up with Chen Mo and a pitted club smashed heavily down toward him!

Chen Mo was quick to react and ducked, escaping the Black Goblin’s attack by a hair’s breadth.

As luck would have it, the other Black Goblin’s attack descended and Chen Mo, with no escape this time, took a direct hit.

Bang!

A big damage number floated up. Chen Mo was unable to take even one attack from a Black Goblin and was instantly killed.

System Prompt: You have been killed by a Black Goblin!

System Prompt: You are the first player in the game to die. You have unlocked achievement “Lightspeed Death”!

System Prompt: You have gained achievement title “Lightspeed Death”!

Chapter 2 – Trapped

Title: Lightspeed Death

Description: A special title only attainable by the first player to die in the game. Must be equipped to apply effects.

Attributes:

Strength +1

Stamina +1

Agility +1

Intelligence +1

Spirit +1

Luck +1

Additional skill: Basic Heal – heals player for 50HP, cooldown 60 seconds.

After the system death prompt, Chen Mo found that he had acquired not just a title, but something else!

“I’m actually the first to die?”

Chen Mo felt like a lucky bastard; he got a title for dying!

Although Lightspeed Death has miserable stats of just +1 for all character attributes, the Basic Heal that can heal 50HP every 60 seconds looked like quite a good one to Chen Mo.

However, the skill was practically useless to him. With an added

point in Stamina, his HP increased by 20 but these Black Goblins could still kill him instantly with a strike of their clubs. The Lightspeed Death title would not be of any use.

When players die, they enter a soul state. While in soul state, the player cannot communicate or interact with players who are alive and the only choice he has is resurrection.

Chen Mo chose to resurrect, hoping to return to the beginner village. Reality gave him a heartless smack in the face, though, for all his hopes he ended up in the same place he had begun.

He equipped the title he had just gotten and his HP rose to 80, then tried ways and means to get out of the valley. He quickly discovered that the entire valley had not that many Black Goblins but they walked about in pairs and were bursting with aggression. They also had overlapping attack ranges, leaving Chen Mo with no way to escape their surveillance net. He died several times without finding a way out of the valley.

“What? There’s actually a cave here?”

He had resurrected again and this time, he was further from the spot he had first appeared in. After resurrecting, he had spotted a dark cave in the rock walls behind him by chance.

“Let’s have a look.”

This valley can’t be entirely unescapable! The key to escaping

should be in this cave.

The cave was about two body lengths wide and was not very deep – it was only about 30 metres deep. He walked up to the back of the cave without running into any monsters.

“A chest!”

Chen Mo was excited to discover a bronze chest at the back of the cave. This bronze chest might hold the very thing he needed to leave the valley!

However, before he could open the chest and get his mitts on the items inside, he had to first find a way to get rid of the 6 White Goblins around it.

White Goblin: Level 3, 400HP

The White Goblins were a level lower than the Black Goblins but Chen Mo still frowned as he looked at the chest.

With Lightspeed Death, he could probably survive two White Goblins if he were outside the cave.

Inside, however, was a narrow space with nothing to hide behind. If the White Goblins came after him, he could have no other option than to fight them head-on.

With his attributes, if he does not dodge a level 3 monster's attack, he would die without question. Unless the monster was retarded he had no chance of winning.

Chen Mo had Basic Heal though, so he can heal himself for 50HP when in a pinch. White Goblins couldn't possibly instant-kill him like the Black Goblins. That meant that Chen Mo had 130HP to worth with.

On the other hand, White goblins were just one level lower than Black Goblins so their attack wouldn't differ by much. If Chen Mo rushed ahead, he would lose at least 40HP. If he took 43 damage or less, he could survive 3 attacks but if he took 45 damage or more, he would only survive two hits. Any more and he would die.

After a little calculation, Chen Mo walked towards the chest and pulled the White Goblins' aggro.

“Damn you! Are you going to kill me or not?!”

Chen Mo then found that he had been too optimistic. The White Goblins in the cave were aggro-ed in pairs too and proceeded to attack him fiercely when he approached.

Chen Mo retreated in tears, but his speed was not a match for the White Goblins, or he could have led them out of the cave and whittle away at their health while hiding and dodging.

Two White Goblins caught up with him with just 10 metres or so

to go from the cave mouth.

A White Goblin swung his club. Chen Mo had nowhere to run!

-47! +50!

Damn, it damaged him more than he'd thought!

The second goblin followed with an attack of its own but Chen Mo had reacted quickly and healed himself of 50HP the instant his health dropped.

-44!

The second damage number floated up. It was lower than the first but Chen Mo would have died if he'd been any slower!

Still alive!

Chen Mo continued to run – if he manages to get out of the cave and use the surrounding to his advantage, he'd still have a chance!

However, Chen Mo found that the cave had been designed too well. It was simply impossible for a Level 1 player to attract the white goblins and escape safely. With just 3 metres to go, the two White Goblins renewed their attacks. Chen Mo's remaining HP could not hold out and he was dead once more.

“If I had a way to pull their aggro from further away, I could escape the cave.”

After resurrecting, Chen Mo analysed his situation.

He was only 3 metres from the cave mouth and the alert range for White Goblins is only 5 metres. If he could aggro them from 8 metres away, he could run out of the cave and find a way to kill them.

If he took the goblins on in the cave, he'd lose for sure. As a level 1 player, it'd be pretty good if he could even hit a level 3 monster for 30HP. A White Goblin has 400HP, so he would have to hit it at least 10 times to kill it. The time taken to hit it 10 times would be enough to let them kill him several times. Without anything to hide behind, he would die before the goblins do.

Chen Mo looked at the stones around him and suddenly thought, “Would throwing a stone at them work?”

In a traditional game, assassins would have no way of picking up stones to kill monsters but this wasn't a traditional game... It's a state-of-the-art, holographic virtual game that's extremely close to reality!

“Haha, I actually can do it!”

Chen Mo tried it right away and, to his joy, really could throw

stones around in the game!

“But this distance... it’s a bit short!”

Chen Mo had uncovered yet another problem.

It was still a game after all, and different from reality. A level 1 player is very weak and without a throwing skill, he could only throw a stone 7 metres – 1 metre shorter than the 8 he needed.

“I don’t care anymore, I’ll just try it and see!”

Thinking too much about it wouldn’t yield any results so Chen Mo took action immediately.

He entered the cave again, and when he came to the end, he did not rush to aggro the White Goblins with his stone.

When he saw the White Goblins, he suddenly had the thought that these White Goblins were not completely immobile. The cave was narrow but they would shift positions at times so there was a chance Chen Mo could still achieve the effect of 8 metres though he had a 7 metre range if he took into account the distance they would move. He could pull the goblins out of the cave!

Chen Mo lay in wait like a hunter waiting for his prey to fall into his trap.

Just a bit more!

There were a few times when the goblins nearly reached the required distance but it wasn't enough.

“A chance!”

His patient waiting had awarded him a chance!

A White Goblin had moved half a metre more than the calculated distance!

Chen Mo did not let the opportunity go by him and flung the rock at the White Goblin!

Bang! -1!

A pitiful little damage number floated above the White Goblin's head. Two goblins, standing one behind the other, looked at Chen Mo with eyes full of hate, and charged.

Chen Mo hurried back. If he still couldn't get out of the cave this time, he was out of ideas.

Bang! Bang!

With less than 10m to go, Chen Mo suffered two attacks from the

White Goblins.

Chen Mo knew from experience that he wouldn't die from this. He used Basic Heal.

He ran with all his might and, before the White Goblins caught him, he finally got out of the cave!

Outside the cave, Chen Mo nearly went mad with frustration.

It wasn't safe yet outside the cave! There was nothing to hide behind outside the cave. The closest thing to hide behind was more than 70 to 80m away.

A goblin had caught up with him and swung its club. Chen Mo could only dodge.

Being outside had its advantages. He had space to dodge.

Unfortunately, while he dodged the attack, the second goblin caught up.

The two goblins attacked together. Chen Mo had nowhere to hide and was killed tragically by them.

After killing Chen Mo, the two goblins turned around and scampered back into the cave.

After resurrecting, Chen Mo pondered in silence.

Maybe there was something else he'd missed and he would be able to kill the cave goblins after finding it.

Who knows when he'd be able to find it though? He was very interested in finding out what was in the chest in the cave but he was here not to play but to hack the system. He shouldn't be wasting time here.

The items in the cave couldn't be that good anyway and with or without it, it wouldn't help him with finding loopholes in the game.

It could be seen from the Lightspeed Death title awarded to him. It only gave him a tiny bit more attributes than normal players.

Chen Mo decided to commit suicide and restart. He might appear in the beginner village that way but if he still appeared here, he would find a way to deal with it.

The assassin class didn't work so well here, but there is a character class that, with some time, could kill all the White Goblins in the cave!

Chapter 3 – Class Change

Chen Mo issued the command to commit suicide.

System prompt: Are you sure you want to commit suicide? After suicide, character level, skills, experience, prestige and associated data will be cleared!

“Confirm!”

In GENESIS, there are two ways to reset a character. One is to delete the character. The other, is to commit suicide.

When a character is deleted and the player creates another, he can only inherit the original's tradable equipment and money. Deletion is practically restarting from zero.

The extent of loss in suicide is a lot less than plain deletion. Players get to inherit a majority of the bound equipment and even achievement titles. What gets deleted is the character's level and skills. This saves effort when having to raise levels again.

However, there are drawbacks too. For example, when raising levels again, quests that have been previously completed will not award the same equipment and accomplishment rewards. If the player chooses a different character class after suicide, the original class-specific equipment cannot be used by the player anymore and past titles that had been won cannot be equipped until the same level is reached, otherwise the character would have insane attributes after restarting at level 1.

On the character creation interface, Chen Mo did no modifications to his character. He chose the assassin class again and went straight back into the game.

Light flashed and when it cleared, Chen Mo found that he had appeared in the valley again. Looks like leaving by suicide was not an option.

Perhaps a total deletion would work but Chen Mo chose not to do so.

After deletion, his Light-Speed Death title would vanish. Though the title was not much, with a few more levels the attribute additions could bring more benefits. That one Luck point seemed important to Chen Mo. His intuition told him to keep it. It might be useful later.

Chen Mo decided to change his character class to hunter to break through the barrier the goblins had formed around the valley.

He did not choose the hunter class at first because the hunter could only use traps and wait for the enemy to step in them in the beginning stages. It was too restrictive. He had planned to enter the game and try to assassinate important NPCs in the beginner village. If it worked, there would be mass confusion and chaos in the game due to the large number of players. Irregularities in the holographic virtual network could possibly then occur.

This sort of thing couldn't be done by a hunter of course – it had to be an assassin.

But now if Chen Mo can get a skill book or something from the chest in the cave and add more combat skills to the hunter, killing an NPC would be possible with the hunter. Furthermore, the attacks can be complemented by traps and have a better result.

Chen Mo could not be sure what's in the chest but from what he saw of the situation, the chest very likely contained a skill book or good equipment to help the player get out of the valley; otherwise it would be impossible to get out.

If it wasn't a skill book, it'd be a good piece of equipment. No matter which, it would be good for Chen Mo.

“Suicide!”

Chen Mo committed suicide again and returned to the character creation interface. This time, he chose the hunter class.

Returning to the game, he appeared in the valley yet again.

His backpack had a “Basic Trap Technique” book, an old crossbow with physical damage of 1~2, and a quiver of a hundred crossbow bolts with 1 attack damage.

“A crossbow! It'll be much easier to kill those White Goblins now!”

Chen Mo could not help the glee in his heart at the sight of the crossbow.

The crossbow had an attack range of 10m – 3m more than simply

throwing a stone. It'll be simple to get out of the cave now!

With a long-distance weapon on hand, he could leisurely kill monsters.

However, Chen Mo had rejoiced too soon. After entering the cave again, he discovered that though it was the same cave, it had grown over 20m deeper than when he had entered as an assassin!

Chen Mo was startled. He could understand if it became a few metres deeper but over 20m? What are they trying to do? Is this map not going to give him any chance of escape at all?

No way!

Chen Mo's gaze fell upon the only skill he had – Basic Trap Technique.

Basic Trap Technique (Novice Level): Constructs a trap on the ground. When an enemy steps on the trap, it will explode and inflict 130% damage. 10% chance of disabling the enemy. Disable effect lasts for 3 seconds and slows enemy movement speed by 30%. Cooldown 10 seconds. Each trap lasts for 60 seconds. Maximum number of traps that can exist simultaneously – 3.

“Hmm, a maximum of 3 traps. That's a problem.”

Hunter and assassin skill characteristics are totally different. It would be very simple to escape from the cave with 3 traps if it were just a few metres deep.

Now that it's deeper by more than 20m, he would have to depend on not just luck but good placement of traps to successfully escape.

A level 1 player's movement speed ranges from 5 to 10. 5 is the walking speed and 10 is the maximum speed when running, which is roughly the same as a slow jog of about 3m per second. Chen Mo estimated that the speed of the White Goblins while chasing him was about 14, or over 4m per second.

When a White Goblin steps on a trap and becomes disabled, its speed will fall to roughly the same as a player's. So for those 3 seconds, the player is safe and Chen Mo could safely run for about 10m.

If that's the case, 3 traps with a distance of 10m between them could grant him escape if two of the traps' disabling effect activate.

It's all a matter of luck.

With a rough idea in mind, Chen Mo immediately chose 3 locations and set a trap in each, then waited for a good opportunity and used his crossbow to shoot at White Goblins.

Two White Goblins came running and Chen Mo retreated quickly.

Bang!

The first trap went off and a 30+ damage number floated up from the goblin's head. The goblin's speed remained the same.

The trap's disabling effect did not get activated!

Two more traps – there’s still a chance!

However, Chen Mo’s feet stilled. He knew that even if the traps had their disabling effect activated, he would still not be able to escape.

He had left something very important out of his calculations.

The cave had a width of two body-lengths but the traps only damage a single enemy. Don’t talk about two – even if all 3 traps’ effects were activated he would still not be able to escape!

What can be done?

After resurrecting in the valley, Chen Mo meditated on the problem.

Put the trap in the middle of the cave passage?

To pull the White Goblins out of the cave, the traps had to be effective on both goblins at once. To do that, the only way was to put the trap in the middle of the passage so that when it explodes, both goblins would get affected and hurt.

“Looks like... It won’t work”

Chen Mo tried it out and discovered that he could not do it. Every time he used the skill, the system would automatically decide which side to put in on in the two body-length cave. The trap appeared either on the left or on the right.

Chen Mo had played games before and was no stranger to this situation. In a traditional game, game maps are made up of coordinates. If you take out the scenery, the map is a lattice of cubic spaces, and each space corresponds to a coordinate. No matter how a player moves, he can only appear on a space, and never on the junction of two cubes.

It seems GENESIS, the latest in virtual games, did not advance in terms of maps and functions similarly to traditional games.

If that's true, one of the hunter class would never be able to leave this valley alive.

But Chen Mo squeezed his arm, then closed his eyes and tried to sense his surroundings.

He was very sceptical.

With a holographic virtual network that looks like the product of black sorcery and a game that is almost real – a revolutionary game like this – will something as simple as map design be unable to move beyond the boundaries of traditional games?

If it were him, having developed the game to this point, he would never copy over the same settings as a traditional game for map design!

If this game setting were to be revealed, the reputation of the entire holographic virtual network will take a dive.

That's not right!

Chen Mo suddenly felt that something didn't quite measure up.

In a traditional game, whenever a player moves, he can only appear on a space, and never on the junction of two cubes. According to traditional game logic, the cave passage should be divided into two rows of spaces. When he walks in the cave, he should be only able to walk on the left or on the right.

In truth, Chen Mo was able to stand in the middle of the passage – which is the junction of two grid spaces!

When he was an assassin, he did not notice this at all. He only took note of the game map settings and similarities to traditional games after he'd changed to the hunter class.

Since people can stand on the junction of two cells, there is no reason to not be able to put a trap there!

This must have been intentional!

Chen Mo was sure that the game designers did this on purpose!

Standing in the middle of the cave passage, Chen Mo bent again to lay a trap.

However, the trap fell on the left as before.

It became obvious that, according to game settings, setting a trap

like this would not enable the trap to land in the middle in any case.

What if... I don't use the system command to set the trap?

Chen Mo suddenly thought.

Chapter 4 – Another Title

To become a hacker, what does one most need?

Technology?

Of course not.

Almost all of Chen Mo's fellow hackers would answer: Imagination!

Technical ability is just the basics – without tech, it'd be a joke to try to become a hacker. However, if you have the tech but no imagination you wouldn't get far as a hacker.

As a fairly famous hacker, Chen Mo could think of scenarios that a regular person could not.

After determining that the setting was done on purpose by the game designers, Chen Mo immediately reasoned that the designers were perhaps hoping that players would use skills independently from the system commands.

He would know if it was true once he tried it.

When using the skill to set the trap, Chen Mo's character automatically bent and faint light would appear on his fingers and palm as they moved continuously across the surface of the ground.

In just a second, a trap appeared out of thin air.

Chen Mo committed the movements to set a trap to memory and waited for the skill cooldown. This time, he did not use the system command but copied the movements with his fingers and palm on the ground.

There was no change in his palms when Chen Mo touched the ground but when he made a movement similar to the movement for setting a trap, his palm started emitting a faint light.

This was the light that would shine when setting traps!

His faintly shining palm flew over the surface of the ground, executing one action after another.

System prompt: Failed to use skill!

Chen Mo completed all the movements but a trap did not appear on the ground. Instead, he received a system prompt.

“I knew it!

Chen Mo was not disappointed. Conversely he felt a burst of excitement.

He knew he might have guessed right and only failed to use the skill because his movements were too different from the system

movements, resulting in a failure to use the skill.

The skill he was using was the basic trap technique – the lowest level of skill. It wasn't complicated at all. His try resulting in failure proved that the system was quite strict on the requirement of accuracy of movements. So, for his second try, Chen Mo deliberately slowed down the speed of his movements and focused on accuracy.

System prompt: Failed to use skill!

The second try was also unsuccessful but Chen Mo knew he was close to succeeding.

Though the speed had decreased, his palm was still exuding light. This showed that as long as his movements were accurate, he could release his skill even though he slowed down.

Chen Mo took stock of which movements he did imperfectly in his second try and started on his third attempt.

His shining palm stroked across the surface of the ground. This time, Chen Mo spent 3 seconds to complete the movement set. He had tried his very best to be accurate in every movement.

When he lifted his hand off the ground, a palm-sized trap suddenly appeared in the middle of the cave passage.

Basic trap technique! Success!

System prompt: Free-skill System unlocked!

System prompt: You are the first player to unlock the Free-skill System. You have gained the achievement “Freedom Leader”!

System prompt: You have gained the achievement title “Freedom Leader”!

Free-skill system!

Sure enough, the game designers were hoping that the players would discover the existence of this system themselves. That was why the trap arrangement was so similar to the settings of a traditional game.

Getting an achievement title after unlocking the new system was an unexpected bonus for Chen Mo.

The “Freedom Leader” title was several times harder than the “Lightspeed Death” title to obtain so the attributes should also be much better. If it adds more to his attributes, he would have a higher chance of leaving this place.

Chen Mo inspected the contents of his backpack with interest.

Title: Freedom Leader

Description: Only attainable by the first player to unlock the

Free-skill System. A symbol of honour. Effects are passive. Does not need to be equipped.

Attributes:

Luck +3

All Human NPC favourability +5

Special effect: Skill cooldown reduced by 10% when using Free-skill System to cast skills.

Chen Mo expected something else. The title did not increase any of his 5 attributes but he knew he had struck gold.

This title was passive so this meant that as long as he does not discard the title, it would be able to take effect in conjunction with other titles!

The attributes for this title wasn't too shabby either.

Chen Mo wasn't sure what value Luck had but NPC favourability – this was something common in lots of games. Increase in NPC favourability is definitely a good thing. The special effect's use was much more evident.

His cooldown time for the basic trap technique was 10 seconds. If he used the Free-skill system to set the basic trap technique, the cooldown time would be reduced to 9 seconds.

The effect may not be obvious for one skill but when one has multiple skills, a cumulative cooldown of 10% will have a visible effect. Compared to other players, his advantage was obviously

greater.

Chen Mo opened his attribute window. A Free-skill system tab had appeared on his skills page. Chen Mo took a look in it and found nothing special. It was similar to the normal skills page but where the normal page showed the level and skill proficiency, the Free-skill page displayed the frequency of use of the Free-skill system and high degree of completion of skills.

Chen Mo currently had the basic trap technique. Frequency was, of course, 1. As for completion... he took a look and found that it was just 42%.

He wasn't too sure what these numbers could be used for but he knew it was absolutely not insignificant – the degree of completion in particular should be very important.

He was in no hurry to find their use – he would find out sooner or later. What was most important now was for him to improve his movement accuracy and set a trap in the spot he wanted so he could get out of the valley.

The movements were not complicated. Chen Mo's memory, learning and reaction is top-notch. After focusing his attention and practicing twenty or thirty times, he could set a trap in over a second with a maximum completion of 78%.

Chen Mo gradually figured out the use of degree of completion.

All traps set using the system can survive on the ground for 60 seconds. Chen Mo discovered that it was different for the traps he'd set with the Free-skill system. The traps with a low degree of completion did not last long – the worst one he set didn't survive 20 seconds. Traps with a high degree of completion survived for much longer. The trap with 78% completion lasted for 55 seconds.

Chen Mo estimated that if his skill reached 80% completion, his traps would have the same survivability time as the system traps.

If he gets more than 80%, he might even have a higher survival time than the system!

Additionally, he believed that the degree of completion affected the destructive power of the trap.

He came to this conclusion because of a simple thing. When the trap with low completion went off, the sound it made was not as loud as the trap with high completion.

Though the difference was not obvious, Chen Mo could tell that it was different.

He would know for sure once he tried.

This was important, after all, if the degree of completion really affected the power of the trap, the disabling effect would undoubtedly also be affected. The odds of the disabling effect taking effect would probably be lower the lower the degree of

completion. In order for Chen Mo to increase his chances of pulling the aggro of the White Goblins out of the cave, he must have a trap with a high degree of completion to get the job done.

With his life on the line, Chen Mo deliberately set two traps with very different completion degrees and baited two Black Goblins in the valley to step on the traps.

The result was as he had thought. The gap in destructive force was obvious. The trap with 70% completion dealt close to 30 damage while the trap with 40% dealt 10-plus damage. The difference was significant. With his attributes, if he used the normal system traps, his damage wouldn't go over 10.

Improving his skill movement proficiency had become a necessity.

The movements were not complicated so Chen Mo was not too worried. He decided to spend more time on raising his proficiency.

Grinding an axe will not delay the work of cutting firewood – as long as he keeps from dying, he could make up for lost time.

While practicing the strokes, Chen Mo was hit by a sudden thought.

Mimicking the system strokes, bending over to set the trap... This isn't freedom! Real freedom should be him able to do what he wanted to do, like... standing up and setting a trap in the air!

Chen Mo's heart skipped a beat at the thought.

Chapter 5 – A New Discovery

To Chen Mo, the hunter class was not bad as a Lone-Ranger.

However, this class has a disadvantage – insufficient abilities to combat attacks from the sky.

Traps are set on the ground and totally useless against flying monsters or enemies.

Though the hunter can also use crossbows and make contracts with monsters to turn them into his pet, unless the crossbow or pet is godly, the hunter's destructive power will be lowered without the support of his traps.

The hunter has two paths in the beginning stages. One focus is the crossbow and the other is contracting pets. No matter which path one chooses, traps are the basis of all of a hunter's skills. Because of this, the hunter can even equip support items other classes cannot. The hunter's support items are gloves – these gloves have an effect only on trap-based skills when equipped.

If a hunter can stand upright and set traps in the air, he will have some defense against air attacks. It might not be strong against air attacks, but it will be much stronger than if it were on the ground.

Will it work?

Chen Mo nervously took a deep breath, stood straight up and

started to draw in the air in front of him.

Hu!

The practiced strokes of Chen Mo's hands moved through the air and a "hu" sound came from the air in front of him!

A trap had appeared in the air!

Success!

Even the ever-calm Chen Mo could not help but be a little excited.

He was sure that though people would quickly discover the Free-skill system and set traps independently of the system like him, not many would think of setting traps in the air!

He wouldn't have thought of this either if it were not for his stroke of genius.

But Chen Mo quickly realised that the trap set in the air was not stable. It hung in the air for just 2 or 3 seconds before dropping to the ground and exploding.

"It didn't fall right after I set it so this means the trap can be set in the air. Why did it fall... Ah, it has to do with the degree of completion!"

In just a second, Chen Mo thought of the degree of completion.

The trap has to stay in the air for at least 5 seconds or it won't be useful in real battle and it won't pose a threat to long-distance enemies. With more practice and familiarity with the skill, this won't be a problem.

Setting traps in the air works, but how about setting a trap while moving?

Chen Mo's brain buzzed with activity and one idea after another popped into his head.

A hunter has to stand in place while setting a trap. If a monster approaches and attacks while he is setting the trap, the skill will be interrupted and stopped. His combat capabilities will be severely reduced in close-up battles.

If he can move about and set traps, this disadvantage will cease to exist!

Will it work?

Chen Mo immediately put his plan into action.

“It won't work! The trap-making strokes get distorted when I move. It's impossible!”

Chen Mo tried just once and knew that moving while setting a trap in the air couldn't be done.

The Free-skill system most requires movement accuracy and completion. When a player moves, his original movement will get moved to another position and be incomplete, rendering it unsuccessful. Chen Mo's palm did not glow when he moved, signalling a non-use of skill.

“But what if I set a trap on a medium, like a wooden board, while I move?”

Chen Mo's nimble mind came up with another idea right away when the first failed.

It's highly probable!

He hadn't tried it yet but intuition told Chen Mo that this idea had a high probability of success!

Chen Mo couldn't find any wooden boards in the valley but he found some flat stones to act as substitute.

Move!

Chen Mo moved his character and started drawing on the rock at the same time. Stroke by stroke, the movements for the trap

placement appeared!

His strokes flowed naturally like in calligraphy. All done!

Chen Mo focused his nimble thoughts and attention on his task and the trap was set with unprecedented speed and accuracy!

With his superb thought-hand coordination, a trap suddenly appeared on the stone!

Yes!

The degree of completion was high too!

In one fluid motion, Chen Mo hurled the trap-bearing stone 7m away!

Boom!

The trap landed on the ground and exploded!

“Haha! A trap-grenade!”

Chen Mo felt refreshed. He only had this feeling before when he made a huge breakthrough during the initial stages of his hacker-learning. In that moment, it was like he had gone back to the past.

“No, no. I’m here to look for vulnerabilities, not play.”

Chen Mo felt he had been over-elated. He quickly took a deep breath to calm himself down.

After he had calmed down, he walked back into the cave behind him.

What he wanted to do had not changed – pull the White goblins out of the cave and kill them.

Even though he had unlocked the Free-skill system and was able to set a trap in the middle of the cave passage, he would still have to rely on luck to succeed.

But now, he had not only unlocked the Free-skill system, he also knew that he could set traps in the air and could also move about and set a trap on a medium. The matter of pulling the White Goblins out of the cave and killing them had become very very small.

He could originally set just three traps in the cave and was not able to set any other traps while moving. Now, he could use the time taken to run out of the cave to set two more traps.

With a total of 5 traps, he could run out of the cave safely if the disabling effect of two activated. If 3 traps’ disabling effect activated, he could 100% kill those White Goblins behind him!

When rested, Chen Mo set 3 high completion traps in the appropriate locations and went to the end of the cave to await an opportunity.

Despite a firm grasp of the mechanics of setting a trap while moving, timing was still most important. He must pull both goblins at the same time. If they chased him one behind the other, the traps in the centre of the cave passage would not be able to damage both of them at the same time.

Originally, to increase his chances of getting out of the cave, Chen Mo had to lure two White Goblins from as far away as possible but now, he did not need to do so.

Soon, two White Goblins moved to the same spot and Chen Mo immediately used his crossbow. A bolt flew.

Chi!

The stumpy little bolt struck home and hit a White Goblin. The two White Goblins turned and charged towards Chen Mo with fire in their eyes.

Chen Mo swiftly retreated.

Boom!

Soon, the 2 goblins stepped on the first trap and it exploded.

Chen Mo looked over and saw two 20+ damage numbers float over the heads of the goblins.

The White Goblins' speed remained the same. No disabling effect.

Chen Mo was not worried.

He was most concerned with whether the traps set in the middle of the cave passage would deal damage to both goblins. The basic trap technique was a single-target skill according to the skill page but he had used it to deal group damage.

If it were a traditional game, a single-target skill could never deal damage to a group.

But it can be done in GENESIS!

As long as the basic trap technique can simultaneously damage the goblins that chase after him, it was just a matter of time for him to pull them out of the cave and kill them. Chen Mo, naturally, did not have to feel anxious.

He could only use 3 traps at the same time. The first trap had already exploded so Chen Mo immediately took a stone out from his backpack and set a trap on it as he ran.

In just 2 seconds, a trap appeared on the stone. Chen Mo had done his job well – the completion degree was over 70%!

The distance between Chen Mo and the goblins was about 20m but since the first trap's disabling effect did not activate, the distance had shortened to under 7m.

As soon as he finished the trap-grenade, he hurled it at the two White Goblins.

Boom!

The trap landed at the feet of the two White Goblins and exploded with a boom.

The steps of the goblins suddenly slowed!

The disabling effect had activated!

“Good!” It worked this time. He still had 3 traps. The chances of the disabling effect activating again was not slim.

The chase went on and after about 3 seconds, the White Goblins arrived at the location of the second trap.

With no idea that there was a trap lying in wait for them, the goblins stepped on the trap with no hesitation.

The trap exploded but the disabling effect from the first had not worn off so Chen Mo had to wait to see if the disabling effect had activated yet again.

The goblins moved another 2m and their speed did not increase. Chen Mo then knew that the disabling effect had activated again. He could escape from the cave!

The distance between the goblins and Chen Mo was still 7m. Then, they got to the third trap.

The trap exploded and the goblins took two more steps and their speed suddenly increased.

The disabling effect had not activated.

It was within the parameters of his calculations. Chen Mo kept calm.

The basic trap technique has just 10% chance of activating. He had already been extremely lucky for it to have activated twice in a row. If it had activated thrice in a row – what science could explain that?

The goblins' speed increased and the distance between them and Chen Mo shortened to 4m.

At that moment, the cooldown for his skill was complete and Chen Mo quickly took out another stone from his backpack and

started setting a trap.

It was more difficult to set a trap while moving than standing so, more time was needed to set it too.

When standing, Chen Mo needed a second and a half. When moving, he needed about two seconds.

In two seconds, the goblins had moved 2m closer to Chen Mo. The distance between them was now less than 2m.

Chapter 6 – Attribute Allocation

At a distance of 2m, Chen Mo was within reach. Most people would panic at this point.

When setting a trap while moving, he needed to focus all his attention on the task or the skill would fail.

Chen Mo was as cool as ice. As a hacker, the more critical the situation, the greater the need to remain calm and judge the situation or else he would fail abysmally. This was just a game and if he failed he could try again. The approaching goblins did not give him any pressure.

His strokes flowed precisely and, as the goblins moved a step closer, the trap was complete. Chen Mo threw it at them.

Boom!

The sound of an explosion reached his ears. Two 20+ damage numbers floated above the heads of the goblins!

Furthermore, the steps of the goblins slowed!

At the same moment the goblins' slowed, the area in front of Chen Mo brightened. He'd successfully escaped the cave!

Without the limitations of the cave, even if the goblins were to

catch up with him, he could use Basic Heal and hide behind the two huge rocks in front of him.

Additionally, the last trap's disabling effect had activated. The goblins could not catch up with him.

Low-level monsters have low intelligence. They are able to chase in a straight line in the cave but when there are obstacles in their path, their stupidity is revealed.

Chen Mo lured the two White Goblins close to the huge rocks. He wanted to make use of the rocks and slowly whittle away at their HP as he ran around it but he discovered that their IQ numbers were bleak. He had brought them to the rocks but instead of running right after him, they hesitated, not sure if they should run to the left or right to intercept Chen Mo.

As it went, they had no chance of catching up with Chen Mo.

The 5 traps earlier had dealt a total of over 100 damage to the goblins. While the goblins were hesitating and running about haphazardly, Chen Mo focused his crossbow and traps on one of them and it was killed not long after.

System prompt: You have gained 30 experience!

“So much experience!”

The white goblin died and Chen Mo looked at his experience bar.

It had increased by 20%.

That meant he could get to Level 2 by killing all the White Goblins in the cave.

After getting to Level 2, his attributes would increase by quite a bit. It would be much easier to deal with the goblins then.

A White Goblin was still chasing him but it had just about 200HP left. Two goblins were no problem for Chen Mo – much less one. He did not expend much effort and made use of the obstructions to kill the goblin easily.

His experience bar increased by 20% again. However, this goblin had also dropped 3 coins when it died.

3 coins were a pitiful amount but Chen Mo had nary a penny on him. He picked them up. Seems like it's really difficult to earn coins in this game – heroes have to die multiple times to get this measly bit.

With prior experience, the next steps were easy.

However, whether he could successfully lure the White Goblins out of the cave and kill them depended on the activation of the disabling effect. This 10% chance was neither high nor low and he had to depend on his luck. Chen Mo died twice before he was able to kill the second batch of goblins.

Players Level 10 and below get no penalty for dying. After killing the second batch of goblins, Chen Mo's experience was close to 90% and he would level up if he killed one more goblin.

His luck wasn't too bad when he dealt with the third batch of goblins. He got them out of the cave in his first try.

System prompt: You have levelled up!

System prompt: Your basic attributes have levelled up!

Strength+3

Stamina+2

Agility+2

Intelligence+2

Spirit+1

After easily killing the fifth goblin, a white light flashed from Chen Mo's body. He felt a flood of warmth wash over his body and the HP he lost was refilled.

However, what concerned him more was the increase in attributes. This would affect his performance when dealing with the Black Goblins later.

Looking at his increased stats, he found that the hunter class basic attribute increase was fairly uniform.

Players will have ten attribute points for every level up. These

ten points are allocated according to character class and is decided by the system. The players cannot change the points.

Other than the 10 fixed points, players also get 5 points for them to freely add to whichever attributes they want.

So they say. Chen Mo looked at his stats and found that out of the 5 points, only 4 were truly free for him to allocate as he pleased. The remaining point must go to the player's non-primary attribute.

Stamina is an attribute that all character classes need. Other than Stamina, the hunter's primary attributes include Strength and Intelligence. In other words, from the 5 points given, one point must go to either Agility or Spirit.

The other 4 attribute points are truly free for allocation. A player can use these points however he wished.

To a hunter, though Agility and Spirit are not his primary attributes, he cannot overlook them. Agility affects the speed of his trap setting and speed of his crossbow wielding. Spirit can affect the loyalty of his pets. Don't look down on loyalty – loyalty of pets determine whether the pet will follow the commands and its battle initiative. Pets with low loyalty will not help the player much even if it's powerful.

In addition, out of the 3 primary attributes of a hunter, Strength affects the physical attack of both traps and crossbow. Stamina affects HP. Intelligence influences the attack power of the hunter's

pet.

The most difficult choice was between Strength and Intelligence as these two attributes represented the two different paths of a hunter. If one added Strength, he would embark on the path of a crossbow-man. If one added Intelligence, he would embark on the path of a beast-master.

Be it crossbow-man or beast-master, Chen Mo chose neither. What he needed to address and was most important to him now was traps. Of his 5 points, he added 1 to Agility and 4 to Strength without hesitation.

When he entered the game and first equipped the crossbow, his physical damage was 4~5. With Lightspeed Death and the added 1 point to Strength, it became 5~6. At Level 2, after adding all his points, his Strength was at 11 points and his physical damage rose to 12~13.

According to the data, it seemed 1 Strength point equalled 1 physical damage.

But Chen Mo knew it definitely could not be calculated in that way. If he unequipped his crossbow, his physical damage would instantly become 0. It was apparent that physical damage relied very much and was intricately linked to weapons.

The weapon's attack power is not directly related to the written "Attack power" but "Basic physical attack power"

However, the specifics could not be worked out just yet.

But, after levelling up, his attack power had an unquestionable increase. His HP had also increased by 40. It seemed like he could now withstand one more attack from the White Goblins.

Chen Mo immediately experimented on the last White Goblin to see how much damage he dealt.

He swiftly set a trap and the White Goblin stepped on it. It went off with a boom.

-43!

A damage number of over 40 floated above the head of the White Goblin. Chen Mo's damage had doubled!

The increase in damage was not as high as expected though his attack power had increased. Thinking about it more carefully, he surmised that damage to the monsters should have some sort of applicable algorithm, otherwise his pitiful Level 1 physical damage of 5~6 could not result in over 20 damage.

With double damage, Chen Mo leisurely killed the last White Goblin.

System prompt: You have gained 30 experience!

Each White Goblin gave him 30 experience points but this time, his experience bar only increased by 7%. Looks like every increase in level requires much more experience for the next.

The valley still had 40 to 50 Black Goblins in it. Black Goblins are Level 4. Chen Mo calculated that he would reach Level 4 after killing all of them.

Picking up the few coins the White Goblin dropped, Chen Mo ran into the cave.

The bronze chest rested quietly at the end of the cave. Without the obstruction of White Goblins, Chen Mo walked straight to it and opened the chest with a motion of his hand.

System prompt: You have gained the skill book “Quake Trap”!

System prompt: You have gained the equipment “Ordinary Crossbow”!

“Good stuff, as expected!”

Chen Mo perked up.

The chest contained more than he had thought. There was not only a skill book, but also a weapon!

Chapter 7 – Ingenious Kill

“Quake Trap”: Hunter skill book. Can be learnt at Level 1. After learning, the hunter will be able to set “Quake Trap”.

The Ordinary Crossbow had basic physical attack of 3~4. It was a bit better than the one given to him by the system. As for the skill book... its description was so plain that Chen Mo could glean no details. He promptly learnt the skill.

System prompt: You have learnt the skill “Quake Trap”!

Quake Trap (Novice level): A trap made in a special way. When the trap explodes, it will simultaneously damage the enemy and cause a quake. The quake waves will not distinguish between friend and foe. Quake waves will push all monsters and players within range 2m away. Cooldown 30 seconds. Each trap lasts for 60 seconds. Maximum number of traps that can exist simultaneously – 2.

“A support-type trap.” After reading the trap’s description, Chen Mo reached a conclusion.

Hunters’ traps are classified into two categories – Attack and Support. The Quake Trap obviously belonged to the Support category. The skill description did not mention the damage the trap would deal, indicating that its power was nothing great. However, the Quake Trap is a very useful skill for a hunter.

Hunters do not usually fight close-range. Once an enemy gets

close, his skills are no use but if he sets a Quake Trap and sets it in a good location, he can immediately put a distance of 4m between himself and the enemy.

This is just the effect of a novice-level trap. Once it levels up, the effect will be greater.

Setting the Quake Trap was relatively easy. It only had a few simple movements more than the Basic Trap and was not that much different from it. Chen Mo was already quite familiar with the Basic Trap so with a little practice and time, he was able to set it with Free-skill with a completion degree of over 60%.

“The most difficult part about leaving this valley is actually the White Goblins at the beginning. It shouldn’t be a problem to kill the surrounding Black Goblins with Quake Trap.” Chen Mo thought to himself.

He could set two Quake Traps at the same time. If placed well, he could greatly hinder the Black Goblins’ pursuit of himself.

Or maybe not – the Black Goblins are much faster than White Goblins and have greater attack power to boot. Even though Chen Mo had 120HP and the Basic Heal to heal himself 50HP, he could only take two attacks. If he’s unlucky or the Black Goblins a little smarter, he would be in danger even if he brought them to the huge rocks to run around.

The Quake Trap afforded him the possibility of attack but to kill the Black Goblins, he would still have to see how his luck went.

Looking over at the tens of Black Goblins in the valley, Chen Mo could not help shaking his head. He would have to kill at least half the Black Goblins to leave the valley. Considering the number of them, he would have to die several times in the process of escaping.

Hey, wait a minute!

Chen Mo suddenly smacked himself on the head.

Why did he have to play tag with the Black Goblins? He'd learnt to set traps with Free-skill and could set traps on stones to make them into grenades – he didn't have to use the same method as before to fight Black Goblins!

There was a boulder that's almost 2m high not far off too. He could attract the Black Goblins to the base of the boulder and throw traps down on them from above, killing them with little to no effort!

This is a great idea!

Chen Mo immediately ran to the base of the boulder and practiced climbing up and down a few times, otherwise he'd be a laughingstock if he pulled the monsters over to only die because he failed to climb the boulder.

After practicing his climbing, Chen Mo perched on top of the

boulder and practiced his trap-setting.

He could set traps on stones as he'd expected but he discovered with surprise that if he used the system to set a trap on the stone, his movements would sway about non-stop and largely end in failure to use the skill. If he used Free-skill, it was much simpler to set the trap as it was not affected by the terrain. Looks like unlocking the Free-skill system first gave him quite an advantage over others.

Quite a few people would, like him, be able to find a way to attack monsters from afar but not many would be able to kill in complete safety.

Chen Mo surveyed the distribution of Black Goblins surrounding him and did some calculations in his head, then begun setting traps.

The nearest goblin was under 40m away and he could pull a monster with his crossbow from 11m away. He only needed to set 5 traps in a straight line of 30m. Additionally, he could also set two Basic traps and a Quake Trap while moving.

With a total of 8 traps, the Black Goblins could only dream of catching up to him, even if they were much faster than White Goblins. Just 3 Quake traps made it difficult for Black Goblins to get close to Chen Mo. If just one of the Basic traps' disabling effect activated, Chen Mo would be 100% safe.

Chen Mo set his traps and walked close to two Black Goblins.

When their positions were about the same, he seized his chance and attacked with his crossbow.

Chi!

The two Black Goblins got enraged and started chasing him. Not long after the chase begun, they stepped on a Basic trap. It exploded but the disabling effect did not activate. Two steps later, they were suddenly pushed 2m backwards. They had stepped on a Quake trap.

The result of the Quake Trap was better than Chen Mo had expected. It not only pushed monsters back 2m, it also cut their speed to zero while the player is free to continue running. In this time, the monster is delayed from chasing more than just the distance of 2m.

With the support of the Quake traps, Chen Mo easily lured the 2 Black goblins to the base of the boulder. When the goblins arrived, he was already sitting on top of the boulder, unhurriedly setting traps on stones and throwing them in the middle of the blindly circling goblins.

Chen Mo did not use his crossbow to attack. It needed bolts and he only had the hundred the system had given him. If he used them all up he'd have no more. Furthermore, he had no crossbow skills and was unable to deal high damage with the crossbow.

Boom! Boom! Boom! ...

Traps exploded one after another. Though each trap dealt under 40 damage to the Black Goblins and each goblin had over 500HP, Chen Mo was very precise when throwing the traps. Every time a trap landed on the ground, it landed between the two goblins and damaged both simultaneously.

He could set a trap every 9 seconds. In just a minute and a half, the two goblins' health were dangerously low.

The low-HP goblins glared menacingly up at Chen Mo and their actions became more and more violent. Chen Mo had a faint feeling that their defense had increased as well.

However, before he could get any useful information, the goblins' HP hit rock bottom and they fell to the ground, dead.

Each goblin dropped 3 or 4 coins and Chen Mo picked them up unceremoniously.

“It takes 2 minutes to kill a pair. I'd need about half an hour to kill a path out of here.”

Chen Mo did some quick calculations and perked up. Half an hour was not a long period of time.

However, this would only be possible if the Black Goblins in the valley did not respawn – if not, leaving would be arduous.

Half an hour passed quickly and, like Chen Mo had guessed, the

Black Goblins did not respawn but he still was unable to leave the valley because the Black Goblins who were still alive constantly changed positions, making it impossible for him to leave undetected.

In this half hour, Chen Mo had reached Level 3. The system added the 10 fixed points and he added the free 5 points as he had before. His Strength increased to 18, and, adding the attack power of his Ordinary Crossbow, Chen Mo's attack was now 21~22. A basic trap could damage a Black Goblin for close to 70HP.

The time taken to skill Black Goblins had halved. Chen Mo decided that he might as well spend a little bit more time to just kill them all in one go. The experience from Black Goblins wasn't low and he had the boulder. Killing them was a breeze.

His HP had also increased by 40 so his HP was 160. Even if the Black Goblins got a little close, he was not worried that he'd get killed by them.

The remaining goblins swiftly died pair by pair as Chen Mo's experience increased rapidly.

Very soon, there was just one pair of Black Goblins left in the valley.

Chen Mo checked his experience bar and found that the experience he needed to level up was more than he had thought. Killing these two goblins would make his experience increase to just 70% – short of his expectation of reaching Level 4.

His damage output had increased quite a bit. He only had to throw a trap down from the boulder and the two goblins would die.

But just then, Chen Mo remembered the information from the data he had hacked.

It mentioned that when facing monsters that will not respawn, there is a method to make the last monster enter a state of mutation!

Chapter 8 – Mutated Monster

It was just a possibility but if he were to make the monster mutate, its abilities would increase significantly and have a 100% chance of dropping rare items that would not usually drop from the monster.

Whether this was true or not, Chen Mo felt that he had to try. It won't be easy to find monsters like the Black Goblins that do not respawn.

He attacked the last pair of Black Goblins till their HP were below 10% and killed one of them, leaving the very last goblin.

Chen Mo stopped attacking the last goblin. When a monster does not receive damage from a player within a certain time frame, its HP will recover rapidly. Soon, the Black Goblin's HP was at maximum once more.

The moment its HP fully recovered, Chen Mo attacked.

In just a bit, the Black Goblin's HP was below 10% again and he stopped his attack and waited for it to recover.

He repeated this 30 times and, when he had reduced its HP to under 10%, the Black Goblin let out a great bellow.

In a blink, the Black Goblin increased in size and its black skin took on a metallic sheen. Red veins branched out from the centre

of its black eyes and its speed increased visibly.

Good boy! You really do mutate!

Chen Mo couldn't help but be frightened.

The Black Goblin's attribute increase could be seen with the naked eye after mutation. Had he not hidden himself up on the boulder, a one-on-one fight would be a problem.

He was safe on the boulder, though, so he was not afraid, no matter how powerful the mutated goblin.

He watched the Mutated Black Goblin circle anxiously below and gaily threw traps down at it, one by one.

“Mutated Black Goblin, 3000HP. Hmm... it has much higher defense than the Black Goblin.”

Each trap dealt under 50 damage to the Mutated Black Goblin. Chen Mo calculated that he would need to hit it at least 50 times to kill it.

50 times was not a small number. Even if he hid on the boulder and attacked non-stop, it would take him 8 or 9 minutes to kill the Mutated Black Goblin – 20 minutes if he were on the ground being chased.

Good thing Big Brother here is smart and found this method to kill it – or else it wouldn't be easy to kill this fellow!

Chen Mo could not help but feel proud of himself. It is no small feat to deal with the Mutated Black Goblin for 20 minutes, considering its frightening speed. Its attacks are surely not weak either. It is no surprise if he gets instantly killed after being hit once or twice by it.

He soon built up a rhythm and 3 minutes passed in the blink of an eye. The Mutated Black Goblin's HP had dropped by about 30%.

If he kept at this rate, the Mutated Black Goblin would be dead in 6 or 7 minutes.

However, Chen Mo's mood gradually grew sombre.

Something was wrong.

He'd felt that something was not quite right when he'd started using this method to kill Black Goblins. However, he didn't think much of it as the Black Goblins had died quickly.

The Mutated Black Goblin displayed the same condition. The already violent Mutated Black Goblin had become even more agitated. It occasionally glared up at Chen Mo with eyes of wrath. It began to strike at the boulder with its club, as if it were trying to smash it to smithereens!

Not good! The Mutated Black Goblin had begun to bend its knees, preparing to attempt a jump attack!

How could Chen Mo not understand the situation?

If he could think of attacking monsters from a distance by climbing up the boulder, the game designers could think of it too. But the game designers did not boorishly disallow the method – they had set a variety of restrictions!

The game becomes more interesting when a player can attack monsters from above, but this method of attack will result in a special kind of monster aggro and cannot be used continuously!

Chen Mo had no prior accidents because every time he killed a pair of goblins, he had moved away from the boulder to pull the monsters' aggro.

He knew that he could not stay any longer on the boulder. He needed to leave the boulder to disperse the special monster aggro, or else he'd be at a disadvantage when the monster reaches its peak aggro!

At the thought, Chen Mo jumped with no hesitation from the boulder to land opposite the Mutated Black Goblin.

HWRAR!

The Mutated Black Goblin let out a bellow and charged around

the boulder.

“Fuck, it’s quick!”

It didn’t seem so when he was looking down at it but now that he was on the ground, he discovered just how powerful it had become after mutating!

The Mutated Goblin closed the distance of a few metres in 2 or 3 strides, coming in close on Chen Mo’s heels!

Bang!

It stepped on a trap Chen Mo had set earlier.

Unfortunately, the disabling effect did not activate.

It wasn’t realistic to rely on the 10% chance, as expected.

The Mutated Black Goblin charged towards Chen Mo. Mere centimetres separated them. Chen Mo calmly set a Quake Trap on the stone in his hand.

However, he did not throw it right away. He continued running.

Hu!

In just a few steps, the Mutated Black Goblin had caught up with Chen Mo. Running around the boulder neither hindered nor reduced its speed.

It seemed about to land a strike on Chen Mo with its club when he threw the Quake Trap with a snap of his wrist.

Boom!

The Quake Trap exploded and a 10+ damage number floated up from the goblin's head. Chen Mo and it were each pushed 2m away from one other.

Chen Mo was prepared and immediately ran with the push, increasing the distance between himself and the goblin.

The Mutated Black Goblin was not as nimble as Chen Mo and it paused before resuming its pursuit of Chen Mo.

It was just too quick. The distance Chen Mo had put between himself and the goblin soon closed once more.

“Basic Trap Technique!”

The skill cooldown was over and Chen Mo set a trap as he ran.

“Fuck! Still no disabling effect!”

The trap dealt over 50 damage to the Mutated Black Goblin but the disabling effect did not activate. It had caught up with Chen Mo and its wooden club swiped down at him.

Chen Mo dodged and avoided the attack, but the Mutated Black Goblin was abnormally quick and launched another attack right after the first one.

Chen Mo had no place to run. He raised his crossbow and blocked the wooden club with it, kicking out with his feet as he did so.

GENESIS is a very realistic game and seems almost real, especially when it comes to battling. When a player attacks a monster or is attacked by one, he will feel the additional effect of strength.

Bang! – 88!

The Mutated Black Goblin's club connected with Chen Mo's crossbow. The crossbow did not lessen any of the damage taken by much and Chen Mo's HP was halved in an instant.

But with the impact of the goblin's club and his kick, Chen Mo's body was thrown over 2m backwards.

The instant he was thrown backwards, he turned and ran, using a Basic Heal on himself and pulling his HP up to over 120HP.

Other players could do nothing else than be attacked by the

Mutated Black Goblin. Chen Mo, however, was able to make use of the goblin's attack and flee temporarily.

But Chen Mo could do it largely due to the Mutated Black Goblin's great strength. It wouldn't work with ordinary Black Goblins.

He had increased the distance by a few metres yet again but this was nothing in the eyes of the Mutated Black Goblin. In under 3 seconds, it was hot on Chen Mo's heels once more.

All his skills were still in cooldown. Seeing the goblin's club descend, Chen Mo rolled and dodged the attack.

The second attack followed, but he was ready. He raised his crossbow to parry and kicked with his heels.

Bang! -79!

Another high damage number floated up. Chen Mo was left with less than 60HP and could not afford to take another attack from the goblin.

He bore the attack, and put some distance between himself and the goblin once more.

The Mutated Black Goblin, of course, persevered in its course. Chen Mo's doom seemed inevitable.

No!

Basic Trap Technique's cooldown was over!

Chen Mo quickly set a trap and threw it at the fast-approaching Mutated Black Goblin.

Boom! -47!

The trap exploded but the goblin's speed remained the same. The disabling effect had not activated.

Chen Mo was unperturbed. He used his trump card; he quickly climbed up the boulder again.

“You're unlucky to have met an incredible player such as I. Accept your fate.”

Chen Mo looked down at the furiously hopping Mutated Black Goblin and sighed.

It was powerful but it was still a monster after all. It had loopholes that could be manipulated. His little cat-and-mouse chase had greatly reduced the special monster aggro, and he was able to hide up on the boulder and blast away at it for a while more.

Although he could not stay on the boulder to attack continuously, the Mutated Black Goblin was not a threat to Chen Mo anymore and killing it was just a matter of time.

Blast and run, blast and run... After 15 minutes of repeating this cycle, the Mutated Black Goblin's HP finally hit rock bottom.

Chapter 9 – A Hidden Quest

System prompt: You have levelled up!

System prompt: Your basic attributes have increased!

Strength +3

Stamina +2

Agility +2

Intelligence +2

Spirit +1

The Mutated Black Goblin died without incident. It was Level 4 but the experience it gave was several times more than a normal Black Goblin, and Chen Mo's experience increased by over 30% in a shot!

Crash!

The instant the Mutated Black Goblin crashed to the ground, a large number of copper coins and items burst forth from its body. Chen Mo was surprised. This was the first time he saw so many items come from one monster.

“105 bronze coins, Low Level Mutated Strength Drug, Low Level Mutated Stamina Drug, Low Level Mutated Agility Drug, Low Level Mutated Intelligence Drug, Low Level Mutated Spirit Drug, Low Level Mutated HP Drug and a pair of Goblin Shoes. Mutated monsters sure are rich! All the monsters I killed combined didn't drop as many as this one fellow.”

Chen Mo picked up the items and checked them.

He had killed about 50-60 goblins but only got less than 50 bronze coins. This one Mutated Black Goblin yielded more than all of them.

Chen Mo was considered a rich man to have 150+ bronze coins at Level 4 but the Mutated Drugs were more valuable than the coins by far.

Low Level Mutated Strength Drug: Increases player's Strength by 20. Deals additional 20 damage to enemies when using physical attacks. Drug effects last for 10mins. Cooldown 15mins.

Low Level Mutated Stamina Drug: Increases player's Stamina by 20. When the player is attacked, all damage taken by player is reduced by 20. Drug effects last for 10mins. Cooldown 15mins.

Low Level Mutated Agility Drug: Increases player's Agility by 20. Movement speed increased by 3 points. Drug effects last for 10mins. Cooldown 15mins.

Low Level Mutated Intelligence Drug: Increases player's Intelligence by 20. Deals 20 additional magical damage to enemies when using magic attacks. Drug effects last for 10mins. Cooldown 15mins.

Low Level Mutated Spirit Drug: Increases player's Spirit by 20.

When the player uses a healing skill, the target receives additional 20% healing result. Drug effects last for 10mins. Cooldown 15mins.

Low Level Mutated HP Drug: Instantly recovers 300HP, thereafter HP will increase by 30 every second. Drug effects last for 10mins. Cooldown 15mins.

Chen Mo had never seen what normal drugs looked like but these 6 Mutated Drugs were definitely better!

These drugs looked like they were best suited for those Level 10 and below but the special effects they had made it not a bad item for use at Level 20 or so.

If he had time, he could earn quite a sum by committing suicide over and over again to get more Mutated Drugs.

It was just wishful thinking though. Chen Mo felt that the spoils from killing a Mutated Black Goblin for the second time would definitely not be comparable to the first time. He could try if he got more chances but he wasn't here to make these little sums of money. He won't waste his time on it.

Now, these Goblin Shoes. Judging from the name it didn't seem too bad. It was really just an ordinary White Quality equipment which increased both Strength and Movement by 1 point. It wasn't much but it was the first equipment drop in the game for him.

Chen Mo equipped the shoes and walked out of the valley. To his

surprise, the whole valley was actually sealed. Where the exit lay was a little teleportation platform.

Half an hour later, Chen Mo started running around a little beginner village called Ayr Town.

The little teleportation platform in the valley had brought him directly back to Ayr Town but Chen Mo had not started looking for vulnerabilities immediately. He had spent some time to go on the game's forum.

He was glad he did.

Somebody else had already attempted to kill an important NPC. Players had attempted to attack all sorts of NPCs and found that though they were beginner village NPCs, they were still not killable by players. The players who tried to kill the NPCs were put in prison and the prison time ranged from an hour to over 4 hours.

He couldn't kill NPCs anymore but there were plenty other things he could do.

Ayr Town began to suffer a mild calamity. Chen Mo went about causing mischief like he was born into the role of troublemaker. He chopped a chicken he'd passed by. He shaved a dog's head bald. He cut off the whiskers of a cat... These were all little things but Chen Mo knew that these tiny details often escaped attention and that could mean a higher chance of uncovering loopholes.

Unfortunately, half an hour of Chen Mo's furtive mischief-making yielded him no result.

System prompt: You have triggered the quest, "Lovers' Rendezvous". Would you like to accept the quest?

When causing mischief didn't work and seemed to get him no results, Chen Mo started molesting the female NPCs. He had casually touched the boobs of the sexily dressed tailor shop boss named Enoch as he had walked past, and a system prompt pinged.

Chen Mo hesitated when he saw the system prompt. He didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

Is this one of those legendary hidden quests? Other players were trying desperately but unsuccessfully to uncover a quest like this, yet he had triggered one by causing trouble everywhere he went.

What now? Should I accept?

He had no idea how difficult it would be but it would certainly not be easy. Chen Mo had always seen his endeavours to the end and was not one to leave things unfinished. If he decides to accept the quest, he will complete it. This though, could cost him a lot of time in the process.

But... Ah, heck. Ayr Town seemed to be free of loopholes. He had to level up anyway so he could spend time finishing this quest and get more capital for after he got out of the beginner village. If the

game did have loopholes... well, the loopholes won't run away.

System prompt: You have accepted the quest "Lovers' Rendezvous"!

Quest: Lovers' Rendezvous

Quest difficulty: Unknown

Quest details: Enoch seems to have something to discuss with you. She has invited you to meet her alone at the northernmost corner of houses in Ayr Town at night.

Reward: Unknown

"Night... It's still early."

Game time is also divided into day and night but daylight is much longer. The game has 18 hours of daylight but 6 hours of night. These 6 hours correspond exactly to midnight to 6am in the real world.

It was just 8pm in the real world, so he had plenty of time. He decided to level up in the meantime.

He received a quest from an NPC to get rid of 20 Wild White Rabbits, then followed other players to the area outside Ayr Town.

"WTF? So many people?!"

Chen Mo felt suddenly ill when he got to the Wild White Rabbit

spawn point.

How could you call this the Wild White Rabbit spawn point? The area's coated with people!

The respawn light had not even faded before the Wild White Rabbits were slaughtered by the players around it.

Even though the rabbits spawned quickly, with a huge number appearing every 10 seconds, it was not easy to kill 20. If it hadn't been for the rule that players under level 10 cannot PK, the area would be flooded with blood.

“Humph! Peasants! How hard is it to complete a quest? You! Form a circle around me! I only have a few more to go. The rest of the money will be transferred to your accounts immediately after I'm done!”

“Yes, Big Brother Green Mountain!”

China is massive and has all sorts of colourful characters. Chen Mo immediately had an insight to how the nouveau riche play games. That person did not do the task the hard way like other players but used his money to hire a group of people to form a barricade around a spawn point, allowing him to kill the monster leisurely without fear of anyone snatching it.

This Green Mountain guy was also extremely arrogant, provoking the other players near him. Quite a number of them

were full of animosity towards him, but they gritted their teeth and pretended not to hear.

“Hey! You there! Baaaaabe! Wanna come in here with me? I’ll let you do your quest here with me, baby!”

Chen Mo was flabbergasted. Now I’ve seen everything! In real life, guys treat girls to meals or give presents when wooing her... In this game, guys invite pretty girls to kill monsters!

Chen Mo was not an overwhelmingly rich man like Green Mountain so he couldn’t employ the same methods but it’s easy to steal a kill as a hunter!

He found a repawn point and bent to set a Basic trap on the ground.

Heh heh! Once the rabbit spawns, the trap will explode! No need to calculate the best time – nobody can snatch the kill!

“A hunter? Heh! Dream on!”

A few of the surrounding players walked over with smirks on their faces and stepped on Chen Mo’s trap.

Boom!

The trap exploded but the players suffered no damage.

WTF? They countered him just like that?

Chen Mo stared disbelievingly.

Players can set off a trap, fine. But they don't even get damaged?
Damn it, the hunter class is too weak!

Chapter 10 – Kill-Steal Expert

“Heh heh. Buddy, with us here you’ll get nothing. Go somewhere further off and try your luck there, eh? Maybe there won’t be people who know that hunter traps can be stepped on”, said an assassin called Toxic Hand, as he patted Chen Mo on the shoulder.

In the beginning, other players were not able to snatch monsters from hunters but when the number of players increased, people soon discovered that hunter traps could be stepped on. The hunter players were at a disadvantage after that.

The Wild White Rabbits spawned again and Toxic Hand saw that Chen Mo had not left as he’d suggested. He shrugged. Oh well, this world was full of people who just would not listen to the voice of reason. Seems like this fellow couldn’t swallow his pride and was going to compete with him to the bitter end.

The respawn lights flashed, and the surrounding players raised their weapons, used skills and threw spells. The Wild White Rabbits were eliminated in the blink of an eye.

“Damn it, I was a step too late again and didn’t get one!”

“Oh, I just need a few more.”

“Haha! I got another one!”

Noise erupted around Chen Mo. The players who managed to get

a monster were elated and the players who didn't were full of regret for not getting one. Seeing others complete their goal and advancing ahead of them, they felt increasingly anxious about having to spend more time stuck on this low level quest.

Toxic Hand was unperturbed by the upset people around him. He had gotten a monster again. Five more and he'd complete his quest. The people near him were not as quick and Chen Mo, a hunter who relied on traps, was below his notice.

Wild White Rabbits spawned yet again and the surrounding players rushed to the kill. Toxic Hand's dagger flashed and a Wild White Rabbit perished.

But this time, he looked oddly at Chen Mo. This hunter had previously tried attacking with his bare hands and this time, he used a crossbow bolt.

Wild White Rabbits have very low HP. With so many people attacking at once, there was hardly any difference between bare-handed and weapon attacks. As long as one manages to get the first blow in, he will get the kill.

In Toxic Hand's opinion, using long-distance skills and weapons to kill-steal was a dumb move. Low-level monsters spawn in set locations and long-distance attacks were disadvantageous. On the other hand, short-range attacks are likely to be successful if one calculates the respawn time and attack in advance.

Many surrounding players were doing this too but were

unsuccessful because he, unfortunately, was there. It was impossible for them to steal Wild White Rabbits from him. He had calculated the respawn time and optimal timing to attack and it was not possible to be faster than him. If anyone tried to attack before him, his or her effort would be in vain.

Wild White Rabbits spawned once more and amidst all the weapons, Toxic Hand's dagger flashed downwards.

The Wild White Rabbit died immediately but this time, Toxic Hand paused, shocked.

He didn't get the kill!

His gaze landed on Chen Mo. He knew. It was Chen Mo's crossbow bolt which had pierced the Wild White Rabbit first.

Was it luck?

Toxic Hand couldn't help wondering.

The Wild White Rabbits spawned. Toxic Hand focused his attention, and swiftly swung his dagger.

He didn't get the kill this time either! That hunter snatched it away!

Damn, he's an expert!

Toxic Hand looked at Chen Mo and finally understood why he had not attacked bare-handed but switched to a crossbow bolt.

Even if this hunter did his bare-handed attack perfectly, he would only match his timing and hit the Wild White Rabbit at the same time. When that happens, the kill will go to the player with the higher attack.

Toxic Hand's an assassin so his ordinary attacks were higher than a hunter's bare-handed attack. A hunter would never be able to kill-steal bare-handed.

That was why this hunter used a crossbow bolt. The crossbow bolt has the combined attack of the crossbow and the bolt and has a higher damage than bare-handed attacks.

Toxic Hand also had "Stab", the basic assassin skill, but he wasn't fully confident that it would work.

He was able to get the kill from all the surrounding players not just through exact calculation – he had a trick up his sleeve too.

When attacking, he would move his dagger to the Wild White Rabbit's respawn position and deliberately slow a little. The moment the Wild White Rabbit respawned, he increased his speed. That ensured him first strike even if his calculations were off. If he used his skill, he would have to be 100% accurate or his attack would highly likely be too quick and strike at empty air.

Toxic Hand was unable to be so precise and that was why his gaze held a trace of horror.

This hunter must be a super expert!

Chen Mo was not aware of Toxic Hand's thoughts. In truth, he was not as scary as Toxic Hand had presumed. It was all estimation after all and it was impossible to be that precise. He was able to kill-steal twice in a row by a sheer measure of luck. He was just doing his best to get to the monster first and was doing none of the complicated stuff Toxic Hand was thinking about. If he didn't get one this time, he would just try again. No biggie.

“Mr Expert! You, that hunter expert over there! Come here – I have extra monsters here!”

After Chen Mo had killed his second Wild White Rabbit, rich-boy Green Mountain yelled excitedly, as if he had discovered a new world.

Before Chen Mo turned up, Green Mountain had been watching Toxic Hand.

Green Mountain was a greenhorn through and through. He had first entered the game out of curiosity but had soon been fascinated by this realistic fantasy world.

He had gotten to Level 4 with difficulty and accepted a quest to

kill monsters. He left Ayr Town in high spirits but, in the end, after half an hour of vying with other players for Wild White Rabbits, he had none.

Green Mountain blew his top and used his wealth to hire a group of players near him to barricade a spawn point.

Money was nothing to Green Mountain. He enjoyed the looks of envy and hate but he knew that spending money to hire people to help him kill monsters was outrageous. Those envious eyes held, too, some measure of despise.

Green Mountain wanted, like other players, to be able to snatch the kill from the hands of others. Though it would be slow-going for his quest, it would be much more interesting.

That was why he had observed the players around him and Toxic Hand caught his eye. He had wanted to watch for a while longer, then ask Toxic Hand for advice but an even more skilled hunter arrived on the scene.

Toxic Hand had already seemed like a powerful guy but now there was another guy who was even more awesome! Green Mountain could no longer remain calm.

Green Mountain's eyes gleamed with undisguised desire. Chen Mo was no stranger to that look and knew what Green Mountain wanted.

After some thought, Chen Mo walked over to Green Mountain.

It wasn't too bad a deal – he'd get to save some time while teaching this rich kid.

“Hey, Big Brother Green Mountain, we agreed to help only you finish your quest.”

Green Mountain's actions immediately drew dissent from the surrounding players.

“Cut the crap. I'll double what I'm paying!” Green Mountain stared at the person who spoke. The players around him quieted down too.

“Mr Expert, you're really powerful. Can you teach me? Damn, I tried fighting for half an hour earlier and couldn't get a single kill!” Green Mountain got straight to the point and looked helplessly at Chen Mo.

Chen Mo was just too cool. Green Mountain got pumped up just thinking about himself being able to also do something like that.

“Of course.” Chen Mo smiled. It was no secret. Get the timing down, and have okay reaction time. Anybody could do it.

Green Mountain nodded while listening to Chen Mo outline the method. He was eager to experiment on the respawning monsters nearby and immediately put himself to the test.

“Haha! Looks like it really does work!”

Green Mountain was no idiot. Chen Mo’s advice had been simple but contained the essentials.

Green Mountain tested it out and could not help getting excited when he found that it seemed to work.

“Observe. The rules are important. Grasp a good time, then go in for the kill. High-level monsters later may be more complicated but overall it’s roughly the same.” Chen Mo reminded as he killed Wild White Rabbits.

“Of course, yes! Mr Expert Silence, it is as you say.” While talking, they added one another to their friend lists.

“I’ve completed my quest. I’ll go off first then. Try to get the hang of it – you can ask me if you don’t understand.”

With nobody around to kill-steal, Chen Mo had his 20 Wild White Rabbits in no time.

“Okay! Have a nice walk, Mr Expert!” Green Mountain nodded at Chen Mo but he didn’t turn to look as he spoke. He kept his eyes glued to a spot where the Wild White Rabbit respawned. He was nervous and looked ready to chop down with his sword at any moment.

Chen Mo knew that Green Mountain's attention was on killing monsters and did not bother him. He left alone.

“Heeeh!”

Not long after Chen Mo had left, Green Mountain's sword cleaved down and cut the body of a Wild White Rabbit that had just respawned.

“Hahaha! I can kill-steal now! You guys, scram! I've already instructed my people to transfer the money to you guys.” Green Mountain laughed in elation. He waved, motioning for the hired players to disband, then looked about himself and inserted himself into the crowd.

He had completed the quest long ago but he had the rare opportunity to learn how to kill-steal. How could he not try stealing the monsters of the surrounding players?

“Shit! What happened?!”

Wild White Rabbits spawned again but it went differently from how he had imagined.

Over 10 Wild White Rabbits spawned but he was unable to get a single one.

“Damn it, I don't believe this!”

Green Mountain stubbornly kept trying and kept a close eye on the respawn location and swore that he would not give up until he kill-steals all his Wild White Rabbits.

Chapter 11 – You Know Your Place

System prompt: You have completed the quest “Rascally Rabbits”!

System prompt: You have gained 10 bronze coins and 500 experience points!

After returning to Ayr Town and turning in his quest, Chen Mo shook his head in disappointment at the reward.

The reward wasn't terrible – it was equivalent to getting an extra 25 EXP for every Wild White Rabbit killed – but there were just too many players competing for the same monster. It wasn't worth doing the quest at all and killing non-quest monsters would be much faster.

Chen Mo logged off and checked the forums. Some people had started posting the spawn locations of different monsters.

“Wild Wolf Valley, Level 7 Wild Wolves. Hmm. That's it.”

Chen Mo quickly chose his next target.

Level 7 Wild Wolves had high attack and wasn't slow either. It would be difficult for a level 5 player to take it on. He had not much in the way of equipment and would die if he were attacked twice.

Chen Mo examined the data he had on the Wild Wolf and found

that if he made use of the surrounding terrain and trees, he could fight one-on-one with it. He had to be very careful.

He logged in to the game again and passed a huge army of players. From the Man-Eating Flower region onwards, there was a sharp decline in player numbers.

Only small parties of players were able to take on monsters in the Level 6 monster area, though these small groups were mostly temporary.

China has many game guilds and gamer groups but Ayr Town's numbers were even more staggering. One has a very slim chance of randomly meeting another from the same guild in the same Ayr Town.

The Level 6 Man-Eating Flower has low attack and almost never moves. It is the first choice for long-range attack players but to a hunter like Chen Mo, it was not a good monster for levelling up.

He could throw his trap-grenades but that would also put him within range of the Man-Eating Flower. Its attack came from the ground, so terrain and obstacles won't work. Alone, Chen Mo cannot withstand more than a few attacks from it.

Moving on past the Man-Eating Flower area, he came to the entrance of the Wild Wolf Valley.

At this stage in the game, most of the players were still around

Level 5. Wild Wolves have high attack and will kill a Level 5 player in 2 or 3 attacks. Regular people will not come to Wild Wolf Valley to grind monsters so Chen Mo did not find it odd that he saw nobody in Wild Wolf Valley but a large number of Wild Wolves.

Compared to Wild Wolves, the Man-Eating Flowers were undoubtedly the better choice.

Chen Mo's gaze swept over Wild Wolf Valley and his eyes lit up.

There was a large boulder not far from the entrance to the valley. He could kill Wild Wolves leisurely like he had with the Black Goblins!

He moved cautiously to the boulder and lured 2 Wild Wolves, then climbed up the boulder and started attacking the Wild Wolves leisurely.

What luck that such a great kill-spot had not yet been discovered! Looks like the players in the game were still being restrained by the rules of traditional games and not many knew that they could kill monsters like this. Otherwise, he would not have gotten the spot at all.

However, Chen Mo was not so kind as to post this information on the forums and let other players know. While browsing the forums earlier, he had found that quite a few players, like him, had appeared in Goblin Valley instead of the beginner town. These players were trapped in the valley and could not escape so they posted on the forum asking for help. Unfortunately, nobody was

able to present them with a feasible solution.

Chen Mo was sure that he was not the only one who had managed to escape from the valley. Those who managed to get out on their own must be capable people and no one would be willing to disclose his or her methods and help rivals.

The Level 7 Wild Wolf has low HP – just 800HP. However, its defense is much higher than the Black Goblins' Chen Mo killed. He speculated that the Black Goblins had no defence but the Wild Wolves should have some defence. After equipping the Goblin Boots, which added 1 to Strength, Chen Mo's attack was 8 more than when he was fighting against the Black Goblins. However, the damage he dealt was 10 points lower than when he was hitting the Black Goblins. Every trap he threw down only did over 40 damage to the Wild Wolves.

Chen Mo did not have to be stingy with crossbow bolts after being able to return to the beginner village. When his skills were on cooldown, he used his crossbow to attack. Ordinary crossbow attacks only did 20+ damage to the Wild Wolves but the accumulated damage was not lower than his skill attacks.

In over a minute, the 2 Wild Wolves fell to the ground, dead.

System prompt: You have killed Wild Wolf! You have gained 100 EXP!

“The EXP is not bad. If I keep going like this I can get to Level 5 in 20mins.”

Chen Mo was very satisfied with the EXP from Wild Wolves. When he was doing the rabbit-killing quest earlier, walking and killing had taken him up to 7mins. In the end, he had gotten just over 1000 EXP for his efforts but it was due to rich-boy Green Mountain – if not, he would have had to spend much more time KS-ing others.

After killing the 2 wolves, Chen Mo jumped down the boulder and lured more. He deliberately hit them for a while before hopping onto the boulder to avoid having the Wild Wolves' aggro changing.

Wild Wolves died one after another as Chen Mo's experience increased rapidly. Soon, his EXP bar was at 70% – 6 or 7 mins more and he'll be Level 5.

But at that moment, 3 figures appeared in the valley entrance.

Mark of a Bright Moon was the guild leader of a small guild called Bright Moon Guild. He was the leader but his guild only had a pitiful number of 60 to 70 active players.

Mark of a Bright Moon wanted to strengthen and grow his guild and become famous. However, to be famous, he had to be very skilled in a well-known, populous game. To become the crème de la crème, though, he had to throw money into it. Of course, Mark of a Bright Moon had no such copious amounts of money to sink in a game so he had messed around for years and gotten nowhere.

The appearance of GENESIS had been like a great ray of hope for him.

In the past, even if a guild was well-known in a game, once you were out of the game the guild was seldom heard of by others. Mark of a Bright Moon had been unwilling to throw money into the game because of this.

GENESIS is different. From what he knew, virtually every guild from all corners of China had entered GENESIS. Countless players from various games in China have also become enthralled by this game.

If one can make a mark in GENESIS, he will become an overnight celebrity!

With fame, it will be easy to make money and make Bright Moon Guild bigger and better.

Mark of a Bright Moon had entered GENESIS with much excitement. He had been surprised to discover that other than himself, two members of the guild had also started in the small town of Ayr.

He was a fighter and the other two were a mage and an archer. With 3 of them working together, they were able to kill monsters of higher levels than themselves.

With their help, competing for the highest level in the game was

not an impossibility. If he got to Level 10 first and gets a System Reward or Announcement, it would be easy to get famous.

Their levelling up speed was quite good when killing the Man-Eating Flowers but Mark of a Bright Moon was determined to climb the Level ladder and felt that it would be 20mins at most that others would flood in if they continued killing at the Man-Eating Flowers area. He would have to find another spot to grind in then. Hence, the Wild Wolf Valley, which was a level higher, was his best bet.

Unexpectedly, when they first got to the valley entrance, they saw a lone hunter on a boulder easily killing 2 wolves below him.

The 2 Wild Wolves dropped dead and the hunter on the boulder had shed not a drop of blood!

Simple yet quick!

Killing monsters could actually be that easy!

“Boss Bright Moon, let’s snatch that boulder for ourselves. The wolves are Level 7 – we can stay here till we reach Level 9!” The mage in the group could not help but suggest.

“But players Level 10 and below cannot PK. How can we chase that hunter away?” the archer hesitated.

“Simple! We kill-steal everything and he’ll leave on his own!”

Mark of a Bright Moon sneered.

It was like the Heavens were aiding him. Bright Moon Guild would prosper! With this level-grinding spot, he will be sure to get ahead in the level ranks!

Mark of a Bright Moon was an old hand at KS-ing. The 3 of them quickly cleared a path to the boulder. The boulder could accommodate one more person so the mage climbed up. The archer and Mark of a Bright Moon then lured the monsters away from the boulder. Just like that, Chen Mo, a hunter with no means of long-range attack, was entirely unable to kill any monsters. Once he jumps down the boulder, the archer would climb up and occupy his spot.

“Have it.” Chen Mo did not want to waste any time on them and jumped off the boulder himself, then went to a corner not far off to slowly kill some wolves.

“Haha! Good boy! You know your place, eh?” Mark of a Bright Moon laughed. He did not expect the hunter to be so amiable. He’d expected the hunter to hang on and try to make trouble for him.

Chen Mo just rolled his eyes when he heard him and ignored him.

Damn you! You really think that you can snatch my spot so easily? I’ll teach you a lesson real soon!

Chapter 12 – Elite Monster

“Haha! Leader Bright Moon, this place is great for leveling!” The mage cried happily. The 3 of them had been fighting together before but the archer and the mage had always been very careful not to pull aggro.

In the Wild Wolf Valley, however, the archer and mage did not have to worry about the aggro problem and struck with all their might, pulling aggro as needed.

This way, Mark of a Bright Moon just needed to lure monsters to the foot of the boulder and let the archer and mage pull aggro away from him. He could then hit the monsters without fear of reprisal and all 3 of them won't suffer any damage.

There's no better place than this to grind levels! Who can keep up with this levelling speed?

The 3 of them were in high spirits and put their all into their strikes as Wild Wolves dropped dead one after another.

They did not notice that, as their EXP increased exponentially, the surrounding respawning Wild Wolves began to undergo a change.

“Haha! We got 15% EXP in just 5 minutes! Just a little more and we'll be Level 6. I told you – coming to this valley was the right thing to do. You believe me now, right?” After luring and killing a few more wolves, Mark of a Bright Moon grinned up at his

companions.

“Of course, Leader Bright Moo...” The archer and mage chorused agreement but their conversation was cut short as they turned to look at their surroundings, startled.

Mark of a Bright Moon sensed that something was amiss and he hurriedly turned to look.

It was as though he had seen a ghost. The scarcely populated surroundings had filled with scores of Wold Wolves all of a sudden!

The Wild Wolves charged at the 3 of them with malevolence in their eyes!

A Wild Wolf rebellion!

“Woah, what a shitty situation!” In his corner in the valley, Chen Mo clearly witnessed their peril.

Chen Mo winced* as he watched Mark of a Bright Moon and his buddies get insta-killed by the mob.

He knew that a special aggro would be induced if one attacked from above on a boulder, causing a possible mutation in the surrounding monsters, but he had not expected this mutation to be so terrifying. There was no way out alive.

With the death of the 3, the special aggro on the Wild Wolves dissipated. The pack of wolves looked about for a bit, then dispersed to the 4 corners of the valley.

After the wolves walked off, Chen Mo went unhurriedly to the boulder and climbed up, then started throwing his trap-grenades.

4 minutes later, a pure white light flashed and Chen Mo rose to Level 5.

After adding his attribute points, Chen Mo's Strength reached 33 points, his attack was 36~37 and he had 200HP. His attributes were barely decent but his equipment comprised of an Ordinary Crossbow and a pair of Goblin Shoes.

Speaking of equipment, Chen Mo couldn't help but bemoan the low equip-drop rate of the game. He had slain quite a few monsters on his path to Level 5 but other than the Goblin Shoes from the Mutated Black Goblin, he had not seen any other monster drop any equipment. The drop rate was so low that he could not bear to even look at his equipment.

After levelling up, his killing speed naturally increased but he did not have much time to himself to kill the wolves leisurely for, not long later, Mark of a Bright Moon and his buddies were back with sullen faces.

Although they had been killed for no apparent reason, Mark of a Bright Moon was not willing to give up on such a good levelling up spot so easily.

Seeing the 3 of them return, Chen Mo took the initiative and gave up his treasured spot.

“Be careful this time!” Mark of a Bright Moon wanted to vent his anger on someone but Chen Mo had cooperated so he had nothing to vent on. Instead, he yelled at the archer and mage.

“Yes, boss!”

The 3 surrounded the boulder and started killing monsters. This time, they were more cautious but after a few minutes, there was no change in the monsters in Wild Wolf Valley. The trio gradually let down their guard.

Looks like the large wave of monsters earlier was just a coincidence.

However, after about 5 minutes, Mark of a Bright Moon’s face paled. Another wave of Wild Wolves had suddenly spawned around the trio!

Roar!

The pack of wolves came roaring towards the three.

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“The respawn time was at least 1min earlier than the first time!”

Chen Mo looked at the time.

With Mark of a Bright Moon and his cronies so willing to die, Chen Mo happily began to test some of the things that interested him on the side.

The trio’s death had not been in vain. Chen Mo had gotten some additional information from the respawn time of the 2nd wave of wolves.

“Wild Wolf Valley is scary!”

When Mark of a Bright Moon’s team was getting killed by the 2nd wave of wolves, a large group of players had appeared in the mouth of the valley and witnessed the slaughter. What they saw scared the living daylights out of them.

They had originally been killing the Man-Eating Flowers and had decided to come to Wild Wolf Valley after discussing it amongst themselves as the area was getting crowded with more players. They had not expected to see such viciousness displayed by the monsters in Wild Wolf Valley.

The attack by that pack of wolves was no joke. Don’t even talk about a team taking them on – even if their entire group went up against the wolves, they would all die.

“Let’s go somewhere else. Even if this happens occasionally, it’s too time-consuming and not worth it”, someone recommended immediately.

“I agree! Let’s go somewhere else.”

“Let’s go kill Black Boars. They’re Level 7 too. Their skins are quick thick but their attack is weaker than Wild Wolves.”

The group ignored Chen Mo, who was quietly killing monsters in a corner, and left the valley with their noses in the air.

Chen Mo tapped his nose. Seems the Heavens were telling him to stay and continue killing monsters in the valley. If that were so, he should not waste the Heavens’ goodwill.

With an “I’ll take what I can get” attitude, Chen Mo returned to the boulder and continued to kill Wild Wolves.

Needless to say, it was really comfortable killing monsters from up above on the boulder.

However, his comfort did not last long. Mark of a Bright Moon and his cronies rushed back, steam blowing from their ears.

Ha!

These 3 guys haven’t given up!

Chen Mo acted scared and quickly ran away.

“Let’s try again!” Mark of a Bright Moon growled through his teeth.

“Boss Bright Moon, I’ve been thinking... those huge groups of Wild Wolves earlier spawned when we had been killing for 9mins straight. What if we kill for 8mins, then leave the valley and walk for a bit before coming back to kill wolves again?”, suggested the mage.

“Okay, let’s do that”, Mark of a Bright Moon nodded.

The trio began to kill wolves again and this time, they kept a constant eye on the time as they killed wolves.

Six minutes passed and their EXP rose like water being poured into a jug.

They were unwilling to leave so easily despite being insta-killed twice because of the high EXP here.

The seventh minute.

Just as Mark of a Bright Moon was about to go lure more monsters, the familiar wolf pack suddenly emerged around them!

Additionally, the moment the wolf pack appeared, yet another large group of players entered the valley.

Upon seeing the murderous wolves, this group of players left without a word, giving up on Wild Wolf Valley. The notoriety of Wild Wolf Valley soon spread.

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“The special aggro accumulates more and more quickly – it was 2mins quicker this time!”

Chen Mo observed the trio’s third slaughter and calculated the time difference.

“Interesting game setting. Such a small detail but settings have numerous little details – the more complicated the more likely there are loopholes.”

With Mark of a Bright Moon inadvertently acting as a guinea pig, Chen Mo had gathered enough information. From what he knew, his previous idea of repeatedly killing Mutated Black Goblins would not work. He estimated that the Mutated Black Goblin would not drop anything after killing them a few times.

The 3 were vanquished again and Chen Mo, the guy who knows how to avoid the special aggro, hopped back on the boulder and started killing wolves.

The trio kept dying repeatedly but Chen Mo kept accumulating EXP. In a little over 20mins, he would be able to get to Level 6.

When Chen Mo had almost cleared the wolves around him on the boulder, something unexpected happened. A wolf much larger than the others spawned near the boulder.

Wolf Elite!

Chen Mo hesitated. He felt sure that the Wolf Elite had appeared only due to Mark of a Bright Moon continuously inducing special aggro. Furthermore, hundreds of monsters had been killed but no Elite monster had spawned.

In this regard, Chen Mo could not help feeling frustrated**. He had not found a single loophole but uncovered a lot of hidden game settings.

Though... Since he'd encountered one, he should kill it first.

The Wolf Elite was Level 7 and had 5000HP – a thousand more than a Mutated Black Goblin.

However, the Wolf Elite was just an elite monster. It was a level lower than mutated monsters and, compared to the Mutated Black Goblin, only its HP and attack were a little higher. Its speed was the same as the Mutated Black Goblin.

Chen Mo had the experience of going one-on-one against the

goblin so facing this Wolf Elite was no biggie. He was unafraid and his attack power had nearly doubled compared to the time he was up against the Mutated Black Goblin.

He was in a similar environment and the Wolf Elite did not have any special attacks. Chen Mo whacked away at its HP with no incident.

“Roar!”

Chen Mo threw down a trap, and with a final roar, the Wolf Elite dropped dead. A pile of bronze coins burst from its body.

Three figures appeared in the mouth of Wild Wolf Valley. Mark of a Bright Moon had witnessed the fall of the Wolf Elite and his eyes blazed with anger.

*Yes, this is the prodigal “sucked in a breath of cold air” phrase you’ll find in TONS of Chinese webnovels. I just HAD to change it – one would think their heroes’ bellies are full of ice from all that cold air they inhale.

** The legendary “did not know whether to laugh or cry”

Chapter 13 – Flaming 3-Headed Wolf

Mark of a Bright Moon was not an idiot. They'd witnessed the scene of Chen Mo killing the Wolf Elite and that told them that he was powerful. How could a powerful person like him readily hand over a precious levelling spot just like that? There was a catch!

This hunter obviously knew about some hidden settings of the monsters in this map and had used them. He had treated them as fools!

Mark of a Bright Moon was about to storm up to the hunter to question him in a pique of anger but he suddenly stopped.

Another mutation was happening in the Wild Wolf Valley.

The empty floor of the Wild Wolf Valley suddenly burst into a sea of flames. The ground seemed to have melted and something was emerging from the ground!

Chen Mo picked up his spoils from the Wolf Elite and glanced down. Seeing the flames beneath his feet, he started.

What happened?

Boom!

Before Chen Mo could figure it out, the glare of flames suddenly

dissipated and the figure of a huge monster appeared!

“Wha... What’s that? A 3-headed wolf?” At Mark of a Bright Moon’s side, the mage murmured as he stared at the monster.

“Flaming 3-Headed Wolf! A BOSS – a big BOSS! If we kill it, we’ll be rich!” The archer exclaimed after reading the huge monster’s name.

Mark of a Bright Moon went from shocked to overjoyed, then brooding.

No matter how they looked at it, this BOSS could not be tackled by the 3 of them. Whoever manages to kill this BOSS would not matter to them.

“Flaming 3-Headed Wolf!” Chen Mo, too, couldn’t help staring at the 3-headed BOSS.

For unknown reasons, this BOSS had suddenly spawned. Flames ran up and down its body. On each of its 3 heads were a pair of flaming eyes of different colours. Its enormous body exuded swelling power, seemingly possessing inexhaustible strength.

System announcement: Hidden conditions have been met. The hidden BOSS, Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, has appeared! Wild Wolf Valley is now under the rule of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. Regional map rules have changed!

Hidden BOSS? Regional map rules changed?

Chen Mo was stunned. Did he do something to trigger this?

No matter how he looked at it, it was impossible. He'd believe that the Wolf Elite spawned because of Mark of a Bright Moon's continual pulling of special aggro but the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf definitely did not spawn because of him!

What Chen Mo didn't know was that, other than the Wild Wolf Valley he was in, all the Wild Wolf Valleys of all the beginner villages had spawned Flaming 3-Headed Wolves at the same time!

He did not have time to ponder for the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf enveloped in a wreath of flames had spotted him and, lunged at Chen Mo.

Chen Mo barely managed to dodge and evade the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. However, this was no ordinary monster. The head with burning blue eyes twisted around and a stream of blue flame poured from the mouth, rushing towards Chen Mo.

Chen Mo had no place to hide. He was hit by the blue flame and a damage number of over 3000 floated up from him. He was killed instantly!

Chen Mo was not the only one to get killed. All the newbies in the Wild Wolf Valleys across the server had met the same fate. No one could survive even one attack from the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf!

The system announcement encouraged masses of curious players to flock to Wild Wolf Valley. They were overcome with glee at the sight of the hidden BOSS and wanted to rely on numbers to take it down. However, they found to their dismay that none of their attacks could penetrate the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf's defences. They were like lemmings jumping off a cliff edge.

The appearance of a hidden BOSS caused an uproar in the beginner villages. This uproar only died down after the players discovered they could not kill the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, but this was not till hours later.

Chen Mo resurrected at the busiest time in the beginner village. The players around him were all talking about the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. He felt the sudden appearance of the BOSS rather peculiar, so he logged off to see what he could find on the forums.

He found out that the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf hidden BOSS had not just appeared in the Wild Wolf Valley he was in but all of the Wild Wolf Valleys in the game.

He checked the spawn time. It was the same for all the beginner villages.

Seeing that, Chen Mo was sure that the BOSS had not spawned because of him. The spawn conditions for this BOSS should be numerous. It was just that there were too many Wild Wolf Valleys – with multiple players killing monster there any one of them could have inadvertently fulfilled the conditions to let the hidden

BOSS spawn.

Several players had made all sorts of guesses and speculation about this hidden BOSS. One speculated that as long as one of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolves in the valley was killed, the others would disappear. It would appear that there was only one BOSS and it could only be killed once.

Quite a few people supported this view. Chen Mo, too, was in favour of this bit of speculation as it was in keeping with the circumstances in which the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf had appeared.

As a result, the value of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf hidden BOSS rocketed. A number of guilds, in a bid to get famous, had announced that they would kill the hidden BOSS on the forums.

There were too many people with the same idea as Mark of a Bright Moon. As long as one can be famous in GENESIS, he can be recognised by all.

There were numerous small guilds on the China server but not one could claim to be of any rank in GENESIS. Right now, all of them were at the same starting point so they were all working like mad to be the first to make a breakthrough.

There is no other way than to kill a widely-known BOSS to get famous in a game!

Other than the guilds, the strong solo players were also having

designs on the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf BOSS. The competition was fierce.

Chen Mo, on the other hand, was not interested. He only wanted to uncover the conditions that allowed the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf to spawn but it seemed that it would be not possible to tell at this juncture.

Back in the game, Chen Mo could not help but be distressed at the thought of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf occupying his precious levelling up spot. He only had half of his EXP bar to go after he killed the Wolf Elite. Ah, if only that darned BOSS had spawned later!

Chen Mo decided to look for another spot to grind. But first – he had to sort through the items the Wolf Elite had dropped.

Although the Wolf Elite had seemingly dropped a lot of items, Chen Mo didn't harbour much hope when it came to the drop rate in the game.

A large part of the drop was bronze coins, totalling about 130. In addition to the coins, there were 5 bottles of low-level HP potions which healed 100HP upon consumption and 20HP every second thereafter for 10 seconds.

The only piece of equipment was a pair of Wolf Leg-guards, which Level 5 players can equip. It added 8 to physical defense after equipping. This was blue, which was better than white equipment. It also added 3 to Stamina, which equated to 60HP for

him. It could be regarded as a good piece of armour.

Chen Mo put the Wolf Leg-guards on and left Ayr Town. He found that the higher-level players had all gone to Wild Wolf Valley to join in the fun so he returned to town and accepted a bunch of monster-killing quests before leaving again.

This was a good chance to go kill monsters. Most had gone to gawk and there wasn't too many left to Kill-Steal. Doing quests to level up didn't take too long. Besides, it wasn't so easy to find a nice levelling spot like in Wild Wolf Valley.

There were 2 more hours to go till midnight. Chen Mo busied himself with quests for an hour and by the time the players who'd gone to join in the fun slowly trickled back, he had reached Level 7. He had left a large number of players behind in levels and nobody was able to Kill-steal him while he was doing his monster-killing quests.

This was the advantage of being a higher level than others. Most people wanted to get ahead for this advantage.

Chen Mo did quest after quest till it was midnight. He was at Level 9.

There wasn't a big difference between Level 9 and 10. Chen Mo headed to the Northern part of Ayr Town to begin the "Lovers' Rendezvous" quest.

Chapter 14 – I Got Tricked!

20km outside Jing Hua City.

A year ago, a tech company called “Ash Blue Tech” was established in that area. The newly established Ash Blue Tech had no reputation to speak of in China and only a select few knew that the GENESIS China servers were being monitored by them.

Ash Blue Tech knew the first day of GENESIS’ launch was crucial. It was midnight but the monitoring department was in full gear, keeping a vigilant eye on the game’s data.

Data flowed in a continuous stream across enormous screens as a group of young men watched attentively below.

The game had been running for quite a number of hours now and they were not as nervous as before.

There had been no hiccoughs, even at the game’s busiest time. It should be able to maintain its stability later, too.

“Eh?! How is this possible? Someone has entered The Land of Divine Punishment!”

A young man suddenly cried out in surprise.

“The Land of Divine Punishment? Isn’t it accessible only through

a very few hidden quests? The highest-level players are just Level 10 – How could anyone have managed to get into that hidden map?”

“Quick, investigate what’s going on!”

The whole group was taken by surprise. The young man who first discovered this development hurriedly called up the corresponding data.

If bugs have appeared in the game, they have to report it right away. Ash Blue Tech only did monitoring and had no power to repair anything in the game.

“Oh, so that’s how it is.”

“Haha! This guy must be a big pervert! He molested over 10 female NPC in a row and triggered a hidden quest that would throw him into The Land of Divine Punishment!”

“Woah, what a revenge! The person who designed this quest must be some Old Maid who’d never been molested before.”

“Poor bastard. It’s the Land of Divine Punishment – Players level 10 and below have no chance in hell of getting out unscathed. He’ll probably lose all his levels and drop back to Level 1 again.”

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The Land of Divine Punishment.

Chen Mo gnashed his teeth as he stared out at the ruins in front of him.

The ruins was located on a large, black, borderless marshland. The sky was gray and lifeless with not a trace of light. Half submerged debris from fallen buildings poked out from the depths of the marsh.

There were no monsters to be seen other than the black female figures which emerge from below to assassinate him.

He had barely been here for 5 minutes but he'd been assassinated 5 times and dropped from Level 9 to Level 8!

Bloody hell! I got tricked!

This rendezvous quest was a hidden quest all right – but it was a hellhole where you paid with your life!

When he had gotten to the Northern end of the town, he'd knocked on the door and Enoch caught hold of him without a word, then said that she was going to punish a wicked bastard before sending him into this Land of Divine Punishment.

Of course, Chen Mo did not go in without putting up a fight.

However, Enoch's speed and attack power was too much for him and he was caught in a few moves.

He could only leave The Land of Divine Punishment after an hour. In The Land of Divine Punishment, his EXP was reduced by 20% – this effect was applicable too, even though he was not yet Level 10.

Only 5mins had passed and he'd died 5 times and dropped a level. Looks like he'll be dropped all the way back to Level 1 when an hour's up.

Chen Mo reckoned that this place should have some good items somewhere in it but he was powerless to obtain it.

He had actually moved just 30m in all of 5 minutes in the black marsh. Every time he resurrected and took a few steps, black figures would emerge from the surface of the swamp and insta-kill him with the wave of a dagger.

After dying, he would resurrect after 30 seconds but would get assassinated again after walking a few steps.

He was unable to logoff to escape either. When he logged off, his avatar remained and was still killed by the dark figures.

After his 5 deaths, Chen Mo finally got to a huge rock.

He was thinking of using the huge rock to defend himself against

the shadowy figures' attacks.

He quietly calculated the timing of the figures' appearances and silently set a Quake Trap on a rock.

Whoosh!

Right after he'd set the Quake Trap, a figure suddenly appeared on his left. Chen Mo reacted quickly and flung the Quake Trap at it.

Boom!

The Quake Trap exploded! The dark figure was blasted away by the Quake Trap!

Looks like it'll work!

Chen Mo's heart leapt for joy.

However, the quake had also pushed him away from the huge rock and he fell once more into the wet, murky marsh.

Damn!

Before he could get away from the marsh surface, Chen Mo felt a sharp pain in his back. He'd been stabbed once again.

No...! There is no way to defend against this!

He'd thought it was possible to use the Quake trap to lessen his death count and somehow pass the hour but after this attempt, Chen Mo knew that his current attributes and level was no match for the power of the black figures.

Once he admitted this fact, he did not resist. He ran in one direction like a madman, trying to uncover some treasure, any treasure, before he got killed all the way back to Level 1.

Chen Mo dropped dead over and over, running as soon as he resurrected.

“A treasure chest!”

When his level dropped to Level 5, Chen Mo was gratified to discover that, 50m in front of him, was an ancient, blackened treasure chest sitting on the marshland!

If he can open that treasure chest, it would be worth it even if he dropped down to Level 1!

Chen Mo ran without care for his life.

Unfortunately, it was just a pipe dream. With just 30m to go, dark figures emerged from the marshland one after the other.

This was the first time Chen Mo had a chance to look at the dark figures properly. These dark figures had alluring figures of an exquisite beauty – it was just that their entire bodies were darker than black and details could not be seen clearly at all except those pairs of cold, killer red eyes. These eyes were a sign that they were not to be trifled with.

One dark figure was impossible. Faced with over 10 of them, Chen Mo had not the slightest chance in all the hells of the universe.

He could only sigh and halt his steps and obediently be killed all the way to Level 1.

Once he hit Level 1, he was finally free from the Land of Divine Punishment and resurrected in Ayer Town Square.

“Shit! She tricked me! I’d like to see what’d happen if I overpowered that Enoch and made her my servant. We’ll see what happens to the quest then!”

It didn’t matter to Chen Mo that he had fallen back to Level 1.

What he couldn’t stand was being tricked into being killed over and over!

He had fought against Enoch. He knew her attributes were not that high. If he could get his hands on good equipment, it would be

possible for him to spar with her.

Judging from the contents of the quest, it was obvious that the motive of the designer of the quest was to severely punish the players who want to take advantage of NPCs. Sigh, he must've been an innocent party caught in the crossfire.

Chen Mo was doubtful if the game designer intended at all for the quest to be possible to complete. Enoch was more powerful than Level 10 players by far and they wouldn't be a match for her.

If it was truly so, the game might get stuck in an infinite loop if he completes the quest.

Therefore, be it professional or personal, Chen Mo had every reason to complete this quest.

To accomplish this, he had to first get a set of good Level 10 equipment.

It wasn't easy to get excellent equipment right now but he'd dropped to Level 1 and failed the quest. He could not re-trigger it again. That meant that he had to commit suicide and start over.

But before he did that, he could do something first to get a hidden title and increase his attributes.

Chapter 15 – Degenerate

Chen Mo first spent about 10mins to get back to Level 3, then headed to the left-hand outskirts of Ayr Town to look for an old-man NPC named Boude to accept a quest guarding Jade Pheasants.

This quest can only be accepted by players Level 3 and above. Not many players knew of the quest. On top of that, Boude was a distance from Ayr Town and there was hardly any monsters in that area.

Chen Mo knew of this quest not from forums but from the data he had hacked.

Guarding Jade Pheasants was an easy job. The problem was that it wasted time. After accepting the quest, he would have to protect the Jade Pheasants for 10mins from Eagles in a quest map.

The Eagles' attacks were low and of no threat to players. Players have to be on the alert and block the Eagle's attack path when it begins swooping from the air.

“Hoho, brave adventurer! Complete the task I give you and I guarantee you, you'll get a nice reward!”, said Boude merrily as he waved Chen Mo into the quest map.

Though it was dark outside, the quest map was not affected by the outside environment. Chen Mo appeared in a small backyard with a large grassy field behind it. The field had only a single proud male Jade Pheasant and in the azure sky above it circled several

Eagles.

Boude had not mentioned any specific reward but Chen Mo had done his research on the forums. Boude would give players 10 bronze coins and 100EXP as a reward. It wasn't bad for a Level 3 player but for those Levels 4 or 5, the reward was puny.

Of course, Chen Mo was not here for the reward.

The quest begun and an Eagle lowered its head and started to descend, shooting down from the sky towards the Jade Pheasant.

Chen Mo should stand between the Jade Pheasant and the Eagle – but he didn't. Before the Eagle got to the Jade Pheasant, he had shot it with a crossbow bolt.

The Jade Pheasant had only a little bit of HP so it died right away.

The airborne Eagle was stunned. With its target gone, it sulkily returned to the skies.

System prompt: You have intentionally killed your protectee. Your World Prestige has decreased by 10 points!

“I knew it.” Seeing the system prompt, Chen Mo was not surprised. It was as he had found from the hacked data. Who knew how that person knew how to deduct World Prestige in this way?

Though the Jade Pheasant died, the quest was not yet a failure. This was because the quest was to prevent the Jade Pheasant from getting attacked by Eagles – if the Eagles don't manage to hurt the Jade Pheasant, the quest will not be failed.

After 10 seconds, a light flared in the yard. A Jade Pheasant had spawned.

Chen Mo did not wait for the Eagles to make a move this time. The Jade Pheasant died with one shot.

System prompt: You have intentionally killed your protectee. Your World Prestige has decreased by 10 points!

His World Prestige dropped by 10 again. Chen Mo's current World Prestige was -20.

Chen Mo did not stop. After 10 seconds had passed, one more spawned and he killed it.

The Eagles in the sky were at a loss as to what to do. Their mission was to attack the Jade Pheasant but there were none for them to even shake a talon at.

... ..

System prompt: You have intentionally killed your protectee. Your World Prestige has decreased by 10 points!

System prompt: Your World Prestige has dropped to - 100. All NPC will refuse to render you service. After death, you will resurrect in “The Land of Exiles”!

System pompt: You have gained the achievement title “Degenerate”!

Achievement Title: Degenerate

Description: A special title obtainable only when World Reputation drops to -100 and below. Attributes take effect only when equipped.

Attributes:

Strength +10

Stamina +10

Agility +10

Intelligence +10

Spirit +10

Movement Speed +2

Special effects: Can only be taken off 3 hours after equipping. When equipped, the player cannot enter human cities. Penalties upon death are increased. Additionally, the equipped title may increase Favour with certain NPC.

“The info’s good!” Chen Mo nodded in satisfaction. It was worth him spending all that time hacking into that guy’s computer after all.

The Degenerate title's attributes weren't very high – it was the same as him getting the same attributes as players 2 or 3 Levels above him. However, the consequence of getting this title was nothing to sneeze at. It won't be easy to get his World Prestige back up to zero again. On top of that, The Land of Exiles had difficult quests and those were impossible to complete for low-level players. That was why Chen Mo did not opt to receive this quest at first.

And even if Chen Mo decides to commit suicide right then and there, it was not a title to be worn carelessly.

“You bastard! What have you done?!”

When Chen Mo had killed 10 Jade Pheasants in all, Boude charged in angrily and sprinted towards him, yelling.

Next, Boude will seize Chen Mo, jail him for at least 4 hours, then expel him from Ayr Town and he'll resurrect in The Land of Exiles after death.

Chen Mo had never been to The Land of Exiles before but he knew it could not be very comfortable at all for a player below Level 10.

Therefore, there was no need to even think about it. Before Boude could lay hands on him, Chen Mo chose to commit suicide.

Back in the character creation room, Chen Mo did some minor modifications and entered that game once more.

His character appeared in the Goblin Valley again. Looks like if he doesn't delete his character, or get it over Level 10 and leave Ayr Town, he'd always appear here whenever he commits suicide.

His backpack contained just a worn crossbow, 100 crossbow bolts and a Basic Trap Technique skill book. The Ordinary Crossbow, Goblin Shoes and Wild Wolf Leg-guards he'd gotten previously were not in his backpack but in his Storage. He'd have to get back to Ayr Town to retrieve them.

However, the "Light-Speed Death" title and "Freedom Leader" title were on his attribute page. He only had to twitch his fingers to equip them.

The high-attribute "Degenerate" title was there too. Unfortunately, Chen Mo had gotten it at Level 3 so he could only equip it at Level 3 – otherwise he'd be able to kill the White Goblins in the cave easily.

With prior experience, Chen Mo did not waste much time in killing the 6 White Goblins and getting to Level 2.

When he opened the treasure chest in the cave, he only got a Quake Trap skill book this time. There was no Ordinary Crossbow.

He didn't get the Ordinary Crossbow this time but it didn't affect him much. After a mere half an hour, there was just one Black Goblin left in the valley.

Chen Mo had left this one last goblin to try make it mutate again.

He silently counted the number of times the Black Goblin recovered its HP. It had mutated after 30 times previously but this time, it mutated after 20 times.

After the Mutated Black Goblin died, Chen Mo found that the items it dropped was much less than previously.

It had dropped only 60+ bronze coins in all and one Low Level Mutated Strength Drug and one Low Level Mutated Agility Drug. There was nothing else.

Chen Mo could not help but be moved by his wisdom in deciding not to spend time making the Black Goblins mutate repeatedly for drops.

After being transported to Ayr Town, Chen Mo was in no rush to level up. It was too crowded now to worry about levelling. Now, he had a goal. He had to find some way to attain some good low-level equipment.

“Ah! A portion of players have left Ayr Town and entered the 3 main human cities. The 3 main cities only drop equipment that’s Level 11 and above?” Chen Mo read the forums. In the hour since he had committed suicide, the players who levelled the fastest had left the beginner villages and arrived at the 3 main human cities.

The 3 main cities were East Sea City near the Sea of Miracles, Storm City, which sat on the Stormy Desert and Shadow City in the Forest of Shadows.

Besides these 3 main human cities, there were several small towns which have yet to be explored by the players.

Chen Mo had originally planned to go to a main city to acquire some good equipment for his showdown with Enoch in Ayr Town but it looked like that wasn't an option anymore.

It seems only Ayr Town was selling equipment for Levels 10 and below.

However, Chen Mo was keenly aware of the poor drop rate of equipment in Ayr Town. Excellent equipment? Pfft, don't even talk about it.

If Chen Mo was a rich guy like Green Mountain he'd consider using cash to get hold of a nice set of equipment.

It was only some low level equipment. The stock in Ayr Town was limited – even if he had the cash he might not have anything to buy. The best equipment he could find on the forums was just Green equipment – which was 1 level above Blue.

Purple equipment seemed to have appeared too but rumour had it that only the Level 10 Slime King BOSS on the outskirts of Ayr Town dropped them.

Chapter 16 – The Bosses In The Beginner Villages

There were currently 2 known big BOSSES. One was the hidden BOSS, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. The other was the Level 10 Slime King.

After a few hours of commotion, practically nobody was willing to “sacrifice” himself to his curiosity over the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf anymore. Everyone knew that that hidden BOSS could not be taken down with numbers alone. If your team’s equipment and attributes was crap, you’re just asking to put your head on the chopping block.

On the other hand, the Level 10 Slime King BOSS was a normal BOSS. It could be found a 20min walk away from town in the Slime Plains.

Every beginner village had a Slime King BOSS. The Slime Kings were different from the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf – they were separate and individual entities.

The Slime King had only been discovered 3 or 4 hours ago but there was already news of it being attacked.

The attackers were not from any of the previously formed guilds but a newly-established guild called the “Richie Rich Club”.

Nobody knew if the Richie Rich Club members were really rich

folk but their approach towards the Slime King was very in keeping with the methods of the rich.

The guild had used some sort of method to gather 10+ members in the same Ayr Town, then used their money-clout to hire a few hundred players over Level 8 to engulf the Slime King in a wave of human attackers to kill it.

Players on the forum estimate the total cost of Richie Rich Club's method to kill the Slime King to be at least 500,000 Chinese yuan.

Though it was the BOSS of the beginner villages, the Slime King's drops were not spectacular. The most valuable drop was a Level 10 Purple necklace. If you really want to sell it, it'll go for 30 or 40 thousand at most. As for the rest of the equipment and items – they were of even less value.

However, nobody could say that the Richie Rich Club lost out. They had gained instant fame for killing the Slime King. An unknown little guild had its name passed into many peoples' ears in a short span of time.

Then again, besides being the first to kill the Slime King, they had also attracted attention with their name, thus enabling them to become better known.

The two words “Richie Rich” attracted the attention of many.

Chen Mo could only smile and shake his head. Guilds have it

tough too, eh? They might have many members but with the Richie Rich Club throwing money left and right like that, how could they compete? Those guilds had been struggling and fighting amidst themselves for the glory of the first kill but had the chance taken from them by money-flinging rich men just like that.

Furthermore, seeing that the Richie Rich Club had spent hundreds of thousands and only gotten a single Purple necklace, Chen Mo frowned.

To fight with Enoch, he would need a set of Purple equipment at least. The Slime King was the only source for Purple equipment.

The Slime King was located in the middle of the Slime Plains of every Ayr Town. Its spawn location was fixed so it was easy to find it.

After the Richie Rich Club killed the first Slime King, a large number of players got to Level 10. As there was penalty for death in the beginner villages, these Level 10 players were not afraid for their lives. They grouped up and swarmed towards the Slime King, testing their luck and hoping for a windfall.

But the fact was that though the Slime King was not as OP (overpowered) as the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, it was not a monster that you could just simply kill. Without an organised attack, the hundreds of players were unable to kill the Slime King even when they attacked together.

Though the players levelled up quickly, they had virtually no

equipment and they were insta-killed by a little bump from the Slime King. There was no contest.

The Richie Rich Club was able to kill the Slime King as their members all had a full set of Green equipment. They were the main damage dealers in the attack on the Slime King and the players they had hired were just there to be cannon fodder. Those poor souls were only used to attract the Slime King's aggro.

There was no loss in dying anyway so a large number of players ran happily to their deaths in the Slime Plains after getting to Level 10.

10mins was needed to run back to town. If one goes to the Slime King to get insta-killed, he'll be sent back to town in an instant and save time in getting back. Furthermore, one could also boast that he'd tried going one-on-one with a BOSS – despite getting insta-killed.

“No matter how I look at it, this fella isn't one I can take on single-handedly.”

There was quite a bit of information on the Slime King and Chen Mo read through all of them carefully. He had a headache as he pondered.

The Slime Plains was a yellow-green grassland with many Level 8 to Level 10 coloured Slimes scattered across it. As for obstacles, other than some grass piles, there was nothing else.

If there had been some obstacles, Chen Mo could still find a way to slowly kill the Slime King but on the Slime Plains, it was a contest between attributes. Even if he managed to get some Blue equipment and fight the Slime King in them, he would not be victorious.

There was no returning from the Slime Plains alive, even if you went in a large group.

”What? A Mutated Slime King?”

Chen Mo suddenly spotted a post on the forums. A player had seen a Mutated Slime King.

This player had originally gone to let himself get killed by the Slime King but for some unknown reason, the Slime King had mutated. Seeing such a rare Mutated BOSS, the player was not so anxious to die anymore. However, it was night-time and his visual scope was limited. When he saw the Mutated Slime King, it had spotted him too.

Not wanting to die, the player ran for his life.

He had killed an Elite monster before and gotten a pair of Green shoes that added 5 to his speed. It also had the special skill “Fleet of Foot”. Relying on this pair of shoes, he had run for over a minute before managing to shake the Mutated Slime King off his tail. However, when he turned back to look for the Mutated Slime King, he found that it had reverted to its original form.

“Where’s the picture? Where’s the picture?”

“I was concentrating on running away and didn’t have time to snap one.”

“No picture, no proof! You’ve gone mad with hunger for fame, haven’t you?”

Once the post went up, it attracted the attention of many players but most did not believe him because he had no evidence.

Chen Mo was on the fence. From the player’s words, he realised something that the player himself probably had not realised.

That player said he had run for over a minute before the Mutated Slime King gave up on chasing him. That wasn’t normal.

If this player had not lied, then Chen Mo had reason to believe that the Mutated Slime King’s aggro-attack range was very wide. For a normal BOSS, once a player is out of its aggro-attack range, it will immediately give up on chasing the target and go back to its nest.

With such a large aggro-attack range, Chen Mo might be able to find a suitable place to kill it. If the Mutated Slime King really did exist, he could kill it through some trickery, and not directly.

The problem now was whether the Mutated Slime King was real. If it was, how does it mutate?

Chen Mo ceased the thought. If the Mutated Slime King existed, then it would appear again. What he had to do now was to get back in the game and get to Level 10.

Chapter 17 – Chen Dong

Back in the game, Chen Mo did quests and levelled up till 5am before logging off to rest.

Though the helmets had a sleep function, it was still in the testing stage and had not been released yet. There wasn't a need to lose sleep over levelling up either. In order to prevent game addiction and reduce stress, GENESIS was only available for 12 hours a day. Players who exceed the 12-hour limit will be forcefully logged off after the time limit.

The time reset for Chen Mo at midnight every day.

“A life-like, new world!”

“A revolutionary game!”

“The holographic virtual network era is irresistible!”

While Chen Mo slept, a new day dawned and with it came a flood of headlines from the district's major media companies. Everywhere one looked was an overwhelming barrage of news about GENESIS and the virtual network.

The launch of GENESIS allowed the public to have a deeper understanding of the allure of holographic virtual networks. People who had never gotten addicted to a game before entered the game, riding on the wave of novelty and popularity and became

completely hooked.

GENESIS was another reality; a second world. Players experienced a freedom unlike the real world here. Though nobody was equal and money still affected the world here, they could experience a different life they never could in the real world.

As more and more people discovered this new world, their lives took on added direction and motivation.

However, there were also people who were unmoved.

Yu Hang City – Yu Hang University.

“Ruo Lian, here are today’s transfer applications.”

In the amphitheatre of Yu Hang University’s Computer Department, Year 3 Class 1 was doing self-study. Less than 10 people were present. The door opened and a clear and strong female voice could be heard from beyond the door.

A waterfall of long, straight ebony hair that fell to the waist followed the voice.

Almost all of the students raised their heads to look at the approaching person, many with a faint look of envy in their eyes.

They had already been in the same class as the girl for more than

2 years but every time they saw the girl they could not help but sigh. A person whom you would immediately envy on sight really did exist.

She had a head of shining black hair, skin as fair as white marble and a tall and slim build, a pair of peaks that was not terribly huge, but not that small either. Her eyes were onyx and calm and her gaze steady. She often wore a white shirt and black trousers but this neutral yet competent way of dressing did not take away from her unique aura. No matter where she stood, she would be instantly recognised. Anyone who had seen her once would not be able to forget her.

Her name was Chen Dong, the flower of the Computer Science Department in Yu Hang University. In the girl-poor Computer Science Department, she could even be said to be the greatest beauty in history.

She could have been just a beautiful girl with poise, but she was more.

Over the past 2 years, whether it was humanities, science, sports, professionalism, core modules or elective modules, she was always first. Second place could never hope to catch up!

Other than her stand-offish and cold manner, Chen Dong was the perfect human specimen in others' eyes. Every time someone saw her, he or she cannot help feeling that the Heavens were unfair.

Chen Dong walked towards a person in the amphitheatre with

everyone's eyes on her.

There, was a girl in a white dress, sitting demurely like a lady.

But the students in the class all knew that she was indeed a lady.

Hua Ruo Lian – the Hua Family's daughter. The Flowers Group is a super organisation that owns several well-known financial companies in China. The Hua Family's business covered every corner of China.

It was already incredible enough that the Computer Science Department had a beauty such as Chen Dong but this term, there was Hua Ruo Lian too. This made the Computer Science Department very popular.

She was different from Chen Dong. Ruo Lian was warm and gentle, giving people the impression of tranquillity and calm. Everyone could not figure out why she would come to the Computer Science Department – a course of study that did not match her status and future profession.

“After we're done with the transfer applications, we'll be the only ones left.” Flipping through the applications, Ruo Lian laughed ruefully.

She looked at Chen Dong. “The Computer Science Department is done for. Which course are you planning on transferring to? You have high scores in your Finance and Administration elective

modules and you're beautiful to boot. You'll be welcomed to any and every department no matter which you choose."

With the emergence of the holographic virtual network era, the Computer Science Department had no more future.

Faced with Ruo Lian's slightly teasing tone, Chen Dong did not even look up. "You say it as though you won't be welcome."

"Not as popular as you are. Especially if the people who admire you find out that you can play the piano like a pro too. Who knows? They might go crazy" Hua Ruo Lian shook her head.

Both beauties had their own unique allure. However, Hua Ruo Lian could never compare to Chen Dong in popularity. Her status as a daughter of the Hua Family had scared off countless suitors. There were many who liked her, of course, but none dared to stand before her and those who did were most likely only after her status.

So Hua Ruo Lian, too, sometimes envied Chen Dong. She knew Chen Dong better than most. In many peoples' eyes, Chen Dong had uncountable good qualities but Hua Ruo Lian knew that Chen Dong excelled in more than her admirers could fathom.

Over a year ago, Hua Ruo Lian's grandmother had an eightieth birthday celebration and Ruo Lian was determined to introduce Chen Dong to high society. She invited her to attend the event together. She was of the opinion that a person such as Chen Dong would become a member of high society sooner or later.

Chen Dong had tried to evade her at first but had given in in the end.

The Hua Family was large and complex and housed several factions. Hua Ruo Lian had many competitors in the Hua Family.

Hua Ruo Lian's decision to join the Computer Science Department had sparked criticism in the family. Chen Dong was just a normal university student and the lowest ranked at the event; her being brought to this event immediately attracted the attention of Hua Ruo Lian's cousin, Hua Ruo Yun.

Hua Ruo Yun was proud and domineering. She brought one of her friends over to Hua Ruo Lian and Chen Dong and scathingly told Hua Ruo Lian that she pitied her for stooping to making low-class friends, then told her own friend to play a famous piece on the piano, which brought thunderous applause.

Hua Ruo Yun's intention was simple. She wanted to humiliate Hua Ruo Lian and Chen Dong. This wouldn't hurt Hua Ruo Lian's standing in the family but this competitive behaviour was the norm in the Hua Family and Hua Ruo Lian was used to it.

Hua Ruo Yun's real target was Chen Dong.

Chen Dong must have a place in Hua Ruo Lian's heart to be introduced to the Hua Family. This girl may have beauty and poise but she would surely distance herself from Hua Ruo Lian after getting humiliated. One less friend for Hua Ruo Lian was a good

thing for Hua Ruo Yun.

However, when Hua Ruo Yun shot an uppity look at Chen Dong, she calmly walked to the piano and sat down, then begun to play the same piece that Hua Ruo Yun's friend had played.

The people in the banquet had a passing knowledge of music and those who truly knew music were few and far between. But when Chen Dong started playing, they could not help looking.

It was the same piece but under the slender fingers of Chen Dong, each note seemed to touch their souls.

By the time she got to the middle of the piano piece, the entire banquet hall was silent. Everyone was listening to Chen Dong play.

When the song was finished, Hua Ruo Lian sprang into action. Before the first person in the banquet hall had gathered his wits, she had quickly left with Chen Dong.

For a long time after that, Hua Ruo Yun dared not show her face in front of Hua Ruo Lian.

Hua Ruo Yan smiled whenever she thought of that event.

Even Hua Ruo Lian had not known that Chen Dong had that skill up her sleeve.

She thought she knew Chen Dong very well but that incident showed her that her knowledge of her friend was quite superficial.

She had her own plans when she'd signed up for Computer Science but she had no idea why a person like Chen Dong would sign up.

Chen Dong could choose anything. With infinite possibilities for her to pursue, she had chosen the most unlikely.

“Hmm. Young Master Zhou has good informants. You haven't been here long and here he comes sniffing around. That guy has been chasing you for half a year already; are you really not going to give him a chance? Zhou Yang isn't too bad.”

An imposing figure appeared outside the amphitheatre. Hua Ruo Lian took one look and started to tease her friend.

Zhou Yang was the third son of the Zhou Family. He was one of the likely successors of the Yuan Yang Group. He was tall and handsome and said to be very loyal. In over two years at Yu Hang University, there had been no scandals. He had been chasing after Chen Dong for half a year.

“Ignore him. Help me get these transfer applications done quickly, I want to hurry home...”

Chen Dong was still concentrating on her work and had not looked at to speak to Hua Ruo Lian but before she could finish her

sentence, Hua Ruo Lian interjected, "yes, yes I know. You need to hurry home to cook for your legendary brother, don't you?"

She'd heard this excuse a thousand times and more. Every time someone invited Chen Dong out, she would firmly say that she had to go home to cook for her brother.

She said that every single time and Hua Ruo Lian did not know if it was really so. She wanted very much to meet Chen Dong's legendary brother but Chen Dong refused her immediately every time she asked for an introduction.

Hence, Chen Dong's legendary brother, whom no one had ever seen, became public enemy number one of her countless admirers.

Chapter 18 – Caron's Trial

On the outskirts of Yu Hang City.

In a spacious, white rental room, Chen Dong opened her thickly-lashed eyes, her hair a glossy halo around her.

The room was big but it held only a table, a bed and a piano, which was placed next to the bed. She was the only occupant of the room. Her legendary brother was not there.

Computer Science classes had been scheduled for that afternoon but almost all the students had already transferred so the class was, naturally, cancelled.

Chen Dong picked up the virtual helmet next to her bed and smoothed her hair before putting the helmet on.

Seeing the burst of reports and news on GENESIS that morning, Chen Dong had a strong premonition.

She can meet her dear brother in the game!

She had not seen him in over 3 and a half years. What would it be like if she met her brother again?

Chen Dong almost squealed in excitement just thinking about it.

She buried her face in her pillow for a while before calming down.

Taking a deep breath, Chen Dong closed her eyes, switched on the helmet and entered the game.

It was very difficult to find someone specific in the game but Chen Dong knew that she had a chance, at least, in the game.

... ..

“Wow! A super beauty!”

Chen Dong appeared in the town square of Ayr Town and immediately drew the gaze of a crowd of male players.

Chen Dong had not modified her appearance; she wanted her brother to see the real her if she met him.

As for other people, she cared nothing and was not concerned for what they thought.

“Humph! She must have changed her looks. If I’d known, I would have made myself even more beautiful!”

Chen Dong had attracted the stares of virtually all the male players and the female players who had been enjoying the attention before she arrived became unhappy.

“You can change your looks but can you make yourself poise like that?”

Someone next to the female player who had spoken lightly said. She was struck dumb.

Appearances can be modified but a person’s bearing and poise cannot be made artificially. Whether it was the effect of the virtual helmet or not, Chen Dong’s bearing in the game was even more marked than in the real world. Those female players knew they could not compete with Chen Dong and so spoke in spite.

Ignoring the gazes of these people, Chen Dong headed to Ayr Town’s central square. Before entering the game, she had done some research. She found an old man NPC and received an Old Wooden Bow, a quiver of arrows and a “Basic Archery” skill book. Then, she followed the recommendation on the internet and headed to all corners of Ayr Town to receive quests from NPCs.

After half an hour, she smoothly rose to Level 3, then opened a letter in her backpack.

She had gotten the letter after completing the survey that had popped up after creating her character, but it could only be opened at Level 3. Once you open it, you will be given a random quest.

System prompt: You have accepted the quest “Caron’s Trial”.

Quest: Caron's Trial.

Quest difficulty: D and above.

Quest details: Go to the western outskirts of Ayr Town (3385, 1309) and find Archery Master Caron nearby. Finish Caron's Trial and you will earn a valuable reward.

Quest reward: Unknown.

Chen Dong had an inkling of what Caron's Trial entailed. Many archers had received this quest and if one completes the quest successfully, he will get a "Precision Shot" skill book. Archers' accuracy improved significantly after learning the skill.

Chen Dong walked to the coordinates given. According to the online recommendations, once you accept this quest, you should find any way to complete it. "Precision Shot" was not a rare skill but it helped a great deal for players who were still in the beginner villages. After learning the skill, archers will see an additional automated targeting system when fighting against monsters and this increased the shooting accuracy.

Honestly, Chen Dong did not care how her game character developed. However, she would need to at least gain some strength to be able to travel freely. If one day she finally finds out where her brother is but be unable to get to him, she would regret it very deeply.

"Very good, my humble adventurer students! If you pass my trial, you will learn a rare archery skill from me!"

Outside Ayr Town, in the middle of a sparse forest was a wooden

hut. A middle-aged NPC named Caron stood next to the hut.

When Chen Dong found Caron, there were several archer players in front of him. These players, like Chen Dong, had accepted the quest “Caron’s Trial”.

“What ‘rare’ skill? Isn’t it just a ‘Precision Shot’ skill book?” Some players could not help muttering after hearing Caron’s words.

Those who had not done their research would think that Caron really had some rare skill but in truth, it was a common “Precision Shot” skill book.

However, accuracy was very important for archer players so it could be classed as rare at their level.

Caron took no notice of the muttering players. Once he finished talking, he waved his hand and the surrounding 6 players disappeared. They appeared in a small quest map.

The 6 of them appeared in a sunny grass-field with colourful balloons floating above it.

Besides Chen Dong, the other 5 were male players. When the 5 male players looked around them and saw a great beauty, they hesitated.

“Oh no, Caron’s Trial is going to start!”

The players snapped to attention. Now wasn't the time to appreciate the beauty.

However, this trial was also a good opportunity to stand out and do well. Who knows? They might win the favour of the beauty.

Such a beautiful girl would not just make a great show-piece girlfriend – they would be envied even if they were just ordinary friends with her.

System prompt: The first trial has begun! Use the quest bow to shoot the balloons in the air. For every balloon you shoot, you get one point. Get 60 points in 3mins to complete the trial!

Caron's Trial had begun!

“The bow shakes like a leaf in the wind!” The 5 male players had drawn their bows and were trying to aim at the floating balloons.

They already knew the conditions of the trial. Each person had 3 chances at the trial and once you get 60 points in any of the 3 tries, the quest would be considered complete.

But when the trial begun, they discovered that it was more difficult than they had thought. The bows in their hands seemed uncontrollable as their arms shook terribly.

“Let’s shoot a few and see!”

There was no use trying to aim. A few of them shot first, figuring that since there were so many balloons, they could possibly hit one if they were lucky.

However, their hopes were in vain, for all 5 shots went wide.

“Damn, no wonder so many people failed the trial.” After missing several more shots in a row, they found that it wasn’t due to lack of skill that others had failed, but that the trial was too difficult.

In order to complete the trial and get the “Precision Shot” skill book, they tried their best to aim and shoot. Thoughts of impressing Chen Dong had been pushed to the back of their heads.

They couldn’t even hit one balloon; who could they impress?

Next to them, Chen Dong raised the quest bow. Her arms, like the others, trembled all over the place and made it impossible to aim.

But she did not rush to shoot like the others.

Her uncontrollable arms and hands made her uncomfortable. Being used to playing the piano and able to perform precise actions when in control of her hands, she forced herself to be calm when faced with her trembling hands.

Then, she sensed something. Her arms and hands were feeling some trace of a rhythm.

Close your eyes. Feel it.

That's it!

When she concentrated, she could feel that the vibrating bow and arrow were like dancing notes, just that these notes were rather violent.

No matter how violent the notes were, she could meet them head on and also follow them!

She opened her eyes. Her hands were still shaking but Chen Dong's fingers clutched the wooden arrow and she let it loose.

Swoosh!

Pop!

The wooden arrow pierced through the air and accurately struck a green balloon. The balloon burst into pieces with a loud pop!

Chapter 19 – Mutated Slime King

The first successful shot actually came from the beautiful flower next to them?!

“Luck! It must be luck!”

The male players were unsettled and quickly consoled themselves.

See, the second shot missed!

They looked at Chen Dong and observed her next shot. It had brushed past a balloon.

She didn't hit it but she almost did!

They were starting to see that the pretty flower was more powerful than them and this fired them up.

No way! Better get as many points as possible, just so long as I'm not last!

The male players focused hard on the balloons in the sky and tried their best to control the bows in their hands.

Unbeknownst to them, Chen Dong noticed not their existence. She paused after missing her second shot.

The shaking bow in her hands felt foreign and violent. It was not easy to control. She needed time to practice. Even though she could grasp the rhythm of the bow and arrow, she needed time to familiarize herself with the bow and the archer class.

Although Chen Dong had far more advanced control than the average player, and the bow in-game was not as difficult to control as real-life bows, she could not have 100% accuracy.

In the next 2mins, Chen Dong shot an arrow from time to time. Some hit but half missed.

However, in that time, she developed a feel for the rhythm of the bow and arrow. She just had to work on her accuracy next.

To improve her hit rate was easy – just do a minor correction of position and direction based off the last shot.

Everyone knew that but it was difficult to actually do it.

But to Chen Dong, who could play a piano piece exactly the same twice, this was not difficult. She only needed a few tweaks and practice to be more accustomed to the bow.

Time soon ran out for the first trial.

The male players blew air out of their mouths in huffs. They had

hit a few balloons after the first trial and Chen Dong had not hit too many balloons either. They breathed in relief.

The second trial started after a short break.

Pop! Pop! Pop! ...

The guys were prepared to show their mettle and complete the trial but when they got ready to aim, a barrage of pops issued from behind them!

They immediately looked over and saw the beauty, her arms seemingly paddling in the air and arrow after arrow being slung forward like rain dropping from the sky.

In this quest map, there was no limit on players' shooting speed; the players only need to be able to control the shot. You can shoot as quickly as you want!

Many archers before them had used this method, hoping to shoot as quickly as possible and somehow blindly hit some balloons but this was a waste of energy and without aiming, the chance of hitting a balloon was really small.

“Holy crap! Is this girl an Olympic athlete in real life?”

They goggled at her.

It was almost an arrow per second, with 7 out of 10 hitting the target! Even if she had not hit the target, it was close!

They knew from personal experience how difficult it was to hit the target in this map. They had difficulty hitting 10 balloons in a row in 3 minutes but this babe was doing it in 20secs!

“128 balloons!”

3mins passed in the blink of an eye. They had just witnessed Chen Dong establish such an impressive record that they forgot all about shooting balloons.

On the game forums, the players who'd managed to hit 60 balloons were lauded as highly-skilled. Now, with this mind-blowing record, how are they going to categorize this beauty?

128 balloons! This result can't be any better!

Looking at Chen Dong's upright posture, the guys gave up. She's from a different world! She was not an air-headed flower-pot but beautiful and capable – they were no match for her brilliance.

After passing the trial, players can choose to leave the quest map and receive their reward. The guys breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that they would not have to face the pressure of this beauty in the 3rd round.

But, to their despair, this devastating beauty had no intention of

leaving!

The guys had tears streaming down their faces. O Great Beauty, we beg you... Please leave the map! You already have such a scary score – what more do you want? If you don't go, we'll be too ashamed to even shoot our crooked, pathetic arrows!

Whatever they thought, the third trial was about to begin.

As soon as it begun, Chen Dong raised her arms and arrows flew like a storm from her bow!

The second trial was just her first practice session. The third trial was her going at full throttle!

“This... is so OP!”

“How the hell is she doing this?!”

The arrows flew, and pops could be heard immediately after. The guys were floored.

This time, she hit 9 out of 10 times!

3mins passed in a cacophony of pops.

How many balloons had this beauty hit?

The guys shook themselves out of a stupor and looked at her score. Their hearts dropped.

183!

183 balloons in 3 minutes!

They'd seen with their own eyes that she did not have 100% accuracy. That meant that this beauty's speed was more than an arrow per second!

System prompt: The trial has concluded. Successful players, please collect your reward from Caron.

A minute later, Chen Dong left the forest.

Chen Dong looked at the skill book in her backpack and thought it a bit strange.

She didn't think that after getting a score of 183, Caron would give her an "Olympic Archery" skill book.

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"Olympic Archery! Somebody had actually gotten Olympic

Archery so quickly!”

At that same moment, in Ash Blue Tech, someone jumped up in excitement.

“Is it some national athlete who’d gotten into the game?” a young man asked curiously.

“We have no way of checking the player’s data but from the character’s profile, it doesn’t look like any of the professional archers.”

“Wow, she’s so pretty!”

“The Chinese are indeed strong. They have so many talented players and such a capable beauty.”

“Woah, getting Olympic Archery from Caron’s trial is no easy feat. The Olympic Archery skill is also almost akin to adding one more natural skill to the archer class player’s arsenal. She’ll become powerful for sure!”

“Other classes have Olympic skills too. Unfortunately, only a very few have managed to get them so far.”

“What is this chitter-chatter? Keep your eyes on the screens! If something goes wrong I’ll kill you!”

While the young men were having their heated discussion, an icy cold female voice cut through their chatter.

The young men shut their mouths and immediately bent backs to their tasks again.

Yikes, getting on this woman's bad side is no joke.

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Chen Mo slept till 1pm.

After washing up and having a meal, Chen Mo checked the forums.

“The Mutated Slime King really exists!”

Chen Mo took one look and found the bit of news he was looking for.

One topic had been tagged ‘hot’ on the forums.

The beginner village's strongest BOSS, the Mutated Slime King!

Last night, a player had talked about the Mutated Slime King and insisted that it really existed. This time, this other player had seen it during the day and had not just pictures but a video.

This player had also cleverly posted a pay-to-view post. He charged *one yuan per view. When Chen Mo paid to enter, he found that over a million people had already viewed the post.

Not only was the Mutated Slime King famous now, the player who'd become a millionaire after posting the video had also become today's hot news.

Overnight fame is not impossible in GENESIS!

The already much-talked-about GENESIS and holographic virtual networks topic burst afresh with fervour.

In the game, ordinary slimes were about the size of footballs and basketballs. Their colour and attributes varied. The Slime King BOSS was much bigger than ordinary slimes – it was over a metre long and a glistening emerald colour.

The Mutated Slime King was twice as large as a normal Slime King, reaching 2m in diameter. It was a crystalline violet and looked like a humongous gem. It was beautiful.

*one Chinese yuan is like 10 pence, 16 US cents or 61 groszy.

Chapter 20 – Trial Of Natural Skill

Slimes are legless monsters and can only move by jumping and hopping. It was considered one of the slower monsters.

The Mutated Slime King was a BOSS and though it was slower than other BOSSes, an average player was still no match for it.

The second player who discovered the Mutated Slime King managed to record a video of it but he did not have good shoes like the first player. When he got discovered by the Mutated Slime King, he could only run a short distance before it caught up with him, launched itself into the air, and came hurtling to the ground to crush him.

The video was less than a minute long. Other than confirming the existence of the Mutated Slime King, it had no other valuable information.

The interesting thing was that when this player, like the player before him, went back to the site to look for the Mutated Slime King, it had resumed its normal Slime King BOSS appearance.

Random mutation? Or was it a condition-based temporary mutation?

There were 2 main speculations on the forum.

Chen Mo looked at the two bits of speculation and his brow

wrinkled.

If it was random, his chances of meeting one was close to zero.

However, as a hacker, Chen Mo was reasonable sure that the chances of it being random was low.

A randomly mutating BOSS does not reflect the existence of game designers. Anyone could do it. He had found hidden game settings and there was the hidden Flaming 3-Headed Wolf BOSS. It was not possible for the game designers of GENESIS to have a completely randomly mutating BOSS. The chance of it being a condition-based temporary mutation was higher.

The Mutated Slime King really did exist. Then, the conclusion he reached last night about its aggro-range being huge should be correct. If he could find the condition that sets off the mutation, he could try to find ways to kill the Mutated Slime King himself.

Besides the Mutated Slime King, the other hot topic on the forums was the “Trial of Natural Skill” that players can participate in when leaving the beginner village at Level 10.

When Level 10 players leave the beginner villages, they can choose to participate in the trial. The trial has 4 levels; Normal, Difficult, Nightmare and Hell. Those who pass the Normal level can pick which of the 3 main cities he would like to go to and learn a natural skill of his character class. If one does not participate or fails, he will be randomly transported to one of the 3 main cities. Once there, he would have to waste quite some time running to all

the Profession Unions to complete the quest for a natural skill.

The Normal level was not difficult and quite a few players on the forums had already passed it. This Trial of Natural Skill was not an individual trial either – it can be completed as a group. Even weak, novice players can pass the trial with a little luck.

The Difficult level was the same. Many people can team up too but there was less success. There was a person on the forums who posted proof of himself passing the Difficult level.

It seemed like this person, too, had been influenced by the guy who posted the video of the Mutated Slime King. He had posted a pay-per-view post and hundreds of thousands of players had paid.

These videos, if posted on the traditional networks, would be pirated within the minute. However, on the holographic virtual network, if the poster does not allow it, it is impossible to download or repost. Even text cannot be copied without permission.

These people could get rich from a single post because of this feature of the holographic virtual network.

These features had existed in the holographic virtual network since the beginning but nobody paid attention to it or understood it well until now, when people got rich from it.

When Chen Mo saw that, he felt a tinge of worry. It seems the

advancement of the holographic virtual network era cannot not be stopped.

However, it was not in his character to give up halfway. If he gave up because he thought it would fail, then he was not Chen Mo.

Failure was one thing but not attempting at all was another. Though the result of both was the same, it was completely different.

Chen Mo paid to view the post and, after viewing, found that the Difficult level and Normal level was about the same.

Both required the player to face a strong monster. The player in the video passed due to his team-mates. There were over 10 of them and all had pretty decent equipment and skills.

After passing the Difficult level, these players got a natural skill and an additional 10 silver coins. They also had the added option of choosing smaller cities near the 3 main cities that were also suitable for Level 10 players.

The 3 main cities were the most crowded and competitive so they chose the smaller cities without thinking twice. A less-populated city would mean more monsters and faster levelling.

There was yet anyone to boast about the Nightmare level, but there was some news that said that a group of people had passed it.

It had the same rewards as the Difficult level and it also seems to give a skill book as an extra reward.

There was no news at all about the Hell level.

According to them, it is an impossible trial for Level 10 players!

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Wild Wolf Valley.

Back in the game, Chen Mo decided to go to Wild Wolf Valley to try his luck.

There were just as many players in the beginner village today as yesterday and it was flooded with players except for one place – Wild Wolf Valley.

The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf kept the whole map in lockdown mode. It was devoid of humans and there were only monsters to be found.

It was impossible for Chen Mo to evade the vigilance of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf on his own. Then again, there were so many players around and a number of curious fools so people still went to the Wild Wolf Valley for a look-see.

With those kind of players around, and a little luck, he might get

into the deeper parts of the Wild Wolf Valley.

Nearing the map, Chen Mo saw a group there as expected. One of them was jumping in and out of the entrance.

In the Wild Wolf Valley, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf was lying lazily on the burning ground. It seemed to have not noticed the taunting of the players.

Seeing that the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf did not react, the players near the entrance got bolder and bolder and moved closer and closer.

“Roar!” The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf finally flew into a rage and pounced on the group of players.

Chance!

Chen Mo was waiting for this chance.

Degenerate title!

Low Level Mutated Agility Drug!

The players had scattered at the roar and charge of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. Instead of retreating, Chen Mo equipped the Degenerate title and drank an agility drug, increasing his speed dramatically!

Whoosh!

Chen Mo sped into the Wild Wolf Valley.

He threw a nervous glance over his shoulder and his heart nearly seized!

He'd been discovered! The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf has 3 pairs of eyes – how could he have hoped to fool it so easily?

Upon seeing Chen Mo, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf twitched as if it were considering giving up on chasing the other players and going after him.

However, after moving a step, it looked like it preferred to kill more players and ignored Chen Mo in the end. It turned and galloped towards the group of players.

Chen Mo breathed a sigh of relief. He'd won this gamble.

However, getting into the map was one thing. If the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf came for him afterwards, he was bound to die.

His only option was to run as far as he could and get out of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf's aggro-range.

But with the Mutated Slime King's aggro-range being so wide, the

Flaming 3-Headed Wolf's range should be even bigger.

On top of that, the Wild Wolf Valley was also the territory of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

Chen Mo's burst of speed brought him to the deepest part of the map.

After a long while in the map and killing a big bunch of monsters, Chen Mo finally relaxed when he saw no sign of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

Surrounded by monsters and with the Degenerate title boosting his stats equipped, his experience went up and up.

In this map, Chen Mo prepared to rise to Level 9 in one shot, then go to the Slime Plains and get to Level 10. The Slime King BOSS would be next.

Chapter 21 – A Dubious Harvesting Skill

Chen Mo spent 3 hours in the depths of the Wild Wolf Valley to rise to Level 8.

For every level he gained, he put 4 points in Strength and 1 in Agility. After getting to Level 8, and with the +1 Strength from his Goblin Shoes, plus 10 points from the Degenerate title, he had 63 Strength points with an attack of 66-67. He could deal almost 70 damage to Level 7 Wild Wolves with an ordinary attack from his crossbow.

In less than 20 seconds, the 800HP Wild Wolf was killed by Chen Mo.

His killing speed had increased by quite a bit. After the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf had appeared in Wild Wolf Valley, the number of monsters had decreased. There was not enough for Chen Mo to kill in the surrounding area so he slowly killed his way to a more populous area.

Half an hour later, Chen Mo halted.

There was a deep, dark cave!

He was one of the first players to come to Wild Wolf Valley to grind levels yesterday. There had not been many players in the Wild Wolf Valleys across the server and there had been more monsters than now. Nobody was able to explore deeper areas of the map before the appearance of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. There

had then been a massacre. In other words – this cave had not been discovered by anyone else yet!

What could be inside this cave?

A treasure chest?

Chen Mo, curiosity nagging him, made his way to the cave.

The monsters in the cave were still Wild Wolves but they were no longer just Level 7. There were some Level 8 Black Wild Wolves.

The cave was like a maze. Chen Mo spent an hour in it killing non-stop. He was close to getting to Level 9 but not close to finding any treasure chests.

Just when Chen Mo was about to give up and concentrate on levelling up, he suddenly saw an old man NPC appear out of the darkness ahead.

This NPC looked dangerous. He was imprisoned at the end of the cave behind steel bars. His hands were not bound but around his bare left foot was a huge chain. Even if the doors of his prison were to be opened, he would not be able to go anywhere.

The old man had been staring off into space but once he caught sight of Chen Mo, his dead eyes flashed with life.

“Degenerate! You have also become a Degenerate?” The old man shouted.

Degenerate?

Isn't that the title he had equipped right now?

Who knew this title would actually be of use! That meant... The game designers intentionally made it so that he could lose Prestige at Boude's?

“Yes, Mr Gleason. You too?” The old man NPC was named Gleason. Chen Mo was in desperate need of equipment, so he replied with words that echoed the NPC's.

“Heh! I'm not a Degenerate – I'm a Villain! A Villain spurned by everyone! In truth, I did not do anything. They accused me of being a Villain, then imprisoned me here!” Gleason roared in anger.

“So, Mr Gleason... Do you want me to get you out of here?” Chen Mo gave the bars a look.

However, Gleason shook his head and seemed to come back to himself. “It's no use – this prison is too sturdy for you to break through. However, if you have some time, I hope you can harvest some wolf meat for me. I have not had meat for so long! Those bastards who imprisoned me in here only bring me some dried food once in a while so I won't die from starvation. I've eaten those

things for tens of years. If I have any more, I'll vomit. Of course, your help will be rewarded. If you bring 10 pieces of meat to me, I will give you an animal trap.”

So saying, Gleason brought out an iron trap.

Low-Level Animal Trap:

A very sturdy iron trap. Effective on monsters Level 20 and below. When stepped upon by a small monster, the monster will not be able to move for 10 seconds. When stepped upon by a big monster, the monster will enter a state of serious injury and be unable to use its abilities to the fullest.

Retrievable item.

Each Animal Trap can be used 3 times.

Current number of remaining uses: 3/3.

Good stuff!

Chen Mo perked up at the sight of the item.

If he got the Animal Trap, he'll have one more way to deal with the Mutated Slime King!

“I’ll be glad to help you out, Mr Gleason! But how do I harvest meat for you after killing Wild Wolves?”

In order to harvest from corpses, one needed to leave the beginner village and learn the skill from the union representatives in one of the 3 main cities.

“That’s simple – I’ll teach you.” Gleason hurriedly replied.

System prompt: Gleason wishes to impart a harvesting skill to you. Do you accept?

Of course! Why not? I get to learn a harvesting skill earlier than other people!

System prompt: You have learnt “Dubious Harvesting Skill”!

Dubious Harvesting Skill: A harvesting skill with dubious origins. Under normal circumstances, this skill will not be recognised by the official Profession Unions.

Shit! What’s this? Are skills split into official skills and wild skills in this game?

Chen Mo’s mind was blown. If he had not seen it with his own eyes he would not have even thought that such a setting in the game existed.

“Mr Gleason, this harvesting skill...” Chen Mo wanted to clarify some things.

“Huh? You think the harvesting skill I taught you is lousy?” Gleason glared at Chen Mo, looking all ready to blow his top.

“No, no, you’re mistaken.” Chen Mo had to stay on Gleason’s good side if he wanted that Animal Trap.

“If you have nothing else to say then scram! Go get me that meat! Hurry, boy – I can wait no longer!” Gleason did not care about Chen Mo’s concerns.

Chen Mo, too, did not waste his breath. He turned and left.

He quickly ran into a Wild Wolf. After killing it, Chen Mo used Gleason’s Dubious Harvesting Skill.

He wasn’t sure if it was due to the skill not being an official one but he gained nothing from most of the corpses. It seemed the harvest rate was one piece of Wolf Meat for every 3 corpses.

Additionally, this skill had no levels and no Proficiency rating. It was completely different from the Basic Trap Technique and Quake Trap he had learnt.

Chen Mo quickly harvested 10 pieces of Wolf Meat. With the meat in hand, Chen Mo returned to look for Gleason.

“Hahaha! Meat! It’s meat! It’s only Wolf Meat but oh, this is the most heavenly taste!” Gleason snatched the meat from Chen Mo’s hand as he shoved the Animal Trap at him, so eager to taste the meat that he ate it raw. It had been too long since he had tasted meat.

“Mr Gleason, do you still need Wolf Meat?” With the Animal Trap in hand, Chen Mo wanted to see if he could get more.

“Of course! I still have quite a few Animal Traps. Kill more wolves for me, boy. Ah, I can’t keep eating it raw... I’ll need to start a fire...” Gleason’s mind was full of meat. After responding to Chen Mo, he ignored him.

Seeing that Gleason still had some rewards to give out, Chen Mo continued to kill Wild Wolves for meat.

After half an hour, Gleason patted his stomach, a pleased look on his face.

“All right, young man, I’ve given you all the traps I have. I’ve got nothing left to give. However, if you feel thankful at all, harvest some more meat for me. I’ll be able to stock and have some to eat next time. Otherwise I’ll never know when I’ll get to eat meat again.”

Chen Mo had gotten a total of 10 traps from Gleason.

“Sure. I’ll come back again in a bit.” Chen Mo nodded.

There were Level 8 Black Wild Wolves in the cave. He decided to get to Level 10 before leaving.

Though the experience from Level 8 Wolves was lower than from Level 10 Slimes, there was no competition for monsters here. Levelling up on wolves would take roughly the same time as on slimes.

“Good man! My eyes saw true! I’ll wait – but don’t make me wait too long!” When Gleason heard Chen Mo’s words, he nodded in approval.

An hour passed quickly and there was neither sight nor sound of Chen Mo. Gleason frowned.

Two hours passed. Chen Mo was still not back. Gleason was livid.

“Damn it, that bastard! They’re all bastards! All liars!” Gleason burst out in a roaring rage.

Yet another hour passed. Gleason’s red face returned to its normal hue. He had given up on that hunter adventurer.

Just then, Chen Mo’s figure appeared in the darkness.

“You little shit! Why did you come back? I don’t want your meat

anymore!” Gleason said frostily.

“You don’t want it?” Chen Mo was puzzled. Did this quest have a time limit?

“I brought over 300 pieces. You don’t want them?” Chen Mo frowned. If he’d known he wouldn’t have wasted his time harvesting. Gleason’s Harvesting Skill had no levels or Proficiency – all that harvesting did nothing to his harvesting level.

“Over 300 pieces?” Gleason was shocked. What? Had he wrongly accused this nice adventurer?

“Yes. Do you want it?” Chen Mo nodded confirmation.

“Yes! Of course! I want them all! Haha... Over 300 pieces! I’ll be able to eat for a long time!” Gleason bellowed with glee.

Chen Mo removed the meat from his backpack and threw them all to Gleason.

10 pieces took up one space in the backpack. The pieces of meat had filled his whole backpack. After emptying it of meat, he turned to leave.

He needed a lot of EXP to get from Level 9 to Level 10. He was just a little bit away from Level 10.

“Young man, wait. You seem a good sort. I’ll give you a piece of information for free! This titbit has to do with the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf outside!” Chen Mo was halted in his tracks by Gleason’s words.

Chapter 22 – Other Plans

The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf?

Chen Mo stopped in his tracks.

“What information?”

Though his aim was not to play the game but find hidden weak spots, he was still interested. Especially if it concerned the Hidden BOSS.

“Heh heh! Don’t be too shocked when you hear it! That Flaming 3-Headed Wolf appeared in this valley partially because of me. I know a great weakness of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf!” Gleason smiled smugly.

WTF!

And he claimed to be innocent? If he can make such an OP monster like the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf appear, a hundred years of imprisonment is not enough!

Chen Mo was curious about Gleason’s imprisonment but that statement made it all clear.

“What weakness?”

“The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf is afraid of water!”

Hearing his reply, Chen Mo felt an urge to punch the guy in the face. Speak more clearly, dammit!

“Afraid of what water?” Chen Mo persisted.

“Ordinary water wouldn’t work, of course. The Flaming 3-Headed wolf is afraid of a type of “Stone Cold Water”. If the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf gets some of this water on it, its power will be decreased by at least 70%! You, weak adventurer, should give up on getting your hands on such a rare material. However... Many years ago, I had some. Now... it’s in the hands of Soro, the mayor of Ayr Town.”

Soro, the mayor?

Does this mean he had to steal from the mayor?

This was no joke. He definitely was no weakling since he’s the town mayor. If he got caught, the punishment would be greater than just being thrown in jail for a few hours.

“Don’t worry, I’m not going to let you just go like this to steal something from Soro. Didn’t you learn my harvesting skill? Go look for Soro and show him the skill, then tell him I’m dying and would like to see him one last time. Soro will leave his dwellings and you can find a way to steal the Stone Cold Water when he’s gone. Bring the Stone Cold Water to me and I will teach you a

hunter skill that will let you catch monsters. You know what? I used to be a hunter too. Though 10 years have passed since and I've forgotten almost all my hunter skills, I still remember a bit of how to catch wild monsters.”

It was as if Gleason knew what Chen Mo was thinking and dispelled his misgivings with his words.

“But even if the mayor leaves, I can't enter the mayor's house. He's got guards at the entrance”, Chen Mo said.

“Guards? I don't remember him having any guards outside his home. He's just a town mayor – what does he need guards for?” Gleason frowned.

“You've been imprisoned here for too long. He does have guards.”

Did the mayor have guards outside his door?

Nope!

Chen Mo had just seen an opportunity to test Gleason.

“Hmm... Guards... This is a problem. All right, I'll teach you a hunter's camouflage skill.” Gleason thought for a bit and made a decision.

System prompt: Gleason wants to teach you Camouflage Skill. Do you accept?

Accept!

System prompt: You have gained the “Dubious Camouflage” skill!

Hahaha! NPCs can be fooled!

Chen Mo’s eyes lit up. He’d gotten a hunter skill just like that!

Although it was a fake skill that couldn’t be levelled up, this was still the beginner village. Other than him, nobody else in the beginner village had camouflage abilities!

If he did as Gleason asked and got him the Stone Cold Water he would learn another skill too!

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“Gleason is dying and wishes to see me?”

After getting to Level 10 in the Wild Wolf Valley cave, Chen Mo immediately returned to Ayr town and headed to the northern part of town to look for Soro.

Soro was an old man roughly the same age as Gleason. When he heard Chen Mo's words, his brow wrinkled in thought.

“All right. Thank you for passing the message on, adventurer. I'll go pay Gleason a visit.” After looking at the harvesting skill Chen Mo showed him, Soro still had some doubts but he wanted to know what Gleason was up to.

“Come, little guy. Watch the door for me.”

As he stepped out of the doorway, a huge old white hunting dog ran over. Soro gave a wave and it swiftly ran to his side and obediently sat in the doorway.

Shit!

Not so simple after all. There's a guard!

Good thing he was smart and made Gleason teach him the camouflage skill or else he'd have to find some other way to lure this hunting dog away.

He waited a bit after Soro had left and used the camouflage skill to creep closer to the mayor's home.

Gleason's camouflage skill didn't look too dependable but Chen Mo was able to get close to the door and open it a crack. He slipped in without the dog noticing him. This camouflage skill was not so bad. A bad thing about it was that his movement speed was too

slow.

The most difficult part about this quest was to get into the mayor's house. He found the Stone Cold Water after a brief search. He looked about for other good items but found nothing.

After waiting for the skill cooldown to be over, Chen Mo used it again and left the mayor's house.

However, Chen Mo did not bring the Stone Cold Water to Gleason. He went to the Warehouse and put it in.

According to the quest sequence, a player would get the Stone Cold Water, hand it to Gleason and get a reward.

Of course, this quest involved the Hidden BOSS. Chen Mo knew it would not just end like that. Gleason probably wanted the Stone Cold Water to threaten Soro with so he could get out. And then, having been imprisoned for so long, he would want revenge on Soro after being released.

Since Gleason was related in some way to the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, his revenge would surely involve it – and it would play a big role, too. When that time came, the beginner village would have a huge, region-wide quest event.

So the Stone Cold Water was the trigger to a whole chain of quest events.

Chen Mo knew that he had not guessed entirely right but it should be more or less right. He had first-hand information and who knows? He might get a whole lot of benefits from these quests.

Chen Mo had taken a look at the Stone Cold Water attributes. The item had the ability to weaken the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf but it was a quest item. Players cannot use it directly. It seemed that players can only hand it to Gleason after getting it.

However, Chen Mo had no intention of doing so.

He was not going to embark upon the nicely constructed route by the game designers. He had other plans for the Stone Cold Water!

He wanted to see what would happen in the game if he used the Stone Cold Water his way. He could maybe even create a bug in the game!

But now was not the time to use the Stone Cold Water.

After storing the Stone Cold Water, Chen Mo headed to the Slime Plains.

He had reached Level 10. It was time to meet the illustrious beginner village BOSS.

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“What the heck is this guy thinking? He can just go get the reward and trigger the region-wide quest. Every beginner player will benefit. Why isn’t he continuing?”

In Ash Blue Tech, a group of young men waited in excitement for the next development in the game. Someone had started the chain of events related to the Hidden BOSS and the region-wide quest!

This hunter player was, without a doubt, very clever. The most difficult barrier had been easily crossed by him!

If the region-wide quest were to be activated, all beginner players on the Chinese servers would benefit. The Chinese region players would immediately get ahead of all the other regions and quite possibly have an advantage over the others too in future inter-region events.

But this hunter player just threw the very important and very significant quest item into the Warehouse! The young men almost went mad with frustration.

“This guy’s Level 10 already but he’s still going to the Slime Plains. Is he going to visit the BOSS?”

Seeing Chen Mo appear in the Slime Plains, the inquisitive group continued to watch this guy-who-does-not-hand-in-quest-items to see what he was up to.

They, after all, only had permission to monitor those in the beginner villages. Once a player leaves the beginner villages, they would not be able to watch him as closely as right now.

According to the higher-ups, as long as nothing went wrong in the beginner villages, the rest of the game would go well and there would be no further problems.

As to why it was so – they had no idea. They could only attribute it to the greatness of the holographic virtual network.

So while they still had permission to do so, they satisfied their curiosity.

Chapter 23 – Mutation Conditions

Slime Plains.

On the seemingly never-ending Slime Plains were Slimes of various colours from Levels 8 to 10, each colour with their own special characteristics.

When a Green Slime is attacked, it will produce Green Poison Slime. Close-range attackers stay away from it since fighting it resulted in both parties getting injured.

White Slimes have long HP bars. Black Slimes have very little, but their defence is extremely high – Level 10 players only deal 3 DMG to it no matter how hard they hit it. Red Slimes self-destruct when they are about to die and Lime Slimes will emit a strange sound-wave attack which traps the target in a short period of chaos.

In comparison to the other monsters around the beginner village, the shiny, adorable Slimes were more difficult to deal with. If the beginner village hunting grounds were not so crowded, nobody would have been willing to mess with them.

Chen Mo arrived at the Slime Plains but did not go towards the Slime King right away. Its location was no secret so he did not have to look for it.

Before going to the Slime King, Chen Mo was going to kill 50 Green Slimes first.

At Level 8, hunter players receive a quest in Ayr Town to kill 50 Green Slimes on the Slime Plains. After completing the quest, players will get a “Lesser Poison Crossbow” skill book.

After activating the skill, players will have additional poison damage. The low-level skill deals 3 additional poison damage and the effect stacks 5 times at maximum. If one can keep it stacked constantly, every attack would deal an additional 15 DMG, which is quite good.

“Chopper Group! We have a priest! Looking for long-range players or seasoned close-range players!”

“3 skilled priests! Looking for heavy-hitters with at least 3 pieces of equipment!”

Players basically form parties on the Slime Plains and have no equipment. It was too difficult to kill Slimes one-on-one. It took too much time to kill a Slime and if you sit down to rest and recover HP, you could get killed by a monster if you're unlucky.

Priests with healing or effect-cancelling skills were most welcome on the Slime Plains. Long-range players were also welcome but close-range players, because of Green and Red Slimes, have difficulty finding a party. Most close-range players join the all close-range Chopper Group. They were slower but it was not dangerous.

“Hey there, hunter buddy! Want to join our party? We have 5 out

of 6 slots filled and a priest!” Seeing Chen Mo approach, a fighter went up to ask.

Monster killing quests for hunter players were quite tough in the beginning stages so a lot of people did not choose to be hunters in order to level up faster. Hence, there were not many hunter players.

However, on the Slime Plains, the hunter class was very welcome.

At close-range, the hunter can set traps to slow down the monsters. Crossbows were not terribly long-ranged but with the poison effect mid-range crossbow attacks were quite effective, especially against the high-defence Black Slime. The only thing that could deal more than 3 DMG to it was the Lesser Poison Crossbow skill. A hunter’s normal attack, plus poison damage after stacking 5 times can deal at least 7 DMG to the Black Slime. One hunter, therefore, can deal the damage of 2 to 3 people.

The Black Slime is quite commonly encountered on the Slime Plains so the hunter players, naturally, are hot favourites on the Slime Plains.

“No thanks, I’m already Level 10. I’m just here to take a look around.” Chen Mo shook his head.

“I see.” The fighter turned away, disappointed.

There were too many players on the outskirts. Chen Mo decided to walk somewhere further in.

50 Green Slimes were not a lot but waiting for them to respawn would take some time, especially when there were so many people about.

Chen Mo decided to kill as he went. He estimated that he would kill roughly 50 by the time he found the Slime King.

Ten minutes later, Chen Mo found the huge jade-coloured Slime King.

Though many players had been curious about the Slime King, the novelty soon wore off and few came to throw themselves at it now. Rather than spending 10 minutes searching for the Slime King to off themselves, they let the regular Slimes kill them to get back to town.

The Slime King was on some soft grass, hopping occasionally and checking its surroundings lazily.

Chen Mo had some luck on his way over and already killed 50 Green Slimes. He could afford to experiment a little without worrying about dying.

It was not like he knew nothing about the Slime King. People have killed it before and the forums had a fair bit of information about it.

In general, the Slime King had high defence and strong attack. The current players can only deal a little damage to it and because they don't have any defensive equipment, they get insta-killed when attacked by the Slime King. Not many came to make an attempt on its life due to this.

It wasn't actually difficult to kill the Slime King. Simply use a human wave of hundreds or thousands to hit it willy-nilly and kill it.

However, there were too many beginner villages and the guilds have not enough clout to gather hundreds or thousands of players. The only way was to borrow the Richie-Rich Club's tactics and use money to clobber the BOSS to death.

Unfortunately since the Richie-Rich Club already did it the resulting impact would be much lower and the benefit from doing so was outweighed by the cost.

Chen Mo observed the Slime King's movements from afar. He was in no hurry. The Slime King's speed was not very high but without his Degenerate title equipped he would not be able to escape if it chased him.

He spent half an hour hiding and observing. Some players came and sacrificed themselves to the Slime King. For every player that approached, Slime King roared and promptly jumped, flattening the offending one.

“Leap attack, quake attack. Hmm, simple attacks like the forums said.” Chen Mo had observed enough.

There were no other players around. Chen Mo leapt towards the Slime King in a whoosh.

“Roar!”

Seeing yet another challenger, the Slime King immediately hopped towards Chen Mo.

Chen Mo took out a stone and drew a trap as he moved.

It drew close in a bound. In a few more hops it would catch up and make mincemeat out of Chen Mo.

The Slime King was getting nearer. Chen Mo was not flustered at all. He flung the trap at the Slime King.

BOOM!

The Slime King was pushed back over 1m!

“Good! It jumps just over a metre high. The Quake Trap effect was weakened but it can still be pushed back!”

“The problem is its speed. Even with Goblin Shoes and the

Degenerate title I am slower than it. When I get back I'll need to find a way to buy some shoes that add 2 points to speed.”

He had already unequipped the Degenerate title before going back to Ayr Town, otherwise he wouldn't be able to enter town.

His first-hand experience was telling him that even with the Degenerate title he was still slower than the Slime King.

The Slime King soon caught up with Chen Mo and viciously smashed him to the ground.

A huge damage number flashed and Chen Mo died.

“The speed shoes can wait. The most important thing now is to find out how the Slime King mutates.”

After reviving in Ayr town, Chen Mo pondered.

What were the conditions that triggered the mutation?

Killing a certain number of players?

Nope. If that was it then every beginner village's Slime King would have about the same number of player kills. According to that statistic, it was impossible for just two Slime Kings to mutate.

So the Slime King mutation must be triggered by an item that's either used on the player or on the Slime King itself!

Chapter 24 – Eliminate And Verify

It could only be one of 2 possibilities to make the Slime King mutate – either the player uses an item on himself or on the Slime King.

Chen Mo was in favour of the first possibility.

In the two posts about the Mutated Slime King, the players did not mention any others around them so it was possible that other players further away used some item and orchestrated the Slime King's mutation.

However, he could not dismiss the possibility that the two who posted the information could have deliberately concealed the trigger for the Slime King's mutation.

No matter which, the item that triggered the mutation must have come from the beginner village or its surrounding area.

This item won't be common, should be difficult to obtain and is usable by players. The item description should not be related to the Slime King since it's a hidden attribute of the item.

There were not many items in the beginner village. With this conditions, he can eliminate several if not most from the list of possibilities right away.

There are 3 ways to get items in the beginner village – kill

monsters, buy from shops and rewards from quests.

Chen Mo went round the shops in Ayr Town to look at items and eliminated them as possibilities immediately.

The items on sale in Ayr Town were pathetic. There were only beginner items gifted by the system, newbie HP and MP drugs and some random, jumbled mess of quest items like fishing poles, iron shovels, hoes and etc.

That leaves items dropped by monsters and quest rewards items.

Monsters drop many items so Chen Mo knew it would not be easy to whittle the list down in a hurry. Quest reward item information, on the other hand, can be easily gathered from the forums.

The game had been online for over a day so there were already many beginner village quests posted on forums with detailed information on quest flow and rewards.

After logging in, Chen Mo went through the posts one by one.

He himself had only done the first few. Other than that, the only later-stage quest he had done was the one that gave him the Lesser Poison Crossbow skill.

“It seems overall that the most likely items are ‘Braised Dolphin Fish’, ‘Expired Spirit’, ‘Corrosive Apple’, ‘Enticing **’ and ‘Abandoned Dogfood’.”

Chen Mo made his final 5 choices from the list of items that can be gained from quests.

For the Braised Dolphin Fish, a cook in Ayr Town will request players to get a Dolphin Fish. To get it, players needed to buy a fishing pole from the General Items shop and go to a river outside the village to fish for the Dolphin Fish.

The success rate of fishing was not very high so a lot of time was needed to finish this quest. After completing this quest, players can get 10 pieces of “Braised Dolphin Fish” from the cook.

After eating the Braised Dolphin Fish, players get all their attributes boosted for 10 minutes. However, the Dolphin Fish was poisonous so in those 10 minutes, the player will have -5HP per second.

It was not easy to complete this quest. You'd need at least half an hour to get the Dolphin Fish. Half an hour in exchange for a 10 point boost on all attributes for 10 minutes and poison effect was not worth it so players who knew about the reward were not interested in the quest. There was not a lot of Braised Dolphin Fish in the game and it had a poison effect; it seemed the most likely trigger for the Slime King's Mutation.

Expired Spirit can be gotten from a drunk in Ayr Town after completing his request. It recovers a player's MP by 300 instantly but for the next 10 minutes, the player will not be able to use MP recovery drugs.

The master of the orchards outside Ayr Town gave a quest where players weed the orchard. The Corrosive Apple was not the final reward but an item you have a chance of picking up while weeding. It cannot be found in other places. This Corrosive Apple recovers both HP and MP but decreases Strength and Intelligence by 10 points after consumption. Like the Braised Dolphin Fish, it was an item with negative effects.

The Corrosive Apple was uncommon and not all who go weeding can pick it up. The item, therefore, went on Chen Mo's list.

Then there was 'Enticing **' and 'Abandoned Dogfood'.

Enticing ** is actually a quest item. A resident in Ayr Town has a rat infestation in his basement. After the player accepts the quest, he will get Enticing ** and use it in the basement to kill the rats to complete the quest.

However, there was no location limit for Enticing **. Some player had tried to use it in another location and found that it could be used but was ineffective against other monsters.

Will it work on the Slime King? That player had not tried it. Chen Mo put it on his list.

Now, Abandoned Dogfood.

This item has strange origins.

A resident in Ayr Town wants to dig a well. The player, after accepting the quest, will have to buy an Iron Shovel from the General Item shop and, in the process of digging, have a small chance of obtaining Abandoned Dogfood.

Nobody knows what it's good for yet.

However, when Chen Mo saw the Abandoned Dogfood, he knew it had something to do with luring the mayor's hunting dog away from the door.

It was difficult to get it though. Chances were less than 1%.

Chen Mo took time again to look through the items the beginner village monsters dropped.

He'd thought it would be complicated but after a short search, Chen Mo had eliminated most of the options.

The reason was simple – items that can be used by players comprised mostly of drugs, followed by equipment and materials which players cannot use directly.

Of course, many monster materials can be exchanged through quests for useable items but these have already been eliminated by Chen Mo.

In other words, he could start on verifying his chosen items next.

However, these items were difficult to get hold of. If he were to do it alone, he'd not finish in a day and waste a lot of time.

Furthermore, after confirming the Slime King's mutation, he had to buy a pair of good shoes that would increase his speed.

All these needed money. Chen Mo had reached Level 10 and saved 5 silver coins. It was impossible for him to buy all of the items.

After some thought, Chen Mo decided to make a quick buck by making a pay-to-view post!

“Become more powerful! – Free Skill System Revealed!”

In a few minutes, a pay-to-view post appeared on the forums.

The Free Skill System would not be secret anymore sooner or later. He was surely not the only one who knew of it now but the other players, for reasons of their own, had not revealed it either.

Chen Mo was actually not too willing to make this system public too soon because the Free Skill System was like a key. Once the players know about it, somebody was bound to realise that the holographic virtual network is much bigger and greater than he had thought.

But in order to amass funds, Chen Mo decided to make it public.

At least he'd have made some money if he does not complete this commission successfully.

After posting, Chen Mo went offline to get something to eat and drink after his long hours online.

When he'd had his fill, he logged in again to see what profits his post had brought him.

“What the...? Only over a thousand people paid to view?”

Chen Mo had been away for half an hour. He thought that he should get at least 20,000 paying people in this time but it had only garnered a pathetic 1000+ views.

Chen Mo quickly found the cause.

“The Richie Rich Club will tell you about the Free Skill System for FREE!”

A few minutes after he made the post, a guy called “Jiu Ge” made a post.

“Shit! Fuck you, Richie Rich Club!”

Chen Mo scanned through the contents of the post and burst out in curses.

The Riche Rich Club had made use of him!

Chapter 25 – Slime Poison

On the official forums, Chen Mo's pay-to-view post has copyright protection. If other players pay, then copy it and re-distribute it for free afterwards, they will be subjected to punishment.

However, in the case of Jiu Ge, he had already unlocked the Free-skill system before Chen Mo posted the video so he had the right to post a video of his own.

“I, as a member of the Richie Rich Club, find it imperative to stand in opposition to unscrupulous actions such as profiting from the reveal of the Free-skill system. I stand in opposition – otherwise the forum will become a place that demands money for every such post in the future. This information is crucial to the growth of the Chinese region players and withholding it will have disastrous consequences for our might! I, Jiu Ge, spent over a day researching the Free-skill system. My ranking has lagged as a result but it was worth it. Now, I will tell you all that I know...”

“Well said! The Richie Rich Club is right! We have to stop these money-making actions!”

“Agree! Upvote Jiu Ge!”

“Jiu Ge! I want to join the Richie Rich Club!”

“Jiu Ge! Be my boyfriend!”

... ..

As Chen Mo read Jiu Ge's post, thunderous clouds roiled about him.

Son of a bitch! This Richie Rich Club asshole is gaining a following by stepping on him!

Jiu Ge revealed the Free-skill system only a little bit later than he did. If he did want to reveal it for everyone's sake, then he should have revealed it sooner.

However, the Richie Rich Club had held the information back too. Though they could gain a bit of recognition and admiration by revealing it right away, they knew that freely given information would not be long-remembered by the forgetful masses.

Now, with someone posting a pay-to-view and them countering with a free post, coupled with niceties about the growth of all players on the Chinese servers, the situation has become very much different.

Chen Mo, the person who posted and asked for a fee has become the scrooge and the Richie Rich Club the benefactor of all!

The Richie Rich Club, huh?

Just you wait – once I get my hands on you, you'll know why flowers are so red!

Chen Mo's gaze grew icy cold. The Richie Rich Club shall be his first enemy in GENESIS.

He had not expected a windfall from his post but he still needed capital for his plans.

If the Richie Rich Club had truly posted it freely for the betterment of all Chinese players, then he, Chen Mo, would applaud.

But this Richie Rich Club was obviously using his as a ladder to climb towards fame. How else could that Jiu Ge have an essay of thousands of words in his post explaining the process and an accompanying video in the short span of a few minutes?

Chen Mo added the Richie Rich Club to his little black book and returned to the game to acquire the items.

“Hey buddy, will you sell me a piece of Braised Dolphin Fish for 1 silver?”

“Hi there, pretty miss! I'll buy Corrosive Apple for 1 silver!”

“Yo! Bro...”

... ..

The beginner village had no official market and the entrance was where most players traded but Chen Mo did not go there.

The items he wanted were uncommon. There might be a large group of players at the village entrance but it would still not be easy to buy them.

That was why Chen Mo went to the quest NPCs – all the players who went there were on their quests.

A silver per item was definitely not a bad price. Many players only manage to get just over two silvers at Level 10. Players traded without hesitation after seeing his offer and equipment.

In under half an hour, Chen Mo acquired all five items.

There was still the issue of the shoes but it was not easy. Chen Mo took a look around the village entrance before heading off to the Slime Plains without finding anything.

He needed to determine the mutation condition first or buying the shoes would be for naught.

Ten minutes later, Chen Mo arrived at the Slime King's territory.

Chen Mo did not aggro it and used his camouflage skill right away. He crept closer to the Slime King.

“Braised Dolphin Fish!”

System prompt: You have used item “Braised Dolphin Fish”. Strength, Stamina, Agility, Intelligence, Spirit increased by 10 points for 10 minutes. -5HP per second for 10 minutes!

Chen Mo used the Braised Dolphin Fish but the Slime King did not budge. There was no reaction at all. It stayed still, looking dumbly at its surroundings.

“Corrosive Apple...”

System prompt: You have used item “Corrosive Apple”. HP, MP recovered by 200. Strength, Intelligence decreased by 10 points. HP and MP recovery of 20 points per second. Effects last for 20 seconds.

Next was Corrosive Apple but the Slime King did not react either.

“Expired Spirit... Enticing** ... Abandoned Dogfood...”

Chen Mo used the five items one by one.

“Not so simple after all.”

Chen Mo looked at the un-mutated Slime King and sighed. He wasn't surprised.

His reasoning and methods were not wrong. The problem was that the searchable items on the forums were not all there was. There were still undiscovered and uncompleted quests.

Chen Mo did not give up. He went back to the game forums and started to look through quests that people have posted about but not completed, and quests where people did not reveal the rewards for completion.

Half an hour later, Chen Mo decided on two quests.

The first quest was from a beggar in Ayer Town. Players have to collect 10 Wolf Meat, which was only obtainable from Wild Wolf Valley. However, it was currently occupied by the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. Furthermore, a player would need the harvesting skill to obtain Wolf Meat so nobody on the forums had completed it. There was no information on what the reward item was either but gathering-type quests normally don't give good items so many people were, naturally, not that bothered about the quest.

The second quest was from an old man in the northern area of the Slime Plains. The quest was to collect 20 Green Poison Slime and a Shabby Green Slime Poison Bottle.

There is a chance of Green Poison Slime dropping when a Green Slime dies. Chen Mo had killed dozens of Green Slimes and he currently had 7 of these.

The drop rate wasn't high but it wasn't as bad as some other items. He could easily get 50 if he spent some cash and bought it

from other players.

The problem was the Shabby Green Slime Poison Bottle. Nobody on the forums knew where to get it. It was not available in the General Shop either.

That was why there was yet anyone to complete the quest though so many had taken it up. The reward was a complete mystery.

Chen Mo looked at the two quests. There was something strange about them...

These two quests were mixed in with a whole host of other quests so it was not obvious at first, but when Chen Mo put them together, he found a vague link between the two!

Now, to put it to the test!

Chen Mo accepted the quest from the beggar and went back to Wild Wolf Valley. This time, he made it easily to the deeper part of the map thanks to his Camouflage Skill and the foolhardy charge of players sacrificing themselves to the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

Chen Mo returned to Ayr Town immediately after harvesting 10 pieces of Wolf Meat.

“I am thankful, kind adventurer. I am just a beggar and I do not have anything of value to give. Perhaps this glass bottle will be of use to you.”

Chen Mo handed the quest in to the beggar, who gratefully bestowed him a glass bottle.

System prompt: You have received the item “Shabby Green Slime Poison Bottle”!

“I knew it!”

Chen Mo felt a little excited. He might just be on the right track!

Next, get 50 Green Poison Slime and he’ll know what that other quest gives!

Chen Mo was penniless now so he had to do the dirty work himself.

“Heh heh! I can harvest it!”

Back on the Slime Plains, Chen Mo killed a Green Slime. It did not drop any Green Poison Slime but when he used the Dubious Harvesting Skill on its corpse, his hand reached in and emerged from the corpse with a Green Poison Slime!

Once he knew that it could be harvested, Chen Mo simply stopped killing. He made his way towards the NPC, harvesting from Green Slime corpses as he went.

And just like that, he got 50 Green Poison Slime halfway through his walk to the NPC!

“Not bad. This drug is your reward. Use it wisely – you’ll find that these Slimes aren’t as they seem!”

Several minutes later, Chen Mo found the quest NPC and handed the quest in. The old man nodded in approval and handed a bottle to Chen Mo.

System prompt: You have gained the drug “Slime Poison”!

Chapter 26 – First Contact

Slime Poison: A special drug made from the bodily fluids of a Slime. Effective against all Slimes and counters all Slime effects on a player. Each attack deals a powerful poison damage. Drug effects last for 30 mins.

This is it!

After reading the item attributes, Chen Mo knew right away that the Slime Poison was what made the Slime King mutate!

He had over-thought it. The Slime King did not mutate because of some hidden condition – it was this drug! It's effective on all Slimes so that included the Slime King too. If one tries to go up against the Slime King after drinking it, the Slime King will mutate and become stronger!

If the Wild Wolf Valley hadn't been taken over by the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, resulting in players being unable to complete the beggar's quest, the Slime Poison would be an easy item to obtain. Just spend a little more money to get a bottle and killing the Slime King would be no problem.

So his initial assumption was totally wrong and it wasn't so complicated after all. The system just wanted to make it tougher to kill the Slime King.

But Chen Mo knew that his methods and reasoning were not wrong. He would not have arrived at his discovery if he hasn't

gone through his process.

Now, how did those two people make the Slime King Mutate?

Use it within its aggro range?

No, those two were trying to kill themselves when they went looking for the Slime King. They must have used the Slime Poison to kill the smaller Slimes, then gone to the Slime King while the drug was still in effect, resulting in the Slime King's Mutation!

After analysing this, Chen Mo downed the drug without hesitation.

A faint green-black light flashed from his body. The colour of his equipment and crossbow changed too.

Chen Mo found some nearby Slimes. Time to test the effects of the drug.

The first to get attacked was the defence-heavy Black Slime.

“Woah!”

A crossbow bolt hit the Black Slime in the head and Chen Mo exclaimed in surprise.

-2! -10!

His attack did only 2 DMG, but after the red -2 was a higher, green -10 poison DMG!

The Black Slime had only 60HP. Chen Mo hit it a few more times and killed it!

“Let’s try something else!”

The Slime Poison effect was great! If it had the same effectiveness on the other Slimes, they would be no problem to deal with and no stronger than the other monsters in other maps!

“It works on all the Slimes! Every one of them received additional damage!”

Chen Mo tested the power of the drug and found that all ordinary attacks he did on a Slime could generate an additional 40 to 60 poison DMG. This increased his damage output by quite a margin.

Chen Mo’s eyes twinkled in merriment. If the Slime King really did mutate because of the Slime Poison, then it must also have quite an effect on it, otherwise it wouldn’t need to mutate to counter it!

He stopped attacking and made his move. He was going to the Slime King.

Slime King spawn grounds.

“Hahaha! I’m coming, Slime King!”

“Die and drop loot for us!”

A group of Level 10 players had come to offer their lives to the Slime King. They knew they were going to die but were fearless; they laughed in the face of danger.

The Slime King was about to lunge at this group of intruders when it felt a prickle in its Slime-senses.

Anger flashed in its round, black eyes. Someone had killed its people and defiled the flesh of its children by refining the flesh into a devious concoction to use against it!

“Roar!”

With a great roar, the Slime King’s body expanded and its colour changed rapidly!

“Mutated Slime King! Shit! The Slime King mutated!”

“Quick! Record a video! I remember this guy got rich on the forums by posting a video of the Mutated Slime King. He got over a million yuan!”

The group was frozen in shock. One of them came to his senses and yelled.

However, they were just too close. The Slime King gave them no chance to record a video once it mutated!

Hu!

The Mutated Slime King's body shook and fist-sized marble-like crystal balls emerged from its body. The crystal balls ricocheted towards the group of players.

-800!

-800!

-800!

... ..

Frightening damage numbers floated one after the other above the heads of the players. They were all insta-killed in the blink of an eye!

After the group died, the Mutated Slime King's eyes narrowed at a person in the distance!

That adventurer was the cause of its ire!

“This bastard did have more skills!”

Chen Mo was surprised at the Mutated Slime King’s move.

There was not much data on the Mutated Slime King. Chen Mo had come close earlier but deliberately waited for a group of players to get closer to the Slime King before getting into its range and triggering its mutation.

He did not expect that this little experiment would reveal this ranged skill which was high damage and dealt group damage too!

Chen Mo hurriedly set a Basic Trap on the ground and turned to flee.

“This fat bastard! It doesn’t have legs but it’s still a BOSS. It’s hopping so quickly! My maximum speed now is 11points – 13 with the Degenerate title. This bastard’s speed is at least 17 points, maybe 18. If I don’t buy a good pair of shoes, I’ll never be able to outrun it even with a Speed Drug!”

Chen Mo took note of the Mutated Slime King’s speed as he ran. He discovered that the Mutated Slime King was impossible to outrun at his current speed!

Boom!

The Mutated Slime King set off Chen Mo's trap and it exploded!

-48! -50!

Two damage numbers floated above the Mutated Slime King's head. One was from the trap and the other was from the Slime Poison effect.

The Slime Poison's effects were powerful indeed!

The Mutated Slime King was fast. Chen Mo kept running. He equipped the Degenerate title. He drank one of his two remaining Low-Level Speed Drugs.

The drug increased his speed by 3 points. Chen Mo's Speed was at 16 points. He was still a little slower than the Mutated Slime King though and it was only a matter of time before it caught up with him.

However, Chen Mo could set traps as he ran. After calculating the Mutated Slime King's speed, he knew that it would not be so easy for it to catch him. If he was lucky, escaping from the Mutated Slime King's range of attack was not impossible.

He quickly threw a Quake Trap and it landed behind him.

Boom!

The Mutated Slime King landed on the Quake Trap and its huge body stopped moving!

Not only that – it was also thrown 1m backwards!

“Good!”

Chen Mo was cheered by the sight. The Quake Trap worked on the Mutated Slime King!

The Mutated Slime King chased and Chen Mo ran. This went on for several minutes more.

The Mutated Slime King did not manage to catch up to Chen Mo in the end. It glared at him as it gave up its murderous chase.

“This distance... Should be enough...”

Chen Mo stopped running. He did not look back at the Mutated Slime King but lowered his head to think and calculate the distance he had just run from the Mutated Slime King.

“Now I just need to buy a pair of excellent shoes, then try that method again. It’s not impossible to kill the Mutated Slime King one-on-one!”

Chen Mo used the data he had collected and came up with a plan

after thinking for a while. His eyes were alight with excitement.

Chapter 27 – Shoes Of The Storm

Chen Mo had already come up with some ideas on how to kill the Mutated Slime King BOSS while he was gathering information on its mutation process. However, the priority now was to get a pair of excellent shoes.

He had only one bottle of Low Level Speed Drug left and its effects last 10 minutes. He would have to spend a few minutes luring the Mutated Slime King away or else he would not be able to kill it in peace. There were too many players approaching the Slime King.

The Mutated Slime King had a long HP bar. If he didn't finish the job himself in 10 minutes, the speed drug would wear off and he'd definitely die.

However, Chen Mo was sceptical of his chance of purchasing the shoes he wanted in Ayr Town.

He was already wearing Goblin Shoes, which added 1 point to Speed. The Low Level Speed Drug added another 3, so that meant he needed to buy a pair that added 4 to speed.

Other attributes, give or take a few points, would not affect the price much but Speed was different. The price multiplied by the number of points it increased. +3 Speed Shoes were rare in the beginner village. A pair of +4 Speed Shoes? Unicorn-rare!

No matter how difficult it was, he had to get a pair. If it came

down to it, he could go to one of the 3 Main Cities to buy them, then commit suicide and restart. He couldn't go back to the beginner village after leaving unless he had some sort of special quest.

He still had the Degenerate title equipped so he couldn't enter Ayr Town. However, it only restricted his entry. He could still hang around outside without the town guards bothering him.

“Selling Low Level HP Drugs! Limited stock! Hurry, get it before it's gone!”

“Selling many pieces of equipment for Level 5 and above! White grade and above! Price negotiable!”

“Chopper Group – one more member needed for the Slime Plains!”

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Shouts from inside Ayr Town could be heard. Many players stood within a few metres' radius of the entrance touting their wares. The area was bustling. There were things being sold and bought and various requests to form parties or to join groups.

“REAL WORLD CASH for Speed Shoes! +4 or higher! Private Message if you have what I want!”

Chen Mo stood near the entrance and began yelling.

Quite a few people looked over when they heard the words ‘real world cash’ but they lost interest after hearing ‘Speed Shoes +4 or higher’.

Chen Mo went on yelling for a while. Only a few curious players PMed to ask how much he was willing to pay but they did not have the shoes he wanted.

He was not in a rush; Chen Mo was a patient man. He did not expect it to be easy to find excellent shoes.

Seated outside the town entrance, Chen Mo yelled his lines every once in a while. In little over an hour, the entire beginner village knew that there was a guy looking to buy +4 Speed Shoes.

The sky had darkened. In the Man-eating Flower spawn area, an assassin girl who looked about 16 or 17 and her priest friend were killing Man-eating Flowers in a party.

The assassin girl was in no danger since her friend healed her as she killed.

“Fei Fei, did you hear? Someone at the town entrance is buying +4 Speed Shoes,” the priest girl said in a small, excited voice as she healed her friend.

“Do you really want to sell these shoes, Xiao Yun?” Hua Fei Fei stroked the Shoes of the Storm. Wearing these +4 Speed Shoes of

the Storm while running was like flying.

She wanted to tell Xiao Yun to sell the shoes to her but she held her tongue.

Hua Fei Fei's family was wealthy. Xiao Yun, on the other hand, was from a single-parent family with an ailing mother, a younger brother and a younger sister. She had heavy responsibilities. Xiao Yun wanted to play GENESIS to try her luck after hearing how lucrative it could be but could not afford the cost of the helmet. Hua Fei Fei told Xiao Yun that she had bought two and intended to give one to her cousin but the cousin had already bought one herself so she could lend the extra helmet to her.

The two of them were good friends and never talked about money. Mu Xiao Yun had no idea Hua Fei Fei's family was rich and Hua Fei Fei never mentioned it. She had never had many friends. If Mu Xiao Yun knew that there was such a disparity between them, they might not be friends anymore.

Mu Xiao Yun was a cheerful and optimistic girl. Other than being a little shy, she was a great person. Hua Fei Fei did not really think that Mu Xiao Yun would distance herself after finding out she was a rich man's daughter but she had seen too many issues which revolved around money while growing up and did not want to risk it.

"I'm sorry, Fei Fei. My mother is sick again." Mu Xiao Yun looked at Fei Fei apologetically.

“Auntie’s health comes first. It’s also good to sell it early – it won’t be worth as much once levels go up.” Hua Fei Fei soothed her friend.

She had thought about it too. It was no big deal for her to spend some cash and buy some better shoes so Xiao Yun can earn some income. She could help her make a bit of money and lessen her burden.

Oho! Looks like she can find a way to get Xiao Yun good items in-game to sell for real cash and help her indirectly!

Haha! She’s so smart!

“Come on, let’s go back!” Hua Fei Fei said happily. Mu Xiao Yun thought it a bit odd that her friend was suddenly acting all cheery but couldn’t understand why.

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“You have +4 Speed Shoes?” Chen Mo looked at the two pretty girls before him. They looked like high-schoolers – one quiet and shy and the other with a guarded but aggressive gaze.

“Yes. This is the pair.” Hua Fei Fei sent the item attributes to Chen Mo.

Shoes of the Storm

Description: Wearing these shoes will let you run like the wind.

Equipment quality: Green

Limit: Level 5 and above

Attributes:

Physical defence +15

Magic defence +20

Movement speed +4

Green quality Shoes! Movement speed +4 and two additional defences!

Chen Mo's heart skipped with glee. Hanging around for two hours had been worth it.

“The shoes aren't too shabby. How much do you want for them?” Chen Mo asked immediately.

“H-How about 1000?” Mu Xiao Yun squeaked out a price.

“Xiao Yun! That's too little!” Hua Fei Fei pulled Xiao Yun aside when she heard her friend's price. “What she said just now didn't count. She doesn't know about prices. You'd better quote us a price that matches the item quality, you geezer. If you dare cheat us, I'll kill and chase you to the ends of the Earth!”

“What geezer? I'm like your big brother! I'm not much older

than you two!” Chen Mo was outraged. He wasn’t just a hacker – he was also a young man in his prime. He was just 21! Being called an old man out of the blue was unbearable.

“Big brother? Ha! Don’t try to cheat us! You’re an old geezer! Name your price, old geezer. We won’t sell if we don’t like the offer!” Hua Fei Fei completely ignored Chen Mo’s protests and called him a geezer again.

Chen Mo gritted his teeth in anger. This little wench was just asking to get hit. Chen Mo cursed the girl. She’ll never get married, get left on the shelf and become an old spinster!

Hmm. This curse might be a bit too harsh.

Whatever. With this kid’s attitude, if curses worked then one more curse from him won’t make a difference.

“5000. Any higher wouldn’t be worth it for me. These are just Level 5 shoes anyway.” Chen Mo did not quibble with Hua Fei Fei. He’d rather complete the transaction peacefully. If he offended her and she refused to sell, he would be in trouble.

“Is it really only worth 5000?” Hua Fei Fei glared at Chen Mo in suspicion. Was this guy lying?

“It’s enough, Fei Fei.” Mu Xiao Yun tugged excitedly at her friend’s sleeve.

These Level 5 shoes could actually be sold for 5000 RMB!* Expenses for this month won't be a problem now!

“If you feel like I've cheated you, then you're welcome to hound me.” Chen Mo shot a look at the little wench.

“Hah! I'll really do it!”

Hua Fei Fei snorted in derision and handed the shoes to Mu Xiao Yun to trade to Chen Mo.

In GENESIS, it was inevitable that real-money trades would happen so the game had incorporated a system that supported real-money transactions. The amount had to be a minimum of 1000 though. The system also charged a 5% transaction tax that would go towards charity.

“Okay, the money has been transferred to your account.”

It was the first time dealing in real-money for both Mu Xiao Yun and Chen Mo so they took a while to complete the transaction.

“Thank you.” Mu Xiao Yun thanked Chen Mo.

“Hey, geezer. Don't forget what I said. If you dare cheat Xiao Yun, I'll chase you to the ends of the Earth!”

Chen Mo turned to leave after completing the transaction and

started sprinting towards Wild Wolf Valley but Hua Fei Fei's voice could still be heard behind him.

Chen Mo gritted his teeth. He really wanted to hit that girl.

* 5000RMB = 693.6 EUR = 787.8 USD = 2927 PLN

Chapter 28 – Ensnaring The BOSS

The Beggar's Wolf Meat quest and Slime Poison quest were both repeatable. However, the beggar asked for 10 more pieces for every additional time the quest was done. Chen Mo decided to take the opportunity to stock up on Wolf Meat while the other players were still unable to enter Wild Wolf Valley.

After half an hour, Chen Mo had over a hundred pieces of Wolf Meat.

He unequipped the Degenerate title and entered Ayr Town, then used 50 Wolf Meat to complete the Beggar's Wolf Meat quest twice to get two Shabby Green Slime Poison Bottles. Chen Mo stored the rest of the Wolf Meat in the Warehouse and bought Wooden Bolts, some coils of Rope and a few Shovels from the General Store.

Everything was ready. Now, time to kill the Mutated Slime King.

If a player were to hear someone say that the Mutated Slime King could be killed one-on-one, he would think the person was insane.

Player attributes are always dwarfed by BOSS attributes. Even though the Mutated Slime King was just a Level 10 BOSS, the players stood no chance on the obstacle-free Slime Plains.

The Mutated Slime King's aggro-range was huge. Chen Mo had no way of luring it out of the Slime Plains and could not find any environmental obstacle to use for killing it.

However, Chen Mo had thought of another method.

On the Slime Plains, Chen Mo spent the last of his game money to buy 100 Green Poison Slime and got two bottles of Slime Poison. Then, he looked for some players and found three male players. “Hey bro, you interested in making some fast cash?”

“Fast cash?” The three looked at Chen Mo with great interest.

These three were not randomly selected. Chen Mo could tell if a person needed money and these three exuded the aura of poverty.

“I’ve received a quest to dig for hidden treasure. The area I need to cover is quite large so I need your help to dig. You’ll dig for one hour and I’ll pay you 200 RMB.” Chen Mo had thought about what to say and it was not something random he had come up with.

“We’ll do it!” 200RMB for an hour, and not real time but game time! The trio agreed right away.

Additionally, the mention of treasure had their tails wagging in excitement.

The exchange was simple. This time, Chen Mo and the trio used the traditional website to initiate the transaction. Chen Mo made an advanced payment and the three just had to provide evidence of work done to have the money deposited into their accounts.

Chen Mo brought them to an area in the Slime Plains which had neither players nor monster spawn.

“Is there really treasure here?”

Looking about them at the empty plains, the three began to doubt Chen Mo's words.

“An NPC told me about it in confidence. We'll know if it's true after the digging is done. You're getting paid anyway so don't ask about it!” Chen Mo could not be bothered to say more to them and threw three Shovels to them, indicating that they should start digging.

When the trio heard Chen Mo's words, they picked up the Shovels and began digging in earnest. If they get caught slacking off the 200RMB might slip through their fingers.

That's right – in order to kill the Mutated Slime King, what Chen Mo had to do was... Dig a pit!

A pit with a radius of 1m and depth of at least 3m!

The Mutated Slime King could only jump over 1m high. If he could get it into the 3m pit, the Mutated Slime King was his to slaughter!

A huge pit would take him ages to dig alone so he hired these three to help.

Of course, saving time was an issue but Chen Mo had another motive for hiring three people.

The trio examined the ground as they dug. They had already decided to grab the treasure if they found it. Treasure was worth much more than 200RMB!

Chen Mo saw their furtive glances and grinned to himself.

If there really was treasure here, nobody would hire you to dig for it! Naïve fools!

Unlike in reality, the game digging speed is actually quite fast and players do not feel tired when digging. Only physical strength will be depleted and it will recover by itself with a little rest.

About half an hour later, a round pit with a diameter of about 3m had formed.

“Not one sign of treasure.” One of the hired players looked at Chen Mo in dissatisfaction.

They had been digging in anticipation of treasure for over half an hour and though they were being paid for it they couldn't help feeling like they'd gotten bamboozled somehow.

“Looks like the NPC was lying. All right, stop digging. You guys

logoff and collect your payment.” The job looked done. Chen Mo waved his hand dismissively at the trio to signal them to stop and threw three ropes down for them to climb up.

After they left, Chen Mo quickly unequipped his Shoes of the Storm and half-buried them in the dirt, making it look like he had uncovered it while digging. Then, he took a picture.

He saved the image, then climbed out of the pit.

He didn't go far though. He used his camouflage skill and hid close by.

Not long after, a player came back sneakily under the cover of night. He did not see Chen Mo. He hesitated, then clenched his jaw and jumped into the pit and began sniffing around.

The player found nothing and crawled dejectedly out of the pit.

It was well into night-time and the sky was dark. Chen Mo looked at the retreating figure of the player and chuckled darkly. This bastard was tenacious but he shouldn't be back after this. Now, he could lure the Mutated Slime King here with no worries.

“Time to speed up!”

Chen Mo equipped the Shoes of the Storm and sped to the Slime King.

A pit like this dug by players would be erased by the system automatically if no player activity was detected after an hour.

“Good, there is no one around” Chen Mo got close to the Slime King and noted that there were no other players nearby. He immediately downed a bottle of Slime Poison.

“Roar!”

The Slime King reacted and bounded towards Chen Mo!

Chen Mo immediately equipped the Degenerate title and began running, luring the Mutated Slime King to the huge pit.

It was night time in-game and players’ visibility was limited to about 10m. There were players in the distance killing monsters but none of them was aware that the Slime King had mutated and was chasing a player.

It took a little under 5min to get to the pit – Chen Mo had checked it on his way to the Slime King. He wouldn’t run into any other players unless they stumbled across his path but that was unlikely as he had chosen a spawn-free area.

Chen Mo used his trap attacks on the Mutated Slime King as he raced ahead.

The Mutated Slime King's HP bar was very long. Chen Mo estimated that it had about 100,000 HP. Killing it would take a lot of effort.

Chen Mo's trap attacks were limited in these 5min. Even with the Slime Poison effect, he could only deal about 100 DMG each time. The Mutated Slime King's HP recovery rate was not slow either so the overall HP loss was not a lot.

A few minutes passed and his read-dug pit could be seen about 10m ahead. The Mutated Slime King's HP had only decreased by 8000+ and it still had over 90,000HP.

Chen Mo had had a few tough minutes dealing with the Mutated Slime King. It was fine if he didn't attack it but when he did, it not only chased but occasionally sped up to try to body-slam him.

If it hadn't been for the Quake Trap which could disrupt the Mutated Slime King's charge, Chen Mo would have died long ago.

The pit was straight ahead. Now, the next problem was to get the Mutated Slime King into the pit.

If Chen Mo jumped right in, the Mutated Slime King would not be stupid enough to blindly follow him in. Chen Mo lured the Mutated Slime King to the side of the pit and ran close to its edge.

The Mutated Slime King came chasing after Chen Mo.

Camouflage!

Chen Mo suddenly used his camouflage skill. The Mutated Slime King stared blankly for a bit before it discovered Chen Mo.

How could a dubious camouflage skill pull the wool over the eyes of a Mutated BOSS? The camouflage skill had only distracted it for a moment.

But this moment was enough. Chen Mo leaned towards the Mutated Slime King and threw a Quake Trap.

BOOM!

The Mutated Slime King's huge body was suddenly pushed forward and it fell into the pit!

Chapter 29 – BOSS Loot

“Yes!”

Chen Mo’s heart skipped in joy as he ran to the pit and shot bolts willy-nilly down into it.

“Roar!”

The Mutated Slime King bounced anxiously in the big pit but was unable to escape.

“Be a good boy and die! Resistance is futile!” Chen Mo cackled.

After all that effort to kill it single-handedly, what would a Mutated Slime King BOSS drop?

Normal Slime Kings dropped Purple equipment sometimes. The Mutated Slime King should give at least that much!

Oho! What if I killed the Mutated Slime King in this beginner village, then commit suicide and go to another beginner village? If I kill them all and get a full suit of Purple equipment, Enoch will be easy to handle!

“Uh oh!”

Chen Mo daydreamed as he attacked the Mutated Slime King.

With the Slime Poison in effect, his damage was quite high. Each ordinary attack could damage the Mutated Slime King by 60+ HP!

However, the Mutated Slime King became enraged after about 10 seconds in the pit. It gave a great roar and its body swelled. It gave a great bounce and went about 5m up in the air. As it came down, it aimed its great mass at Chen Mo!

“Shit! The Mutated Slime King isn’t so easy to defeat after all!”

The pit he had so painstakingly had dug only held the Mutated Slime King for over 10 seconds. He had Quake Traps too but he cooldown was 27 seconds and he had quite a while more till he could use it again.

With Shoes of the Wind equipped, his speed was about the same as the Mutated Slime King’s. Unfortunately, Chen Mo discovered that the enraged Mutated Slime King could not only jump higher but faster. He had planned to circle the pit while shooting at it as it followed – now it looked like the Mutated Slime King would catch up to him in a few seconds!

There was no other choice – Chen Mo reacted quickly and jumped into the pit himself!

The huge pit could be used to ensnare the BOSS and to impede its movements!

Chen Mo would thank the Heavens if the Mutated Slime King

followed him into the pit, though he thought it unlikely that the monster would re-enter the pit it had just jumped out of.

As he'd predicted, the Mutated Slime King glared heatedly down at Chen Mo in the pit but made no move to jump in after him.

“If you don't jump in, I'll start attacking you!”

Chen Mo stood in the pit and quickly shot some bolts at the Mutated Slime King.

“Roar!”

The Mutated Slime King was hit by a few bolts and it gave an angry roar. Its huge body quivered and a large number of fist-sized crystal-like purple balls burst from its body and rolled into the pit.

“Fuck!”

Chen Mo had seen these balls before. The group of players from before had gotten insta-killed by these little bastards. His HP wasn't any much higher than that group's – he'd be dead as a duck if two of the balls touched him.

There was nowhere to hide from them in the pit. Fortunately, he had tied escape ropes at four points of the pit. He quickly shimmied up a rope and got himself to the edge of the pit.

The pit was now occupied by over a few hundred of the purple balls. Looks like attacking the Mutated Slime King from the safety of the pit was not an option.

Though Chen Mo could climb out of the pit, his climbing speed was not comparable to the speed at which he could jump in. By the time he got out, the Mutated Slime King had hopped over, its bright, black eyes fixed on its prey. It was going to kill him.

The BOSS monsters were difficult indeed and very different from regular monsters. Killing one is a great struggle!

Other players would have just resigned themselves to being killed and sent back to town since jumping into the pit to escape the Mutated Slime King would also result in death.

But Chen Mo had one more thing up his sleeve!

Animal Trap!

Chen Mo only had a limited number of these traps from Gleeson and he couldn't quite bear to use them but if he did not he would die for sure.

He swiftly placed an Animal Trap by the pit, in the path of the Mutated Slime King.

“Clack!”

The Mutated Slime King was a huge monster – the tiny Animal Trap was, of course, not enough to contain it.

However, against large monsters, the trap had the effect of making the monster enter a state of grievous injury. After being hit by the Animal Trap, the Mutated Slime King's speed fell drastically.

Great! It worked!

Chen Mo let out a breath. If the Animal Trap had not worked, he would really have been a goner.

The Mutated Slime King was unable to catch up to Chen Mo with its reduced speed. Chen Mo turned to face the Mutated Slime King and unceremoniously set traps in its path and shot bolts at it as he ran.

The Animal Trap's effects normally last for 10 seconds but the Mutated Slime King was a BOSS and had higher resistance to effects so it was not affected for the full 10 seconds. It was enough, though. The cooldown for the Quake Trap skill was over.

The Mutated Slime King grew angrier and angrier under the continuous onslaught of Chen Mo's attacks but try as it might to hop closer, it was too slow due to the grievous injury effect.

It was Chen Mo's first time using the Animal Trap and he found

it to be a very useful item indeed.

The effect also lowered the Mutated Slime King's defences so his attacks could now deal over 100 damage.

In the few seconds that the effect was in place, the poor monster's HP decreased rapidly. Its health had fallen by over a 1000HP.

“Roar!”

The effect had worn off. The Mutated Slime King roared and charged at Chen Mo.

Chen Mo did not move away. He ran towards the charging Mutated Slime King and threw a Quake Trap in the same instant that he sidestepped it!

Boom!

The Mutated Slime King was pushed back and it fell into the pit again.

“Come on, you bastard! Die!”

The Mutated Slime King still had over 8000HP left after their first bout. He might just kill it after a few more rounds!

If the Mutated Slime King had no other tricks after this, Chen Mo could use the pit and slowly hack away at its HP.

After about 10 seconds, the Mutated Slime King gave another roar and jumped out of the pit.

Chen Mo was prepared this time. He did not waver. He waited for the Mutated Slime King to get close to him and jumped into the pit, then attacked it a few times from inside the pit. It released purple balls, and he climbed out right away and set the Animal Trap to counter the chasing Mutated Slime King.

80% ... 70% ... 60% ... 30% ...

Chase and escape, chase and escape... 20+ minutes passed in the blink of an eye.

The Mutated Slime King's HP was at 30%. Chen Mo looked nervously at it.

In traditional games, most game BOSSes would undergo a second change or enter berserker mode once their HP reaches a certain percentage.

He recalled that the Slime King the Richie Rich Club killed did not undergo any changes but he did not know for sure if it would be the same for the Mutated Slime King.

The Mutated Slime King was already quite a handful. If it did

undergo a second change, it would be impossible to kill no matter how many players you threw at it unless, of course, one employed a special tactic like his. The players in the beginner village were practically naked when it came to equipment.

HP... 20% ... 10% !

No second mutation! No change!

The Mutated Slime King just became fiercer but did not exhibit any other surprising change.

Chen Mo breathed a sigh of relief. The Mutated Slime King was still just a beginner village BOSS and was not too overpowered.

“Roar!”

Under Chen Mo’s continuous attacks, the Mutated Slime King’s last 10% of HP vanished and it finally dropped dead with an anguished roar.

Jingle-Clink-Clatter!

A large number of items burst from the Mutated Slime King’s body and scattered in all four directions!

So much loot from the Mutated Slime King!

The loot was different from what he'd gotten from the Wolf Elite and Mutated Black Goblin. Chen Mo could see bronze coins, silver coins, a few pieces of equipment and something that looked like a scroll!

“Hahaha!”

Chen Mo jumped down in excitement and started to pick up the items on the ground.

“Skill Mutation Scroll?”

An ancient-looking red scroll lay on the ground next to Chen Mo's feet. He picked it up first and read the item description, then did a double take.

Chapter 30 – A Great Haul

Skill Mutation Scroll: Use while learning a skill. This gives the player a chance to mutate the skill!

Jackpot!

A rare item that he'd never heard anyone mention before!

But... This item was, for now, useless to him.

“Equipment, equipment...”

At the thought of equipment, Chen Mo ignored the Skill Mutation Scroll. What's most important was to see what fine equipment the Mutated Slime King had dropped.

“Yes! Green equipment! Durable Leather Armour!”

Durable Leather Armour

Description: Leather skin of monsters sewn together. Very durable. Able to effectively withstand attacks from monsters.

Equipment grade: Green

Limit: Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Physical Defence +40

Magic Defence +48

Stamina +15

Agility +5

Not bad – he finally got something good. If he equipped the Durable Leather Armour, his HP would rise to 300!

As a Mutated BOSS, the Mutated Slime King could not possibly drop just one Green grade equipment. Chen Mo immediately picked up another Green grade equipment – a magic staff!

Rattan Staff

Description: A light magic staff made from ancient rattan. Able to raise the casting speed of the user.

Equipment grade: Green

Limit: Summoner, Mage, Priest – Level 10 and above only

Attributes:

Basic Physical Attack 35-45

Basic Magic Attack 55-70

Intelligence + 20

Spirit +15

Additional attribute: Dry rattan strips.

Dry rattan strips: 5% chance of summoning dry rattan strips when the player successfully attacks the enemy. Dry rattan strips will bind the enemy, rendering the enemy motionless for 2 seconds.

What a great weapon!

Chen Mo read the attributes and his eyes grew round. If he got a similar Level 10 Green equipment for his character class, he'd be able to kill the Mutated Slime King more quickly!

“This weapon... If I sell it now, it'll fetch at least 20 to 30 000!” Chen Mo estimated.

The Rattan Staff could go for 20 or 30 thousand, and the Durable Leather Armour could also go for a few 10-thousands. He still had yet to pick up some other equipment lying on the ground... this

meant that killing one Mutated Slime King could bring him a profit of hundreds of thousands! The money would be much more than what he usually made.

Huh. Treat it as side income then. If the advance of the holographic virtual network cannot be stopped then making this amount of money from the game can still cover some losses.

Worried that someone would come, Chen Mo picked up the items without looking at the descriptions. He threw them all into his backpack.

When he was done with picking the items up, he used the Dubious Harvesting skill on the Mutated Slime King's corpse to see if it would yield anything.

System prompt: You gained the item "Summon Slime"!

Woah!

He actually got something – and it's a Summoner skill book!

Summon Slime: A Summoner skill book. After learning, the player can summon an additional Slime. One-time use only.

This skill book is a fine item! Hmm... could it be obtained from other sources? If not then it'll definitely be a few times more expensive than the Rattan Staff. Though the Rattan Staff had good attributes, it could only serve well till Level 20. The skill book can

be used at any time.

Chen Mo then looked inside his backpack. It contained ten-something pieces of equipment. The Mutated Slime King was a Mutated BOSS, so it naturally couldn't just drop paltry items. These pieces of equipment were almost all Blue grade and there was no White grade equipment at all. Looks like Mutated BOSS-level monsters have an item grade guarantee.

Putting aside the Blue grade equipment, Chen Mo finally found what he had been looking for in his backpack!

Purple equipment – Slime King Bracelet!

Slime King Bracelet

Description: A bracelet that is part of the Slime King's collection. Collect three different pieces of the Slime King's Jewellery Collection to unlock hidden attributes.

Equipment grade: Purple, part of a set

Limit: Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Basic physical attack +15

Basic magic attack +15

Strength +20

Agility +15

Intelligence +20

Additional attribute: Slime poison

Slime poison: Whenever the player attacks a target, the target will have a 20% chance of being poisoned. After being poisoned, the target will have -20HP per second. Effect lasts for 5 seconds. Poisoning effect stack maximum 3 times.

Special effect: Collect 3 pieces of the Slime King's Jewellery Collection to unlock set effect.

Woaaaah!

Not only was this the rarest Purple grade jewellery – it's also part of a set!

Chen Mo felt like he was floating on cloud nine. All that time spent had not gone to waste!

He'd spent quite some time on the forums so he knew that defence equipment dropped the most while weapons and jewellery dropped the least. Excellent grade jewellery? Even rarer.

Now, he's not only gotten his hands on excellent jewellery – it's part of the Slime King set!

It's just one bracelet but its attributes are amazing! If he collected the bracelet, necklace and ring... Who knows how mind-blowing the attributes would be?!

Chen Mo decided that he would collect all three pieces of the set no matter what. This was the only way he could defeat Enoch!

Not just beating Enoch – there was one other thing he really wanted to do! And that matter also required him to have a full set of freaking awesome equipment!

Chen Mo counted the coins dropped by the Mutated Slime King. It totalled 50+ silver coins. This was a rather good amount in the game.

The Slime King would not spawn for quite a while. In order to continue killing Mutated Slime Kings, Chen Mo had to go to other beginner villages – and that meant committing suicide.

Before he did that though, he logged off and made a post on the forums.

“Want to get rich? Treasure is waiting in the wilderness! Dig for your future!”

Chen Mo attached the picture he had taken in the pit and the attributes of the Shoes of the Storm to his post.

He would have to hire players to dig pits for him in beginner villages. Once or twice wouldn't be anything to bat an eyelash at but if he kept at it, people would begin to take notice and suspect something sooner or later.

People wouldn't easily believe a post like this now but there surely would be a portion of players who would and run over to the Slime Plains to dig for treasure.

They would find nothing, of course. Thereafter, players would go on the forums and complain that it was fake, and so on.

This post was fake for sure but it provided a smokescreen for Chen Mo. If any players saw him hiring players to dig pits they'd definitely think that he was one of those fools who had believed the forum post.

Chen Mo was most happy for them to think that way.

“Is this for real?”

“It’s a hoax, isn’t it?”

“OP, you there?? Post more pics!”

As soon as the post was posted, players started to question the authenticity of it and voicing their doubts.

Chen Mo ignored them all. Most would dismiss it as fake but, as anticipated by Chen Mo, some still believed it and bought shovels before heading to the Slime Plains.

At about the same time those players started digging, Chen Mo committed suicide and reappeared in the Goblin Valley.

Chapter 31 – Loli Fighter

It was late when Chen Mo got to Level 4 and exited the Goblin Valley. He logged off and went to bed.

Chen Mo awoke in the afternoon.

Having eaten and slept his fill, he went on the forums to check the result of the post.

“Liar!”

“Wasted my time!”

“Everyone, don’t get tricked! It’s fake!”

Chen Mo clicked on the post and smiled smugly. People had gotten tricked and gone digging in the Slime Plains as expected.

However, Chen Mo found that something was not right as he read on.

Many had called him a liar but there were a few people actually defending him!

After taking a closer look, he was struck dumb.

There really was hidden treasure outside Ayr Town in the beginner villages!

When creating their characters, players who had answered the survey had a chance to receive a quest from an old man tending graves in the wilderness. The quest was to clear weeds from gravestones and the reward after completion was a “Thieves’ Gang Treasure Map”.

Long ago, a severely injured leader of a gang of thieves came to the outskirts of Ayr Town. The old man was a young boy then and, as a kind-hearted lad, did his best to nurse the leader’s wounds but the leader succumbed to his wounds and died. The leader had buried the gang’s treasure outside Ayr Town and given the grave-tending old man the treasure map.

However, due to the leader’s terrible injuries, a large portion of the map was obscured by blood. The old man searched for years but was unable to find the treasure.

In the end, the old man gave up and gave each adventurer who helped him a copy of the map as a reward.

After so many years, the originally unclear map became even more muddled. The players who got the map could only look at it and sigh.

Very few players obtained the map but the forum post Chen Mo made had given them a new hope. Quite a few had run to the Slime Plains and tried digging for treasure in places they felt most

suspect.

Chen Mo was speechless. He never thought that his ruse would prove true.

Still, his treasure was fake – these players would give up quickly after realising that there was none to be found. However, with this quest information made public he could openly go about his digging.

Back in the game, Chen Mo prepared to level up. Returning to the warehouse, he was surprised to discover that the quest item, Stone Cold Water, had disappeared.

Thinking about it, Chen Mo surmised that committing suicide and restarting had reset Gleeson's quest.

That's okay. He could just re-learn the Harvesting and Camouflage skills from Gleeson.

With prior experience, his levelling up speed was much faster and he got to Level 10 before 10pm.

After getting to Level 10, Chen Mo put on the equipment that the Mutated Slime King had dropped.

Durable Leather Armour, Slime King Bracelet and 3 other Blue grade equipment with attributes that were not bad.

Jewellery and weapons were, of course, the most difficult to get. Of the 10+ pieces of Blue equipment, there was not one weapon Chen Mo could use nor jewellery to be found.

Then again, Chen Mo now had on 2 Green grade, 1 Purple grade and 3 Blue grade equipment with awesome attributes. You'd be hard-pressed to find anyone better equipped in the beginner villages!

This was the advantage of taking on BOSSes one-on-one. If a party killed the Mutated Slime King, each person would only get a little share of the loot.

With this set of equipment, Chen Mo would have 96 Strength points without equipping the Degenerate title – if he equipped the title, he would have at least 106 points!

His Stamina attribute with Degenerate title had 61 points, boosting his HP to 1220. A direct attack by the Mutated Slime King won't kill him now!

The thing Chen Mo lacked now was a weapon. However, good weapons were scarce and even more expensive than shoes. He'd spent 5000 on the Green grade Shoes of the Storm; a Green grade weapon would cost him upwards of 10,000.

Furthermore, he might not be able to find it for sale even if he had the money.

As for lower grade weapons, given his current attributes, Chen Mo felt that it made no difference whether he had a weapon or not.

He was still able to kill the Mutated Slime King with his previous pathetic equipment. Now with a great increase in attributes there was no reason he wouldn't be able to kill it. Without a good weapon, he would at most be a little slow – but taking his attributes into consideration, his killing speed would definitely be higher than yesterday's!

After completing the Wolf Meat quest from the beggar and the Slime Poison quest, Chen Mo went on to collect Wolf Meat in the Wild Wolf Valley as he awaited nightfall.

Players abound during the day. Luring the Mutated Slime King away without anyone noticing was nigh impossible.

Close to midnight, Chen Mo brought some shovels and rope to the Slime Plains.

“Dude, a ton of peeps on the forum said that's a con job. You still diggin'?”

Chen Mo had advertised for help in digging and one of the three male players who heard couldn't help but caution him.

“Just help me dig and don't bother about anything else. Are you digging or not?” Chen Mo took on an arrogant air like he had too

much money to spend.

“Yeah, we are!” They’d be fools not to take the easy money. Seeing his attitude, the three players said nothing more to change his mind.

Chen Mo led the three of them to his target location.

When they were almost there, Chen Mo and the three male players stopped and stared blankly. There did not seem to be anything amiss from afar but once they got close...

A raven-haired little head popped out of the ground. And beneath that little head of hair was a dirt-streaked adorable doll-like face.

A loli fighter had dug a pit almost two metres deep.

“Hey! Are you here to dig for treasure too? I think you should give up because there probably won’t be any to be found. I dug a pit this deep and still didn’t find anything.”

Seeing a shovel in each person’s hand, the loli fighter assumed that they were treasure hunters too and gave them some friendly advice in a clear and pretty voice.

Hot damn! A loli with an innocent child-like face and huge boobs!

The hired help had walked over to the pit out of curiosity and

found a loli fighter with a mesmerizingly hot body.

The heart rate of the three male players went up. One of them squatted at the edge of the pit with a grin. “Hi, sweetie! What’s your name? Do you want help in digging?”

Asshole! I hired you to work for me! Trying to pick up girls while on the clock? Do you want your cash or not?

When Chen Mo heard this, he was sorely tempted to kick the guy into the pit.

“Me? I’m Itsy Bitsy Fighter. My pit’s almost done so I don’t need any help.” The loli fighter shook her head and refused help.

“What level are you, sweetie? I can help you level up. Big brother here is Level Ten.” The asshole pressed on.

“No! You’ve got a mean look about you. One look and I can tell you’re not a good guy!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter shot back and glared at him.

“Let’s go! Follow me elsewhere to dig.”

At that moment, Chen Mo yelled. Having been rejected outright, Chen Mo’s yell gave the guy a way out of an embarrassing situation and he hurried to Chen Mo’s side.

The other two had witnessed his rejection and knew that the loli wasn't going to be easy. They gave up.

His number one spot had been taken by the loli fighter but this was still within the parameters of Chen Mo's calculations. Trapping the BOSS in one spot all the time was not safe. He had other locations mapped out in his head.

After walking for a few minutes, Chen Mo stopped and told the trio to start digging.

A 3m deep pit opened up in the ground half an hour later. Chen Mo sent the trio on their way and checked his surroundings to make sure there were no other players nearby.

When he had made sure all was well, he went to the Slime King and used the Slime Poison.

The Slime King mutated and bounced toward Chen Mo with a great roar.

Chen Mo ran along his now-familiar path to the huge pit with the Mutated Slime King in tow and easily pushed it into the pit.

He knew exactly how the Mutated Slime King would react but it was unable to pose any threat to him in the pit. Chen Mo had the upper hand and the Mutated Slime King's HP decreased quickly.

Chen Mo had to drink one more Slime Poison the last time to

sustain the mutation while he hacked at the Mutated Slime King's HP. This time, the monster's HP had dropped quite low and he still had 10mins to go.

“Almost dead! Just 20% left!”

Chen Mo estimated that it would take him a few minutes more to kill the Mutated Slime King while the Slime Poison was still in effect.

Suddenly, a figure with a shovel in hand appeared in Chen Mo's peripheral vision!

Shit! Someone's coming!

Chen Mo groaned inwardly at his bad luck. He was much quicker compared to the previous time and there was just that bit of HP left. If this person posted this on the forums he would have a tough time getting the Mutated Slime King in a one-on-one kill!

Chapter 32 – The Second Piece Of Purple Equipment

The person holding a shovel was obviously here to dig. Chen Mo screwed up.

He did not expect anyone to come digging at this hour. Players who'd read the forum post in the day were already done digging. Not many could be seen digging for treasure in the Slime Plains at night.

The figure drew closer and came into focus, making Chen Mo start in surprise.

The shovel-holding person was the loli fighter named Itsy Bitsy Fighter he had met an hour earlier.

“What’s she doing back here?”

Chen Mo had doubled back after his pit was dug and checked the area. Itsy Bitsy Fighter had gone off, leaving a deep pit behind. He assumed that she had left to dig somewhere else so he did not think that she would come back and dig around the same area.

“It’s you? Wow! You dug up this huge monster?”

Itsy Bitsy Fighter had a good memory and recognised Chen Mo at once.

The Mutated Slime King sat in the pit. Itsy Bitsy Fighter stared, her eyes almost popping out in disbelief.

“Yes, yes I did. This monster’s really strong! You should leave quickly!” Chen Mo replied at once. This loli fighter must have not played many games. No gamer would ever think that BOSS monsters could be dug up.

Chen Mo could not be bothered to think up a good story so he lied to the little loli. He’d probably be done with Slime Kings by the time she figured it out.

“Don’t worry! I’ll help!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter heroically equipped her sword and charged the Mutated Slime King.

“Don’t!”

Chen Mo made to stop her but he was a step too late. Itsy Bitsy Fighter jumped into the pit with a huff*, fully intent on fighting the Mutated Slime King.

*Asian cutesy-style.

Her luck in the game was not too bad and she had gotten her hands on some equipment. Monsters on the Slime Plains posed no real danger to her. Granted, the Mutated Slime King was bigger but she did not think that its attack power would be much greater.

Chen Mo could not bear to look. The Mutated Slime King had not been in the pit long and the pit still held a number of little purple balls secreted by it. The purple balls only disappear after 10 or more seconds. This loli fighter jumping in like that was suicide!

As expected, Itsy Bitsy Fighter got hit by some purple balls before she even got close to the Mutated Slime King.

Bang! Bang! Bang! ... Itsy Bitsy Fighter was insta-killed before she could work out what happened.

Eh, forget it. Dead is dead. It's just a game and no losses suffered for those Level 10 and below.

Chen Mo gave it no further thought and concentrated on killing the Mutated Slime King. If someone else came he would not be so lucky again.

“Roar!”

The Mutated Slime King let out a familiar, vengeful roar. As expected of a BOSS – a fixed pattern even in death!

Under the night sky, the Mutated Slime King's body fell with a crash and lay surrounded by glowing loot. The BOSS hath bequeath its bounty yet again!

Chen Mo hurriedly jumped down and shoved everything into his backpack.

That loli fighter might come back and he was not going to sit around and wait for her. She was naïve and would ask lots of questions. Chen Mo did not want to feed her lies. It was better to not see her again.

After walking a distance, Chen Mo started looking through his loot.

“Ha ha ha! Another piece of Purple Grade equipment!”

The Mutated Slime King had dropped over 10 pieces of equipment. Chen Mo spotted the Purple piece right away!

Shoes of the Wind Walker

Description: Wearing these shoes will make you a man of the wind!

Equipment Grade: Purple

Limit: Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Physical Defence +48

Magical Defence +52

Agility +10

Movement Speed increased by +5

Additional Skill: Wind-speed Dodge

Wind-speed Dodge: After using this skill, the player's max speed is increased by 1 point. 20% chance of avoiding enemy's attack. Effect lasts for 5 seconds. Skill cooldown 30 seconds.

Purple Grade shoes that increased movement speed by 5!

“Not bad, not bad... With these shoes, I won't have to worry about dying when facing the Mutated Slime King!”

When the Mutated Slime King escapes from the pit its speed will increase. Now that Chen Mo had Shoes of the Wind Walker his movement speed had increased. Granted, he would not be able to shake it off his tail completely but it would have trouble catching up to him. If he could add obstructions in front of the Mutated Slime King, it would never be able to catch him.

“A piece of Green Grade equipment! Durable Leather Leg

Guards!”

Durable Leather Leg Guards

Description: Leg guards made from the skin of monsters sewn together. Very durable. Able to effectively withstand attacks from monsters.

Equipment Grade: Green

Limit: Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Physical Defence +32

Magic Defence +36

Stamina +8

Strength +5

The description was more or less the same as the Durable Leather Armour he'd gotten yesterday. The difference was that yesterday's equipment was for his upper half and today's for his bottom. Attributes varied a little but the equipment looked to be of a set.

Besides these two pieces of equipment, the rest of the ten-odd pieces were Blue Grade.

Chen Mo harvested the Mutated Slime King's corpse but did not get anything this time.

Compared to yesterday, he was short a Skill Mutation Scroll, skill book and piece of Green Grade equipment. Still, he was quite satisfied with his haul.

It might have been the first solo kill of the Mutated Slime King,

so it probably dropped more than usual. It was normal for the subsequent amount of loot to be less than the first kill. He would thank the heavens if a Purple Grade equipment dropped every time he killed a Mutated Slime King.

It had also dropped 40+ silver coins. 100 silver coins would automatically be converted into a gold coin by the system. Chen Mo checked his backpack – almost there.

... ..

Not long after Chen Mo left, the lovely little face of Itsy Bitsy Fighter graced the shadows of the night.

She noted Chen Mo's absence and did not comment on it. She did, however, feel saddened by the fact that the monster the amazingly skilful big brother dug up had insta-killed her right away.

Itsy Bitsy Fighter took out a worn and tattered treasure map which she had marked in several places. She corrected her position and went about digging her own pit very close to where Chen Mo had dug his.

“Not here either.”

Over an hour later, Itsy Bitsy Fighter climbed out of the pit and sat at its lip, swinging her legs. Under the moonlight, she took out her map and drew an X on it.

“This means I’m left with one last possible place.”

Itsy Bitsy Fighter put away her treasure map and set off towards the next location with her shovel in hand.

About 10 minutes later, she checked her treasure map again and started digging industriously.

Dirt flew through the air as a huge pit formed in the ground.

Clank!

Suddenly, there was a metallic sound.

“Treasure!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter gleefully uncovered a treasure chest at the bottom of the pit.

“What a mess of items! Oh well, I’ll just sort them out later. This hidden treasure quest is finally complete! I’ll start doing the next quest when I get back. Sigh. Why does this little town have so many quests? When will I ever finish them all and leave this place?”

Itsy Bitsy Fighter opened the chest. There were books, scrolls, jewels and more, all heaped up in the chest. Itsy Bitsy Fighter’s eyes barely registered the items before they were all unceremoniously shoved into her backpack. She climbed out of the

pit, looked at the long, long list of quests and let out a huge sigh.

Chapter 33 – Got An Excellent Weapon!

“This rascal! Looks like he really does intend to kill all the beginner village BOSSes!”

In the heart of Ash Blue Tech, a group of young men watched the hunter player kill the Mutated Slime King again on their screens.

“To think that he would come up with such a method.”

Two days ago, they suddenly discovered that the Mutated Slime King had been killed and looked into it out of curiosity. They’d been gobsmacked.

The beginner village BOSS that countless guilds, big and small, were unable to take down – had been slaughtered by a single player!

Upon seeing the method this player had used to kill the Mutated Slime King, the young men turned red with embarrassment.

The method looked like a hack, but they did not think it was a bug. The Mutated Slime King could not be defeated by a mere pit! Nevertheless, they followed protocol and submitted a report of the situation. The AI computer “Glimmer” conducted a self-test on the process of the killing method and it ended up approving Chen Mo’s method for killing the BOSS.

This group of young men had no objections to Chen Mo killing

the BOSS. It was good news to have a player from the Chinese servers kill the Mutated Slime King so early in the game. It was difficult enough for the players on the global servers to kill a Slime King, yet alone a Mutated Slime King.

“Holy shit! Another Skill Mutation Scroll! This guy’s going to be rich!”

Items burst from the Mutated Slime King’s body. The young men had signed agreements that they would only watch and not play. Seeing someone defeat the BOSS made them itch to play. Watching this hunter player kill the BOSS made them jittery, so when items burst forth one of the young men could not contain himself anymore.

“Skill Mutation Scroll! This can only be dropped by mutated BOSSes and above. The Mutated Slime King must be the easiest mutated BOSS to kill in the game.”

“Definitely! From what I know, it is very difficult to make the other BOSSes mutate. And after they mutate they become freakishly powerful; they are extremely tough to kill.”

“Hold on, doesn’t every mutated BOSS have a limit on the number of Skill Mutation Scrolls dropped within a certain time frame?”

“Every mutated BOSS will drop a few and when those are gone it’ll take a long while before the item drops again.”

“This means... if he keeps killing like this he’ll get his hands on every Skill Mutation Scroll the Mutated Slime King drops!”

Obtaining one Skill Mutation Scroll was impressive enough... To have several in one’s possession? It defied the laws of the natural world!

“You don’t have to kill mutated BOSSEs for a Skill Mutation Scroll. Aren’t you guys forgetting that a player obtained two scrolls, plus a whole lot of other goodies just yesterday?”

At that moment, one of the young men reminded his peers of the other event.

The group ceased their chatter upon hearing his words.

Even though it was just the beginner villages, they were not unaware of the activity in the ground-breaking game.

In-game, Chen Mo slaughtered the Mutated Slime King and picked up his items. He should’ve been happy but dissatisfaction showed on his face.

Hmm. Why? This was just his third time killing the Mutated Slime King. The good loot this time consisted of just a Skill Mutation Scroll. Don’t even talk about the Slime King Jewellery set, there was no Purple Grade equipment. He got two Green Grade equipment and nine Blue Grade. He used his harvesting skill on the corpse and came up empty.

“WTF? Next one! I am going to get a Purple equipment set. Just you wait, Enoch!”

Chen Mo had great patience. He returned to the beginner village, stored his items and committed suicide right away.

... ..

“Fuck, yeah! Finally willing to give me a piece of Purple equipment, huh?”

Two days passed in the blink of an eye. Chen Mo killed his fifth Mutated Slime King.

Yesterday’s Mutated Slime King loot was the worst. It dropped just one piece of Green Grade equipment. Today’s loot standard went up; a piece of Purple equipment – and it’s a crossbow too!

Poison Tinted Crossbow

Description: A crossbow that was soaked in **. Arrows fired from this crossbow can cause poison damage.

Equipment Grade: Purple

Limit: Hunter, Assassin Class Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Basic Physical Attack 68-82

Basic Magic Attack – 59-77

Strength +25

Agility +20

Poison Crossbow Skill Level +1

Poison Skill Level +1

Additional Attributes: Weak Poison

Weak Poison: Upon successfully attacking the target, chance of causing 200 poison damage to target is 10%. This poison damage does not stack with other poison damage.

Chen Mo's heart was all aflutter as he looked at the Poison Tinted Crossbow.

It was all mothafuckin' worth it!

This Purple Grade crossbow was just too awesome – it was even better than all the different weapons Chen Mo had seen on the forums!

Among the various weapons, the crossbow's damage attributes

were average or below but this level 10 crossbow's basic attack was already higher than most of the weapons in the game. The additional Strength points weren't low either. Coupled with Poison Crossbow Skill and Poison Skill, plus the additional attribute, Chen Mo was sure to get at least 50,000RMB* for it!

*Roughly 7485 USD, 6810 Euro or 29670 PLN

He wouldn't sell it, of course. Not right now!

This Poison Tinged Crossbow was the greatest asset on hand to defeat Enoch. With this weapon, the speed with which he would be able to fight and kill the Mutated Slime King would double.

He needed about 20mins to kill the Mutated Slime King now. The Poison Tinged Crossbow would allow him to spend just 10mins or so to kill it!

Now that he had this weapon, he needed four more pieces of armour and two more pieces of jewellery from the set for him to have his showdown with Enoch!

Chen Mo's weapon boosted his power quite a bit. Back in Ayr Town, he wasted no time in committing suicide.

Chen Mo logged off just before dawn broke and prepared to go to bed.

However, before he did that, he checked the forums for the latest

developments in the game.

He was focused on fighting the Mutated Slime King now but it was still important to keep his ear to the ground.

He was not the only one to have accepted the commission so it was almost necessary to keep abreast of the latest happenings in the game.

Nothing major happened in the few days past. There were only two topics of interest.

The first was the Trial of Natural Skill. It had been proven that the better one scored in the trial, the better the Innate skill received.

That was not the only chance to get Innate skills, of course. Players could also obtain the skill as they level up but the earlier you can get a skill, the greater the benefit.

The second was the day and night times in the game.

According to the players who'd already gone to the three main human cities, it was best not to be outside city walls at night. Your field of vision was narrow and the monsters become stronger at night. Players with lousy equipment were easily killed by monsters at night.

However, there were players with different opinions too.

The monsters become stronger but they also give more EXP. Some monsters and NPCs also only appear at night. Players can get rare quests from these NPCs and the rewards upon completion were great indeed.

Whether one could kill monsters at night in safety depended on one's equipment. It was difficult to level up after Level 10. Equipment of Blue Grade and up became ever more essential in the three main human cities. Needless to say, high-quality equipment was very much sought after.

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Two days passed again in a flash.

With the Poison Tinged Crossbow, Chen Mo's attack power was such that the Mutated Slime King no longer posed a threat.

Chen Mo's eyes lit up as the familiar death roar and flash of light faded. He had spotted a familiar piece of equipment!

Chapter 34 – Stroke Of Luck

System Prompt: You have obtained “Slime King Ring”!

Slime King Ring

Description: A ring that is part of the Slime King’s collection. Collect three different pieces of the Slime King’s Jewellery Collection to unlock hidden attributes.

Equipment grade: Purple, part of a set

Limit: Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Basic Physical Attack +20

Basic Magic Attack +20

Strength +15

Intelligence +20

Spirit +15

Additional attribute: Slime King’s Call

Slime King’s Call: Summon a Level 13 Slime to fight for you. Colour of the summoned Slime is random. Summoned Slime is active for 3 min. Skill cooldown 5min.

Special effect: Collect 3 pieces of the Slime King’s Jewellery Collection to unlock set effect.

He was right!

The design was similar to the bracelet he had gotten before. Chen Mo rushed to pick it up. It really was the ring from the 3-piece jewellery set!

He had collected two of the three pieces in the set!

The attributes of the Slime King Ring were more or less the same

as the bracelet. The difference was that the bracelet added to the Agility attribute while the ring added to Spirit. The additional attributes were different too.

Chen Mo equipped the Slime King Ring and summoned a Slime.

A black Slime appeared and Chen Mo took a look at its attributes. The level 13 Slime had 100HP. With his current attributes and without Slime Poison, he would need some time to hack the 100HP to zero. Looks like the Slimes summoned by the ring would prove useful after all.

Chen Mo was in high spirits after getting the second piece of the set. He swiftly picked up the other items.

He did not care very much about the items now that he'd gotten the Slime King Ring.

However, when he looked through his inventory, he paused before he burst out in laughter.

Holy shit! What luck today – a piece of Purple equipment!

Refined Wolf-skin Leg Guards

Description: Made from durable wolf leather. Excellent defence capabilities.

Equipment grade: Purple

Limit: Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Physical Defence +50

Magic Defence +55

Stamina +15

Spirit +20

Additional attributes: Resist (Low level)

Resist (Low level): Every time the player receives damage, all damage is reduced by 10. Only applicable to 15 damage and above.

Purple equipment attributes were indeed a cut above the rest! These refined Wolf-skin Leg Guards' attributes were nearly twice as good as the Durable Leather Leg Guards he had equipped!

Normally, Purple Grade is just one grade higher than Green and attributes should not differ by a lot. However, attributes vary even within the same Grade and this is the difference between excellent and average.

The attributes of the Refined Wolf-skin Leg Guards were quite good for a Purple Grade equipment while the attributes for Durable Leather Leg Guards were average. This resulted in the chasm between the two items' attributes.

With the addition of the Refined Wolf-skin Leg Guards, Chen Mo now had two pieces of Purple Grade armour, a Purple Grade weapon and two pieces of Purple Grade jewellery. He was just three pieces of armour and one piece of jewellery away from a full-body Purple Grade equipment set!

All this from clearing the Mutated Slime King seven times. His luck wasn't too bad. If he cleared the Mutated Slime King 10 more times, he would reach his goal!

A full-body Purple Grade equipment set – something so luxurious that no player had yet! This was something money couldn't just buy.

Then again, without a set like this he would not be able to go up against an NPC. His goal was not to compete with other players but with the NPCs. He did not care if other players were good. Players could not compare to NPCs, whose “parents” were the game system. He had to be freaking OP or else challenging an NPC would be like knocking on Death's door.

Getting two pieces of Purple equipment in one go advanced his plans quite a bit. Chen Mo was in a good mood. He picked up all his

items and did not forget to harvest the Mutated Slime King's body before leaving.

System prompt: You have obtained the item "Capture"!

Capture: Hunter Skill book. Players Level 10 and above can learn this skill. After learning, hunter players can capture monsters to fight for them.

Holy shit!

There was a ping as the system prompt flashed. Chen Mo could scarcely believe his eyes.

His luck today was unbelievable!

Two Purple equipment, plus a Skill book – and a must-have for his own class at that!

The Capture Skill book's skill was not a rare skill but a hunter player had to get to Level 15, then go through the Hunter Profession Guild quest before he or she could get the skill.

As of now, the highest level player had only gotten to Level 14. That meant that nobody had learnt the Capture skill yet. If Chen Mo wished, he could learn the skill now and be the only hunter in the game with the Capture skill.

However, he could not learn it. It would be a waste since he was going to commit suicide right away and keep killing the Mutated Slime King in order to get his full-body Purple set!

However, this did not get in the way of his good mood.

This Capture skill would let him have incomparable levelling speed after he left the beginner village. When the time came, he would be able to summon a Slime, use his captured monster and waltz around in his Purple equipment set. All monsters would die at his feet and he would cut down all the little shits who ticked him off!

Though... he was here to find loopholes to break the game and

won't have many chances to chop people up once the game crashes.

Chen Mo stopped daydreaming and composed himself. He happily committed suicide and started from Level 1 again.

He had already gone from Level 1 to Level 10 a total of seven or eight times. While quite a number of unlucky people were still agonising over how to escape the Goblin Valley, he could walk out of it blindfolded.

Chen Mo could not be bothered to make any more Mutated Black Goblins in the Goblin Valley.

After killing it six or seven times, the Mutated Black Goblin did not seem to want to yield any more items to Chen Mo. The last time he killed it, it dropped what looked like a lot of coins but it turned out to be just 30 plus copper coins. It did not drop any Low Grade Mutated Drugs either. Chen Mo could not be bothered to waste his time on it any longer.

His storage was full of equipment but it was Level 10 equipment. They weren't in his backpack either so there was no change in the speed at which he could kill the Mutated Black Goblin.

After he got out of the Goblin Valley, Chen Mo logged off just before the break of dawn as usual and went to sleep.

When he awoke, he continued to Wild Wolf Valley to level up.

The Flaming 3-headed Wolf was still undefeated. Other than a small group of players, nobody wanted to disturb it. It was just too OP; fighting it would be a waste of time. It was better to use this time to level up.

And so, the Wild Wolf Valley remained relatively empty of players while the hunting grounds outside were bursting with over-eager kill-stealers. Chen Mo snuck in and merrily went about killing Wolves, levelling up as he collected Wolf Meat.

Chen Mo was amassing quite a lot of Wolf Meat. He had over

1000 pieces in his storage and several bottles of Slime Poison – enough material to keep doing quests for a long time.

Night time descended in a flash and Chen Mo dug his pit, then proceeded to kill the Mutated Slime King. With his current attributes, killing it was a breeze after the pit was done.

The Mutated Slime King had been killed eight times by Chen Mo but it still died with fanfare when he struck the final blow.

“One Skill Mutation Scroll... As expected, the loot after that stroke of luck is crappy.”

Chen Mo threw the Skill Mutation Scroll into his backpack with a look of dissatisfaction on his face. Today’s Mutated Slime King was so crappy! Not even one Green Grade equipment – just a stupid Skill Mutation Scroll.

Unbeknownst to him, in the depths of Ash Blue Tech, a group of young men sighed with great feeling. This guy’s luck was just mind-blowing.

Whether it was the Slime King Jewellery Collection or Skill Mutation Scroll – these items’ drop rates were definitely not high!

Chapter 35 – Rivals Appear

“This beginner village’s Slime King... has been killed?”

Chen Mo had killed the Mutated Slime King nine times. He was on his tenth when he discovered to his shock that the Slime King was not in its customary spawn location.

The Slime King respawn time was three days. If he had killed the Slime King here two days ago then it had yet to respawn but Chen Mo knew that it was not he who had killed it.

Every Ayer Town map had a different serial number. This was Ayer Town 3014 and Chen Mo had never been here before.

He walked around the area to check if the Slime King had been lured away by other players. Nope, it had definitely been killed.

The Slime King was not a difficult BOSS to kill. It had only those few skills and if players had the right equipment and method, a party could take it down. The Richie Rich Club only managed to kill it using a sea of bodies because they simply had no real plan and just went at it. Take Chen Mo, for example. With the right method, it was possible to take it down single-handedly.

Chen Mo knew that it was just a matter of time before other players started killing the Slime King. Ten days had passed. He suspected that a party of players had gotten sufficient equipment from the 3 main human cities, and figured out a way to let all party members spawn in the same beginner village.

He did not think that his competitors were killing the Slime King one-on-one like he was. Players were always approaching the Slime King so it was not possible that they were digging pits to kill it. Even with Chen Mo's current equipment, there was no chance that he would be able to take it head-on. He wouldn't be able to dodge its attacks without the help of obstacles either.

Only a party with players who can attack, block and heal can kill the the Slime King in a face-to-face fight.

So, Chen Mo went on the forums and did some digging. He confirmed his hypothesis.

The situation was more serious than he'd imagined. Two parties had popped out of the blue and they were doing what he was – killing a Slime King BOSS a day. Someone mentioned them in a post of the forums two days ago but Chen Mo suspected that they had been active for some time before that.

One of the two parties had a video taken of them while they were killing the Slime King.

“It's no wonder. They have a silencing skill as their weapon.”

The Slime King had a group attack too but it was not as powerful as the Mutated Slime King's. However, the attack would in all likelihood insta-kill party members with low HP. Even if the members did not get insta-killed, the entire party would suffer great damage and have a very tough time in the fight afterwards.

The priest player in the party could use the “Silence” skill. Right before the Slime King used a skill, the priest used Silence and cancelled its skill. This ensured that the Slime King would not be able to use all its big moves and its death was only a matter of time.

Rivals had appeared – and not just one.

Chen Mo was unperturbed. This was an internet game after all. Rivals were as common as grass and nothing to agonise over.

There were quite a number of beginner villages and just these few rivals. The chances of them running into each other was not high and besides, he only lacked a few pieces of equipment. He would need to spend a few days more at most if his luck held.

Back in the game, Chen Mo promptly committed suicide.

He appeared in another beginner village. This time, after he left Goblin Valley, he went to the Slime Plains first to check if the Slime King was still there before levelling up to Level 10.

“It’s there.” This beginner village’s Slime King was still there. Chen Mo breathed a sigh of relief.

He was turning around to go level up when he stopped in his tracks.

Wait a minute... This Slime King's colour is a little different from what he usually saw. It also seemed more mellow.

Was he just imagining things?

No! Chen Mo was very confident in his powers of observation. This Slime King was indeed slightly different.

Chen Mo thought for a bit, then took out a bottle of Slime Poison and downed it.

“Roar!”

A distance away, the Slime King roared aggressively. Its body swelled, emerald green skin darkened and its eyes filled with rage as it charged at Chen Mo.

“Its aggro range increased, body size increased, its attributes should have also gone up but... It's not mutating!”

Chen Mo was surprised. He was only testing an idea but the result was unexpected.

This Slime King must have been killed once and was a freshly spawned Slime King!

It had not killed many players so its colour was not as deep as those which had killed dozens. It was also less aggressive.

Chen Mo had two hypotheses on why it did not mutate when he drank Slime Poison.

Hypothesis one: BOSSes only mutate once in a set period of time even if the mutation conditions were met. After it dies, it will only mutate after a certain period of time. BOSS mutations therefore, like player skills, have a cooldown time.

Hypothesis two: Not all conditions have been met for the BOSS to mutate. Slime Poison is just one of the conditions for mutation and the other condition is what a freshly-spawned BOSS lacks but an 'old' one has met – which was what Chen Mo had surmised at first. The BOSS needs to have killed a certain number of players before it can mutate.*

*ARGH! This guy writes in such circles sometimes! He must have very buff arms from beating about the bush so much.

The non-mutation could be due to one or both of his hypotheses.

Whatever it may be, he could not kill this non-mutating Slime King.

Good thing he had come first to check or he would have wasted a whole day getting to Level 10. Right now, he had wasted only over an hour of time spent in getting out of Goblin Valley.

Wordlessly, Chen Mo committed suicide and started over. He

should still make it to Level 10 by nightfall.

After exiting Goblin Valley, Chen Mo checked on the Slime King again.

This beginner village's Slime King was still alive and was a good, deep colour. It looked like it had not been killed by anyone yet.

Chen Mo turned back and quickly started on levelling up.

Those two parties did not have to wait for nightfall to kill the Slime King like he did. He needed to use his time wisely.

Chen Mo was not in that much of a hurry either. Even if he levelled up quickly, he still had to wait till night time to kill the Mutated Slime King. He did not want his method of killing the Mutated Slime King to be leaked or his rivals won't just be these two parties. It'll be difficult to even find a Slime King to kill if his method was known to all.

Luck was on his side. The two parties had not turned up while he was levelling up. Chen Mo got to Level 10, paid some players to dig him a pit and wasted no time in killing the Mutated Slime King.

“What... Skill Mutation Scroll again? Ha! A piece of Purple equipment too!”

The appearance of rivals made him waste an extra days' time but Chen Mo found that his luck was returning. He got the third piece

of Purple armour on top of the Skill Mutation Scroll!

Mercury Wrist Guards

Description: A pair of metal wrist guards made from Mercury with special poison resistance effect.

Equipment grade: Purple

Limit: Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Basic Physical Attack +12

Basic Magic Attack +15

Physical Defence +20

Magic Defence +25

Strength +15

Intelligence +15

Additional effect: Poison Protection

Poison Protection: Passive effect. When equipped, poison damage

to player is reduced by 10% and there is a 10% chance to become immune to all poison damage.

A pair of Purple Grade wrist guards!

Wrist guards were unique among the five defence equipment. It was the only one which raised the Basic Physical Attack and Basic Magic Attack. On the other hand, the defence capabilities of the wrist guards were more or less the same as the other pieces.

However, players preferred to go for attack over defence, so the wrist guards, like shoes, were popular among players, and therefore priced higher than the other defence equipment.

Chen Mo was feeling pretty good about his day after getting one more piece of Purple Grade equipment; he committed suicide after putting his things in order.

About half an hour after Chen Mo committed suicide, a richly-equipped party appeared in the Slime King spawning area.

Chapter 36 – Leader’s Badge

If Chen Mo was there, he would have recognized the people from the video on the forums.

“Strange, someone else killed the Slime King,” the cultured-looking youth in the lead said in puzzlement as he looked around the empty spawn ground.

His in-game name was Woody Forest and he was a mage; the leader of the party of six.

“You think Cold Flow and Co. got to it first?” asked Shallow Words, as she approached and looked around.

She was the priest of the party – a gentle and quiet 21, 22-year-old beauty. She, Woody Forest and the four other people in the party were all from a small but high-flying studio*. Before GENESIS was released, they focused on games with a high percentage of big spenders, then worked exclusively for them. When the news of the ground-breaking game was released, Woody Forest and his team did not hesitate. They sold off all their game accounts and resources and started to focus solely on GENESIS.

*Studio – a group of people who make money from playing games by selling items, offering levelling up services, quest completion, etc.

To players like them, a holographic virtual game was a dream come true. How could they miss out on it? However, the more

important reason was that Shallow Words and Woody Forest knew that they would definitely make big money from this game.

“No, I know for a fact that Cold Flow’s in another beginner village.” Woody Forest shook his head.

“Cold Flow... Humph! It’s a pity we were short a basket in the previous quest and he gained the advantage. If not for that, he won’t have any business killing the BOSS!” growled the party member named Iron Head.

Iron Head was solidly built and was a straightforward guy. In all the games he’d played, he’d chosen the bold fighter class.

“It’s all my fault. If only my ambush on Cold Flow had succeeded... Then they wouldn’t have finished that quest.” The party’s assassin lowered his head in shame.

“Don’t blame yourself, Sixth. You didn’t do anything wrong. If Cold Flow is so easily ambushed, then he wouldn’t have been competing with us for three years with no clear winner.” Woody Forest patted Sixth on the shoulder.

Before GENESIS, there were already countless studios, big and small. Quite a few were like Woody Forest’s group and the one headed by Cold Flow was one of them.

All the studios were profiting in harmony and did their own thing. What you earned depended on your own capabilities.

However, Cold Flow had a huge appetite and was a risk-taker. He employed various insidious methods to attack his rivals. Woody Forest and his team were not aware of his nature at first and were attacked twice. They had to compensate quite a sum to their clients and their studio had problems that nearly made them disband.

Since then, their enmity for Cold Flow smouldered for three years as the two groups struggled to one-up each other. Unfortunately, neither side was able to do anything about the other.

This time, Cold Flow chose to play GENESIS too and destiny brought the two enemies together again. Both studios had appeared at the same time in Shadow City, one of the three main human cities. Both met the same NPC while levelling up at night and both received the same rare quest.

During the quest, Woody Forest's group had a greater advantage and completion was guaranteed. Of course, Woody Forest wanted to stop Cold Flow from completing the quest too but was unsuccessful.

Both groups finished that rare quest and the leaders received an additional reward, which was "Leader's Badge".

Once they received Leader's Badge, Woody Forest and Cold Flow knew that they had struck gold. The item allowed leaders to gather their party mates to their side once a day. So long as the party mates agree, the leader can summon fellow quest-takers straight to their side!

Both men's money-making minds thought of the beginner village BOSS right away. Level 10 Blue Grade and Green Grade equipment fetched good prices at this stage in the game – if they can get their hands on Purple Grade equipment, each piece would sell for several times the amount they used to get for a few single job requests!

They entered the game for money, so with an opportunity like this staring them in the face, Woody Forest and Cold Flow did not hesitate in committing suicide.

Leader's Badge was a special character-bound piece of equipment. It did not add to attributes but there was no level limit on its use and as long as the party members did not change their nicknames, they could be summoned, even in the beginner village. The party members would have to commit suicide too, of course. They also had to be in the same beginner village map as the leader or else the Leader's Badge would not be of use.

Woody Forest and Cold Flow had begun killing the Slime King in their respective maps. They did not even conceive the notion that there would be a third party out there with the capability to kill the BOSS.

“If it wasn't Cold Flow, then who was it?” Shallow Words frowned.

“Let's split up and investigate the area.” Woody Forest wanted to know too.

His members nodded and each went in a different direction.

Half an hour later, the six convened.

“I didn’t get anything worth investigating. Nobody saw any party that could take on the BOSS.”

“Same here.”

“Ditto.”

Woody Forest and his team shook their heads. They’d come up empty.

“I have something. I asked a player and he said he saw a hunter player heading towards the Slime King. He felt that the player’s equipment was none too shabby and wanted to party with him but the hunter was too quick. He chased after the hunter but was unable to catch him. When he stopped chasing him, he found himself in the Slime King’s aggro-zone and broke out in sweat but the BOSS did not rush out to kill him. Curious, he went to the BOSS’s spot to take a look and discovered that it had disappeared.” Shallow Words recited the story she had heard.

“You mean that hunter player killed the Slime King BOSS? On his own? In such a short period of time?” Shock showed in Woody Forest’s calm eyes.

“Surely the BOSS had been killed before the hunter arrived.” Iron Head sputtered.

But Shallow Words shook her head. “No. That person could still see the BOSS’s silhouette in the distance before it got dark. That hunter arrived after dark, and in the few minutes after he appeared, the BOSS disappeared.”

A single person killed the Slime King one-on-one?

Was there really such an OP person in the game?

... ..

Chen Mo was unaware that someone had discovered his one-on-one fights with the BOSS.

He committed suicide once again and got to Level 10, then got ready to kill the Mutated Slime King. He hired some players and was going to bring them to dig when he saw with surprise that a party was killing the BOSS.

This party’s equipment was not bad. They had at least Green Grade equipment on and the members coordinated with each other very well. They were all skilled players.

They were different from the ones he had seen on the forums. It was the other group.

After exiting Goblin Valley, Chen Mo had gone to the Slime Plains to check if the BOSS was there. He had not expected this party to show up while he was levelling up.

Chen Mo and his hired help did not get close before the party killing the Slime King spotted the four of them.

The female mage in the party glared at Chen Mo and his crew and coldly shouted in an arrogant voice, "if you want to die, do it somewhere else! Don't interrupt us when we're killing the BOSS!"

Chapter 37 – You Wanna Die?!

“Bitch, watch your mouth!”

The three male players hired by Chen Mo shouted back when they heard her.

They wouldn't pay any attention to this in real life but to be shouted at in a game like that sparked the flame of their anger. They were just walking by and were not even contemplating touching the BOSS. Being yelled at for no reason by that woman would make anyone angry.

“What, you guys retarded? Go fuck off somewhere. You think you can compensate us if you cause us to be unable to kill the BOSS? You, peasants in rags, pay us?” Cold Belle smirked as she looked at the three of them with despise in her eyes.

The people hired by Chen Mo did have some difficulties in real life. Chen Mo could tell that Cold Belle was good at discerning a person's thoughts from his body language and could gauge a person well.

“Boss, your cousin's a little overboard.” Cold Flow's fighter party mate quietly whispered to him.

“She's been in a bad mood these past few days. Just let her do what she wants. These people are beneath regular players and won't ever be important to us. So what if we offend them?”

Cold Flow glanced at the three players and shook his head in dismissal.

The game had already been released for over 10 days. What is there to fear from players who have gotten to Level 10 only now?

If they were wealthy, then they would be potential clients and Cold Flow would naturally be polite. However, one glance told him that these three would never be his clients so there was no need for him to be polite. There were so many people in the game that if one tried to be nice to everyone it would be like tying yourself up. Now, how can you play a game with your hand and feet bound?

Cold Belle's vicious words had struck a painful chord in the three of them. They were well and truly mad.

“Bro, we're not digging anymore. Please find someone else.”

The three of them abandoned Chen Mo but did not continue to trade words with Cold Belle. They charged at the BOSS in rage, meaning to use it to kill off Cold Belle and her party.

“You wanna die?! Pieces of trash! What do you think you'll accomplish?” Cold Belle mocked them as she watched them approach.

Cold Flow and his crew were very experienced. When the three players charged towards them, they changed their positions

accordingly.

The three intended to mess up the Slime King's aggro. Its aggro was pulled, but it started attacking the three. Before the three's charge reached Cold Flow and his party, they had already re-adjusted themselves to make the Slime King's aggro transfer to the three. It was as Cold Belle said – they came to die.

The three were killed by the Slime King in just two or three hits. Their actions did not disturb Cold Flow's party in the slightest.

Cold Belle took delight in their demise. She looked over at Chen Mo, who was still standing off to the side with his head lowered as in deep thought. “Your pals are dead. Aren't you going to join them? Or are you even lower than those pieces of trash? Too cowardly to come here to die, huh?”, she sneered.

Chen Mo was there to dig a pit so he did not equip his Purple Grade equipment. He only wore it when killing the BOSS or he would attract too much attention, even if he hid the glow of his equipment. From Cold Belle's perspective, Chen Mo was no different from the three players.

Chen Mo raised his head and stared at Cold Belle, looking her up and down.

“What're you looking at!” Cold Belle felt a weird vibe from his gaze and shouted at Chen Mo.

“I say, you look like a regular human but nothing good seems to come from your mouth. Why is everything you utter so foul?” Chen Mo asked curiously. He really didn’t get what this woman’s brain was made of.

“You wanna die?! You’re dead, you hear me? I’ll kill you whenever I see you in this game!” Cold Belle glared and shouted at Chen Mo in fury.

“Hey, small fry. Watch your mouth. Cross us and you won’t have an easy time in this game.” Cold Flow followed with a threat in a mild voice.

Damn, these guys sure think they’re superior! And they’re playing at threats too!

Even Buddha would get angry. Chen Mo thought of himself as a pretty good guy but this lit a flame of annoyance in him.

“What, so you think you’re invincible now because you can kill a BOSS?” Chen Mo looked at Cold Flow and Cold Belle and spoke coldly.

“We can kill the BOSS. You trash can only stand there and watch. It’s natural that we’re greater than you!” Cold Belle said arrogantly.

“Well! Great, are you? Show me how powerful you are then!” Chen Mo smiled coldly.

“Roar!”

The moment Chen Mo was done speaking, the Slime King suddenly let out a roar. Its body swelled in an instant and it changed from emerald to amethyst!

The Slime King! It mutated!

“Look out!” Cold Flow was taken by surprise. He did not expect the Slime King to mutate at this time.

They had killed quite a few Slime Kings but had never encountered a Mutated Slime King. They had no idea what to expect from the Mutated Slime King.

The Mutated Slime King, on the other hand, did not go easy on them. Cold Flow’s party’s attacks had landed on the Slime King as it mutated, so after mutation, a load of purple balls shot from its body.

Bang! Bang! Bang! ...

Cold Flow and his party were totally unprepared. Several balls hit each of them at once and small clouds of 700 and 800 damage points floated above their heads as all six were insta-killed.

The Mutated Slime King did not forget Chen Mo the instigator

and bounded towards him but Chen Mo had used his camouflage skill to disappear. The Mutated Slime King stopped.

Having killed the Mutated Slime King more than 10 times, Chen Mo was the foremost expert on its characteristics.

The Mutated Slime King's aggro range was large but divided into two zones. The first was a circle with a radius of 30m in which even his camouflage would be seen through. Outside this 30m radius, was the second zone in which his camouflage and stealth skills worked and decreased the Mutated Slime King's aggro.

“Why did the Slime King mutate?”

Cold Flow and his team were in sour moods when they revived in Ayer Town. The BOSS's HP had already dropped to the last 1/3 when it mutated unexpectedly and insta-killed them.

Furthermore, she had just dissed that hunter for being weak and then gotten insta-killed by the BOSS – a rather quick and painful slap to her ego. Cold Belle's good mood had lasted only briefly.

“Boss, what do we do now?”, asked the fighter.

“We go back and start again. I remember posts on the forums saying that the mutated BOSS will return to normal after a while.” Cold Flow was calm. He'd run a studio for a few years already and had experienced BOSSes insta-killing his party several times. No big deal.

He was not going to give up on this beginner village's BOSS. If he did, it would be a waste of an entire day and losses aside, Woody Forest's group would pull ahead.

About 10 minutes later, Cold Flow's party returned to the Slime King's spawning grounds.

Chen Mo sashayed over after they started attacking the BOSS.

The Slime King was not mutated. Chen Mo had logged off while they were away, effectively cancelling the effect of the Slime Poison.

"Weren't you guys supposed to be great? What's with you getting insta-killed, then?" Chen Mo mocked.

"Fuck off! I ain't got time for you!" Cold Belle shouted.

No time? Ha! Well, I have a lot of time! I'll teach you manners without lifting a finger myself!

Chen Mo smiled as he looked at Cold Belle and used a bottle of Slime Poison again.

Roar!

The Slime King roared and mutated again!

Cold Flow looked sharply at Chen Mo.

He had no proof but his years of gaming experience told him that the mutating BOSS in front of him had something to do with this guy!

Chapter 38 – Luck’s Effect

Cold Flow stared at Chen Mo. He wanted to question him but he found to his surprise that Chen Mo had disappeared.

He went offline?

Cold Flow suspected something but he had no time to dwell on it. The Mutated Slime King was coming at them.

They were mentally prepared for the BOSS to mutate but because they had been wiped out instantly earlier, it was like facing the Mutated Slime King for the first time now.

They were only just able to kill the Slime King anyway; they had no capacity to do more. The Mutated Slime King’s increased attributes enabled it to annihilate them in two attacks. Cold Flow knew then that they could never beat the Mutated Slime King.

Their fighter died in just two hits – and this was without it using any skills, otherwise they’d all be dead instantly!

“Dodge!” Cold Flow shouted. There was no penalty for death but nobody wanted to die.

Seeing its enemies try to escape, the Mutated Slime King rolled towards them in fury like a great big ball of death.

-775! -830! ...

Damage points floated up. This skill could only be blocked by a fighter player who had learnt “Shield”. Other classes stood no chance. The fighter in Cold Flow’s team had died but even if he hadn’t, they would not survive the Mutated Slime King’s attack.

Like Woody Forest, they took measures against the Slime King’s skills and characteristics to kill it. They spent a lot of money on equipment which had effects similar to skills. Only two or three class-specific skills could be learnt in the beginner villages and the fighter’s “Shield” skill could only be learnt at the Profession Union in one of the three main human cities.

The team’s assassin and fighter died quickly.

The remaining team members were Cold Flow (archer), Cold Belle (mage) and a priest.

They were a distance away from the BOSS but, even under normal circumstances and un-mutated, escape was improbable. The three of them tried to run but only managed to run half a length before the Mutated Slime King caught up and finished them off one by one.

“Boss, do we still go?”

At the Ayer Town revival point, the fighter looked to Cold Flow for instruction.

Dying twice in a row had drastically dampened the party's spirits.

“We go!” Cold Flow's face was a mask of determination. Of course he was going – he needed to confirm something!

Slime Plains.

His party of six engaged the Slime King again. Cold Flow was distracted while attacking, his eyes darting everywhere in search of something.

It would be dark soon. Neither hide nor hair of that hunter was to be seen.

Did that guy leave?

Cold Flow had his doubts.

“Roar!”

The Slime King let out a familiar roar. It had mutated again!

The Mutated Slime King was too powerful and the six of them fell dead in short order.

Cold Flow was still looking about before his death – searching for that hunter.

Two minutes passed. Nobody appeared. It was getting dark too and further off places could not be seen. Cold Flow gave up and reluctantly chose to revive.

Chen Mo revealed himself.

He knew that Cold Flow suspected him and he didn't care if he knew. Once the Wild Wolf Valley gets unlocked the existence of Slime Poison would be known by all. Even if Cold Flow found out sooner than others he was still unable to kill the Mutated Slime King so there was no advantage to be had for him there.

Want to know if the mutation was because of me? Like hell I'll tell you!

Curiosity killed the cat after all. I'll let you stew till your brains pop. Even better if you lose sleep over it!

When Chen Mo revealed himself, the Mutated Slime King roared and lunged at him.

Chen Mo put on his equipment with a wave of his hand and led the Mutated Slime King to his intended spot at a run.

He had hired four players to dig a pit the first time Cold Flow died. Chen Mo had helped too, of course, but when the estimated

time of Cold Flow's team's return came, he excused himself saying he had to logoff to attend to something. He then used his camouflage skill to sneak away to make Cold Flow's party die, and returned to dig.

He did not have the time to toy with Cold Flow's party. It would be great if they dropped equipment but unfortunately there was no loss in beginner villages if they died. Chen Mo did not want to waste time on them. Right now, he needed less than ten minutes to kill the Mutated Slime King. If Cold Flow and his team died, he would be able to kill the Mutated Slime King before they hurried back, and leave magnanimously.

Chen Mo had his pit ready before Cold Flow and his team died for the third time. He used his camouflage skill to get close, then made the Slime King mutate and kill them. The sky had darkened too, so Chen Mo lured the Mutated Slime King to his pit for the slaughter.

The Mutated Slime King died in under 10 minutes.

“Skill Mutation Scroll again? This item drops so often that it can't be rare. This isn't worth much, huh.”

Chen Mo looked in his backpack after picking up the items and couldn't help but mutter in disappointment.

A Skill Mutation Scroll, one piece of Green Grade equipment, nine pieces of Blue Grade Equipment – not a fruitful day.

He had five Skill Mutation Scrolls in all. Chen Mo thought this item was quite rare at first but after getting five for killing the Mutated Slime King ten times, he felt that the drop rate was too high and its rarity and value plummeted in his eyes.

He was unaware of the group of young men in Ash Blue Tech goggling at him on their screens.

Wha? How? This doesn't make sense! Why is the drop rate for the rare Skill Mutation Scroll so high?!

One dropping every five kills was already bending the laws of the universe but this guy here was averaging one every 2 kills! The drop rate's abnormal!

“Holy shit! His Freedom Leader title adds 3 Luck!”

“3 Luck at Level 10?! No wonder the drop rates didn't seem to make sense!”

A young man investigated and exclaimed.

“3 Luck isn't that much. Why's the drop rate so outrageous?” another young man asked.

3 Luck was not very much however you look at it. It shouldn't have such a ridiculous effect.

“You don’t get it. Luck is a very special attribute in this game. We all know that high Luck affects the probability values at crucial moments. However, Luck’s effect is influenced by several factors. The amount of Luck, the player’s level and the target’s level must be identical for Luck to have the greatest result. Look at him with his 3 Luck points – a Level 10 player against a Level 10 BOSS has the best result. If this player were Level 20 with 3 Luck and fighting a Level 10 BOSS, or if he were Level 10 with 3 Luck against a Level 20 BOSS, the effect of his Luck would be drastically lower.”

The other young men who didn’t understand it before got it now.

Now they finally knew why this guy’s good fortune was so abnormal – it was because of the three points of Luck!

It was very rare for players Level 10 and below to have 3 Luck. There were less than ten Level 10 players with 3 Luck in the entire game!

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“The BOSS... disappeared?” Cold Flow could not reconcile with his deaths. They had rushed back again only to find the Slime King gone.

They persisted and searched the surrounding area but found no trace of it.

What happened? Did the BOSS vanish on its own after mutating three times in succession?

This seemed to be most probable.

Unless... that hunter killed it all by himself.

The thought flashed in Cold Flow's head for just a moment before he quashed it.

He would never believe that the BOSS could be killed single-handedly.

You must be joking – a BOSS that his team could barely just kill... taken down by one little hunter? Hah!

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Chen Mo committed suicide, got out of the Goblin Valley and went to sleep as usual.

However, he was awakened by a phone call before noon.

Chapter 39 – A Commission Over 10000000!

“Chen-ge! Relaxed as always, huh? Still sleeping?” a cheery voice came from the phone. The silhouette of a wretched fatty surfaced in Chen Mo’s mind.

“Uh huh. What’s up, Old Tian?” Chen Mo awoke and asked.

This Fatty Tian never called him for nothing.

“Eh, Chen-ge! I told you not to call me Old Tian. I turn 18 this year!” Fatty Tian said in annoyance.

Chen Mo rolled his eyes. This damn fatso thinks he’s a deity or something. He said he was 18 years old two years ago and he’s still claiming to be 18 now – like hell he is!

“What is it? If you don’t have anything for me then I’m going back to sleep.” Chen Mo could not be bothered to waste words on this fatty.

“Ah! Don’t sleep! I have something! Chen-ge, I remember you accepted that strange commission, right?” Fatty Tian hurriedly said.

“Duh. You were the one who introduced me.” Chen Mo replied rudely.

Fatty Tian was not a hacker but he worked for a special middleman company. This company sourced various hacker-related jobs to different hackers for completion. The special commission to hinder the holographic virtual network was introduced to Chen Mo by Fatty Tian.

“Well, I’d like to know if you’ve entered the GENESIS game.”

“Yeah, I’m in. What? Is your company preparing to change industries?”

“Heh. More or less. I’m not gonna lie – according to our sources the traditional networks are a lost cause. If our company doesn’t change we’d close down. I’m calling to let you know that our company will be focusing on GENESIS and expanding our reach in it. The higher-ups want to have a meeting with you guys to discuss some new collaborations.” Fatty Tian explained.

“Expand their reach in the game? Is your company becoming a game studio?” Chen Mo found it laughable.

A hacker middleman company reduced to a game studio. No matter how one looked at it, the company seemed to have dropped quite a few ranks.

“Of course not! We are just trying something new. If we don’t do something now, we’d just be sitting around waiting to close down. I’d have wasted the past two, three years then.” Fatty Tian complained. He had worked for two years and finally got to a decent level. He had not expected this sudden change. If the

company went bankrupt, he would starve.

“Okay. What time, where and how?” asked Chen Mo.

“The company has set up a holographic conference room on the holographic network. I’ve already sent an invitation to your virtual account number via the social system. The meeting is at 6pm. Once you connect to the network, you can use the invitation to enter the conference room.

“Okay, I’ll go tonight.”

Chen Mo did not reject Fatty Tian’s invitation. He had always been curious about this hacker middleman company called “Worm Co.”. He had been in contact with Worm Co. and Fatty Tian for two years but had never seen any other staffer than Fatty Tian in all that time. Fatty Tian gave no straight answers when questioned either.

... ..

1800hrs.

Chen Mo returned to the game to level up in the afternoon and left only when it was almost 6pm. He connected to the holographic virtual network social system.

This system was still in the testing phase so invitations were needed to enter the system. It was very difficult to get an invitation

but it seemed like Worm Co. had some pull and was able to get an invitation for all the hackers it was associated with.

Every person in the Holographic Social System had a unique username and a search for the username will show information that the user was willing to make public. Chen Mo's username was "M.C."

The invite was essentially the same as traditional URL networks but the invite only worked for the corresponding username's character. After Chen Mo used the invite, his holographic character appeared in a snow-white, spacious space-age-feeling conference room.

There were already dozens of characters of various styles in conference room hall, waiting quietly in solitude.

Many looked over when Chen Mo appeared but nobody came to talk to him.

"Chen-ge, you're here!" a voice hailed him. Chen Mo knew without looking that it was Fatty Tian.

The Holographic Social System was more or less the same as the game and it also had various communication systems. No one else could tell that Chen Mo and Fatty Tian were chatting.

"Where are your company big wigs?" The speaker's platform at the front of the room was empty and there wasn't anyone close by

who looked like one of the higher-ups of Worm Co.

“Coming soon. Don’t worry, Chen-ge.”

Almost as soon as Fatty Tian replied, a figure of a middle-aged man appeared on the snow-white platform suddenly.

“Good evening, everyone. I am Worm Co.’s project manager for this conference and planning session. You can call me Black Fox. Everyone here is an elite hacker who has worked with Worm Co. for at least a year. Now, I will cut to the chase and not waste anyone’s time.

We called you here today to announce three things.

First, Worm Co. will, from this day forth, move our business to the new platform. We will still have jobs on the traditional networks in the short run but for the most part, the news is already out that traditional network businesses are dwindling.”

“Mr. Black Fox, if I may interrupt? By doing this, is your company insinuating that the disappearance of traditional networks is inevitable? Is it now entirely impossible to complete the commission that we accepted?”

Someone interrupted Black Fox’s speech.

“In regards to this problem, I am sorry but Worm Co. is unable to give a definite answer. From what I personally inferred from the

information our company received, the traditional networks will likely disappear within a year. Of course, this is just my own opinion and not representative of Worm Co. Please, those of you who accepted the commission, do not have misgivings. If you manage to complete the commission, your payment will not be a cent less than promised.” Black Fox did not appear annoyed by the interruption; he answered the questions with great patience.

It was a fucking good answer but the people there were not suckers. Worm Co. did not give a straight answer but judging from Black Fox’s attitude, the company had some information the hackers didn’t. The traditional networks were going to disappear and there was no doubt about it, otherwise the company would not have made such a big move.

Chen Mo muttered to himself under his breath after he heard Black Fox’s words.

Personally, he wanted to stop the holographic virtual network from replacing traditional networks but if it truly could not be stopped then he would not persist and waste his time.

However, he never did anything halfway. He would soon be able to conduct a series of experiments in the game. His continuing or giving up depended on the result of his experiments.

“Secondly, our company’s main businesses and resources will be transferred to GENESIS. We will make available a variety of game-related commissions and if you feel you can complete them, please contact us. You are all our elite hackers and already have varying levels of experience in the game. Accordingly, in GENESIS, no

normal player can hold a candle to you!” Black Fox went on to say.

When Chen Mo heard this, he smirked as he communicated to Fatty Tian, “Old Tian, your company’s a bit off target, isn’t it? Strong hacking skills are not equal to great game skills. It’s kind of far-fetched to rely on a group of hackers to complete game quests no matter how you look at it.”

Fatty Tian just chuckled, “Chen, I’ll tell you this in confidence – don’t tell anyone else. The people here are just a fraction of the total the company has invited. The company has also invited quite a few professional gamers and game studios for meetings.”

Ha! So that’s how it is! I knew it – Worm Co. won’t just depend on a group of hackers to help them. Seems like Worm Co. only prized the hackers’ capacity. The people here are the elite in this city so they may produce amazing results in the game. Worm Co. must be gambling on this; they won’t lose out either.

“Now, the third matter. I am now announcing the first big commission from Worm Co. after our big move. The reward for this commission may reach over 10 million. The commission is funded by the Glacier Group, so there is no worry about payment!”

Black Fox announced the third piece of news and everyone was shocked.

A game commission of over 10 million?

The game was only online for barely two weeks – how can this be?

Chapter 40 – Intention

A commission over 10 million! If that's true, then the reward for this is far greater than the reward for hindering the advance of the holographic virtual network!

Who cared about the survival of traditional networks? They'd be set for life if they complete this commission!

Hungry gazes locked onto Black Fox.

However, quite a few people smiled wryly to themselves. Black Fox said that it was the total reward amount – not individual!

“Everyone, please calm down. The reward amount is high but each person can only get at most 100,000CNY. We shall reveal the commission details now. The Glacier Group is funding Glacier Game Club and they are preparing to take down the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. Those interested can go for an interview with the representative of Glacier Game Club. Once you pass this interview, a 5000CNY reward is guaranteed.”

Black Fox went on to clear the doubts of his audience. For most of them though, the commission was still quite an attractive one.

“Black Fox, sir, could you give more details? I am interested.” A person spoke up.

“Of course. If you want to participate in killing the Flaming 3-

Headed Wolf, you need to gather in the same beginner village. All participants have to commit suicide for a chance to restart in the same beginner village as the one Glacier Game Club has chosen. Those who pass the interview and win the right to participate will get 5000CNY as suicide compensation. If you manage to suicide your way to their selected map, you will get at least 10,000CNY. Thereafter, you shall be rewarded according to your ability and contribution during the battle. The reward is capped at 100,000CNY. The Glacier Game Club also say that outstanding performance or provision of important items that play a role at critical moments can easily double or even triple your reward!”

Using such a primitive method to kill the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf – and at a cost of over 10,000,000? Not cheap.

Everybody knew that this commission did not have a huge payout for them but they were still blown away by the Glacier Group’s ostentatiousness.

There are so many things 10,000,000 can buy. Was it worth it to kill a beginner village BOSS?

Several people had doubts.

The hundreds of thousands the Richie Rich Club spent was worth it but the Glacier Game Club was going to spend over ten million. Even if they killed the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf the cost of publicity was higher than revenue. Direct advertising seemed more practical.

Black Fox was about to explain more about the Glacier Group when Chen Mo suddenly spoke up. “When is the deadline for sign-ups? If possible, I would like to know when they intend to go kill the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. If it’s going to take a long time then getting a few thousand is meaningless.”

“That’s right.”

“Yeah, that’s true.”

Quite a few people agreed.

Black Fox nodded. “This is not a secret. The deadline for sign-ups is midnight tomorrow. If all goes well, the attack will commence within two days following the sign-ups.”

If this was another matter, then the time would not have been made public. However, this Glacier Game Club wanted to use the opportunity to gain fame and recognition so there was no need to keep the time a secret. They did not have to worry about others trying to interfere either.

“This concludes our conference. Other than the commission from Glacier Game Club, we also have other game commissions. Please contact our company for inquiries about these other commissions as we shall not make these public.”

Seeing that nobody had further questions, Black Fox concluded the conference.

Interested parties approached Black Fox. Though Chen Mo had seemed interested, he did not approach. He turned to leave.

A virtual character suddenly shoved itself in his path.

“You’re Chen Mo?” asked the character named W.X.

M.C. – Mr. Chen. This was not the first time Chen Mo had used this nickname. This person knew him!

“Wang Xu?” Chen Mo asked with hostility when he looked at the person’s nickname.

His voice was a little different from real life but it was familiar upon listening more closely.

Chen Mo and Wang Xu were both hackers from Nan Hua City. Being in the same line of work, they were enemies of sorts who frequently had run-ins with each other. Wang Xu lost most of the time and suffered heavily too. He was especially bitter about it as he had entered the industry much earlier than Chen Mo so he tried to make things difficult for Chen Mo whenever he could.

“It is I.” Wang Xu replied frostily.

“We’ve got nothing to say to each other.”

Wang Xu was a small-minded, petty man. Chen Mo was sure he wasn’t here to make nice.

“Heh heh! We have nothing to say to each other, huh? Why don’t we talk about your younger sister?” Wang Xu sniggered nastily, the threat in his words evident.

He had been investigating Chen Mo’s background for two years and recently found out that this guy had a beautiful younger sister.

He could do nothing about Chen Mo but his sister – now she he can harass easily... Unless she didn’t use a computer at all.

Wang Xu anticipated a look of defeat after hearing his threat but Chen Mo only spared him a brief glance. “Wang Xu, I am not belittling you but if that’s all you got then you should study more.”

“Fine! If that’s how you’re playing it then don’t come begging later!” Wang Xu said angrily and sneered before he suddenly disappeared.

“Chen, bro! Aren’t you signing up?” Chen Mo was about to leave but this time, Fatty Tian’s anxious voice stopped him.

Fatty Tian was ‘in charge’ of Chen Mo, so if Chen Mo performed well for Worm Co., his standing within the company would go up.

He did not know how well Chen Mo was doing in the game but he was confident in his gut instinct. He could feel that establishing a good working relationship with Chen Mo would benefit him, no doubt about it!

“Not interested.” Chen Mo shook his head in rejection and left the conference room without giving Fatty Tian a chance to convince him to stay.

Not only was he not interested, he was also going to ambush Glacier Group’s venture! He was going to let the Glacier Group sink money into this project and come away from it empty-handed, losing money and reputation!

He had asked Black Fox questions just to confirm the time Glacier Game Club was going to act!

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“Argh! He drives me mad! Think you’re so great, huh? I’ll mess up your little sister – see how great you are then!” Wang Xu was hopping mad. He took off his virtual helmet and walked to a spacious room where a high-end computer sat.

He switched it on and smirked as he prepared to do some hacking.

He had Chen Mo’s sister’s address and knew which computer she

used and was sure he had the upper hand, otherwise he would not have threatened Chen Mo.

Once he hacked into her computer and gained access to her personal data, Chen Mo would be sure to cave and come crawling in apology. He won't let him off so easily then!

“Humph! Hacking into a university student's computer is only a matter of minutes!” Wang Xu discovered that the target computer was in use and he immediately started to hack into it. He had forgotten that Chen Mo was also just a university student.

“Good! Just a little more... Humph! Chen Mo, just you wait! You'll come begging me for forgiveness! Hahaha!... Eh? What's going on?”

Wang Xu found a hole in the target computer's security and exploited it as usual. At first glance it looked like he had successfully hacked into the computer but he discovered to his horror that his own hard disk had started whirring crazily!

Wang Xu's expression changed rapidly.

He had been counter-hacked and the invader had planted the “Hard Disk Destroyer” virus in his computer!

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“The Glacier Game Club has been established!”

“Lavishly funded by the Glacier Group!”

“The Club’s aim – to kill the undefeated hidden BOSS, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf!”

The game forums were full of posts about Glacier Game Club.

They were eye-catching paid advertisement posts but the Glacier Group name and the target monster were attention-worthy in themselves.

The Glacier Group, one of China’s top ten consortiums, was the first to invest so flagrantly in a game!

Where there’s a first, a second was sure to follow. Many believed that this was a sign that the top ten consortiums would join in one after the other.

The Glacier Game Club had yet to do anything but their name had become recognized by all players.

Chen Mo smiled wryly at the posts.

Nice plan, but the secret weapon needed to take down the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf is in my hands! Glacier Group, you have miscalculated this time!

Chapter 41 – Collecting The Set

Once the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf died, everyone would be able to obtain a bottle of Slime Poison and killing the Slime King would be troublesome for Chen Mo, so he wanted to get the Slime King Necklace before that happened.

But never in his wildest dreams did he expect a unique-looking necklace to fall on the ground after midnight when he was done killing the Mutated Slime King.

Slime King Necklace

Description: A necklace that is part of the Slime King's collection. Collect three different pieces of the Slime King's Jewellery Collection to unlock hidden attributes.

Equipment grade: Purple, part of a set

Limit: Level 10 and above

Attributes:

Basic Physical Attack +20

Basic Magic Attack +20

Strength +25

Intelligence +25

Agility +20

Additional attribute: Slime King's Roar

Slime King's Roar: Player's movement speed increases by 3 after using skill and player can jump 2m high but receives 10% more

damage. Effects last for 10 seconds. Cooldown 1 minute.

Special effect: Collect all three pieces of the Slime King Jewellery Collection to unlock set effect.

The Slime King Jewellery set was complete, just like that!

Chen Mo could not believe his eyes. He knew he would get the set sooner or later but today was a little outside his field of expectations.

Once he picked it up, Chen Mo ignored the rest of the items on the ground and immediately equipped the Slime King Necklace.

The three pieces flared with light and a system prompt pinged!

System prompt: The Slime King Jewellery set special effect has been unlocked!

Chen Mo looked at the special effect.

Special effect: Slime King's Majesty

Slime King's Majesty: The skills and effects of the Slime King Jewellery set is greatly enhanced!

– Slime poison: Whenever the player attacks a target, the target

will have a 50% chance of being poisoned. After being poisoned, the target will have -25HP per second. Effect lasts for 5 seconds. Poisoning effect stack maximum 5 times.

– Slime King’s Call: Summon a Level 15 Mutated Slime to fight for you. Colour of the summoned Mutated Slime is random. Summoned Slime is active for 3 min. Skill cooldown 5min.

– Slime King’s Roar: After using the skill, the player and his comrades’ movement speed increases by 3 after using skill and player can jump 2m high but receives 10% more damage. Effects last for 10 seconds. Cooldown 1 minute.

The set effect did not look too special but Chen Mo’s eyes gleamed when he saw it.

The skills were greatly enhanced. Slime Poison’s chance of poisoning the enemy and effect went up significantly. Slime King’s Roar could now be used for comrades as well. The most important boost was to Slime King’s Call. Originally, he was only able to summon an ordinary Level 13 Slime. Now, he could summon a Level 15 Mutated Slime!

Chen Mo had never gone up against a Mutated Slime before but from what he experienced with Goblins, the Mutated monsters were not just a little stronger than the regular ones, not to mention a Mutated Slime! With a Mutated Slime, he became more confident in his upcoming battle with Enoch!

He had all pieces of the Jewellery Collection and still lacked two

pieces of Purple equipment but he felt like he could go battle Enoch right then because of the boosted attributes.

However, Chen Mo was in no rush. He had plenty of time and Glacier Game Club had about two days to go to kill the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. He could still kill the Mutated Slime King two more times and if he was lucky, he'd get one more piece of Purple equipment and increase his chances in the showdown with Enoch.

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Game forums. Reality.

For the past two days, the names Glacier Game Club and Glacier Group had become hot topics.

The Glacier Group invested 10 million, established the Glacier Game Club and they were going to kill the only hidden BOSS discovered so far – the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf!

Everyone knew about the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. Seven out of ten players had gone to Wild Wolf Valley to take a look at the monster and experience its overwhelming power.

Add Glacier Group and Glacier Game Club's fanning of flames to the mix and the news of the upcoming battle with the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf became known by all.

The Glacier Group had also put word out that several popular

television stations from the region would cover and broadcast the entire event in two days' time at 9pm!

The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf was nigh impossible to kill for Level 10 players. A question was put forth to Glacier Game Club's representative, Bottomless Glacier. He smilingly replied that Glacier Game Club had a way to kill the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. It will surely meet its end!

The night before Glacier Game Club's battle, Chen Mo went alone to the Northern part of Ayer Town.

Knock, knock.

“Enter, Adventurer.”

This was the rendezvous point with Enoch. Chen Mo knocked and Enoch's voice came from inside.

Chen Mo pushed the door open and walked in.

Bang!

The door slammed shut behind him.

Chen Mo noiselessly prepared a Quake Trap. Enoch's chilly voice reached his ears. “Shameless Adventurer, do you repent for your sin?”

“What sin?” Chen Mo replied. No matter which answer he gave the result was the same.

“Hah! You deny it? I called you here to teach you a lesson on behalf of all females. Repent!”

Enoch’s pretty face came into sharp focus as she sprang into action and charged at Chen Mo.

She was different from her usual gray-clad self. The Enoch now was dressed all in armour and armed with a black dagger – an assassin NPC!

Enoch’s first attack was frightening – not because it dealt a lot of damage but because this attack enabled her to control Chen Mo and he would not be able to counterattack.

He had been caught by her before so he knew the attack. He must avoid it!

How was he going to avoid it?

Simple!

Quake Trap! Explode!

Bang!

The Quake Trap exploded. Chen Mo and Enoch were blasted apart in an instant!

Chen Mo was pushed 2m back and Enoch 1m. Enoch's first attack failed!

Chen Mo was not sure what she would do next. He immediately used Slime King's Call!

A Green Slime appeared!

It was a poisonous Mutated Slime, of course!

“Good!”

Chen Mo's heart leapt for joy at the sight.

His ideal Slimes for Enoch were Black and Green Slimes.

The Black Slime had super defences and could block Enoch's attacks. The Mutated Green Slime could poison its attacker and the poison damage had the added effect of lowering the attacker's defences and slowing movement speed!

Hu!

Upon being summoned, the Mutated Green Slime struck Enoch, who had yet to recover from the Quake Trap!

A damage number floated up from Enoch's head. Her movement speed suddenly slowed!

Chapter 42 – Danger Time

Once Enoch slowed, Chen Mo moved and sprang inside the room.

The room for the Rendezvous quest was large – at least ten metres wide. Chen Mo had greater movement speed now but he did not want to get driven into a corner by Enoch. If she used any surprise trapping attacks then he would have no way out.

“Come.”

Under Chen Mo’s command, the Mutated Green Slime stopped attacking Enoch and bounced behind him.

“Scoundrel! Where do you think you’re going!” Enoch’s aim was to catch Chen Mo. Having failed at her first attempt, she came chasing, hot on his heels.

However, she was hit by a Basic Trap which Chen Mo had thrown.

Chen Mo could only throw his trap seven metres. This distance could not even be considered mid-range but in this battle, it was enough.

Bang!

The Basic Trap exploded. Enoch’s speed fell yet again!

The trap's usually low probability of having a disabling effect took effect at this moment!

“My luck's not bad!”

Poison Tinted Crossbow!

Chen Mo did not waste his chances. He immediately used the Poison Tinted Crossbow's skill to attack Enoch.

The weapon came with a weak poison skill. Chen Mo's poison skill now was just the basic one – it was a little stronger than entry level. Every attack would have an additional 7 poison damage with a chance of 5 more points of damage.

Chen Mo fired. Enoch tried to avoid them but with her lowered speed and the short distance, it was impossible for her to dodge.

-211!

-7!

-25!

-200!

A bolt flew through the air. Four different damage numbers floated above Enoch's head.

The first, red number was Chen Mo's hit. The second, third and fourth were all poison damage. Second and third were from the crossbow and the slime while the last 200 was from Poison Tinted Crossbow's weapon effect.

Add the damage dealt by the Mutated Green Slime and Enoch had lost about 600 HP quite quickly.

“Not bad. Enoch's defence is not high and her HP bar's not that long either. Looks to be about 30,000. Not a lot.” Chen Mo observed and felt more assured of Enoch's defeat.

No matter which way you looked at it, the Mutated Slime King's attributes were all higher than Enoch's. He could use clever tactics on the monster but Enoch had to be dealt with the hard way.

“Block her!”

The fuming Enoch was going to come at him. Like hell he was going to let her come close. Assassins were best at controlling movements. If he let her come close, he would most likely be taken down by a set of attacks.

Though Chen Mo was unable to get the last two pieces, the upper body and headgear, for a full Purple Grade equipment set, his

current equipment was unparalleled among Level 10 players. However, his opponent was Enoch so he could not compare her to players. He was not sure if his current HP would be enough to withstand a set of attacks from Enoch either.

The Mutated Green Slime obediently hopped over to block Enoch.

Its every attack had a 100% chance of poisoning the target, continuing to lower attack power and movement speed. The damage was not much but it helped.

Enoch was attacked by the Mutated Green Slime again. The movement-slowing effect that was about to run its course got renewed, angering her further.

“Mid-chop!”

The cold blade of her dagger flashed as it cut across the Mutated Green Slime’s middle.

A line of blood appeared in the Mutated Green Slime’s midsection. It suddenly felt like the part of its body under the line of blood had disappeared. It tried its best to jump closer to attack Enoch but discovered that its lower body was not under its control. It could only glower at Enoch with big, round eyes.

“Shit! Bloody hell!”

Chen Mo became even more vigilant.

He definitely could not let Enoch get close or he'd be dead!

Chen Mo knew he was depending only on his speed now. He had Purple Grade equipment but this only gave him the basics of doing battle with Enoch. He dreaded Enoch getting close. She would gain control of him and throw him into the Land of Divine Punishment!

The designer of this quest must not want any player to be able to complete it.

Then... why didn't the quest designer simply make Enoch undefeatable?

Chen Mo found it curious. From what he knew, there had yet to appear an NPC that was undefeatable in GENESIS.

While Enoch was being blocked by the slime, Chen Mo attacked several times. Enoch's HP had dropped by about 2000. The poison crossbow and slime speed had also stacked 5 times and 4 times respectively making Enoch's HP drop by 135 points per second. Add Chen Mo's attacks and her HP was dropping rapidly by over 300 points per second.

If he factored in the Poison Tinted Crossbow's weapon effect, and if it continued at this pace, Enoch would die in three minutes!

However, Chen Mo knew it would not be so simple. Enoch

endured hits from Chen Mo. The slime was unable to get close to Enoch and the disabling effect had worn off. After the slime's movement slowing effect wore off, Enoch's speed suddenly increased. Her face was a mask of cold fury as she moved to attack Chen Mo.

Enoch did not avoid the crossbow attacks by Chen Mo. This damage was nothing.

This shameless Adventurer's speed was no match for hers. She could take the damage – once she gets close, this Adventurer will have nowhere to run!

“Heh! Trying to get close? In your dreams!”

Chen Mo grinned at Enoch. Enoch knew not why he grinned till she discovered that his movement speed had suddenly increased!

Degenerate title!

Low Level Mutated Agility Drug!

Chen Mo quickly equipped his Degenerate title and drank the drug. His speed increased by 5!

He had not equipped the Degenerate title before entering.

He had originally intended to rely on the Mutated Green Slime to hold Enoch off for as long as possible. He did not want to reveal his top speed that early in the battle. Besides, he did not know what countermoves Enoch had.

Unfortunately, he could not count on the slime now. The chance of the Basic Trap having the slow-down effect was also very low. If he did not use his top speed now, Enoch would catch up to him and it'd be game over.

“You're not getting away! Lightning attack!”

Seeing Chen Mo speed up, Enoch's features steeled as she shouted and she suddenly became a blur!

Not good!

Chen Mo had predicted that Enoch would have a countermove but he did not expect it to be so overwhelming. If his calculations were right, the attack would land on him in the next second!

Nobody can finish this quest!

This quest was most likely without a definite reward after completion!

In that instant, Chen Mo grew more convinced of his prior conjecture.

It was highly probable that he would be captured the moment the attack landed!

However, Chen Mo was not going to quietly await death. He used

a skill right when he saw her blur and disappear.

Wind-speed Dodge!

Bam!

The instant he used the Wind-speed Dodge skill, a figure appeared in front of him and a black dagger stabbed him vehemently!

MISS!

However, this attack landed on empty air!

The 20% chance of evading an attack from the Wind-speed Dodge skill saved Chen Mo's life!

Chen Mo broke out in cold sweat as he rushed to the Mutated Green Slime 'wall'.

Freaking shit! He won't be so lucky next time!

If he'd known this woman had this skill, he would not have let the slime leave his side!

A new battle plan formed in Chen Mo's mind in an instant!

Chapter 43 – Witch Of Divine Punishment

Chen Mo had not foreseen that he could not afford to be attacked by Enoch even once.

However, he knew his guess of Enoch's 30,000 HP was not going to be too far off the mark.

He might have given up on this quest right away if he'd known that he would not defeat Enoch unscathed.

The difficulty level was too high. If he had not gotten the Slime King Jewellery Set, enabling him to summon a Mutated Slime for help, he would have no chance at all in defeating Enoch.

Now, with a Mutated Slime, Chen Mo had a way to deal with Enoch.

He ran to the Mutated Green Slime and hid behind it, then downed a bottle of Low-Level Mutated Strength Drug.

Other than adding 20 points to Strength, the Low-Level Mutated Strength Drug enabled the user to deal an additional 20 damage to physical attacks on enemies.

This drug was rare. Chen Mo only got three bottles from killing Mutated Goblins six times. He was loath to use it but the situation demanded it.

He gulped the drug, and immediately started firing wildly with his crossbow at the advancing Enoch.

Enoch had not expected her lightning attack to fail. She became more incensed and determined to catch Chen Mo.

But Chen Mo was not going to give her another chance to get to him. The spacious room had no obstacles but Chen Mo made one out of the Mutated Green Slime to protect himself.

Normal Slimes were at most as big as a basketball. Mutated Slimes, on the other hand, were three times bigger – akin to a large balloon.

Enoch's speed now was no match for Chen Mo's. She could not catch him while he circled the Mutated Slime.

Additionally, with the Mutated Slime between himself and Enoch, she was unable to attack him with her lightning attack.

He was not very bothered by her other attack since it would just land on the Mutated Slime. He made the Mutated Slime stay in one spot to act as an obstacle; it only jumped up to hit Enoch whenever she approached.

Bolt after bolt hit Enoch. Poison Tinted Crossbow, Slime Poison, the crossbow skill and the added damage from Mutated Strength Drug combined to enable Chen Mo to deal close to 400 DMG per bolt. Enoch's HP fell quickly and she lost over 10,000 HP in a short

time. Her HP was now under 20,000.

“Shadow Ambush!” Enoch could stand it no longer. With a flick of her wrist, a line of shadow shot towards Chen Mo.

Though he made use of the Mutated Slime to make Enoch run around in circles, Chen Mo had not let his guard down for even a second. He watched Enoch closely and when he saw her move her wrist, he knew from the angle of her movement that she was about to use a new skill.

However, this skill was more than he had expected!

Enoch’s attack seemed to make her dagger become a shadow. She hurled it towards him.

It was different from the Lightning attack. When she used it, she could move herself directly in front of Chen Mo. However, the Mutated Slime occupied the space in front of Chen Mo, so she could not use the skill due to the blocked space. Shadow Ambush, on the other hand, passed above the Mutated Slime’s head and continued on its trajectory towards Chen Mo.

Because of his hyper-awareness of Enoch, Chen Mo detected the skill right away so he was still able to dodge it despite the suddenness of the attack.

But the moment she used Shadow Ambush, her body tensed like the string on a bow. Chen Mo had a strong feeling that no matter

which way he dodged, Enoch would be there by his side, successful in her attempt to get close and attack him!

It was unavoidable!

Chen Mo instantly made his decision.

He could not afford to get hit by her attack. What could he do?

Wind-speed Dodge's effect had ended but even if it was still active, the chance of avoidance was just 20%. The likelihood of being hit was still quite high.

Slime King's Roar!

“Jump!”

Chen Mo did not avoid the attack but he was not helpless either.

He used Slime King's Roar to boost the stats for himself and his summoned slime, then commanded the slime to jump.

The Mutated Slime's jumping height was pathetic and it was not possible for it to jump and block Enoch's shadow dagger but under the influence of the boost, its jumping height increased by two metres!

The Mutated Slime executed Chen Mo's command without hesitation.

The shadow dagger whistled through the air as the Mutated Slime jumped. The dagger struck the Mutated Slime and a damage number of 700+ floated above the slime's head as its speed suddenly slowed.

Not only did Shadow Ambush deal a lot of damage, it also had a negative effect. A grey-glow appeared in the Mutated Slime's sparkly black eyes – blindness.

Slowing and blinding! If this mid-range attack hit him, he would be either captured or dead!

He knew it – not one attack of hers must land on him!

Enoch's eye widened and her tensed body loosened. She's never imagined that the Mutated Slime would jump up and block her attack.

“Heh heh. Any more moves? You'd better use them!” Chen Mo provoked Enoch.

It was best to have her use all her moves while Slime King's Roar was still in effect.

However, Enoch just glared at Chen Mo and stuck to her old plan of trying to get closer to him.

Chen Mo would not give her a chance, of course. They circled the Mutated Slime as Chen Mo shot bolts and threw the occasional Basic Trap at Enoch.

Chen Mo wanted to avoid using up the Quake Traps if he could; they could be used to save his life.

Enoch was unable to get close to Chen Mo to attack and she was getting hit by a continuous barrage of bolts. Her HP dropped to below 10,000, then dropped further.

9000HP... 7000HP...

Chen Mo kept a close watch on Enoch. He was getting nervous.

Technically speaking, Enoch was at most a Level 10 BOSS. As the mightiest of the Level 10 BOSSes, the Mutated Slime King did not mutate when its HP dropped to a certain point, so it followed that Enoch would not either.

But Enoch and the Mutated Slime King were different. She was an NPC with an actual backstory and status, unlike the low-level Slime King BOSS, which anyone could kill. Chen Mo would not find it strange if she were to undergo some change at certain HP levels.

6000 HP!... 4000 HP!...

Just 15% HP left!

There was still no change in Enoch. Did this mean she would not mutate?

The final spurt! Finish her off!

At this point, Chen Mo became less cautious. While he still dodged Enoch's attacks, his own attacks grew increasingly accurate and fiercer. Enoch's HP went down rapidly!

Remaining HP.....3000 !

The final 10%!

“Shameless Adventurer! You are stronger than you seem! However, Evil can never triumph over Justice! Appear, Witch of Divine Punishment!”

Just 10% of Enoch's HP was left when that Chen Mo had feared would happen, happened.

Enoch stopped chasing Chen Mo and retrieved an ancient wooden plaque from her backpack. As soon as the words left her mouth, the wooden plaque started glowing with a black light.

Chen Mo felt the ground soften. The entire floor's surface had turned into a dark swamp.

A familiar dark figure emerged from the swampy surface in the middle of the room.

Chen Mo was surprised when he saw the figure.

The Witch of Divine Punishment was the same as the figures he had seen in the land of Divine Punishment!

Chapter 44 – Captive

The Witch of Divine Punishment gave Chen Mo an expressionless glance as its pitch-black body sank into the mud of the swamp below.

Chen Mo's heart sank as he watched Enoch's body start to sink into the ground as well.

Shit, shit, motherfucking freaking shit! This quest had no chance of being completed!

Chen Mo knew better than anyone how powerful the Witch of Divine Punishment was. His HP was at 1300+ now but it still was not enough to withstand an attack from the Witch.

There's no other choice but to go for it!

“Slime King's Roar!”

Slime King's Roar added two metres to his jumping height within ten seconds. Moving about on the swampy surface made him a target of the Witch's attack so increasing his jumping height and leaping about increased his chances of avoiding attack.

The problem was Enoch's position. He had to find her immediately and attack her or he would not have any further chances after his ten seconds were up!

“Venomous Roar!”

With Enoch hidden in the depths of the swamp, Chen Mo had no other way – he used the Mutated Green Slime’s only active skill.

After using Venomous Roar, the Mutated Green Slime would let out a roar and all surrounding enemies enter a poisoned state. Enemies will get -100HP per second and the effect lasts for seven seconds. Cooldown was five minutes.

Chen Mo regarded this skill as the Mutated Green Slime’s most useless skill since -700HP in seven seconds was like peanut crumbs to a monster with high HP.

However, in this instance, this skill was a lifesaver!

“Got you!”

Two green -100 poison damage numbers floated out of the pitch-black swampy surface in two different locations!

Enoch and the Witch were hidden in the swamp but they were still within the Mutated Green Slime’s attack range. Venomous Roar was effective!

Chen Mo could only see two damage numbers but he knew instinctively which was Enoch’s number.

He fired at her location without a second thought.

Thwump!

-366!

-100!

-35!

-75!

-20!

A muffled impact was heard. The bolt had caused a string of damage.

Chen Mo's set of known skills now were pathetic but his set of excellent equipment and its effects helped to increase his damage output. Enoch's HP dropped to about 2500 in the blink of an eye.

There's hope!

If he kept at this speed, he would defeat Enoch in five seconds!

He fired a bolt, then quickly stepped back as he threw a trap in front of himself and jumped to the left.

Boom!

At the height of one metre of his jump, the trap exploded as a pitch-black figure emerged from the swamp's surface.

It was the Witch of Divine Punishment. Chen Mo could roughly calculate its speed from the point it has disappeared into the swamp and the point the poison damage number had appeared.

This summoned Witch was not as powerful as the Witches in the Land of Divine Punishment and it was much slower. Chen Mo would not stand a chance in the slightest otherwise.

If it were not for Slime King's Roar, he would not be able to avoid the Witch's attack.

A second ticked past. Two poison damage numbers floated up again. Chen Mo aimed at Enoch and let another bolt fly.

Enoch had changed position but the green poison damage number marked her location.

She had summoned the Witch but she herself did not have much HP left. By not engaging in direct battle, it meant that she wanted

to avoid and escape somehow but unfortunately for her, the poisoning made it impossible.

This attack whittled 500HP from Enoch. She had less than 2000HP left!

Enoch emerged from the swamp. She knew that if she kept to her old plan, she would be defeated by this Adventurer.

Enoch charged at Chen Mo. She intended to join forces with the Witch to attack him!

Chen Mo felt a jolt of alarm. Dodging one Witch was taxing enough, add Enoch to the equation and he's a dead duck!

What should he do?

Defeat Enoch before she gets close!

This was the only way!

Attack!

Hit!

Enoch still had... roughly 1500HP!

Continue!

Another bolt!

Enoch's HP was under 1000. Two more attacks and she's finished!

However, Chen Mo had no time to attack now. Enoch and the Witch were right in front of him!

He could not attack now – if he did, Enoch's attack would definitely land!

Quake Trap!

At this important juncture, the humble Quake Trap proved its might yet again.

Chen Mo backed away and threw a Quake Trap.

Boom!

Enoch, the Witch and Chen Mo were all pushed backwards by the trap!

But this was just a stop-gap measure. Enoch and the Witch were upon him in the next second!

Camouflage!

Chen Mo stayed calm in that crucial moment and used his camouflage skill in the midst of retreat.

Enoch stopped her rush at Chen Mo once she lost sight of him.

Chen Mo's camouflage hid him from Enoch but it could not hide him from the Witch. The swamp was its territory after all.

That was why he fired a bolt at Enoch, revealing his location before the camouflage wore off.

At the same time as he revealed himself, he leapt with all his might towards the Mutated Slime, avoiding the lunging Witch!

But the instant he revealed himself, Enoch reacted and was almost upon him before his feet touched the ground.

“Jump!”

Chen Mo shouted mid-leap.

It was as though the Mutated Slime below had been waiting for his command all along; it jumped over without hesitation and blocked Enoch!

-1100!

Enoch's vicious dagger stabbed the Mutated Slime. Its HP decreased in an instant but her attack did not reach Chen Mo.

Chen Mo landed lightly on his feet and his bolt hit Enoch.

Several damage numbers floated up. Enoch's movements ceased abruptly and she collapsed.

The moment Enoch hit the floor, the Witch and the swamp disappeared and the room returned to normal.

System prompt: You completed the quest "Rendezvous"!

System prompt: You gain 100 Silver coins!

System prompt: You have captured "Enoch"!

Chen Mo let out a sign of relief. Three system prompts flashed and his steps faltered when he read them.

"So there's a reward after all."

He'd gambled on the game designers forgetting to set a reward for the quest, resulting in a dead loop but his gamble had not borne fruit.

Chen Mo was not surprised at the outcome.

If the game designers truly did not expect anyone to complete the quest, there would be no reward and Chen Mo's gamble would have paid off.

This was a game after all. There must be a set reward for the quest to be created in the game in the first place.

Chen Mo figured out something from this quest.

There is no uncomplete-able quest in GENESIS!

This was the premise of all quests, otherwise "Rendezvous" could never be completed and no matter how powerful Chen Mo's became, his efforts would be in vain.

The quest rewards were pitifully little. If you didn't count Enoch's capture, the reward was just a measly 100 silver coins. If it were another player who'd expended so much effort for so little, he or she would've been frothing at the mouth.

But Chen Mo was calm. He looked at the heavily-injured, motionless Enoch and grinned.

Though his gamble failed and the reward wasn't much, it wasn't important. What was important was that he had captured an NPC.

Right now, no one else in the game has captured an NPC!

Chen Mo had wanted to do all sorts of experiments on NPCs since quite some time ago. How could he miss this rare chance!

Chapter 45 – Extortion And Blackmail

Enoch was in a heavily injured state and lay motionless on the ground. Chen Mo walked to her prone body, all smiles, and took a rope out of his backpack.

Enoch should not be able to move for a while but it was safer to tie her up, just in case.

He trussed her up and found that he was quite skilled at tying people up. The rope binding Enoch resembled the Japanese [Kikkou](#) bondage. Enoch's body was already sexy but the rope made her body even more alluring. Even seasoned men could not hold back if they saw her.

Dang, this won't work – the rope's too tight! Won't be able to take her clothes off like this.

If he couldn't remove clothing, he won't be able to conduct his experiment.

It couldn't be helped. Chen Mo loosened the rope and re-tied her in a simpler pattern. He only had to secure her hands and feet to stop her from wriggling out of the rope.

Enoch awoke and found herself all tied up while the Adventurer removed pieces of her clothing. She cried, "Shameless man! Wha, what are you doing?!"

“Taking your clothes off”, replied Chen Mo honestly.

This holographic virtual game’s so realistic! He’d had many ideas for quite some time now... How could he be satisfied if he did not try everything he can with a captive NPC? Taking her clothes off was just the beginning.

“Release me immediately! If the townsfolk find out, you’ll be banished from the human cities forever!” threatened Enoch.

From what she knew of Adventurers, they were very afraid of banishment from human cities.

“So that will happen if they find out? Hmm, that’s harsh.” Chen Mo nodded.

Too bad! I’m a super Adventurer who commits suicide every day! So what if I’m banished? I’ll just commit suicide and restart!

While they were talking, Chen Mo had already undone all the buttons on Enoch’s leather equipment.

“Stop, or I’ll scream!” Enoch said in alarm.

“You live in a pretty remote area so there’s nobody close by. If you scream, I’ll just shove something in your mouth to shut you up, then take my sweet time with you.” Chen Mo spoke quietly and showed not an ounce of fear.

“Furthermore, if someone really comes I’ll claim that you seduced me. I was invited here by you after all. Now, even if the townsfolk believe you, your reputation will be ruined.” Chen Mo presented Enoch with a threat of his own.

When Enoch heard what Chen Mo said, her chest tightened and she was silent.

NPCs could be lied to and threatened!

Chen Mo had successfully lied to Gleason in Wild Wolf Valley and now his threat worked on Enoch too. This game’s reality factor’s off the charts! It’s way more advanced than traditional games.

WTF? NPCs wear bras too?!

While Enoch kept her mouth shut, Chen Mo removed her leather ‘coating’. He was speechless when he saw her black silk bra.

He reached out to take it off but discovered that he was unable to touch it.

System prompt: You have insufficient favour points / slave points to continue!

Fuck yeah! So it can be removed!

Chen Mo was stunned. He'd just wanted to try his luck but he could actually do it if he satisfied requirements.

Then again, favour points aside... What are slave points? Does this mean he can capture and enslave NPCs?

Oh my... If word gets out, think of the perverts that'll come running.

Chen Mo stopped probing since he didn't meet the requirements. He turned his attention to Enoch's weapon and the wooden plaque she had used to summon the Witch of Divine Punishment.

However, he came up empty even after frisking Enoch.

Looks like NPCs have backpacks too and it's impossible to rob them of their equipment.

Chen Mo stopped his search and looked over at Enoch. "Do you want me to let you go, Miss Enoch?"

"You think you can get away with this? When the townsfolk investigate my disappearance you'll be in big trouble!" Enoch smiled coldly.

Shit. Damn you, woman. I'm talking nicely here and you repay my politeness with spite!

But... Keep calm. This is just an NPC.

“You tricked me into coming here with the intention of hurting me and you expect me to just let you go? I’m not afraid of others finding out since I am an Adventurer. I can just restart and try again. However, you, as one of the indigenous people of this world, will have no way to recover your reputation once this gets out,” said Chen Mo patiently.

Enoch quieted down after hearing his words. She knew this Adventurer was not talking nonsense. It was true that she had invited him into her home, otherwise he would not have been able to enter. If this matter got out, there were sure to be some people who would not believe her side of the story.

“I’ll give you 100 silver coins.” Enoch said.

“That’s way too little. Give me the summoning plaque for the Witch of Divine Punishment.” Chen Mo immediately demanded.

You kidding me? I’m not going to waste all my time and effort for a measly 200 silver coins!

“That item is useless to you. You must be of the bloodline of my race to summon the Witch of Divine Punishment.” Enoch refused to hand it over.

“Never you mind – even if I can’t use it I can still sell it!” insisted Chen Mo.

“Fine. Here you go.” Enoch struggled with the idea, gave it thought and caved.

System prompt: You have obtained 100 silver coins!

System prompt: You have obtained the item “Sealed Summoning Plaque”!

Sealed Summoning Plaque: A special item. Requirements not met. Unusable.

The prompts pinged and a black wooden plaque appeared in Chen Mo’s backpack. He looked at the item and found that Enoch had not lied to him; the summoning plaque was unusable.

“I’ve given you the item. Release me now!” shouted Enoch.

Extortion and blackmail successful! Seems like NPCs lack intelligence; she handed her items over quite readily.

“This isn’t enough. You need to give me more before I let you go”

An unusable wooden summon plaque was definitely not enough to satisfy Chen Mo.

“Scoundrel! Liar!” Enoch was surprised, then furious.

“Give me more! Give me more and I will let you go!” Chen Mo said sincerely.

“No more! I gave you all my items!” Enoch shut her eyes and stopped talking to Chen Mo.

All your items? Yeah, right!

Chen Mo would have believed her if he had not seen the summoning plaque. But now he knew that she was of the bloodline that can summon the Witch, he did not believe her.

Enoch was undaunted. He wouldn't get any results even if he used his previous threats on her again. However, Chen Mo still had a card up his sleeve.

Enoch, with her eyes tightly shut, suddenly felt a hand massaging her breasts.

She opened her eyes and glared at Chen Mo. “What are you doing you shameless scoundrel! Get your hands off me!”

Holy fuck – I can fondle NPCs!

Chen Mo felt a burst of emotion. He'd wanted to do this from the start but was afraid of offending the NPC and making his extortion fail. Negotiations with Enoch had pretty much fallen through so...

heck it.

However, though Chen Mo was taking advantage of Enoch's sexy body, he did not actually feel any sensations.

The virtual helmet was still in its testing phase so several features were limited. Sense of touch was currently limited to the feel of weapons and combat – anything other than those was almost imperceptible.

“Is there really nothing else you can compensate me with, Miss Enoch?” Chen Mo asked with a big smile.

“Nothing!”

This way of speaking – there must be more!

Let's see who has more patience. I have plenty of time.

Soon, Enoch's face was flushed and her breath came in pants and gasps.

System prompt: You gained slave points! Enoch slave points +10!

The system prompt pinged and Chen Mo was surprised when he read it.

I got slave points just like that? If I keep going, will I gain enough slave points to remove Enoch's bra?

By his estimate, he wouldn't; according to Enoch's claims, other NPCs will come along soon.

“Have you given it thought, Miss Enoch? I'm out of patience. I'm prepared to strip your pants off as well and throw them in the middle of town. Look at the state you're in now – if the townsfolk see you, what will they think of you?”

Chen Mo felt like time was running out, so he worsened his threat.

“I have one more very important item that I can give you... But you must agree to a condition.”

Enoch gave in to her fear. If she got thrown into town in this state she'd never be able to live in this town again.

Chapter 46 – Getting More Prestige

“As I’d told you, I am descended from a special bloodline so I’m able to summon the Witch of Divine Punishment. I’m not from around here and I don’t want anyone to pry into my background. I am from a small territory called Katelin, which is under the jurisdiction of Shadow City. I am the inheritor of this territory and because of certain reasons I had to leave Katelin and settle down in Ayer Town. If you agree to my condition, I can give you the rights of the Katelin territory inheritance.”

Enoch pondered, organized her words and spoke.

Inheritance rights for a piece of territory? Does this mean that if I agree to her condition I’ll be a landowner in the game?

Problem is, a piece of territory doesn’t seem so useful... But wait! If I become the landowner of Katelin I can do lots of experiments I won’t be able to do otherwise!

Furthermore, it seemed like Enoch had nothing else to offer if he rejected the inheritance rights.

Since that’s the case, he’d reluctantly accept ownership of this territory!

“Okay. What’s your condition?” Chen Mo asked right away.

“There are some items hidden by the previous Lord, my father,

in the Katelin territory. If you are successful in becoming the Lord of Katelin, I want those items back.” Enoch gazed steadily at Chen Mo.

“No problem.” Chen Mo nodded his agreement.

He didn’t know what items she wanted but who cares. He only wanted to become the Lord of the land to conduct some experiments as a landowner.

“This is the Katelin Territory Inheritance Contract. When the day comes that you decide to inherit the territory, please inform me.” Enoch let out a breath. She was worried that this Adventurer would not agree to it.

System prompt: You obtained the item “Katelin Territory Inheritance Contract”!

Katelin Territory Inheritance Contract: A special item. Not tradable. A contract for inheriting the territory of Katelin.

“I’ve given you the contract. Now, keep your promise and release me!” Enoch glared at Chen Mo.

“Of course, Miss Enoch. I am renowned among the human Adventurers for my trustworthiness.” Chen Mo casually spewed nonsense. He would need to trade with Enoch in the future so it was a good idea to give her a better impression of himself though her impression of him now was definitely 100% negative.

Chen Mo undid the ropes on Enoch's arms and helped her dress herself, then said, "Miss Enoch, I have something I need to do so I'll take my leave now. Please untie yourself."

After saying thus, Chen Mo was out of the room in a few steps. He used camouflage immediately.

He had the Degenerate title equipped so if he were to be discovered in town by NPCs, they might just lock him up. Of course, the most important event was him getting 10 slave points from Enoch. He didn't understand what these slave points were for but he knew that it was surely not a good thing for the NPC. Chen Mo wanted to know what sort of treatment he would get as an owner of slave points but he still had things to do so he could not afford to get caught just yet.

Chen Mo left Ayer Town stealthily under the cover of camouflage.

His greatest task in the beginner village completed, he still had two more things he wanted to accomplish.

The first was to do with Glacier Game Club and the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, of course.

This was an important matter but it was not yet time. There were still nineteen hours to go till Glacier Game Club and the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf clash. No rush.

The second was what he was on his way to do. He'd decided on this early on but was not sure if he could do it till now.

This task's difficulty may just be a little bit lower than the Rendezvous quest!

“Ho ho! Brave Adventurer, will you be willing to guard my precious Jade Pheasants from attacks from the Eagle? If you complete this quest, I, Boude, will reward you handsomely!”

Chen Mo came to the outskirts of Ayer Town to look for Boude, where he first got his Degenerate title

“I'd be happy to.” Chen Mo accepted the quest and Boude waved his hand, sending Chen Mo to the quest map.

As the quest begun, a proud Jade Pheasant spawned on the field in the quest map. The eagle in the azure sky above dove straight at it... and Chen Mo shot the Jade Pheasant.

System prompt: You have intentionally killed your protectee. Your World Prestige has decreased by 10 points!

...

System prompt: You have intentionally killed your protectee. Your World Prestige has decreased by 10 points!

...

System prompts pinged one after another. Chen Mo's World Prestige quickly went down by 100 points!

System prompt: Your World Prestige has reached -100. All trading NPC will refuse to trade. You will revive in the Land of Exiles after death!

“Bastard! What have you done!”

Just like last time, after the System prompts pinged, Boude came sprinting over in anger.

Chen Mo had no power to defend himself from Boude the last time but he had a set of excellent equipment now.

He was sure that Boude's attack power was not as great as Enoch!

Slime King's Roar!

However, Chen Mo was not going to let his guard down. He retreated swiftly and summoned a Mutant Slime.

A Mutated Black Slime appeared.

Boude was a fatty and his speed was slower than Enoch – he could not keep up with Chen Mo either. Chen Mo used the Mutated Black Slime to stop Boude from getting close and fired bolts at him, making his HP drop continuously.

“You horrible fellow! I ask you to protect my precious babies but you slaughter them instead... and now you attack me! You’re finished! Don’t even think of walking around safely in the human world!” Boude shouted.

Chen Mo ignored him and just kept firing.

You kidding me? I came prepared to commit suicide! I’m going to get as much negative World Prestige as possible and become the person with the most negative World Prestige points in the game!

When he had gotten the Degenerate title at -100 World Prestige, Chen Mo had thought of restraining Boude and collecting negative Prestige in the quest map but he had not enough strength to do so at that time. Now that he was stronger, he was definitely going to do it!

Chen Mo was not afraid of negative World Prestige as long as he got some result. He was going to commit suicide anyway.

-100 World Prestige got him a Degenerate title – now what would -1000 or -10,000 get him?

“Bastard! Scoundrel! I’ll kill you!” Boude shouted in fury but his

HP kept going down.

He was quite rotund and had a fair bit of HP. Chen Mo estimated that he had at least 150,000HP. His defence was high too; each bolt did only about 60 or 70 DMG. However, poison damage was not dependant on physical defence. All the poison damage added up and Boude's HP fell all the same.

“Scram, you dark creature!”

After losing about 30,000HP, Boude was finally agitated enough to use skills.

His body swelled up like a giant meatball and smashed into the Mutated Black Slime!

This move of his did not do damage but enemies hit by it will be thrown ten metres away.

However, Boude goggled.

His Meatball Smash had done nothing to the black monster. In fact, it had no reaction at all to his move!

The Mutated Black Slime stared at Boude dumbly. It was heavy and its defence was so high because of how shockingly dense its body was.

The first move did not work but Boude had a second one. He suddenly bent and raised his right foot. It started expanding rapidly.

Chen Mo raised an eyebrow and called out, “Slime King’s Roar!”

Just as he used Slime King’s Roar, Boude’s huge foot came crashing to the ground and Chen Mo leapt into the air

Boom!!!

A great rumble filled the sky and the jade-coloured ground rippled like the surface of a lake from Boude stomp!

“Phew! This guy’s not so easy to kill either!”

Chen Mo quietly wiped some sweat off his brow. Good thing he acted fast! The Mutated Black Slime was not so quick – Boude’s move damaged it seven times instantly. If Chen Mo were slower and not used Slime King’s Roar, he would have been hit at least four times.

The Mutated Black Slime did 5 damage every time and this damage was quite a large amount overall. If it were Chen Mo receiving the damage he would be dead for sure.

It seemed Boude had only two moves. Chen Mo could easily avoid Meatball Smash and the earthquake-like move could be countered by jumping with Slime King’s Roar. Boude could do nothing to

Chen Mo.

Five minutes later, Boude had just 1HP left. He collapsed and entered a heavily injured state. Chen Mo walked over and tied him up with practised moves.

Chapter 47 - OP Eggs

System prompt: You have intentionally killed your protectee. Your World Prestige has decreased by 10 points!

...

System prompt: You have intentionally killed your protectee. Your World Prestige has decreased by 10 points!

...

With Boude all tied up, Chen Mo busied himself with slaughtering Jade Pheasants. His World Prestige points fell quickly as the Jade Pheasants died one after another.

System prompt: You have intentionally killed your protectee. Your World Prestige has decreased by 10 points!

System prompt: Your World Prestige reached -1000. All good and lawful NPCs will refuse to communicate with you. You will revive in “Land of Exiles” after death!

System prompt: You have gained achievement title “Hoodlum”!

Achievement Title	Hoodlum
	Strength +50

Description	Stamina +50 Agility +50 Intelligence +50 Spirit +50 Movement speed +3
Special Effect	Title can only be unequipped 24 hours after equipping. While equipped, the player cannot enter human cities. Half the equipped equipment and items at time of death will drop and player level decreased by 1. When equipped, the title grants favour from some special NPCs. Player receives special treatment in Land of Exiles and Crime City and damage done to monsters in the Land of Exiles and Crime City regions increase by 10%.

Roughly 16 minutes later, following the demise of a Jade Pheasant, Chen Mo's World Prestige hit -1000 and he gained the "Hoodlum" title.

So I become a Hoodlum at -1000. Gleason must have some crazy background then – his World Prestige should be around -1000 too but how cruel must he be that he made the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf appear?

The Hoodlum title's attributes compared to the Degenerate title were much higher!

Players get 15 attribute points every time they level up but Hoodlum increased his attributes by 250 points. That was like levelling up 17 times!

This title's attributes were great but the risks that come with it were great too. If he died within 24 hours of equipping the title he would lose half his equipment and items and his level would go

down by one. This penalty was far more severe than becoming a Black-name player.

When a regular player dies in the game, his EXP decreases by 10% of the needed amount to level up with a low chance of items and equipment dropping. A Red-name player's penalty upon death was twice that of a regular player's – 20% EXP lost. Black-name players get twice the penalty of the Red-names. Each death was -40% EXP.

The Hoodlum title's penalty was more than double that of a Black-name player!

Chen Mo was a little disappointed. The title's penalty was too great; looks like there won't be a chance to use it. It would be useful in Land of Exiles and Crime City but he'd never been there. Also, what is this special treatment? Chen Mo decided to check it out when he got a chance later.

“You wicked man! Brutal criminal! Oh, my poor babies... he killed so many of you! I don't want to live anymore!”

After about ten minutes on the ground, Boude awoke with his hands and feet bound. The only thing he could do was cry.

“That's not right, Mister Boude. Weren't you going to slaughter and eat these Jade Pheasants anyway? I'm just killing them a little early so they can respawn quickly. I'm not a wicked man – I'm a benevolent one.”

It was boring to slaughter Jade Pheasants by himself so Chen Mo engaged Boude in conversation.

“Ignorant villain! Who said the Jade Pheasants were poultry? The most valuable thing the Jade Pheasant produces is its eggs! Every emerald egg is a gem precious beyond compare! Do you know how many eggs you’ve destroyed by killing so many Jade Pheasants?” Boude wailed in despair.

“Oh? How valuable are they?” Chen Mo asked curiously. He really did not know their value.

“I have some on me. Take one and you’ll see!” Boude hurriedly said.

This Adventurer must be behaving this way because he has no idea how valuable these Jade Pheasant eggs are. If he knew, he would definitely stop!

System prompt: You have gained a “Jade Pheasant Egg”!

Chen Mo did the picking action for looting on Boude’s body and actually got an egg.

Jade Pheasant Egg

Rare item. Has strong recovery and boosting properties. The Player can obtain the following result after consumption. Effects last 10 minutes.

Instant recovery 3000HP

Instant recovery 3000MP

HP increase +1000

MP increase +1000

Strength +30

Stamina +30

Agility +30

Intelligence +30

Movement speed +4

Attack speed +20%

Experience gain from monsters +100%

This item can only be used once a day.

Holy crap!

Even Chen Mo, who had single-handedly taken down Mutated BOSSes and was decked out in excellent equipment, could not contain himself when he saw the Jade Pheasant Egg's attributes.

This Jade Pheasant Egg's attributes are OP!

With its long list of attributes and boosts, if it were not a one-time-use item, it would be a fair contender against those rumoured legendary artefacts!

Forget about the recovery and attribute boosts – other items like the Low Level Mutated Drug can achieve similar results if he drank a few more.

The best boost was 100% EXP gain from killing monsters!

Double EXP! An item never before seen on the forums! If he could eat this and kill monsters the whole day, he would be rocketing through Levels!

A pity this OP item had limits and could only be used once a day.

This limitation did not detract the greatness of the item though. If the Jade Pheasant Egg found its way onto the Market trading floor, players would scramble to get their hands on it.

No wonder killing one of these birdies resulted in -10 World Prestige. Seems like these Jade Pheasants weren't the average rare animal.

But who would have thought that the beginner town was hiding an item as OP as this!

“You see? Isn't the Jade Pheasant Egg valuable? The true use of the Egg goes beyond what's displayed. In the hands of a skilled craftsman, the Egg can become even more rare and delicious!” Boude quickly said, hoping Chen Mo would stop the slaughter.

You can use crafting skills to make this even better?

The Jade Pheasant Egg was already OP... What would its

attributes look like after crafting?

Chen Mo could not help feeling curious.

“Eh, it’s not too bad. Do you have more, Mister Boude? Give me some more.” Chen Mo nodded noncommittally.

This was a really rare item and who knows if it could be found outside the beginner village. I should try to get as many as I can from Boude.

“Yes! Yes, I have more! If you let me go now and stop killing my babies I’ll give you more!” Boude promised right away.

“I don’t believe you. You could be lying to me. Give me some first to prove that you do have them on you.” Chen Mo put on a disbelieving air.

“I... I’ll give you five. Stop slaughtering them once I give the Eggs to you. I’ll give you 50 more once we are out of this map!” Boude hesitated at first, then relented.

Chen Mo had already killed over 100 Jade Pheasants at this point. If he kept going, the Jade Pheasants he had reared with great difficulty were going to be exterminated.

System prompt: You gained 5 “Jade Pheasant Egg”!

“All right, you have the Eggs. Stop it now!” Boude yelled.

“Sure!”

Chen Mo nodded, walked over to Boude without speaking and took out some cloth. He gagged Boude and turned around to slaughter Jade Pheasants in peace.

Jade Pheasant Eggs are nice and all but I want to know what OP achievement title I'd get!

Chapter 48 - Despicable

Seconds ticked by and minutes passed. Chen Mo's World Prestige fell steadily.

... -2000... -4000... -6000...

His World Prestige had gone below -5000 and still no system prompt pinged.

Chen Mo remained unmoved and kept killing Jade Pheasants.

-1000 World Prestige is definitely not the limit. A better, greater achievement title must exist!

-8000!

...

-9000!

...

-10,000!

System prompt: Your World Prestige has reached -10,000!

System prompt: You are a wanted criminal in all human cities. All human cities have issued the highest priority warrant for your arrest!

System prompt: Your death penalty rose to S-Rank. You will drop 10 Levels after death. All equipment and items will drop and you will revive in Land of Exiles!

System prompt: You gained achievement title “Despicable”!

After diligently slaughtering Jade Pheasants for over three hours, Chen Mo’s World Prestige finally hit -10,000!

Several system prompts pinged and Chen Mo’s eyes lit up.

“Woah, wall of text!” What he saw gave him a fright.

He did not get one or two prompts but a whole bunch all at once!

Warrant for arrest, criminal to human cities, dropping everything when dead and -10 Levels! Players who reach -10,000 World Prestige will really have no way to survive!

But...!

At -10,000 World Prestige, Chen Mo got the achievement title he was after!

Achievement title: Despicable

Description: A special title gained by players with -10,000 or less World Prestige. Effects apply after equipping. However, when player's World Prestige reach -3000 or less, the title is automatically in effect.

Attributes:

Strength +100

Stamina +100

Agility +100

Intelligence +100

Spirit +100

HP increase +3000

MP increase +3000

Movement speed +5

Jumping height +2 metres

Additional special effects: Title can only be unequipped 72 hours after equipping. When equipped, player's name turns black and he becomes the attack target of all good and lawful NPCs. All items and equipment drop at death and player's Level decreases by 5. When equipped, the player can gain favour of certain special NPCs. Player will be part of the privileged class in Land of Exiles and Crime City. 30% damage increase to monsters in Land of Exiles and Crime City regions, defence increase by 20% and item drop rate increase by 10%.

Additional special abilities: Power of Destruction, Power of Concealment

Power of Destruction: A certain chance of destroying a target when attacking.

Power of Concealment: In order to avoid arrest, you become better at hiding, camouflage and stealth. Stealth type skills are enhanced and effects of camouflage items are strengthened.

Woah!

All attributes +100, increase in HP and MP, movement speed +5 and jumping height +2m!

And part of the privileged class in Land of Exiles and Crime City,

plus increase in damage, defence and drop rate!

Plus these impressive looking Powers of Destruction and Concealment!

This Despicable title is simply beyond compare!

So powerful...! All the attributes of the equipment he was wearing didn't even add up to this one title!

Problem was that this title would alienate him – how was he to equip this and still have friends? Anybody close to him could just kill him and loot his nice shiny equipment and items in addition to making him drop levels like crazy. He would be reduced to nothing in just one day.

-10,000 World Prestige got him such an impressive achievement title already... Is there something even better?

Chen Mo was curious but at that moment, he blanched. A troop of silver-clad soldiers were approaching from the houses on the side!

Boude saw the soldiers and started to struggle violently on the ground.

He'd witnessed Chen Mo slaughter over a thousand Jade Pheasants and his face had gone ashen but now help was at hand.

Chen Mo surmised that this must be the arrest warrant in effect. He was not too far from Ayer Town and these soldiers must have had a special way to investigate and trace him here.

“Suicide!”

It would be cool to find out what would happen to him with 10 Slave points and -10,000 World Prestige but he had business to tend to in Wild Wolf Valley so he could not afford to let anything happen to him lest he miss the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf job.

Back in the character creation room, Chen Mo did not do any changes to his character and simply went back to the game.

As he appeared in Goblin Valley, the group of young men in Ash Blue Tech gaped at Chen Mo's newly created character, dumbstruck.

They thought this Hunter player was brainy, creative and lucky but after watching him enslave Enoch, then make use of a beginner village quest to get a kickass achievement title, they were blown away by this person's machinations.

If they were not afraid of violating their agreement, they would have sneakily gone to play GENESIS too!

“You think the leaked data from a month ago was intercepted by this guy?” A young man couldn't help but wonder.

An employee at Ash Blue Tech had stolen some game information about a month ago and was quickly caught but some of the data had still been leaked.

“The leaked information was way less than what this guy knows!” Someone else shook his head.

The person who spoke thought about it and agreed. The leaked information was laughably little and almost no help at all to players. The players who had answered the survey and lucky players had gained far better advantages.

... ..

After he got out of Goblin Valley, Chen Mo came to Ayer Town.

“So crowded.”

Chen Mo had committed suicide and restarted many times and had been to more beginner towns than any other player so he was immediately struck by how different this town was/

Crowded and bustling!

“Hehe, my luck’s good! I spawned in this beginner village!”

“Man, I committed suicide for two days – five times per day to get

to this beginner village. They're going to kill the BOSS tonight. It's going to be chaotic; we may be able to grab something!"

"Pfft. Not so simple. You think they invested millions just to let you take their equipment? You'll be lucky to find a good spot to watch the BOSS get killed with your own eyes!"

Several people were chatting and Chen Mo listened in on their conversation.

He'd suicided his way to the beginner village that Glacier Game Club was going to kill the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf in.

Looks like he had unintentionally succeeded. He knew that quite a few hackers who'd accepted Worm Co.'s commission were unable to suicide their way to this map but he had come here just like that.

Glacier Group... heh heh. Show's on, folks!

He didn't need to be in the same beginner village as them to ruin their event but since he was here he wouldn't mind ruining it in person.

But now, he should first get to Wild Wolf Valley and do Gleason's quest while it was still dark!

If more people came it would be difficult to sneak in to Wild Wolf Valley.

Armed with a load of Wolf Meat and equipment, Chen Mo sprinted towards Wild Wolf Valley.

Chapter 49 - Mysterious Player

Glacier Game Club was going to attack the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf at night but when Chen Mo got to the entrance of Wild Wolf Valley, there weren't as many people as he'd thought.

The BOSS fight was scheduled for 9pm and it was 5am now. One could only be online for 12 hours so those who wanted to watch the show had gone offline to rest.

However, there were still some players challenging the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. This could be their last chance to see a hidden BOSS for all they knew.

Chen Mo timed his entrance and slipped into Wild Wolf Valley.

... ..

This was the most boisterous day since the launch of GENESIS two weeks ago.

GENESIS' activity had been growing steadily but today, the Glacier Group pushed it to new heights.

As one of the top ten conglomerates in China with countless companies big and small under its banner, each of the companies only had to expend a little effort to help promote the event at the direction of Glacier Group for advertisements to be everywhere.

If you take all that into account, Glacier Group invested way more than the 10,000,000 Worm Co. said.

Even those who did not play GENESIS knew that tonight, Glacier Game Club was going to kill a super BOSS in the game Glacier Group invested in and the whole event was to be broadcast live.

Richie Rich Club had also gained some advertising fame when they were killing the Slime King but Glacier Group was on a whole other level.

In a short span of two days, the hot and popular Richie Rich Club had been overshadowed by the not-even-3-days-old Glacier Game Club.

Richie Rich Club put in hundreds of thousands but Glacier Group put in more than ten million – there was no comparison.

“Huh. Glacier Group sure is willing to throw money into this.” In a virtual bar, Jiu Ge lay on a comfortable sofa, clad in a white swallow-tail coat. He smirked as he watched the live broadcast on the screen.

“Too bad we didn’t find the item to counter the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, otherwise we could have pushed our advantage against it and gained a strong foothold.”

Seven or eight people were in the bar and in the corner, a red-skirted beauty called Executing Hand sighed.

On the forums, many people were awed by the deep pockets of the newly-formed Glacier Game Club and felt that Richie Rich Club was inferior but in reality, Richie Rich Club did not even see the amount Glacier Group spent as something to bat an eyelid at.

“Yu, you’re one of the elite youngsters in Glacier Group. Why didn’t you get any information on this?” Jiu Ge looked over the icy blue-skirted beauty in the other corner named Blue Dream.

Though the group were meeting as their game characters, they knew each other in real life.

“I’m not in charge of the GENESIS project. I wouldn’t have joined you otherwise.” Blue Dream replied coolly.

“However, I found out something. Glacier Group originally did not invest much in this game and was taking the wait and see approach but a huge investment for GENESIS came from somewhere a few days ago. This event now is a result of that investment.”

“What’s going on? Who is the source of this investment?” Jiu Ge and the others in the group were surprised and they all looked at each other.

“No idea. The game project department’s all hush-hush. It’s said that they signed a confidentiality agreement and only some high-level people know about it. I don’t have enough authority to know.” Blue Dream shook her head.

The people in the bar lowered their heads in thought.

They were all from families or conglomerates with elite backgrounds and knowledge of things commoners were not privy to. Behind the sudden emergence of the holographic virtual network were deeply hidden relationships and benefits. They entered the game to gain what advantage they could to strengthen their standing in their real-world work.

It was a normal thing for Glacier Group to invest and establish Glacier Game Club but the problem was this foreign investment. Based on the power and wealth of Glacier Group, this investment was not needed at all. Ten million is peanuts to them. The investor was also strange – if they had so much money then why not set up their own group in the game instead of investing in Glacier Group? Additionally, the investment was done in secret – what advantage do they gain from that?

“Eh?”

They were unable to think of a reason. At that moment, Executing Hand saw a figure appear on the screen in front of her and suddenly let out a soft cry.

It was already 8.30pm. Glacier Game Club was going to start the battle with the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf soon.

Throngs of people were gathered in front of Wild Wolf Valley. The 300+ highly-skilled players recruited by Glacier Game Club

were already assembled in front of Wild Wolf Valley.

Don't look down on these 300+ people – almost all were clad in Green Grade equipment and were great players! Most of the equipment was provided by Glacier Group, of course. They really went all out this time!

“Please be patient, everyone. We still have some time. I shall now confirm our battle plans. Please follow procedure. When the event is over, Glacier Game Club is sure to reward you!”

There was a great hubbub in front of Wild Wolf Valley. Glacier Game Club's representative, Bottomless Glacier, stood before 300+ pro players and gave instructions to them.

Those who had accepted the commission were almost all professionals. They soon quieted down under the instruction of Bottomless Glacier.

“Hey! Who's that?”

Before Bottomless Glacier got to say anything more, several people in the group looked toward Wild Wolf Valley in surprise.

Bottomless Glacier turned to look in annoyance but he was shocked to see a masked player approach the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. When did he get in?

Though it was noisy outside, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf still

lounge on the ground in Wild Wolf Valley. When this person appeared, it sprang to its feet and it turned all six of its different-coloured eyes upon its enemy.

“People will do anything to get their five minutes of fame these days.” A fellow among the pros laughed at the sight of the figure.

The 8pm live broadcast was running. It looked like this person had deliberately gone to die so he could be on television.

“Nuh-uh. See, he’s hiding his face.” Someone else shook his head in disagreement.

“This person seems familiar...” Amidst the group, Wang Xu squinted suspiciously at the masked player.

Everyone had different opinions about what this guy was planning to do but once the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf roared and started charging at him, they didn’t feel bothered to keep watching.

That guy’s a goner for sure.

They didn’t know what the masked guy was up to but they knew that nobody could do anything to the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf before Glacier Game Club used their secret weapon.

“What?! How’s that possible?!”

However, many people started exclaiming in surprise.

The players watching the live broadcast were also exclaiming their surprise.

That masked player had taken something out of his backpack. The charging Flaming 3-Headed Wolf came to a halt mid-charge and glared in confrontation.

“Who’s that guy?”

At that moment, everyone knew that this masked player was definitely not a regular guy!

“Not good! Quick, stop him!” Bottomless Glacier had a bad feeling about this.

This person had an item they didn’t. He did not just get it recently either. This masked guy appearing at this time is definitely not going to help Glacier Game Club!

“How do we stop him? This is the beginner village!” Bottomless Glacier’s lackey cried.

“Dumbass! Get some people to agitate the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. Don’t let it have time to interact with that guy. Buy some time while I push our attack plan forward!” Bottomless Glacier

shouted. He was decisive even in chaos.

“Yes, sir!”

The lackey hurriedly went to carry out his orders. Two teams of 10+ players quickly ran towards the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

In Wild Wolf Valley, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf turned one head and let out a plume of blue fire, instantly vaporizing the two teams. It then turned its attention back to the weak, tiny human Adventurer before it. In his hand was a round, deep blue ball which emitted wisps of cold air.

Chapter 50 - Freeze

The masked player was Chen Mo, of course.

He had interacted with the same quest NPCs many different times and the observant Chen Mo had a much deeper understanding of the game than players who rushed to level up.

NPCs in the game did not have set motion or dialogue. He had got over 10 quests from Gleason and though the essence of the quest was the same, Gleason's words were different every time.

From the varied dialogue and the situation in Wild Wolf Valley with the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, although he had not progressed to the next stage of the quest and Gleason had never said a word about how he made the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, Chen Mo was quite sure of his speculations.

Back when Gleason first made the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, it went on a rampage. However, Gleason still produced the Stone Cold Water and the NPCs in Ayer Town worked together to finally seal the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf in Wild Wolf Valley.

This was not the main point – the most important information Chen Mo got was that the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf was not a mindless murder-crazed BOSS monster. It could communicate with humans. Though Stone Cold Water was its nemesis, if it could not communicate with humans, it would not be sealed in Wild Wolf Valley in fear of the knowledge of Stone Cold Water being used against it.

Of course, if you stupidly ran over without Stone Cold Water then don't blame the wolf for not giving you a chance to speak.

“See this? This is your most feared yet coveted item. If you agree to some simple conditions, I will give this to you. You can leave this damned valley and roam wherever you please!” The Glacier Game Club was right outside Wild Wolf Valley, watching Chen Mo anxiously. He knew he didn't have much time.

“Roar!”

The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf could not speak the human language but it understood what Chen Mo was saying. However, its three brains still remembered the rage from when those humans used just a little bit of this very item to hurt it terribly and sealed it in this small bit of land in Wild Wolf Valley.

It wanted very much to lunge at this weak puny human and tear him to shreds but the cold vapours of the item he held restrained it.

“Do you really want to die? Those humans outside are here to kill you! You have half an hour to live at most. Even if you survive, if you don't agree to my conditions I'll return this Stone Cold Water to Soro. You'll be trapped in this tiny place for the rest of your life!”

Chen Mo could tell that the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf was full of rage; he made his words harsher in order to let the Wolf calm

down.

As expected, when the word “die” was mentioned, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf got angrier but the flames of its anger reflected in its six eyes gradually went down to a simmering cold intent to kill.

“Great! Now, I just have one little thing. It’s not disadvantageous to you and if you promise me this and sign a contract with me I’ll give you this Stone Cold Water. You can go wherever you want. Nod if you want to hear my request.”

Chen Mo was unperturbed by the wolf’s killing intent and quickly explained his visit.

“It nodded! The BOSS nodded its head!”

Chen Mo and the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf had captured everyone’s attention. Everyone could see that the masked player was no ordinary guy when the wolf did not kill him but now, the sight of the wolf nodding at the guy struck them all with horror.

Communicating with a Hidden BOSS and getting it to nod and agree to something... Who the hell is this guy?!

“Get ready to storm that place!” Bottomless Glacier saw the wolf’s reaction and knew that it was making some sort of deal with the masked player.

He felt terribly antsy.

“Boss, we’re not ready!” A player cried.

“There’s no time! All of you – follow my command!” shouted Bottomless Glacier angrily.

He wasn’t a naïve player – he was the upper crust of Glacier Group in charge of the project to kill the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

Wasting the past few days of advertising money was nothing but all the effort and time that went into it – ruined at the last moment by a single player? Glacier Group would become a nationwide laughingstock!

If that happened, someone would have to take the fall and he, as the person in charge, would not be able to escape that fate.

If he acted now and lost some people or failed in his attack, it was still better than watching that masked player and the BOSS make a deal!

Countless pairs of eyes were on them and they all saw the BOSS nod its head. If he didn’t do something then he would be seen as a useless piece of trash and nobody would trust him with any projects, ever!

Even if he failed due to executing the attack ahead of schedule, his actions were warranted and he would still have a chance to climb up the ranks again if he had to take responsibility for the

failure.

“Cool. I’ve got just one request. I’ll give you the Stone Cold Water, you leave this place and go far far away. However, if you see me again you must not harm me but aid me. This aid you provide will definitely not endanger your life or you can reject it. If you agree, make a contract with me!”

Chen Mo noted Glacier Game Club’s activity. He quickly said his piece.

The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf was shocked. Just this little request?

As long as it didn’t see this person again it would have nothing to lose!

Agreed!

The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf decided instantly!

“Wha-What’s happening now?!”

At this critical juncture, the people watching the live broadcast suddenly saw that everyone in the game was not moving and the video on their screens seemed to freeze.

“It must be some problem with transmission.”

It was only between one and two seconds and the video went back to normal. Some people just muttered about bad transmission.

However, the players in the game itself could very definitely feel that it was not a transmission error but that the game itself had frozen for over one second!

In that one-plus second, their consciousness was still there but they were unable to move their bodies – just like the traditional network ‘computer freeze’!

Only Chen Mo, standing in front of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, knew what caused the freeze.

Success! He made the game freeze!

It was for only about a second but he did it!

Chen Mo’s heart leapt in joy when the game froze. He had finally found a loophole in the system!

Through the Rendezvous quest, Chen Mo determined that following the normal game route would not cause any problems in the system. So for the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf quest, which triggered a regional quest, Chen Mo chose a path of action that no ordinary player would ever dream of.

In his many interactions with Gleason, Chen Mo knew that if he

followed the quest plot the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf would die no matter what. He chose a path that did not exist – letting the wolf live, leave the map and roam free!

Chen Mo was experimenting and this result was not in the game script. He would not be able to do this in traditional games but important characters in GENESIS have their own AI, their own way of thinking. Gleason's varied dialogue was proof of this.

System prompt: The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf made a Soul Contract with you!

Contract details: You shall give Stone Cold Water to the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. Every time the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf meets you in the future, it must aid you in a non-life-threatening task!

Chapter 51 - Impact

“Charge! Attack the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf! KILL IT!”

When Chen Mo received the system prompts, the game went back to normal and Bottomless Glacier reacted immediately. He knew that something abnormal had happened with the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

With no regard for his image, Bottomless Glacier screamed like a madman.

The hired pros were unhappy with being screamed at by Bottomless Glacier but they knew that it was a crucial time and charged madly at the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

“Too late.”

Chen Mo looked at the mob of pro players at the entrance of Wild Wolf Valley, then handed the Stone Cold Water to the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

“Roar!”

All six of its eyes gleamed with excitement and it let out a roar. It lowered its middle head and closed its jaws over the Stone Cold Water.

Then, to Chen Mo's astonishment, it threw its head back – and gulped down the misting Stone Cold Water!

“Roar! Grawwwrl!! GRAAWORLARRRL!!!”

The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf let out roar after roar. Its body shook uncontrollably. It looked like it was experiencing great pain!

Jets of flame shot out from its body. It was as though oil had been added to its already flaming body, driving the combustion out of control!

“Don't tell me that masked player is gonna kill it just like that!”

Players watching from afar were aghast. They could clearly see the pain and anguish of the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf and they wouldn't be surprised if the Wolf dropped dead the next moment.

“It's very likely! This guy must be here to steal the BOSS kill!”

Others had a different line of thought – if this person killed the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf like that, all Glacier Group had done thus far would have been for naught while he would gain instant fame!

If it were them and they had the ability, they would definitely do so!

The spectator players were abuzz. Only Chen Mo, who was

closest to the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, could see it change.

The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf was evolving!

Stone Cold Water was its nemesis but it was also its evolution material!

In the midst of the scorching flames, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf's body was changing rapidly!

Wings! A pair of giant, dragon-like wings were growing from its back with shocking speed!

Boom!

In the span of a breath, the wings were done growing at over 10 metres long. The Flaming 3-Headed Wolf beat the air with its wings, dispelling the flames and revealing a more powerful body.

“THE BOSS EVOLVED?!”

All the players at the entrance of Wild Wolf Valley were flabbergasted.

At the head of the charging players, Bottomless Glacier felt a chill in his heart. Now that the BOSS has evolved, would his secret weapon still work?

If Chen Mo knew what was in Bottomless Glacier's backpack, he would have been shocked.

Bottomless Glacier also had Stone Cold Water in his backpack. However, this item was not a quest item and it didn't have limits on what the player could use it for either.

After swallowing the Stone Cold Water and evolving, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf became more aggressive. It gave Chen Mo a passing glance as it flapped its gigantic wings and rose from the ground.

“Attack! Don't let it fly away!”

Bottomless Glacier yelled. He must not let this BOSS escape!

A great number of fireballs, ice arrows, crossbow bolts and other projectiles and long-distance attacks were fired at the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf. Bottomless Glacier used the Stone Cold Water in his backpack immediately.

The Stone Cold Water hit the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf along with all the other attacks.

All the attacks did only 30 to 40 DMG to the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf – and this was due to their equipment. If they were outfitted any worse they would not have even been able to overcome its defence.

Bang!

The Stone Cold Water hit the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf and it swung its head towards Bottomless Glacier, glaring at him with murderous eyes.

It was most familiar with Stone Cold Water. Before it evolved, the water weakened it to the point of being unable to fight!

Hu!

Flapping its wings, it shot three different streams of fire at the 300+ pros of Glacier Game Club!

-3000!

-3000!

-3000!

... ..

Damage number after number 3000 and up floated from above the players' heads!

“Holy shit!”

“What kinda fucking damage is that!”

People were in shock.

Just an instant!

300+ people – wiped out!

Everyone, including Chen Mo, was dumbfounded.

Chen Mo knew the evolved Flaming 3-Headed Wolf would probably be powerful but this was ridiculously overpowered!

He had the contract with the Wolf so if he saw it again, he could use it to extinguish whoever he wanted!

The spectator players and those watching the broadcast were unable to describe how they were feeling.

They knew something big was going to happen but never did they imagine that they would witness such a sight.

“Glacier Group is fucked!”

That was the first thought of everyone in response to what they’d

seen.

After advertising extensively about killing the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf, spending so much manpower and wasting so much money... they died in an instant. This was like a mega bitch-slap to their face!

“Headlines! This will be front-page news!”

Several reporters logged off to write their articles.

Masked Player Suddenly Appears! Overpowered Evolved BOSS!
Glacier Game Club Insta-killed!

This was originally about killing the Hidden BOSS – with these new twists in the story nothing can beat these headlines!

After eradicating 300+ pro players in an eye-blink, the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf flapped its wings and rose high into the air, flew a circle around Wild Wolf Valley and vanished into the skies with startling speed.

“That masked player’s gone too!”

The audience returned their attention to Wild Wolf Valley and discovered that the masked player had disappeared without them noticing.

“Yu, your Glacier Group has incurred heavy losses this time.”

In the virtual bar, members of Richie Rich Club turned their attention to Blue Dream.

Blue Dream said nothing. She just looked at the screen at the spot where the masked player had disappeared, her gaze biting cold.

In Ash Blue Tech, a group of young men sweat buckets.

The moment the game froze, all their monitors displayed a dark red warning, scaring them shitless.

Things had more or less gone back to normal now but a group of people were still feeling nervous and were checking the system.

“Bing-jie*, you’re here! There was a problem with the system!”

*Jie (姐) is used to show respect for an older(usually) or more experienced female. Also means older sister.

A frosty, beautiful young woman walked in. Once the group of young men saw her, they hurried over to give her their reports.

After listening to the reports of her subordinates, Tang Bing looked at the game character on the screen in surprise.

This game character was familiar to everyone in Ash Blue Tech – Tang Bing included.

Before, the folk at Ash Blue Tech were puzzled as to why he did nothing with the Stone Cold Water – now he did actually use it and almost crashed the system.

“It’s fine now. Calm down, everyone.” Tang Bing waved her hand in a calming gesture as she told the staff to calm down.

The group of young men let out a collective sigh of relief. They were expecting a tongue-lashing from Tang Bing but she was unexpectedly reasonable this time.

“Bing-jie, what do we do about this player? Should we give him a warning?” A young man ventured a suggestion.

This guy almost caused the system to crash!

“Don’t do anything. No warnings. The system will reward him!” Tang Bing glanced at the fellow who’d spoken.

“Huh? Why?” The young men were surprised.

“Obviously! The game is still in Beta testing. That guy just helped us find a weakness!” Tang Bing spoke sharply.

The brains of the young men clicked. They remembered that

when the game went public, the higher-ups mentioned that whomever could find loopholes in the game would be handsomely rewarded.

“Um... What reward will he get?” A young man inquired meekly.

“How do I know? That’s for the system to decide!” Tang Bing shook her head. These little chicks were too young and ignorant.

However, this was also intentional. In order to keep their secrecy and after a lot of trouble, Ash Blue Tech chose this group of people.

The seriousness of the game freeze situation was known only to the main AI “brain”, Glimmer. The reward for that player will also be decided and given after Glimmer assessed the event.

Chapter 52 – Super Mutated Slime King!

“Is the holographic virtual network truly without loopholes?”

Chen Mo was definitely not the only one who was not willing to see the traditional networks go. The one-second-plus freeze in GENESIS had been brought under scrutiny and post after post voicing doubts appeared on the internet.

These posts seemed to feature prominently. It was almost certain that there was an invisible power pushing for the matter to be blown up bigger than it was.

Then, Ash Blue Tech came forward and made three statements.

“1: The game did indeed freeze. This was due to imperfect processing.

2: When GENESIS froze, other holographic virtual networks applications were not affected.

3: In traditional networks, a similar freeze would likely cause several breakdowns but in the holographic virtual network, the AI Glimmer only needed over a second to overcome the problem. Additionally, Glimmer will also learn from this without human intervention. The same problem will never occur again.”

Ash Blue Tech’s statements were simple and straightforward. Once they issued those statements, the voices of doubt more than

halved.

“Not enough, huh.”

Chen Mo returned to Ayer Town, logged off to avoid trouble and took a look at the reactions on the forums.

When he read Ash Blue Tech’s statements, his expression did not change.

He had successfully made the game freeze but the commission was still incomplete – he was far from it. Completing the commission by finding loopholes in the game had become impossible now.

Drawing from the experience of this event, it would be nigh impossible to find any loophole in GENESIS any more.

He was a hacker and dealt with programs a lot so he knew how scary it was for it to be resuming game functionality after freezing just over a second. This proved that the game AI, Glimmer possessed self-repairing capabilities that were over and beyond human limits. Chen Mo had no doubt that the soul contract he’d received from the Wolf, it swallowing the Stone Cold Water, growing wings and flying away were all a result of that one-plus second of processing. None of those things existed in the game system before the one-second freeze!

With such great processing, self-repairing capability and ability

to learn, the difficulty of finding loopholes was sky-high.

However, Chen Mo was not about to give up just yet. He still had a crazy idea!

He understood the greatness of Glimmer. This AI Glimmer must have a variety of emotion programs – that was why the game's NPCs had feelings and did actions like real people!

However, Glimmer was definitely not familiar with these emotion programs yet. Chen Mo was one of the players who interacted with NPCs the most, albeit with the same ones. When he compared the interactions, he could tell that there was still stiffness in how the NPCs conducted themselves.

This was due to Glimmer being neither familiar nor mature enough. It had self-learning capabilities though so it would surely perfect emotions over time.

Once these emotion programs mature it was possible that Glimmer would become huge a self-aware program.

What Chen Mo wanted to do was to make use of certain NPC to influence Glimmer's emotions and character. If he could make it have conflicting emotions on the same situation, big problems will occur when it tries to solve problems!

If anyone knew what was running through Chen Mo's head then, he or she would think he was stark raving mad. Doing what he

planned was a complete waste of time and the chance of success was infinity to zero!

Chen Mo knew this was bonkers too but strangely, he felt like he could do it.

“Is this one of the what they call ‘Three great illusions of life’?” Chen Mo wondered and laughed to himself.

Well, I refute that!

He wouldn't be twiddling his thumbs, or feel regret about not playing his game character if he gave up either.

“Eh? Mutated Slime King? And it clones itself?”

Chen Mo found an interesting post on the forums quite by accident.

Now that the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf was gone, the Beggar's Wolf Meat quest and Slime's Poison quest were available to all and Mutated Slime King began popping up everywhere.

Chen Mo had predicted this but he had never seen one which could duplicate itself even after having killed so many Mutated Slime Kings.

He clicked on the post and found that this Mutated Slime King

was not a hoax.

Mutated Slime Kings were powerful and most of them were undefeated in the beginner villages. However, there was one village where pro players had surrounded and attacked it.

However, when its HP hit 50%, the Mutated Slime King instantly became two and used skills which wiped out the 10+ players surrounding it in one move, then slaughtered the happy spectators.

“Holy shit! These two Mutated Slime Kings are well-coordinated! Hold on, this super Mutated BOSS is in...”

Chen Mo immediately returned to the game.

That’s right. This super Mutated Slime King was in none other than the beginner village he was in!

This beginner village had the highest number of pro players. After the attack on the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf failed, a group of pro players had gotten wind of a Mutated Slime King in the area and banded together to kill it. If it had not mutated yet again, it would have been killed by this group of people.

Chen Mo surmised that this Slime King mutated this way due to either the one-plus second freeze he caused or the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf.

He went to the warehouse and equipped his excellent equipment, then retrieved the “Capture” skill book and a Skill Mutation Scroll.

After killing so many Slime Kings, Chen Mo had long wondered if he could capture a Mutated Slime King and make it his minion.

Ordinary Capture skills would probably not work but I am different – I have a Skill Mutation Scroll!

The Capture skill is one of the specialities of a hunter and Chen Mo was bound to use one Skill Mutation Scroll to test it out anyway. Since he had so many, how could he not try it out on a super Mutated BOSS?

System prompt: You will learn the skill “Capture”. Do you want to use Skill Mutation Scroll?

Yes!

System prompt: You learnt “Capture (Mutated)”!

System prompt: Pet system unlocked. You currently have 3 pet slots!

Capture (Mutated) (Beginner level): Mutated skill. After using, the player can capture monster of equal level or make a BOSS his pet. Capture success rate is affected by player’s Strength and Spirit attributes. If skill is used five times unsuccessfully on the target, the target gains immunity from capture forever!

Muahahahhaa! Yeeeeessss!

No less from a Skill Mutation Scroll! I can really catch a BOSS!

Level 15 hunters in the game had learnt Capture long ago. The regular Capture skill only gave you two pet slots when unlocked, Beginner level only allowed you to catch monsters two levels below the player and the monster gains immunity after three unsuccessful tries.

Once he compared the two, he could see that the mutated skill was more than twice as powerful!

Super Mutated Slime King, please don't die yet... Big bro's coming to get you!

Chapter 53 – A Group Of Enemies

Slime Plains.

It was full of hustle and bustle, filled with mountains of adventurer-folk. The bulk of this crowd circled the BOSS spawning area.

In the centre of this circle, a huge amethyst Mutated Slime King was slaughtering players left and right. The surrounding players tried their best to escape – but there was no escaping the Mutated Slime King. Every move it made killed a group of players.

Though there were many opponents, players who could cause harm to the Mutated Slime King were few. Even when players in their last moments tried desperately to damage it, the result of their efforts was pathetically small.

Other than the spot of trouble from the group of well-equipped pro players from last time, the Mutated Slime King was practically invincible.

“Big bro, this BOSS is tough.”

Amongst the crowd, Wang Xu turned to the young man beside him with a grave expression.

If Chen Mo were there, he would have recognized the young man. Though he had only met him once or twice, the young man

had left quite an impression on him.

He was Wang Xu's real life older brother, Wang Wen. 26/27-year old Wang Wen was the opposite of his brother, Wang Xu, and had a serious, reserved air.

“Hm. That's not unusual. It's a mutated BOSS after all so one team is not enough to kill it. Any ideas, Brother Lil' Building?” Wang Wen did not express his opinion but directed a question to the young, cultured mage next to him. His game ID was Lil' Building of Storms.

Lil' Building of Storms smiled faintly. “We kill it, of course. We lost too much in this transaction already. Since we have a Mutated BOSS, we have to kill it. Relax, I've contacted all the members of Glacier Game Club who haven't left the beginner village. Now, add those hired pro players and killing the BOSS will be no problem at all. We suffered a defeat the last time but we are prepared now. Just so long as we do not let the BOSS clone itself, it'll be a piece of cake to kill it.”

The clone of the Mutated Slime King was not as powerful as the original but it was still more than players could handle comfortably.

The party had a fighter and a priest – with the fighter to tank and the priest to heal, they would have been able to withstand the BOSS's attacks. However, a clone meant that they would suffer crushing defeat.

“Stop the BOSS from cloning itself? How?” Wang Xu wrinkled his brow and asked quizzically.

“Aren’t Cold Flow and his friends over there? Their equipment has the Silencing skill.” Lil’ Building of Storms looked at the other party and saw that they too had their gazes on them.

Cold Flow walked over, all smiles. “Brother Lil’ Building, I’ve long wanted to meet you! I heard that you’ve joined Glacier Game Club. Congrats, congrats!”

Lil’ Building of Storms was a semi-famous competitive pro gamer in the Chinese servers, outstanding in his gameplay. He did not have any real contact with game studios like Cold Flow’s but when Cold Flow was not busy, he would provide Elo boosting* services – expensive services for the higher ranks. While doing his job, he ran into Lil’ House of Storm a few times and was always bullied by him. Their encounters resulted in him not getting the job done. Furthermore, this guy was named “Building (lou)” while he was “Flow (liu)” – just one letter was different. How could he not remember him?

* MMR Boosting (Match Making Rating, also known as Elo Boosting) is an act where a player (The Booster) logs into another player’s account (The Boostee) to play a ranked game.

Lil’ Building of Storms smiled wryly to himself at Cold Flow’s words. Glacier Game Club had yet to make its debut and it had already failed in its first big battle. Whether it could continue operations was a problem and even if it did it would not have much support ever again. Cold Flow was congratulating him but anyone

could see that he was rejoicing at Glacier Game Club's misfortune.

But with a BOSS to kill, Lil' Building of Storms did not find it worth his time to bicker with this treacherous, narrow-minded fellow. He nodded and went straight to the point. "Boss Cold Flow, I know you have a piece of equipment that can silence BOSS skills. Since neither your team nor mine can defeat it, how about we work together this once?"

Cold Flow was a professional too; at the mention of business, he put his pettiness aside. He had approached them with the same goal in mind. After a bit of muttering under his breath, Cold Flow asked, "Sure, we can work together. How do we split the BOSS loot?"

"Our two parties aren't enough to kill the BOSS. I've called Glacier Game Club members and some other pro players to assist so there will be quite a few people sharing the loot. I can promise you, though, that you will get to choose one of the top three items of the highest value from the BOSS loot."

"Okay. Then, who gets to choose first?" Cold Flow agreed without much thought.

Though it was a mutated BOSS, it dropped just 10-plus items. Being able to choose from mid to top range of items dropped was already a good deal.

However, the most valuable three also had great price differences so the order in which one gets to choose became a problem.

“Everyone will choose from the top three. If there are no objections, then you can just take it. If anyone opposes your choice, we draw lots and the winner can have it.”

Lil’ Building of Storms had already sorted out the loot split. Cold Flow found his plan fair and nodded in compliance.

Both teams started their preparations.

In the distance, the Mutated Slime King was still slaughtering players. Many knew that they did not stand a chance but they could not help wanting to test the waters.

Since there were so many people – pros from the Flaming Three-Headed Wolf campaign included – the BOSS was bound to die. If they could get a piece of equipment when it died then they would’ve struck it rich.

“Those pros are making their move!”

The moment the leeches had been waiting for had finally arrived.

There were eight parties in total and they numbered less than 50 but once they rallied and started their attack, the Mutated Slime King’s HP decreased quickly.

“Fighters, focus on defence! Priests, heal!” Lil’ Building of Storms

hollered.

The first wave of attacks hit the BOSS hard but they were unable to hold back the BOSS's counterattack, which was an instant team wipe-out.

They were mostly pros so they did not need Lil' Building of Storms to remind them to put their all into withstanding the BOSS's attack.

Not taking the other attacks into account, the move where the Mutated Slime King released purple balls in an area of effect attack was not something a few fighters could block. It was most probable that some party members would be killed.

Lil' Building of Storms had a plan to counter this move, of course.

They would move towards the surrounding players while attacking and wait for the BOSS to release the purple balls, then hide in the crowd to avoid the balls.

With their skill, they could easily make use of the surrounding players to avoid the purple balls. Once the balls were gone, they would rally again and continue their assault.

“Shit! That bastard!”

After two rounds, the surrounding players realized Lil' Building

of Storms' intent. He, however, did not care.

So what? 70% of you guys wanted to kill-steal! If not for the system not allowing players to attack each other in the beginning villages, Lil' Building of Storms was sure that these people would kill them once the BOSS was almost dead. He was not going to be soft-hearted about making these players into the BOSS' target practice.

“Phew, I made it.”

At that moment, Chen Mo finally arrived.

Looking at the BOSS's HP, which had dropped to about half, Chen Mo knew he had time.

“Wang Xu? Wang Wen?” Chen Mo recognized the brothers right away when he observed the group fighting the BOSS.

The brothers had made some changes to their appearance but in a crowd of strangers, the two familiar figures were easy to pick out.

“This Wang Wen is just as calm as in real life! Nice.” Chen Mo had met Wang Wen twice and did not know what he did for a living but Wang Wen was quite eye-catching in the game.

“These guys are here too. What a small world.” Chen Mo recognized Cold Flow and Cold Belle.

“Glacier Group, Wang brothers and the potty-mouthed boobs girl. Ha! I must steal this BOSS now!”

There was no rule against kill-stealing but if there was no reason to do so, stealing some strangers' BOSS would make him feel guilty. This group, on the other hand, would not only be guilt-free... it would feel so freaking awesome!

Chapter 54 - BOSS Capture

“It’s almost at 50%. Use the silencing skill when the BOSS starts to clone itself. Don’t miss the timing!” Lil’ Building of Storms yelled a reminder at Cold Flow.

When the BOSS split at 50% HP, its body would blur. If they used the silencing skill then, they would be able to stop it from using its skill.

“I know that! You don’t have to remind me – I want to stay alive too!” retorted Cold Flow.

They had only one chance. Their annihilation would be the result if the BOSS was allowed to clone itself.

“Toothpick, keep your eyes peeled. Don’t miss the timing.” ordered Cold Flow of his party’s priest. He had the silencing skill on his magic staff.

“Don’t worry, Boss Cold Flow, sir! I won’t.” Toothpick was a calm male priest. Cold Belle was the only female in Cold Flow’s party.

“50%!”

The Mutated Slime King’s HP hit 50% during their conversation. Its body suddenly blurred, ready to split in two.

“Silence!” Toothpick raised his staff. A black beam of light shot from the staff and hit the Mutated Slime King before it could split in half.

The Mutated Slime King’s blurry form snapped back into focus.

“Success! Grab this chance now and attack! Don’t give it an opportunity to use its skill a second time!” Lil’ Building of Storms yelled.

With a group of pros attacking in earnest, the Mutated Slime King’s HP decreased rapidly.

The surrounding crowd of players stirred when they saw the BOSS’s HP fly towards zero. They were aiming to rush over and grab what they could once the BOSS was dead.

Though they had no looting rights, with so many players around they could block off the spaces where items fell and make it impossible for the BOSS-killers to pick their items. After a period of time, the BOSS-killers would lose their looting rights and the items would be theirs to take.

There were almost fifty pro players killing the BOSS, but the team battle system had not been unlocked in the beginner villages so only one party would have looting rights in the end. With such a large crowd to block one party, the possibility of snatching some loot was not small.

The BOSS HP quickly dropped from 50% to 20%.

The would-be loot-snatchers did not move. Running over at this time was plain suicide.

However, an eye-catching lone figure emerged from the crowd.

“It’s that masked player again!”

The players looked at the figure and saw that that player had covered his face.

“No way... Is he the same guy who appeared at Wild Wolf Valley about an hour ago?” The people there knew about the incident at Wild Wolf Valley and all of them were reminded of the event at the sight of the masked player.

“Looks like it really is the same guy! His body shape’s really similar!”

They could not see his face but his silhouette looked familiar to many players. They were quite certain it was the same person.

“We’ll have a good show to watch!”

It struck quite a few that this person may have come to kill-steal the BOSS.

This guy was so mysterious that it just might be possible!

“Him again!” If the layman players could see that it was the same guy, pros like Lil’ Building of Storms couldn’t miss it either. They had seen the masked player up close rather recently after all.

The group of pros were hopping mad; they had amassed their forces to take down the BOSS only to be thwarted by unknown means used by this person. It was a blow to their pride and their money-purses.

If they’d been allowed to PK, they would have turned away from the BOSS and focused all their attacks on this cursed masked player.

Chen Mo ignored Lil’ Building of Storms and his team. He ran straight towards the Mutated Slime King, raised an arm and fired a bolt.

Several test threads had been posted on the forums about the capturing skill. If a hunter wanted to capture a monster, he had to deal damage to it and if no damage was dealt to the monster, there was no chance of capturing it.

The range of a novice capture skill was just 5m. Any further and the skill couldn’t be used on the monster.

“This guy is either a hunter or an assassin!” At the sight of Chen Mo using a crossbow, the surrounding players narrowed down his

character class to one of two.

“Kid, my boss, Bottomless Glacier is telling you to give him your game ID! Tell me now!” A player shouted at Chen Mo. He had contacted Bottomless Glacier at once when he saw the masked player appear.

“Are you retarded? I covered my face so you won’t recognize me, else I won’t be able to do more bad things to you all later. Bwahahahaha!” Chen Mo disguised his voice and mocked them all.

The hired pros turned red with anger and the Glacier Game Club members were so angry you could see steam come out their ears.

Their beautifully bright futures turned into dark despair because of this guy! From what he said – he was going to mess with them in the future too?!

“Kid, if we find out who you are, Glacier Group will use our financial might to crush you!” Another guy shouted.

“Oooh, I’m soooo scared!” Chen Mo laughed loudly.

With a wave of his hand, he was equipped with his best gear. One shot from his bolt dealt 200+ damage to the BOSS.

“Wow! Such high attack power!”

The pros were stunned by the damage.

That was just a normal attack – no skill used! Dealing even 100+ damage was already quite good for them!

They were all in Green equipment, so... did this mean that the masked player had a full set of Purple equipment?

The pros were unsettled at the thought.

Having a full set of Purple equipment was like a legend on the forums. Nobody had ever seen anyone with a full set and yet today they'd met someone who did.

He was able to procure a full set of Purple equipment at this stage? Just who is this guy?

“Focus! Attack the BOSS and be careful not to let it get stolen!” Lil' Building of Storms shouted.

This masked guy had high damage so he must be here to kill-steal. Though it was them who started the attack, if the team which dealt damage to the BOSS gets killed and this guy dealt the most damage after them, he would be able to steal their BOSS.

The groups of pros grew anxious. They'd come away empty-handed at the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf battle. If they lost this low-HP BOSS to this guy now, they would have no place to hide their faces.

Chen Mo looked at the Mutated Slime King's HP; less than 15%.

Capture!

Chen Mo made his move. He ran close to the Mutated Slime King and used the capture skill.

According to tests on the forums, the chance of success was greatest when the monster's HP was 10% and under.

However, Chen Mo could not wait any longer. The BOSS's HP was dropping too quickly so if he used the capture skill at 10% and below he would have to use it consecutively.

There was no cooldown for the skill but the success rate would be quite low if he used it consecutively.

The monster would also build up resistance after every failed capture. Using the capture skill when its resistance had yet to wear off would only make it increase its resistance and lower his chances of capturing it.

System prompt: Capture fail!

The prompt pinged. Chen Mo was not surprised.

This was a mutated BOSS after all. His luck would be through the roof if he managed to capture it on his first try at 15% HP.

Chen Mo retreated.

“What’s that bastard trying to do?”

Cold Flow watched Chen Mo approach the BOSS, then immediately withdraw. He couldn’t figure out why he did that but his actions made him uneasy.

“Attack full-force!” Lil’ Building of Storms was uneasy too. He decided to bring his plan to increase attacks forward.

The BOSS’s HP quickly fell to 10%. Chen Mo saw that it was time to try again and he ran forward to use his capture skill.

System prompt: Capture failed!

However, the capture attempt failed again.

He failed but he still had more tries!

Chen Mo did not panic and calmly retreated.

Lil' Building of Storms and Cold Flow were both keeping an eye on Chen Mo. Seeing him make similar actions twice confirmed that he was up to something and it was no good. Nervousness struck their hearts.

The memory of this guy making the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf evolve and fly away was still fresh in their minds. Him doing incomprehensible things again was not strange at all.

Mutated Slime King HP: 5%!

Chen Mo advanced yet again!

Capture!

System prompt: Capture failed!

“Damn! A mutated BOSS isn't so easy to capture after all. I still have one last try but the chance of failure is high!”

His third attempt failed and Chen Mo had a feeling that he would still fail if he tried the fourth time.

Players would have a strange feeling when using the capture skill. To Chen Mo, it felt like he had thrown a rope at the Mutated Slime King. Unfortunately, this rope was easily shaken off by the Mutated Slime King; there was no 'lassoed' feeling at all.

He had this feeling for all three of his attempts. The BOSS's HP would be nearly zero on his fourth attempt but Chen Mo felt there would be no change in the success rate. If he tried the fifth time... well, the BOSS would be dead by then.

What should I do?

The BOSS had only a little HP left.

The cogs of Chen Mo's mind spun.

Chapter 55 - BOSS Minion!

Any solution?

Yes!

The success rate of monster capture was tied to the player's Strength and Spirit. Other players can't do anything about it even if they knew but Chen Mo was different. He had a crazy overpowered title – Despicable!

His Strength and Spirit would increase by 100 points with Despicable equipped. Chen Mo wasn't sure how much that would increase his success rate but his attributes would surely help!

The problem was he would have to wait three days before he could un-equip the Despicable title. He would be a Black-name player for three days, be unable to return to Ayer Town and unable to leave the beginner village.

After Level 10, players need to go to Ayer Town to look for the Transfer NPC and choose to either participate in the Trial of Natural Skill or teleport straight to one of the Three Main Cities. Chen Mo would have to wait three days after equipping Despicable.

Furthermore, equipping the title only gave him a chance to capture the BOSS.

Should I take this gamble?

I'll do it!

Chen Mo was not the indecisive sort – it was just three days and he would probably be delayed by a level or two. He wasn't like some other players who want to rush levels. It was all right if he was slower since he would get a mutated BOSS as his minion if he succeeded!

There was no other chance better than this to get a mutated BOSS as a minion!

“Go, guys! The BOSS is almost dead! Use all your skills on it!”

The Mutated Slime King had just 2% HP left. Lil' Building of Storms, Cold Flow and all the other pro players began to get excited.

This was a mutated BOSS so it would surely drop a lot of loot whether it was a solo kill or not. And when a video of this event goes on the forums they would be famous – double win!

“Get ready! If we get just one, we'll be rich!” The surrounding players readied themselves for a 100-yard dash.

“What the hell? How..? That guy's as black as the devil!”

Even at this time, Lil' Building of Storms kept an eye on Chen Mo and his eyes widened in shock.

The masked player, who had looked like any other normal player, started to emit a thick black aura from his body right before he rushed in front of the BOSS!

“KILL! Quick, kill the BOSS!” A sight he had never seen prompted a strong wave of unease to wash over Lil' Building of Storms.

BOSS HP: 1%!

The surrounding players rushed forward. Lil' Building of Storms, Cold Flow and the other pro players put their all into their attacks.

The Mutated Slime King let out a roar of part defiance, part lament of its imminent demise.

A great wave of attacks rained down on the Mutated Slime King. Once this wave hit, it would die.

At this moment, it seemed like everyone's vision was lost – over a hundred attacks landed on... nothing!

Right at the end, the BOSS... disappeared!

What happened?

The big group of normal players who'd intended to snatch loot stopped in their tracks and looked about them, trying to see where the BOSS had gone.

“Attack that masked guy! He did something!”

The usually calm Lil' Building of Storms let out a roar of anger!

Him again!

If he'd seen right, the masked player had run to the BOSS, waved his hand and the BOSS had disappeared right after!

“Black Name player! This guy is a Black Name player!”

“Kill him!”

The BOSS disappeared but Lil' Building of Storms' shout finally drew attention to the black-shrouded Chen Mo, prompting somebody to yell.

They did not know why this masked guy had become a Black Name player, or how a no-player-killing zone had a Black Name player.

But when they saw that he was a Black Name player who possibly had lots of rare items on him, the players started to attack.

In a second, attacks came raining down on Chen Mo like they were aimed at a BOSS.

Success! Equipping Despicable worked!

Chen Mo's chest felt like it was bursting with joy.

“Hahaha! You guys are way too weak to kill me!”

Chen Mo had no time to look at his BOSS minion's stats. He looked at the attacks that filled the sky and bellowed with laughter.

Wind-speed Dodge!

Slime King's Roar!

Chen Mo's body glowed. He used two speed-increase skills and those, coupled with Shoes of the Wind Walker and the Despicable title's movement speed boost, raised Chen Mo's movement speed to a whopping 24 points – over twice that of a normal player's!

There were a ton of attacks heading towards him but they were

basic long-distance attacks and lacked chasing or locking-on capability.

Under the onslaught of attacks, Chen Mo's body was like a streak of black light. He zoomed from the midst of the attacks to the centre of the crowd.

“Box him in! Don't let him escape! He's got a whole suit of awesome equipment and if those drop, it beats killing the BOSS!”

They were taken aback by his speed but it confirmed their suspicion that he had a lot of good items on him. Plus, some attacks had landed on him earlier and caused damage! That meant they could attack this Black Name masked player in this no-player-kill zone!

However, the surrounding players were mostly normal players and did not have target-locking skills nor area of effect skills. Boxing in the ultra-fast Chen Mo was impossible.

Chen Mo zipped about the crowd like a loach and he soon got clear of the crowd at a startling speed.

Of course, Lil' Building of Storms and Co. would not let it be after getting the BOSS stolen from them twice. They believed this masked player to be so crazy fast because of some special skill or magic scroll. Once the skill or effect wore off, they would get their chance to catch up to him.

However, they'd only chased him a short distance when the masked player, just 10 metres ahead of them suddenly disappeared from sight.

“It's either camouflage or teleportation! This bastard! Did he come back from one of the big cities? How did he get such overpowered equipment and skills?!” Cold Flow ground his teeth in fury.

Anyone would be hopping mad if his BOSS got stolen at 1% HP, let alone mean-spirited Cold Flow.

“ARGH! I don't care who he is – I, Lil' Building of Storms will remember this! If I find out who he is I won't rest till I hunt him down and kill him!”

In under two hours, Lil' Building of Storms had lost horribly twice. His face was a mask of dark anger.

“Count me in! If Brother Lil' Building finds out who this bastard is, don't hesitate to ask for my assistance!”

The pros had a pro temper too. Their anger and resentment were not any less than Lil' Building of Storms and Cold Flows'.

In the distance, Chen Mo had quickly escaped to an isolated place thanks to his camouflage skill and familiarity with the Slime Plains.

Chen Mo opened the stats page of the Mutated Slime King he'd caught.

Mutated Slime King

Description: King of the Slimes. Mutated due to wrath, attributes increased.

Attributes:

HP: 100 000

MP: 1000

Physical attack power 100 – 500

Magic attack power 100 – 400

Physical defence 50

Magic defence 50

Movement speed 5 – 17

Skills:

Body slam: It uses its body to strike enemies, dealing 150% damage. Cooldown 5 seconds.

Angry roar: Increase own strength. Physical and Magic attack power increase by 30%. Movement speed increase by 5 points, Jumping height 3 metres. Effect lasts 15 seconds. Cooldown 120 seconds.

Jump attack: This skill can be used when Angry roar is activated. Jump up towards an enemy and attack, causing 250% damage. Cooldown 10 seconds.

Miniature exploding slimes: Call a group of miniature slimes to attack enemies. Each slime appears for 10 seconds. May deal 200% damage to enemies upon explosion. Cooldown 5 minutes.

Clone: Skill can be used when Slime King's HP is 50% and below. Clone has only 70% of attributes of the original. Clone can use all of the original's skills except cloning. All skills do 70% of the original's damage. Clone will appear for 5 minutes. Cooldown 60 minutes.

Holy shit! This is freaking OP!

Chen Mo's eyes popped when he saw his minion's stats.

With such an awesome BOSS minion, it'll be hard not to be OP!

Chapter 56 - A Strange Commission

How powerful was this Mutated Slime King BOSS minion?

Not counting the additional attributes from the Despicable title, Chen Mo's full set of excellent items dealt 270 damage at best. However, his damage was small compared to the Mutated Slime King's 500 maximum.

Furthermore, its 100 000HP was undoubtedly BOSS level!

Chen Mo summoned his BOSS minion to admire its awesomeness.

A purple light flashed and the Mutated Slime King appeared in front of Chen Mo.

The BOSS-turned-pet Mutated Slime King had lost its aggressiveness and become gentler.

However, Chen Mo felt that this little fellow had become much dumber. It just stayed on the ground like a dummy after he summoned it. It looked at Chen Mo for a second, then looked about itself, seemingly to search for monsters to attack and show off its prowess.

There were monsters around but Chen Mo was not inclined to let it show off its might unless it was a Black Slime. Other than the Black Slime, all the Slime Plains monsters were pretty much insta-

kill for his minion. Chen Mo could not be bothered with small fry anymore and if anyone caught sight of him, there would be trouble.

Hunters had one chance to rename caught pets. When pets get summoned to fight, the name will be displayed, identifying it as a pet and not a monster so other players in the area wouldn't attack it. Of course, the hunter can also choose not to display the pet's name but if it were to get killed by others, they couldn't be blamed. Unlike summoners' summoned beasts and pets, where they can be re-summoned when the skill cooldown ends, if a hunter's pet dies, he will have to go back to the city and look for a specific NPC to revive the pet.

“Mutated Slime King” was such a long name; Chen Mo changed his pet's name to something that suited its rotund physique – “Fatso”!

He couldn't return to Ayer Town, nor interact with NPCs, nor gain experience when he killed monsters. There wasn't anything he could do at present in the game and he did not have much time left to play so after changing his BOSS minion's name, Chen Mo logged out.

While Chen Mo logged off and ate his supper, chaos reigned on the game forums.

“Glacier Group's joy turned to sorrow!”

“Biggest joke of the year!”

“Mysterious masked player’s identity analysis!”

“The Chinese server’s greatest player!”

“The game’s first Black Name!”

Almost all the posts were about Glacier Group’s fight with the BOSS and the mysterious masked player.

Glacier Group’s advertisements had been plastered all over the past few days and annoyed quite a number of people. Now that the high and mighty had fallen, some players were quick to step on them when they were down. The posts about Glacier Group were full of ridicule.

For the backseat-commenter players, this was just the sort of thing they loved.

Still, the hottest topic was, inevitably, the masked character that Chen Mo played.

The masked man had used unknown means to make the hidden BOSS evolve, spoiling Glacier Group’s plans, resulting in all its enormous efforts plus money to be in vain!

Pretty much everyone on the forums knew about the system's one-second freeze and many were of the opinion that this was also due to the masked player's machinations.

Not long after the uproar, news came of an almost dead Mutated Slime King spirited away to goodness knows where at the last moment from a group of pros by the mysterious masked player.

In the midst of this another piece of news revealed that this mysterious masked player was actually a Black Name player with astounding speed and power.

Each bit of news was, to an average player, greatly attention-grabbing and unimaginable!

From his first appearance till that point in time, the masked player had been put on a pedestal by the forum-players and hailed as their idol – all in under four hours.

“Bah! What ‘Chinese Server’s Greatest Player’? He’s just lucky. If I meet him I’ll beat him up so badly his own mother won’t recognize him!”

A number of players felt that they were superior to the masked player who had gained instant fame. They were those who wished to be famous but weren’t so they ridiculed the masked player.

They weren’t the only group who felt that way.

What was the fastest way to gain fame?

Just like it had been since ancient times – defeat the best! If one could kill a well-known pro player, he or she would be famous!

If Chen Mo let his game ID be known, he would never have a day of peace; hordes of players who do not fear death would come challenge him.

“This guy is seriously invincible on our Chinese servers!”

The group of young men in Ash Blue Tech were already aware of Chen Mo’s awesomeness but when they witnessed him capturing the Mutated Slime King, they could only goggle.

They, the non-players, were very envious of him having a BOSS minion. Now, imagine the actual players – if they knew of this they would die of jealousy.

“Man, I really want to see how this guy would do outside the beginner village.”

The group of young men sighed collectively.

They were very interested in how this player with such a strong base build would fare.

Unfortunately, they would not be able to check in on him so

easily once he got out of the beginner village.

After a good, deep sleep, Chen Mo woke early in the morning, washed up and went for a run.

Your body's your vehicle of revolution. You can skip classes but not training.

He'd stayed up these past nights and though he did train during the day, he'd skipped his morning run the past two weeks. Chen Mo reviewed his schedule and made plans for gaming and training.

He finished his run and ate his breakfast. He was in no hurry to return to the game. Chen Mo returned to his abode at around 8 or 9am and found that he had received quite a few messages on his mobile phone.

Just as he was about to read them, the phone rang in his hand.

“Yeah? Old Tian, what is it?” Chen Mo answered the call from Fatty Tian.

“Haha... Chen, my brother! You had great foresight not to sign up for the commission by Glacier Group. Those who did sign up only got a bit of money and a whole load of grief.” Instead of his usual spiel about being 18 years old, Fatty Tian talked about Glacier Group.

“What’s up? You seem excited and nervous... did you just watch an action film?” asked Chen Mo suspiciously.

“No, no! What’re you saying that for? Why would someone as handsome and dashing as I watch an action film... cough Enough said. Brother Chen, I called to tell you something. The company wanted me to contact you urgently, so sorry for disturbing you so early in the morning.” Fatty Tian blithered on for a bit and finally got to the point.

“I got a call from the company bright and early saying they got a big commission about the game. The cash incentive is huge – bigger than Glacier Group’s! It can go up to ten million U.S. dollars!”

“What does this have to do with me?” Chen Mo’s brows wrinkled.

“Ahem. Well, you see... the commission is big but the requester wants you to do it. The commission is not a one-off but a series of tasks in the game. Every time you complete a task you get a relevant reward. Once you agree to accept this commission, you will get a USD\$100,000 deposit immediately. If you refuse, the requester will withdraw the commission.”

Fatty Tian spoke nervously. This was the largest commission the company had received since its re-branding. If Chen Mo refused, the requester would withdraw the commission, and the company would suffer losses. As the person in charge he would be blamed.

On the other hand, if Chen Mo accepted the commission, he would not have to worry about his work performance for the year.

Chapter 57 - Jealous Hate

“Just me? Nobody else?” asked Chen Mo.

“Yes! The requester said so. Man, I didn’t think you’d be a Master in disguise. No wonder you didn’t accept Glacier Group’s commission!”

Fatty Tian had no idea how powerful Chen Mo was in the game – he only knew that his company had offered to introduce more famous and powerful professional players to the requestor in order to keep them interested but the requester had rejected all of them, insisting on Chen Mo for the job. If Chen Mo did not accept, the offer would be withdrawn immediately.

Chen Mo muttered to himself under his breath after hearing Fatty Tian’s words. The commission was weird – it was as if the requester knew what he had done last night in the game. If not, why must it be him, then?

Last night he had been masked all the time in-game. Players who have learnt “Investigate” would be able to use it on him and see his game ID even though he had his face covered but the skill could only be learnt in the Three Main Cities.

Chen Mo did not find it strange that someone had found out his game ID. If he could get the ‘Capture’ skill in the beginner village, it was no surprise that others could get the ‘Investigate’ skill too.

The problem was that this person probably knew him in real life

since his face hadn't been revealed in-game.

Of course, he couldn't discount the possibility that the game company had leaked his personal details.

Other players may not know about him but every action he took had been recorded by the game company. It would be easy to find him that way.

Chen Mo had seen many cases where company staff sold information for extra money. It was possible someone had sold his information to the requester and that was how he was found.

Money makes the world go around. Judging from the sum of money the requester put up, this was the most likely scenario.

"Brother Chen, you won't reject it, will you?" Chen Mo's silence made Fatty Tian anxious.

"Sure, I'll accept. Why not? I get a USD\$100,000 deposit if I accept, right?" Chen Mo responded right away.

Worm Co.'s policy was that once the deposit had been made, it cannot be refunded no matter if the job was a failure or not. Since the requester knew his identity already it was no use trying to be secretive. Might as well take the money and see how the job went. He didn't believe that he could be forced into doing any task he didn't want to anyway.

Furthermore, he was just a Level 10 small fry. Though he had a full set of excellent equipment, the edge it gave him would only last him till Level 20 at most. He hadn't made any great progress in the game and was probably not that much better than the average player. That was why he found it strange how this requester thought so highly of him.

“Hahaha, Brother Chen, that's great! USD\$100, 000 is yours once you agree. However, the requester also has a condition – the first task you do shall be for free.” Fatty Tian was overjoyed at Chen Mo's acceptance.

“What's the first request?” asked Chen Mo. There was no such thing as a free lunch after all. On the other hand, he had no reason to reject either the USD\$100, 000 commission or the in-game commission.

“Which main city are you in, Brother Chen? You need to go to Shadow City and the requester will let you know about the first task.”

Shadow City?

The Three Main Cities were rather far apart and at this stage in the game it was impossible for Level 10+ players to move from one city to another. Fatty Tian's words implied that if Chen Mo had gone to another city, he would have to commit suicide and get to Shadow City.

Chen Mo was still in the beginner village so it was not a problem

to get to Shadow City but he still had to wait about two days more.

With that thought in mind, Chen Mo said, “Old Tian, I need at least three days to get to Shadow City. Get your people in touch with the requester. If he can’t wait, I won’t be able to do it.”

If he were willing, Chen Mo could let go of the BOSS minion and get to Shadow City in one day. Logically speaking, a BOSS minion was not worth USD\$100, 000 especially since pets caught before the second character class upgrade cannot level up. The BOSS minion was strong but it was just a Level 10 BOSS. Most people would give up on Fatso for USD\$100, 000.

Chen Mo was not going to give up on Fatso. He wanted to know what sort of attitude the requester had as he was uncomfortable not knowing anything about the requester.

“No problem! Don’t worry, Brother Chen. The requester gave enough time.”

Fatty Tian’s words made Chen Mo’s plan to find out more go up in smoke.

He persisted and asked Fatty Tian more questions about the requester but what he knew was limited. Chen Mo got nothing and they both hung up.

After hanging up, Chen Mo opened the messages.

“Come back to school this afternoon. Before 4pm.”

“Get your ass to school before 4 or deal with the consequences yourself.”

He had two messages – the first from their form teacher, Su Yue Hong and the other rude one from the class monitor Li Yun.

Both messages were similar – looks like something happened at school.

Come to think of it, he hadn't been to school in almost a month. Time to show his face.

He dillydallied till it was almost 3, then braved the afternoon heat and took the tram to Nan Hua University.

He walked into Year 3 Class 2's Computer Systems classroom and was surprised to see that it was empty of students except for the class monitor, Li Yun.

Holy crap. The entire world changed in the month he'd been away.

“You're finally here, huh? The School of Computer Systems has been shut down. These are the transfer papers the school has specially prepared for Computer Systems students, valid till 5pm. After that, you'll have to go through regular application and transfer procedures. Everyone else has filed the papers. You're the

only one left.”

Li Yun was dressed in a white shirt and black suit. His scholarly face was full of gloating as he tossed a document at Chen Mo.

“By 5pm?” Chen Mo frowned.

He flipped through the papers. These transfer papers were simple enough to fill but there still were multiple procedures involved and he definitely couldn't finish it in a few hours.

“What – not happy? You only have yourself to blame for not coming to class. I'm being very kind in informing you right now!” said Li Yun snidely.

Chen Mo looked coolly at Li Yun. He knew he hated him.

Why? Simply because Chen Mo was better than him.

In their first year, Li Yun volunteered to be class president. He was also way ahead of others in computer things and was quite well known in the School of Computer Systems.

During those days, Chen Mo did not skip school for a month like he did now. He buried his head in books, studied hard for a year and in that one year he taught himself the material for all three years of university.

So, from the second year onwards, when Chen Mo had more or less learnt all there was to learn, he barely showed up for classes that were not attendance-compulsory.

In Year 2, Computer Systems students were eligible to take part in the highly-regarded annual Computing Competition and every class had to have at least two participants. Of course, Li Yun signed up for the competition and, to everyone's surprise, the form teacher Su Yue Hong pushed Chen Mo very hard to take part too.

Once the results were out, everyone was shocked. Chen Mo placed third!

Getting into the top three as a second-year student was a feat that very few had accomplished in the history of Nan Hua University.

The highly-regarded Li Yun, on the other hand, placed tenth.

The students in Chen Mo's class begun to notice things about him. They discovered that this quiet classmate had a hidden side to him. He did not attend classes but scored very well in all his examinations. Problems others could not figure out were solved easily by him – problems that Li Yun could not solve.

Li Yun, who had always been head and shoulders above the rest, was suddenly toppled from his perch. His lofty position and rank had been stripped from him.

Chen Mo rarely came to school but when he did, he could feel the

animosity and jealousy in Li Yun's gaze. He was surprised Li Yun did not take the opportunity now to exact revenge.

Though he was not a regular attendee, Chen Mo had friends and he entrusted two of his classmates to inform him of any important happenings in school.

Mobile phones in this day and age made it easy for people to send messages or make quick calls but these two classmates had not informed him of the transfers.

Chen Mo could see a trace of smugness in Li Yun's gaze and guessed that he probably had something to do with it. Ultimately, Chen Mo himself was to blame for his month-long absence and not staying on top of things.

“Okay. I'll settle the transfer myself.” Chen Mo nodded, gathered the transfer papers and turned to go.

Behind Chen Mo's back, Li Yun's smug expression morphed into rage.

He had spent so much effort to see Chen Mo's face when he fell into despair and hysterics when given the bad news... But this bastard! This bastard was the same as when he had placed third in the competition – he didn't give a damn!

“Pretend, then! Keep pretending! I'll rip your hypocrite mask off one day!”

Alone in the empty classroom, Li Yun punched the table in fury.

He had lost too much of what should have been his because of this bastard!

Chapter 58 - Hell Level Of Trial Of Natural Skill

“Teacher Su.” Not long after leaving the classroom, Chen Mo spotted the elegant form teacher, Su Yue Hong, walking towards him in black heels.

Su Yue Hong nodded. “Good that you’re here, I was about to go look for you. I assume you know about the transfer already. You’re the only one in the class who hasn’t processed papers.”

“I just found out. I’m afraid I’ll have to ask for your help, teacher.” Chen Mo quickly said. If he had to do it himself he would need a week, at least.

“I knew this would happen. Here, sign this. I’ve arranged for you to be transferred to the Chinese Language department.”

Chen Mo was surprised to see Su Yue Hong take pre-prepared documents out of her handbag. The only thing missing was his signature.

Of course, he wouldn’t reject this great offer – who cared if it was the Chinese Language department or whatever?

Chen Mo got a pen and signed his name, the pen making scratching sounds on the paper as he did.

“Thank you, Teacher Su,” said Chen Mo as he got ready to leave.

“Wait.” Su Yue Hong stopped him.

“Yes? Do you need my help for something?”

He had interacted with her a number of times so her stopping him was likely to ask for help in something.

It was normal for university students to skip classes but Chen Mo had skipped for a month. Furthermore, he was able to do so due to Su Yue Hong’s efforts.

Of course, there was a price to pay and one of the things was the condition that Chen Mo get one of the top three places in the competition in his second year of university.

For at least a year after that, Chen Mo helped solve Su Yue Hong’s computer problems and took care of some documents when she couldn’t do them herself.

“Forget it, it’s fine. I can deal with it myself. Don’t forget to report in at the Chinese Language department.” Su Yue Hong thought for a bit, then shook her head and took the transfer papers from Chen Mo before she left.

Chen Mo found it a bit odd but didn’t ask about it. She would ask for help if she really needed it anyway.

He got on the tram to the outskirts of the city, and back to his warehouse. Chen Mo checked the game forums and saw an interesting post which more or less concerned him.

The post was a call to pro players to challenge the Hell level of the Trial of Natural Skill.

The game was launched half a month ago and nobody had been able to pass the Hell level of the Trial of Natural Skill thus far. Still, many had gone to experience how difficult it was.

The Normal level could be passed by most if your luck wasn't too bad. The Difficult level had detailed guides which gave you a fair chance to pass the level with good equipment and team builds. An above-average set of equipment and a great team gave you some possibility to pass the Nightmare level; Guides on the forums all required specialized equipment and party member configurations.

Hell level, on the other hand, had no guides or tips.

This wasn't just because nobody passed the level – normally, even if nobody passed, there would have been some information available from the many who'd attempted the first part of the trial. Don't even talk about the second part, but some guides would've been written for the first part.

However, this was not possible for Hell level of the Trial of Natural Skill. This was because Hell level was different from the other three levels; every Hell Trial was different. The maps, the

rules were all different and there was no way to predict what would happen.

All players can only participate in the Trials once a week. The trial places were 'booked' with the players' account numbers so even if the player committed suicide to try again, the cooldown would not be reset. Players were normally cautious about choosing which trial to challenge because of this one-week wait.

And now, the players recruited by Glacier Group and the hired pro players were gathered in Ayer Town. They were outfitted with superior equipment and were all pros. You could say that they were the strongest beginner village players since GENESIS was launched.

Their battle with the Flaming 3-Headed Wolf was a bust and killing the Mutated Slime King was also a failure. This group of pros decided to challenge Hell level of the Trial of Natural Skill.

After they had chosen to participate in Hell, they discovered that the rules were different from all the rules before. They needed at least 64 people to unlock the trial map and if they did not manage to get enough people in three days, they would fail.

The group had no other choice than to post on the forums to ask for help from other pro players to participate in the trial together.

They already had over 40 people so they just needed 20 more to start the trial. There were so many people on the Chinese servers – gathering 20 people should be easy.

However, it was not going to be so easy. Rules of Hell trials were either competitive or cooperative.

If the rules were cooperative-centric, it would be beneficial to cooperate with a group of pros. But with a number like 64, it was likely that this trial was going to be competitive. Hell level was tough enough but if you added competing with pros to the mix, it was like putting your head on the chopping block. Those fresh out the beginner villages at this stage were mostly newbies so even though the post had been up for half a day, much fuss had been made while signups were scarce.

“It’s so troublesome to get enough people now.” The one who posted was the group with Wang Xu, Lil’ Building of Storms and Cold Flow in it. They had no idea that they’d have this result when they participated in the trial.

“We have no choice. We need people to meet the quota.” Lil’ Building of Storms sighed.

They were working on their own now so they would need to fork out the money themselves for 20 people. It was not as they could not afford it but it was likely that they would still fail after spending their money.

Regular players would not cost much but the map had not been unlocked yet so they still did not know the rules. If the trial required cooperation to complete the tasks, then hiring regular players would be shooting themselves in the foot, so they would

only hire regular players at the last minute as a last resort.

This proverb summed it all nicely – It is better to have a brilliant opponent than a foolish teammate who will fuck you over. They were not afraid of the trial being competitive and hoped for those who signed up to be pro players and not idiots who would ruin things.

Nearly two days passed in a flash and some above average players had signed up. They were almost able to meet the requirement for 64 players.

“We’re still short five people and we have 12 hours left. We should be able to make it.” One more person arrived and Wang Xu perked up.

“We have another o-Shit! This big-breasted loli must be here to join in on the fun, huh!”

Before the trial begun, the players gathered in a huge white room to wait. One more figure appeared in the room.

This big-breasted loli was dressed in the system-given newbie clothing and looked like she had no equipment at all. The group of pros were annoyed at the sight of her.

A loli with ‘assets’ such as hers could just go to Difficult level, act cute and have pervert sugar daddies all clamoring to lead her through the damn trial. Why did she have to come here to the Hell

trial?!

Chapter 59 - System Reward

Such an obvious embodiment of loli characteristics was a rare sight, in-game or in reality. She was the loli Chen Mo had met twice – Itsy Bitsy Fighter. For some reason, she was only participating in the Trial of Natural Skill now, and Hell Level at that – with no equipment.

Itsy Bitsy Fighter's lovely dark eyes scanned the room, outwardly assessing the glares being levelled at her.

She had planned on going up to the players and asking whether they'd like to make a team with her but those glares sent her to a corner of the room, dejected. She sat, hugging her knees, sure that those people would not team up with her.

“Hey girlie, want to join this big brother's party?”

Two dubious characters approached, looking at Itsy Bitsy Fighter from top to toe and touching the snow-white skin beneath her clothes with their gaze.

“Bad guys! Go away!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter refused them unflinchingly, her clear voice ringing in the white room.

“You don't know what's good for you... Just you wait till the Hell Trial starts!”

They had caught the unfriendly attention of the surrounding pro

players, so they left her alone after uttering mean words.

... ..

On the Slime Plains, where no players or monsters roamed, a figure materialized.

Three days were up and Chen Mo returned to the game.

“Three days are over, I can finally remove this damn...”

Once online, the first thing Chen Mo did was to un-equip the powerful yet dangerous Despicable title.

At that moment, a system prompt pinged unexpectedly.

System prompt: Due to your actions in-game, the game has become more perfect! You will be awarded special rewards by the system!

System prompt: You have gained special item “Seed of Hope”!

Seed of Hope

Description: A special item of unknown origin. Extremely rare. Cannot be traded. Bound.

Item grade: Rare, special item

Level limit: Can be equipped by Level 10 and up

Attributes:

All races Favour points +10

All races Prestige +100

Luck +3

Night-time field vision +20m

Additional skills: Deliver, Ray of Hope

– Deliver: Consume a certain amount of energy to deliver yourself to a designated city or to the side of a good friend. Energy consumption varies, depending on the distance to your destination.

– Ray of Hope: Consume all energy to increase your Luck for five seconds. Useable with at least 1000 energy points. Luck will increase by the amount of energy consumed.

Energy points: 0 (Kill monsters of the same level to gain the monster's energy)

Chen Mo heard the ping and looked into his backpack at the little green seed with wide eyes.

Th-this... is a windfall!

Chen Mo was awestruck.

He had not expected a reward for causing the game to freeze, let alone a reward as amazing as this!

Every player can equip five defence pieces, three jewellery pieces and a weapon. Other than these nine pieces, players can also equip three pieces of special equipment.

Special equipment, normally, did not boost player attributes but useful supplementary attributes.

Like night-time vision.

It was not such a problem in the beginner villages since the

night-time field vision was not bad. However, once you get to the three main cities and went out at night, it would be pitch black if a cloud blocked the moonlight. If you went to a place with no moonlight, you wouldn't even be able to see your fingers when you held out your hand in front of you. Night-time field vision became important in times like this.

Only special equipment had night-time field vision attributes. There were ways to get special equipment which had night-time field vision attributes in the three main cities but most only gave you five metres.

Chen Mo had not gone to the three main cities yet but he had been hanging around on the game forums for the past three days so he was no stranger to special equipment.

There weren't many players who'd obtained 5m night-vision at this stage in the game. There were also very lucky players who'd got 10m night-vision who posted their item attributes on the forums, prompting numerous envious replies.

However, these much-envied items were inferior when compared to the Seed of Hope!

20 metres – double the vision!

And this was just one of the item attributes, and not the best one either!

The special equipment other players obtained mostly had one attribute – two attributes invoked envy. The Seed of Hope, with its multiple attributes, was blindingly awesome!

Chen Mo didn't know much about the Favour, Prestige and Luck attributes but if he made the information on the Delivery skill public, he would attract the attention of untold numbers of envious and covetous people.

There were players who had also obtained special equipment with the Delivery skill, of course, but it could only send them to cities. There was no comparing those to The Seed of Hope!

Chen Mo had never used the Ray of Hope skill so he wasn't sure what it did but the skill name matched the item name, so it must be good!

“Not much time left... I'd better hurry back to Ayer Town.”

Chen Mo admired the Seed of Hope for a while, equipped it and ran back to Ayer Town at full speed.

The headcount for the Hell Trial had almost reached 64 people in the past three days. Only a few places were left.

... ..

“Another one! We need just three more!”

A figure materialised in the waiting room of the Hell Trial.

“This guy... looks familiar?” Wang Xu looked at the new arrival and found him familiar.

The new arrival was Chen Mo. If Wang Xu could see his game ID, he would know at once that this was Chen Mo.

“Big brother, it’s you!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter recognised Chen Mo at once and called out joyfully to him, eyes sparkling.

“What are you doing here, too?”

Itsy Bitsy Fighter was quite memorable after all. Chen Mo saw Itsy Bitsy Fighter and walked over.

This loli fighter should have reached Level 10 long ago. Why is she participating in the Trials only now, and Hell Level at that?

It was like her jumping fearlessly into the pit with the Slime King the last time... participating in the Hell Trial was totally a suicide mission.

“I got a quest which requires me to pass the Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill.” Itsy Bitsy Fighter replied gloomily.

“Ayer Town had a quest like that?” Chen Mo wrinkled his brow.

He'd spent the last three days browsing the game forums but nobody had mentioned a quest like this.

“Yep! I've completed all the quests in Ayer Town. I also looked in the surrounding areas for quests but couldn't find any so I asked the Town Mayor and Mayor Soro gave me this quest called “Impossible”. I am not allowed to have equipment while I complete the Hell Trial. While on this quest, I have no time limit so I can keep participating in Hell Trials but I've tried over ten times and failed them all. It's too difficult.”

Itsy Bitsy Fighter nodded and explained her situation. Chen Mo was dumbstruck.

There were others on the forums like Itsy Bitsy Fighter, who'd gone around completing all the quests that could be done and proclaimed that they had done it all when they couldn't get any more quests from NPCs. Nobody else had got the ‘Impossible’ quest like Itsy Bitsy Fighter had, though.

Looks like those players did not complete everything! Only Itsy Bitsy Fighter had done it all and managed to get this quest from Soro!

“Can this quest be shared?” Chen Mo quickly asked.

From what he'd experienced, there was no impossible quest in this game. The quest Itsy Bitsy Fighter got can definitely be completed!

However, passing the Hell Trial alone with no equipment was definitely impossible. This meant relying on party members... so she should be able to share this quest!

Chapter 60 - Merciless Map

“Share my quest? I’ll try.” Itsy Bitsy Fighter blanked out for a bit. She had buried herself in quests and completed a ton but she had never shared a quest before.

Chen Mo invited Itsy Bitsy Fighter to his party and she opened up her quest interface to find that there really was an option to share her quest.

System prompt: You have accepted the quest “Impossible (helper)”!

Quest: Impossible (helper)

Quest difficulty: S rank

Quest details: Help party member ‘Itsy Bitsy Fighter’ pass Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill alive. The quest will disappear when ‘Itsy Bitsy Fighter’ leaves the party.

Quest reward: Unknown

Holy shit! An S rank assistance quest!

Chen Mo sucked in a breath.

The quests that could be shared with party mates and completed were of two types. One was exactly the same as the original and the other was rendering assistance, which was what Chen Mo had got.

According to the requirements of shared quests, everyone received the same reward as long as the quest was completed and it did not matter who completed it.

Assistance quests, on the other hand, required the assistant to complete the task for the party member to complete the quest. The assistant's reward would also be of much lower value than the party member's reward.

Chen Mo rarely saw assistance quests on the forums. The ones he saw were of low difficulty. C rank quests did not give many rewards and B were few are far between. There were no A rank quests at all and S was completely unheard of.

Chen Mo did not mind that his reward would not be as fantastic as Itsy Bitsy Fighter's. Meeting her here and being able to do an S rank quest was good too. Besides, the reward for an S rank quest would be none too shabby either!

“Big brother, your equipment isn't that good either. Should we get another party member?” Itsy Bitsy Fighter scanned Chen Mo's equipment and felt that his equipment was not up to the task – she was a veteran of over ten Hell Trials after all.

“Nah! I haven’t equipped my good stuff yet. You’ll see my greatness later!”

The room was full of pros so they could tell he had excellent equipment even if he tried to hide the glow of his equipment. Chen Mo had equipped an ordinary set of Blue and Green.

“Really?” Itsy Bitsy Fighter’s eyes shone.

“Of course.” Chen Mo nodded and did not elaborate.

His equipment set could be said to be the best ever assembled in the beginner villages and he had a BOSS as his minion too. If he didn’t pass the Hell Trial in record time then he’ll be damned if anyone else could.

“Yay~ goodie!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter bounced with joy. It seemed she totally believed Chen Mo.

Seeing her reaction, Chen Mo started to develop a deep worry for this girl. She’s going to get abducted by some suspicious uncles if she went out on the streets!

Sixty-one people had gathered in the snow-white room. Chen Mo and Itsy Bitsy Fighter sat in a corner, one totally without equipment and one with equipment that was not bad, but average in this group. Nobody could tell what the pair were thinking so none came to invite Chen Mo to a party.

“Sixty-four people! Finally!”

Over an hour passed and three more people had arrived, meeting the quota of 64.

“Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill has been unlocked. Adventurers, please form parties of at least two people in five minutes. These parties cannot be changed once the trial begins!”

A serious voice rang throughout the room.

“Parties of two or more!”

“It must be a competitive map!”

The pros were certain.

The trial called for parties to be made in five minutes but the people in the room had already formed their own parties before the voice spoke. Every group in the room was just waiting quietly to enter the quest map.

“Time’s up! From the 64 participating, 15 parties have been formed. You will now enter the map “Forest Hunter” of Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill. You shall be safe for three minutes after entering the map to familiarize yourselves with the rules and requirements for passing the level!”

The voice spoke again and everyone was enveloped in a white light before disappearing from the snow-white room.

Their surroundings changed. Chen Mo and Itsy Bitsy Fighter appeared in a quiet, grey forest. The ground was littered with twigs and withered leaves.

System prompt: Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill has begun. You shall now challenge the map – “Forest Hunter”!

Map: Forest Hunter

Rules:

- 1) Players can attack each other in the map.
- 2) There is a total of 300 forest crystals in the map and Elite monsters have a 100% chance of dropping 1 forest crystal.
- 3) Forest crystals cannot be traded. 100% chance of dropping after death. When a player dies, a party mate can use 10 forest crystals to revive the dead party member.
- 4) Forest crystals can be exchanged with a special NPC for limited tools to be used in the map.

Requirements for passing:

1) Kill the map defender.

– Condition for the defender to appear: 10 or less players left alive in the map, or use 100 forest crystals to summon the map defender.

2) Player to have at least 10 forest crystals after the death of the map defender.

“Hell Level indeed! These rules and requirements for passing are brutal!”

Chen Mo quickly read the rules and knew it would be no small feat to pass the trial.

There weren't that many rules and the competitive map was not very different from the usual ones but with the added passing requirements, he was able to figure out many things!

The passing requirement was to kill the map defender but to make the defender appear, they would have to kill each other off till 10 remained or use 100 forest crystals.

There was no doubt that the map defender of a Hell Trial was strong so it would be good if they had as many people to do battle with as possible.

Ideally, he would have a party of 20 kill the other 44 players, then gather all 300 forest crystals and give each party member 10. The remaining 100 forest crystals would be used to summon the map defender, and all 20 pass when the defender dies.

But Chen Mo knew if he really tried that, the party of 20 would perish.

The Hell Trial would not set unnecessary rules so that meant the NPC mentioned in rule four must have some tool that should be used in the battle with the map defender, and it would be impossible to kill the defender without this tool!

It was still unknown how many crystals were needed to exchange for a tool but it wouldn't be a small number for sure.

Seems like reducing the player numbers and getting tools are the goals in this trial.

However, this Hell Trial was definitely not that simple. Chen Mo was sure that it was more beneficial to get more tools. Even if someone successfully kept a 10-plus party together, he would be faced with the need to cut his party down to 10, or use 100 crystals. Keeping his 10-plus party meant having less tools to go around when killing the map defender.

It was a tough choice; less people or more tools. You could be faced with a situation where you have enough tools but not enough damage and fail in the end.

“Find the NPC and take a look at the tool attributes before we decide what to do next.”

Most of the players in the map were pros – other than Chen Mo, Lil’ Building of Storms and his ilk had also come to see the same problem.

The choice, though, would be easily made once they see the tool attributes.

But Chen Mo had thought of a deeper problem. Players had no idea what the map defender’s attributes were before exchanging crystals for tools. What if there were different tools available for exchange? Which tool would be the best one?

Chen Mo felt a chill. If that really was the case, this trial is horrendously merciless!

Chapter 61 - Monster's Words

The more Chen Mo learnt, the less confident he felt about passing. There were only 300 forest crystals and players may use some to revive their part mates. Factor in the crystals exchanged for tools by others and... even if he killed everyone else, he wasn't sure if he would end up with half the number of crystals available.

Three minutes of safety passed and the trial began.

Chen Mo was in no hurry. He unequipped all his equipment, asked Itsy Bitsy Fighter to stand still, and attacked her.

30+ damage floated up above Itsy Bitsy Fighter's head while she looked unconcerned.

"Did you get a system prompt when I attacked you?" Chen Mo asked.

"Nope." Itsy Bitsy Fighter did not understand what he was doing but she answered honestly.

"Very good." Chen Mo nodded.

Rule One said that players could attack each other and this included not just enemies but your own party members. However, Chen Mo was testing another theory.

Outside the borders of town, a system prompt would ping if other players attacked you, informing you of a malicious attack and enabling you to defend yourself. If you get killed by the other person, a system prompt would inform you of the identity of your killer.

If you were a Red-name player, on the other hand, you would get no system prompts if you were attacked or killed.

Itsy Bitsy Fighter had received no system prompts when he attacked her, so this meant that if he killed other players in this map, they wouldn't know who killed them.

Chen Mo summoned his minion, Fatso, with a wave of his hand.

“Wah~ It's soo cuuute! You caught this, big brother?”

Itsy Bitsy Fighter's eyes got all sparkly and she lunged at Fatso to envelop it in a hug.

Fatso's adorably large eyes and round little amethyst body were irresistibly loveable.

“Enough. We don't have much time. You can play with Fatso after we're done here.” Chen Mo pulled Itsy Bitsy Fighter off Fatso.

“Okay.” Itsy Bitsy Fighter snapped to attention at the mention of their quest.

“Be careful. Stay behind me.”

Chen Mo equipped his best equipment and led the way, with Itsy Bitsy Fighter following cautiously.

She had no equipment on and was very vulnerable. Elite monsters could kill her in two hits.

“Big brother Silence, why is Fatso so far behind us?” Itsy Bitsy Fighter asked, puzzled.

After summoning Fatso, Chen Mo made it stay far behind himself – so far that Itsy Bitsy Fighter could barely see it.

“I’ll get it to come forward when we run into monsters. We’ve nothing to worry about now.” Chen Mo did not explain why he kept it at a distance.

“Mm-hm.” Itsy Bitsy Fighter felt it awkward to press the issue and just nodded.

“Monster!”

A black shadow measuring two metres high appeared and Itsy Bitsy Fighter sprang behind Chen Mo.

“Roar!”

The monster was a two-metre tall Black Bear with a large aggro range. They were still over 20m away when it roared and begun its furious rush to attack.

“Stay back! Don’t get caught up in the attack.”

Chen Mo did not dare to underestimate the monster. He called Fatso to the front to fight and made Itsy Bitsy Fighter move to safety.

“Slime King’s Call!”

With the Black Bear almost upon them, Chen Mo summoned a fire-red mutated slime.

Fatso had 100,000HP but its HP regeneration was not as quick as a real BOSS’. Chen Mo planned to use the skill to summon a slime every five minutes to act as a shield buffer for Fatso.

“Roar!”

Fatso was quick – it caught up just as Chen Mo and the Black Bear were about to cross swords.

Once he engaged the Black Bear in combat, Chen Mo knew it was an Elite monster. Its HP and attack power were high. Its seemed to have about 30,000HP and its defence was not low either. Chen

Mo's high attack power could only deal about 200 damage – if it were other players, they would only do a few tens of damage.

However, Chen Mo's equipment had an additional poison damage. The stacked effects, coupled with Fatso's attacks, dealt over a thousand damage per second to the Black Bear.

“Battle Rage!”

Itsy Bitsy Fighter had stepped closer, used a skill unexpectedly, then retreated immediately.

Chen Mo had read about Battle Rage on the forums. It was a status skill fighters could learn after reaching Level 15. Novice level Battle Rage increased the fighter and fighter's party mates' attack power and attack speed by 10% and was the most popular fighter skill. Chen Mo was surprised that Itsy Bitsy Fighter had learnt it at Level 10. Looks like she didn't do all those quests for nothing.

With Battle Rage, the Black Bear's HP dropped faster.

As an Elite monster, and one in the Hell Trial, the Black Bear was definitely not easy to kill but Chen Mo's power far surpassed it and it had no chance of fighting back at all.

Most of its attacks landed on the mutated slime and Fatso did not receive much damage. Chen Mo was quick to dodge and had two summoned minions to block attacks for him so he was untouched by the Black Bear's attacks.

In under two minutes, the Black Bear was on the verge of death.

“You’ll not succeed! You will surely fail!”

The Black Bear’s HP went down to zero and it fell dead but in the throes of death, the Black Bear looked almost human for a moment and let out a roar. Chen Mo and Itsy Bitsy Fighter were taken by surprise.

“This monster can speak!”

Chen Mo recovered quickly but Itsy Bitsy Fighter was shaken badly. She looked like she had seen a ghost.

“Ignore it. Let’s move on.”

The Black Bear had dropped a green crystal after death. Chen Mo picked it up – it was the forest crystal.

Forest Crystal: Quest item. Cannot be traded. Dropped upon death. Will disappear after leaving the Forest Hunter map.

They moved forward and ran into a yellow Fierce Tiger after a short walk.

There didn’t seem to be any normal monsters in the map. The Fierce Tiger they met was also an Elite monster. It had 30,000HP

and a higher attack power than the Black Bear but lower defence.

Chen Mo's attributes and two minions made him an invincible opponent to the map's Elite monsters.

Two minutes later, the Fierce Tiger's HP went down to zero and it keeled over.

“You'll not succeed! You will surely fail!”

In its final moments, the Fierce Tiger roared, just like the Black Bear had.

Two Elite monsters in a row had roared the same line in death. Chen Mo could not ignore it now.

Not succeed? What will not succeed?

Were these monsters saying they wouldn't pass the map?

Chen Mo frowned.

If this were other maps, there would be a whole bunch of possibilities. But in this map, they had only one goal and that was to pass the map to finish the Hell Trial.

It sounded like a cursing roar that monsters made when they died

but Chen Mo was sure it was not just a simple roar.

This was the Hell Trial, and if every monster said the same line then these words were not to be taken as something uttered in vain.

It was not just Chen Mo but the other pro players like Lil' Building of Storms, who were scattered throughout the map, also heard the same line from the mouths of the dying monsters after expanding effort to kill them.

As time went by and the Elite monsters were killed one by one, the same line was repeated over and over again. All the players in the map begun to feel like this map must be even more difficult to pass than they'd thought!

Chapter 62 - BOSS Minion's Might

Ash Blue Tech.

The maps of the Trial of Natural Skill were the last part of the game Ash Blue Tech could monitor.

The people at Ash Blue Tech normally didn't observe the Trials unless an anomaly occurred.

There was no point in watching regular Trials and Hell Trials were a waste of time to observe when nobody could pass the Hell Trials at this point in time.

However, once they heard that Chen Mo was challenging the Hell Trial, the group of young men rushed to their monitors immediately.

This guy had excellent equipment, good reflexes and feel for the game. If even he failed to pass then they would have to wait a long while before someone more capable could pass the Hell Trial.

“This map is... weird.”

Hearing the monsters utter the same lines in death, the group of young men felt something was wrong.

“Should we ask Glimmer its strategy?” someone suggested. The

suggestion was quickly agreed upon.

It was not the first time they had asked the AI about its strategy but the AI would not agree to share its strategy every time they asked, especially if it involved map strategy. When Glimmer gave them information, it concerned only that particular map and the strategy seemed not useable for a second time. They were not expecting a response from Glimmer, since it was about a Hell Trial map.

They were quickly surprised by Glimmer's response.

“Quick, look!” The group bunched around a monitor.

“Holy shit! This map's brutal!”

“This isn't just brutal – it's worse!”

“They're dead. They're all dead!”

“What a shame. If it were another map, this guy could have passed.”

After they looked at the map details, the young men looked at each other in dismay, sighing as they understood now why Glimmer had let them look at the map strategy.

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Half an hour had passed since the map was unlocked.

“This place is scary.”

Every time an Elite monster died, it would scream the same words. Itsy Bitsy Fighter heard the same words again and again and in the silence of the forest, she broke out in goose-bumps.

It wasn't just her – even a big man like Chen Mo felt the creeps.

Chen Mo quickly killed the monsters. He killed 11 Elite monsters in half an hour.

When he had ten forest crystals, he let Itsy Bitsy Fighter hit the monsters. She did not care about collecting crystals and if it were not for the requirements, she wouldn't have taken even one from Chen Mo.

“Looks like there's a lake in front!”

As they walked, flashes of light reflected off water could be seen through the trees. Itsy Bitsy Fighter was glad to see it.

“Let's go take a look. Be careful.”

A different environment had suddenly appeared so this could mean a change in their situation too.

“There’s somebody there – looks like an NPC!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter’s dark eyes were sharp. They still had a distance to go but she had picked out the figure of an old man NPC.

Was it the NPC selling tools? What good luck!

The sooner they knew what the NPC had for sale, the greater the advantage they had in this map.

“Hahaha! What did I tell you, Bobcat? This is the best place to wait! Look – they walked right up to our doorstep. It’s a two-man team too! Heh heh! Too bad there’s only two. They won’t have many crystals.”

Six players suddenly jumped out from behind a large tree ten metres to the side of the lake. A fighter in the party looked at Chen Mo’s party and laughed.

“It’s the bad guys!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter recognised the two sleezeballs who had hit on her in the Hell Trial waiting room among the six.

“Heh heh. Little girl, remember what we talked about in the waiting room? It’s not too late to change your mind now... We’d have to kill you otherwise.”

“No way, ever ever!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter refused adamantly.

“We tried to be nice. You can die, then!” Bobcat’s expression was cold.

“Retreat!” Chen Mo shouted. Itsy Bitsy Fighter sprinted away immediately.

“Get them!” Bobcat and his crew came chasing. An archer raised his bow and attacked Itsy Bitsy Fighter.

Itsy Bitsy Fighter had no equipment on so she could not take much damage. Chen Mo attacked them instead of retreating, shooting a bolt at the archer player.

Chen Mo’s shot was faster than the archer’s move to attack. In the time it took for the archer to pull the string on his bow, he was struck by Chen Mo’s bolt and his own arrow flashed, his shot going wide.

“You’re asking for it! We’ll kill you first!”

The archer was furious. He aimed his arrow at Chen Mo and while he attacked the archer, the other five moved metres closer in a blink, ready to surround him.

They could see that he had a full set of equipment but they were not bothered as they assumed that Chen Mo had a set of Green, at most.

A Green set wasn’t that special anyway. Even if Chen Mo’s

attributes were better than theirs, they had the advantage in numbers.

Level 10 players also didn't have many skills and if there were no great differences in equipment, the side with more people would win.

Surrounded by the group of Blue and Green-clad players, Chen Mo was in a spot of trouble.

They must have something up their sleeves if they were brazen enough to ambush others here. In a six-against-one fight, Chen Mo would have to bear the brunt of at least half their attacks. His equipment attributes were high but it wasn't as if he could dodge everything as he wished.

However, Chen Mo did not back off. He needed to cover Itsy Bitsy Fighter's retreat and buy her time.

“Slime King's Call!”

Chen Mo summoned a Mutated Black Slime.

It was a shame it wasn't a Green Slime which could deal additional poison damage and slow their movement speed. If he'd summoned that slime, Itsy Bitsy Fighter would make it to safety, no problem.

Chen Mo commanded the Black Slime to block attacks for him,

quickly drew a Quake Trap and threw it at Bobcat and crew.

Boom!

The Quake Trap exploded and Bobcat and his team, who were about six metres away, were pushed back two more metres.

Chen Mo had no intention of getting tangled up with them. He turned to leave.

“Chase him! You’ll not get away from us!”

The six chased after the two. Their prey were escaping and Bobcat and his party were furious.

They weren’t casual players after all; They had the pride of pro players to defend!

“What is that?!”

The six chased Chen Mo and the archer shot Chen Mo a few times, slowing him considerably.

When they were about to close in on Chen Mo, the archer looked at the forest ahead of him and cried out.

In the forest was a giant amethyst slime, bounding angrily

towards them.

“Why does it look like the beginner village BOSS?!” The six found the monster familiar.

“How can the beginner village BOSS be here? This must be the map’s Elite monster!”

“Whatever! Kill this bastard first. It’s just one Elite monster!”

They almost had their hands on Chen Mo. No way were they going to stop their attack now.

“Roar!”

They were just a few steps away when they saw the huge amethyst slime attack Chen Mo with a roar.

“Yeah!” The party was in good spirits.

This guy definitely couldn’t run away now!

Their good cheer was short-lived. The guy moved aside, avoiding the amethyst slime’s attack and it bounded to face the six of them.

“Roar!”

The slime roared again and a large number of little purple balls shot from its body.

“Shit! Dodge!”

Group attack! This Elite monster can do a group attack!

The six tried to dodge but were too late.

Bam, bam, bam...!

Explosions sounded and damage numbers of a few hundred floated above the heads of the six players. All six seemed to fall dead to the ground at the same time.

The whole party was insta-killed and they were kicked out of the map. Their corpses disappeared and they failed the trial.

Chen Mo slowly turned around and looked at the five forest crystals the vanquished party had dropped.

“Nice! Good BOSS minion!” Chen Mo praised Fatso and patted it on the head.

If he had to kill them himself he would need to make use of the environment and expand a lot of effort to kill them. Fatso just used one skill and insta-killed them nicely and cleanly.

“What the fuck? That Elite monster was way too overpowered!” Bobcat yelled angrily at the revival point in some city.

Bobcat and his party believed that they had been killed by the map’s Elite monster.

This was the reason why Chen Mo hid Fatso’s name and made it stay far behind him.

He couldn’t let people realise so quickly that he had an assassin like Fatso. If exposed too early, the other players would definitely gang up on him.

However, he couldn’t not use Fatso either. He was just one man against many, and the others weren’t weaklings. It was fine to use Fatso once to protect the equipment-less Itsy Bitsy Fighter but it would not work if he used Fatso too many times.

Chapter 63 - Speculation

“Brave Adventurers, have you come to vanquish the villainous Ancient Tree Spirit?”

Itsy Bitsy Fighter picked up the five crystals and they both walked out of the forest to the lake.

An elderly NPC was seated on a rock beside an old, small wooden hut, his head bent while chopping wood.

The old man raised his head to see Chen Mo and Itsy Bitsy Fighter, and he asked his question with bright eyes.

“Yes, Mr. Moorcher, but we have searched in the forest for quite some time and haven’t found it. Do you happen to know where it is hiding now? We will be able to vanquish it if we know its whereabouts!”

The NPC’s name was Moorcher. Chen Mo sent a whisper to Itsy Bitsy Fighter, instructing her not to speak and let him handle it. He stepped forward and spoke to Moorcher respectfully.

“I do not know. That Ancient Tree Spirit became a spirit a long time ago and is very crafty. It does not stay in one place and it can camouflage itself to look no different from other trees. It is impossible to find it among all the trees in the forest unless it shows itself.” Moorcher shook his head.

“Adventurers, you are powerful but if you approach the Ancient Tree Spirit rashly, you may not be a match for it. That Ancient Tree Spirit has astonishingly high defense and normal attacks deal no damage to it. From what I see, those who approach it without a proper understanding of its abilities get killed by it.” Moorcher looked at Chen Mo and added.

“Then, Mr. Moorcher, how can we kill that Ancient Tree Spirit?” Chen Mo could tell that the old man was about to get to the main point and he kept asking questions.

“You’ve asked the right man.” Moorcher smiled. “I have lived in this forest for tens of years. Nobody knows it better than I do. I know all of its weak points and I have crafted some potions that can be used against it. If you have need of these potions, you can have some if you pay the right price!”

A shop interface appeared in front of Chen Mo, displaying three items.

Corrosive Solution: Apply it on your weapon to enable it to easily cut through the Ancient Tree Spirit’s defence. Effects last 5 minutes.

– Cost: 5 Forest Crystals

Flaming Blade: Lends your weapon attributes of fire. Increases damage to the Ancient Tree Spirit by 50%. Effects last 5 minutes.

– Cost: 5 Forest Crystals

Mutation Suppressant: When the Ancient Tree Spirit's HP drops to a certain amount, it will mutate. This potion stops the mutation from occurring for 5 minutes.

– Cost: 15 Forest Crystals

Chen Mo looked quietly at the items.

It was as he'd thought – there were multiple items. However, all three items were effective when killing the Ancient Tree Spirit, especially Corrosive Solution and Mutation Suppressant.

“Brave Adventurers, if you truly wish to kill that Ancient Tree Spirit, do not hesitate. Without these items, the Ancient Tree Spirit is undefeatable.” Moorcher smiled.

“I thank you for your warning, Mr. Moorcher. It is too bad but we do not have enough Forest Crystals. We shall return when we have more.” Chen Mo said regretfully.

“That's all right. I will wait here for your return. Be careful on your way – this forest floor is uneven.”

Moorcher nodded kindly.

“Oh, right, Mr. Moorcher, are there any other humans in this forest besides yourself?”

Chen Mo suddenly turned back to ask after walking just two steps.

Moorcher paused before answering, “I cannot say for sure. People come to brave the dangers of the forest once in a while.”

Chen Mo nodded and didn't ask further. He brought Itsy Bitsy Fighter a distance away from Moorcher.

“Big brother Silence, it looks like we just have to buy the old man NPC's potions, kill the BOSS and we'll pass the map. It doesn't seem so difficult.”

After walking for a bit, Itsy Bitsy Fighter couldn't help but to say what she thought.

“It's not that simple.” Chen Mo shook his head.

He'd planned on doing what Bobcat and his party were doing – stay close to the lake and take the spoils. However, after seeing the three items, he changed his mind.

Of the three items, Corrosive Solution and Mutation Suppressant were necessary to kill the Ancient Tree Spirit.

If a party of six were to go all out, they would need at least one bottle of Mutant Suppressant and six bottles of Corrosive Solution, which cost 45 Forest Crystals in all.

The effects last five minutes but was five minutes enough to kill the Ancient Tree Spirit?

Nobody could know without first using the items and fighting with the Ancient Tree Spirit.

The best way was for one party member to use Corrosive Solution after the Ancient Tree Spirit appeared to get data and calculate the damage output and monster's HP, then return to Moorcher and purchase potions.

It was great if the Ancient Tree Spirit could be killed in five minutes but a six-man party would still need one Mutation Suppressant and seven Corrosive Solutions, which cost 50 crystals.

To pass, they would need 60 Forest Crystals. If a party of six wanted to pass, they would need at least 110 Forest Crystals!

However, this was the Hell Trial. Nobody had passed it yet! If you think about it, the chance of a party passing the trial with these two items and killing the Ancient Tree Spirit in five minutes was very low indeed!

A party would have several options when killing the Ancient Tree Spirit in five minutes.

Option one: Use Flaming Blade to increase damage dealt to the monster. Six people would need 30 Forest Crystals.

Option two: Recruit four more people and increase the damage. However, you would need more Forest Crystals.

Option three: All six members purchase one Corrosive Solution and one Mutation Suppressant each.

All three options cost about 140 to 170 Forest Crystals – and that was about half of the 300 available.

Getting half of the 300 Forest Crystals was not easy but if you managed to kill all other players in the map, leaving your own party, or whittle the numbers down to ten people, you can get roughly 250 Forest Crystals.

If you could manage all that, you stand a good chance of killing the Ancient Tree Spirit.

This probability applied to not just Chen Mo, but all the other players in the map.

So why were the monsters screaming that line in death?

Chen Mo believed that the monsters' screaming was not just for show. If he proceeded normally, getting the items and killing the Ancient Tree Spirit, he would not be able to pass the map!

But the passing requirements for the trial were clear. Have at least ten Forest Crystals in your possession and kill the map defender.

If you failed, it meant you either did not have enough crystals or failed to kill the map defender.

Getting ten Forest Crystals was easy so it must be about the map defender!

The Ancient Tree Spirit was not the map defender!

Moorcher did say that the Ancient Tree Spirit would not show itself willingly but he never said that it was the map defender!

If the Ancient Tree Spirit was not the map defender, it was someone else.

The real map defender would appear if a player used 100 Forest Crystals or there were 10 players left, and that would expose the truth.

Does this mean that the game system was trying to fool the players with a fake map defender to get them to squander their Forest Crystals... so when the real map defender appeared, players would fail because they did not have enough Forest Crystals...?

Chen Mo did not think it likely that this group of players would use all their crystals from the get-go on items from Moorcher.

The only way to know for sure was to use 100 crystals or kill others till 10 were left to confirm the identity of the real map defender.

If this assumption was true... Chen Mo had an idea.

... ..

Itsy Bitsy Fighter was puzzled. For the past half an hour, Big brother Silence had brought her to walk in circles around the lake, and whenever he saw big or strangely shaped trees, he would shoot a bolt into it.

Thud!

Chen Mo's bolt thudded loudly into an ancient-looking tree, startling Itsy Bitsy Fighter.

This ancient-looking tree moved!

“I knew it!”

Chen Mo looked at the tree and smirked.

He understood fairly well what was going on in this map now!

Chapter 64 - Real, Or Fake Defender?

“Let’s go!” Chen Mo called for Itsy Bitsy Fighter to withdraw.

“Ancient Tree Spirit! Isn’t it the map defender? Aren’t we killing it?” Itsy Bitsy Fighter hurried to Chen Mo but could not help looking over her shoulder at the ancient tree.

A pair of wrinkled eyes and a big mouth had appeared on the tree after Chen Mo shot it, but it just looked at them and did not chase them. It didn’t seem to have any intention of fighting.

“We can’t kill it and we have no need to kill it either.” Chen Mo shook his head.

It was the Ancient Tree Spirit, all right – its defence was so high that Chen Mo’s attack only did 1 damage when he could even deal 4 damage to a Black Slime with his attack power. He could not calculate its HP at this rate. Looks like he wouldn’t be able to defeat the Ancient Tree Spirit without Moorcher’s items.

“Why?” asked Itsy Bitsy Fighter. Being with this hunter big brother made her very confused – there were so many things she didn’t understand.

“It’s not the map defender. The real one should be Moorcher!” Chen Mo grinned.

While Chen Mo was telling Itsy Bitsy Fighter his conjecture, a

duo of beauties arrived on the banks of the lake.

Most of the players in the map, however, were not familiar with these two beautiful girls.

They were the last two to sign up and had worn very average equipment when they entered the waiting room and the system had instructed players to form parties right after, so they had not received any party invites though they were very pretty.

But now, standing in front of Moorcher, they had excellent equipment from head to toe. Light reflecting off the lake danced around them; the plain-looking duo were now dazzling in their finery.

Long, raven-haired Golden Phoenix glanced at the three items Moorcher had for exchange and smiled wryly.

“What do you think, Little Demon?” Golden Phoenix smiled as she asked a question of the lovely, petite young girl next to her. She looked to be about Itsy Bitsy Fighter’s age.

“Something’s fishy. The bit of speculation may be right.” Little Demon nodded seriously.

“Haha! Our Little Demon really is the smartest!”

Golden Phoenix hugged Little Demon tightly and squeezed her small face, then looked at Moorcher.

“Mr. Moorcher, could you answer a question of mine?”

“Of course, I will tell you, Adventurer, all that I know!” Moorcher smiled amiably.

“Are you the map defender?”

Golden Phoenix smiled as she asked her question. Moorcher paused, but quickly shook his head. “You jest, Adventurer.”

“Please answer my question. Are you the map defender?” Golden Phoenix was not letting him off.

“Sigh. Young folk sure are suspicious of everything these days. All right, I’ll answer. I am not the map defender.” Moorcher sighed as he shook his head.

Golden Phoenix looked at Little Demon.

“He lied!” Little Demon said with conviction.

“I knew it! Die, old man!” Golden Phoenix raised her fire-red bow and let loose an Arrow of Flame. It flew towards Moorcher with a boom.

A flash of panic flitted across Moorcher’s face!

-522!

Moorcher was struck by Arrow of Flame and his HP dropped by 500+ in an instant. Golden Phoenix's attack was very effective!

Little Demon had her magic staff raised high, ready to do battle, but in the next instant, she and Golden Phoenix's expressions changed!

A white light suddenly caged them both!

... ..

Announcement: Players 'Golden Phoenix' and 'Little Demon' intentionally caused harm to map NPC Moorcher and have been removed from the map. The 20 Forest Crystals in their possession have been returned to the system and will be re-distributed in the map."

Chen Mo's steps came to a halt.

He was about to explain to Itsy Bitsy Fighter why Moorcher was the map defender but the announcement had taken him by surprise.

What's going on? Was he wrong?

It was not just Chen Mo – the party with Lil' Building of Storms, Wang Xu and Wang Wen was also stunned.

If one paid attention to the monsters' dying words, met Moorcher and thought about it a little more, it was easy to have the suspicion that the map defender was not the Ancient Tree Spirit, especially if you were a pro.

As the only visible NPC in the map, Moorcher was the natural target of suspicion.

However, these were all speculation and no one had acted on it except for Golden Phoenix and Little Demon, who might have been manipulated into believing Moorcher was the map defender and attacking him. Who knew that they would be kicked out of the map by the system?

“What's going on? According to our analysis, Moorcher was most likely the map defender. Now it looks like Moorcher really is an NPC.” Wang Xu wrinkled his brows.

Their party of six comprised of himself, his brother Wang Wen, Lil' Building of Storms and other pros. They were quite a powerful party.

“Moorcher has been confirmed by the system as an NPC. Now we have two possibilities. First possibility is that our initial analysis was wrong and the Ancient Tree Spirit is the map defender but it's too powerful and we can't kill it. This can explain why the

monsters said that we shall not pass. The second possibility is that we fulfil the conditions to make the map defender appear but the map changes or mutates and that makes us fail.” Lil’ Building of Storms analysed.

“It’s no use over-thinking it now since there are too many uncertain elements. It’s more important to collect Forest Crystals.” Wang Wen’s gaze was sharp, and who knew what he was thinking.

“That’s right. If we have enough Forest Crystals we will have an easier time when changes occur.”

The party agreed on a course of action.

However, Chen Mo was still deep in thought.

He had some information nobody else had.

The Ancient Tree Spirit was definitely not the map defender! The rules were very clear – the map defender would only appear if the players fulfilled the conditions. However, the Ancient Tree Spirit had already appeared, so it was not the map defender.

He had reached the conclusion that Moorcher was the map defender based on this information.

Him being able to find the Ancient Tree Spirit close to the lake was not because of luck either.

He had speculated that players would not be able to know for sure if the Ancient Tree Spirit was the real map defender unless the conditions were fulfilled.

How can one know for sure?

Simple – the real map defender was in the same area as the Ancient Tree Spirit. The system would prompt the map defender to appear in a certain area and players would be unable to ascertain if the Ancient Tree Spirit was indeed the map defender.

That was why Chen Mo had gone in circles in the forest around Moorcher, attacking suspicious trees.

Since the Ancient Tree Spirit was not the map defender, it must have existed in the map already. If he could find it nearby, Chen Mo could conclude that Moorcher was the map defender.

Now, after he had arrived at his conclusion with much difficulty, the system announcement threw it out the window. Moorcher was an NPC after all. What the hell was going on?

No, that's not it!

He'd missed an important part in the rules and requirements!

Shit! Nearly got fucked over!

However, Golden Phoenix and Little Demon's sad example held Chen Mo in check. If the two of them had not taken action, the ones kicked out could have been Itsy Bitsy Fighter and himself.

“Come on! Let's kill everyone!” Chen Mo called to Itsy Bitsy Fighter.

“Okay!” Itsy Bitsy Fighter looked excited as she followed Chen Mo. The loli was a bloodthirsty one, too.

Chapter 65 - Clever Ambush

Sounds of battle rang out occasionally in the shady forest map.

Players knew what they had to do after meeting Moorcher – collect Forest Crystals and eliminate other players.

After an hour and a half, less than 10 out of the original 15 teams were left.

“Bah! Bunch of poor beggars! What pros? These six guys only had 13 Forest Crystals!”

Cold Belle counted the Forest Crystals on the ground and huffed in dissatisfaction.

“Almost done. We just have to kill a few more Elite monsters and we’ll have 60 Forest Crystals.” Cold Flow just nodded.

Getting 60 crystals when there were only 300 to go around was not an easy task.

“Heehee... Killing monsters is too slow – it’s best for us to run into other players. Their equipment can’t even be compared to ours!” Cold Belle said arrogantly.

Their team had gone Slime King hunting for a few days so the loot, combined with the equipment they’d bought for the hunting,

made for equipment sets which very few Level 10 players could beat.

Level 10 players did not have many skills, so equipment played a dominant role. Several pieces of their equipment had skills and special effects and their party was well-coordinated. Killing other parties was not a problem for them.

With Cold Flow at the head of the group, they swaggered forward to search the forest.

With their equipment, nothing could threaten them except the map defender and Lil' Building of Storms' party.

Elite monsters attacked on sight but to them, who were able to slaughter even Slime Kings, the map's Elite monsters were easy pickings. They were not worried even if other players tried to ambush them.

“Someone's ahead!” Cold Belle's eyes lit up.

“You're right! Chase him! Kill the enemy quickly before he discovers us!” Cold Flow and the other party members had also spotted the back of a solitary player.

That party was also moving forward. It was a good opportunity for them to ambush the other party from the back.

Cold Flow signalled his team to move with him, using the cover

of the trees to sneak up quickly to their target.

“What the...?!” Cold Flow suddenly saw a flash of unnatural colour in the corner of his eye as he passed a big tree.

He turned his head to see a pair of adorable black eyes, which sparkled as they looked back at him.

Seeing him turn his head towards it, the owner of the eyes roared and jumped into the midst of Cold Flow’s party.

“Mutated Slime King!”

Other players could be unsure, but how could Cold Flow not recognise this big amethyst fellow?

“Retreat!”

Cold Flow’s expression changed as he yelled.

It was too bad but he was too late. A large number of little purple balls shot from the Mutated Slime King. The party had no time to react and were hit several times by the move.

Level 10 players stood no chance against just two of those little purple balls. Even the fighter player in the party had no time to react to the Slime King’s ambush or use a defensive skill and was insta-killed.

Six high and mighty fellows were insta-killed just like that by a Mutated Slime King which came out of nowhere.

“Shit! What the fuck was that?”

Cold Flow cursed after he revived at the revival point.

They were about to collect 60 crystals and fulfil one of the requirements for passing and this BOSS level monster had just jumped out like that and slaughtered them all.

He felt like something was off about the whole situation but could not be sure about the monsters in the map.

“Haha! So many crystals!”

In the map, Itsy Bitsy Fighter’s eyes shone as she looked at the crystals littering the forest floor.

“Pick crystals till you have 20. I’ll take the rest.” Chen Mo was very satisfied with the result of this encounter.

Chen Mo had spotted Cold Flow’s party when they were fighting the other party but did not choose to ambush them at that time. He’d instructed Itsy Bitsy Fighter to act as bait while Fatso and himself lay in wait.

Cold Flow and his party had let down their guard while chasing Itsy Bitsy Fighter, enabling Fatso to surprise and insta-kill them effortlessly.

Credit should be given to Cold Flow's party too. If they had been less arrogant, it might not have worked so well.

Chen Mo and Itsy Bitsy Fighter had also killed about ten additional Elite monsters. Add that number to the number of crystals Cold Flow's team dropped and they had 92 Forest Crystals.

After tasting sweet victory, Chen Mo told Itsy Bitsy Fighter to hide in a more secluded part of the forest. He took Fatso with him to hunt for other players and when he found them, he revealed himself on purpose and let Fatso ambush them.

It was a well-tried method. Though the players still alive in the map were all above average, none could survive Fatso's attack.

In under an hour, Chen Mo had wiped out four parties and gained over 80 Forest Crystals.

The total number of crystals Chen Mo had was well over half the number available in the map!

“The Elite monsters should all be more or less dead by now, and there should be four parties left, at most.” Chen Mo guessed.

The map had been opened for almost three hours. Lil' Building of

Storms' party was the strongest in the map, so they should have a fair number of crystals too.

“Brother Lil' Building, you say there's a Mutated Slime King in the map?” Wang Wen asked. His expression grew thoughtful.

“There's no mistaking it. Many parties were ambushed by it and insta-killed. We have to be careful too.” Lil' Building of Storms nodded.

He'd logged off to contact other teams and check on their situation but discovered that Glacier Game Club parties had been killed.

“All those parties died in different locations?”

“Yes. That Mutated Slime King is mobile but it looks like it will jump out and attack only when players get very close to it.” Lil' Building of Storms nodded.

Announcement: There are less than 10 players alive left in the map. The map defender will appear close to the location (3088, 6369). Kill the map defender in 60 minutes or everyone in the map fails the Trial!

The announcement pinged and Lil' Build of Storms and his party members' expressions changed.

The number of people had gone down to less than ten without them realising it!

“Does this mean we’re the only party left in this map?” Wang Xu guessed.

“The possibility is low. It’s likely that there is another party and that party has even more crystals than us.” Wang Wen shook his head.

They had less than a hundred crystals. If no other parties survived, the remaining crystals would have been re-distributed and more Elite monsters would have spawned but that had not happened.

“Let’s go check the area around Moorcher. The map defender coordinates are around there too. The other party should also be there. We can hurry over and discuss how we shall approach the BOSS.” Lil’ Building of Storms suggested.

They had six in their party so the other party must have four, at most. It was too difficult for four people to kill the map defender on their own, no matter how you looked at it.

The others had no objections and all six headed for Moorcher’s location.

The group hurried but they were careful not to let anyone

ambush them either.

“Doesn’t look like the other party is here yet.”

They had arrived by the lakeside and could see Moorcher just ahead, but did not see any other players.

“Go up to Moorcher and see if anything has changed.”

The party stepped on the spongy fallen leaves on the lakeside, towards Moorcher.

“Eh?”

A few metres away from Moorcher, Wang Wen suddenly paused. The leaves below his feet now felt different from the leaves he’d stepped on earlier.

“Roar!”

He had no time to warn the others. A huge amethyst blur burst out from underneath in a cloud of leaves.

A great number of purple balls shot at them and though they tried their best to avoid them, it was impossible in such close proximity.

Only Wang Wen, the first to sense something wrong, had dodged right away. Only one purple ball had hit him and he'd survived.

Under normal circumstances, he would have gotten away from this inconceivable attack, but this underground-hiding Mutated Slime King seemed to sense that he was still alive. It moved and crushed him mercilessly.

Wang Wen, his HP low, died almost as instantly as his party mates!

A large number of crystals dropped from the party's corpses. A few metres away, Moorcher's eyes lit up and he moved to pick them up, but the Mutated Slime King jumped aggressively to block him.

In the forest not far away, a figure emerged and bent to pick the Forest Crystals.

“Mr. Moorcher, you want these Forest Crystals?”

Chen Mo turned to Moorcher with a smile.

Chapter 66 - Pass The Trial

“Of course. These things are useless to you Adventurers. But to an old man living alone in the forest like me, it is a very valuable thing. Give me the Forest Crystals, Adventurer, and I guarantee that you won't lose out.”

Moorcher looked at Chen Mo and spoke sincerely.

“If you tell me what these Forest Crystals can be used for, I may consider giving you some.” Chen Mo took out a Forest Crystal and turned it over in his hands. The semi-transparent green crystal seemed to hold a mysterious power.

“This is not a secret. Forest Crystals hold a special energy that is used to power ancient magical items.” Moorcher took out a half metal, half glass ball about the size of the palm of a hand. “This is a monster detector. If I have a Forest Crystal to power it, it can easily detect monsters within a 300metre radius. The stronger the monsters, the clearer it is shown. I have no need to worry about monster attacks if I have Forest Crystals, but the monsters in the forest are all too powerful and I ran out of Forest Crystals long ago. If I didn't, I could show you how this monster detector works.”

Moorcher spoke regretfully.

“Monster detector? Interesting! Itsy Bitsy, hand a Forest Crystal to Moorcher so he can show us how it works. You won't refuse, will you, Mr. Moorcher?” Chen Mo's eyes lit up and he let Itsy Bitsy Fighter approach.

A monster detector – this is good stuff!

“Of course! It is no effort at all.” Moorcher replied quickly.

Itsy Bitsy Fighter walked to Moorcher and moved her hand to take out a crystal.

But at that moment, a green light suddenly shot from Moorcher’s palm and struck Itsy Bitsy Fighter!

-1000!

A damage number of exactly 1000 floated above Itsy Bitsy Fighter’s head. Equipment-less Itsy Bitsy Fighter was killed right away.

Moorcher quickly moved to Itsy Bitsy Fighter’s corpse and bent to pick up what she dropped.

He was flummoxed.

This human Adventurer had been killed by him but she hadn’t dropped anything – not even one Forest Crystal!

“You dirty old fox! You’ve revealed your true colours now, huh!”
Chen Mo smiled at Moorcher.

Moorcher was the map defender. Chen Mo had been swayed after Golden Phoenix and Little Demon were kicked from the map, but he was quickly convinced that his initial speculation was correct.

Moorcher had to be the map defender to explain why the Ancient Tree Spirit was hidden close by!

Golden Phoenix and Little Demon were kicked because Moorcher's identity was still that of an NPC at that time!

The rules were very clear that they needed 100 Forest Crystals or 10 or less players left in the map for the map defender to appear. Even if players suspected Moorcher, they were unable to prove anything since Moorcher was still an NPC before the conditions were met.

Like in console games, you'd know an NPC's real identity when you see the game strategy but if you don't find the right item to reveal the NPC's identity, you won't be able to proceed to the next stage.

Outside this map, if you suspect an NPC and sneakily attack him or her, nothing bad would happen. However, this was the Hell Trial and it had stringent rules to increase difficulty. The rules of this map were totally biased towards the map defender.

Chen Mo was sure that Moorcher was the map defender and he had also hypothesised that the Forest Crystals were a sort of tool used to increase Moorcher's power!

The more Forest Crystals Moorcher gained, the more powerful he would become. Players who didn't think he was the map defender and traded crystals for items were just falling for the trap and digging their own graves.

But with Golden Phoenix and Little Demon's demise, nobody could know for sure if Moorcher was the map defender except for Chen Mo, who knew where the Ancient Tree Spirit was. If they tried to attack Moorcher, they would be kicked out, so nobody was willing to take that risk.

Even Chen Mo, who knew about the Ancient Tree Spirit and was almost 100% sure that Moorcher was the map defender, did not dare to initiate the attack and instead thought of a way to make Moorcher attack for the sake of crystals first.

It was not due to sheer luck that Moorcher attacked first.

The Ancient Tree Spirit was Moorcher's ally, so of course he would know about Chen Mo attacking it.

Moorcher could not be sure if Chen Mo, who knew about the Ancient Tree Spirit, would exchange crystals for items to use against it.

In this situation, Itsy Bitsy Fighter was the perfect target as she had Forest Crystals and no equipment. Of course, Moorcher would attack her.

Moorcher was weak without Forest Crystals but it was still a piece of cake to kill an equipment-less Level 10 player.

Kill this Adventurer and he'd gain Forest Crystals! This Adventurer should have at least ten Forest Crystals! It was not much but it was enough for him to deal with the other Adventurer, and if that wasn't enough, he could get the Ancient Tree Spirit to help!

Moorcher did not expect the human Adventurer to have no crystals at all. Giving him one to let them show how the item worked was a lie!

His cover blown, Moorcher turned without a word and ran towards the Ancient Tree Spirit.

“Running away?” Chen Mo smiled coldly.

Chen Mo used ten crystals to revive Itsy Bitsy Fighter, and brought Fatso with him to chase Moorcher.

Itsy Bitsy Fighter did not follow after reviving but ran to her previous hiding spot in the forest.

Twenty Forest Crystals were hidden there.

Forest Crystals were not tradeable. To carry out his plan, Chen

Mo first had Itsy Bitsy Fighter kill him, dropping all his crystals. After Itsy Bitsy Fighter revived him, he killed her, then revived her. That was how they got the 20 Forest Crystals.

Chen Mo did this to reduce the risks and test Moorcher. He was going to attack Moorcher directly if it didn't work, but Moorcher had unexpectedly shown his hand first.

Moorcher had no crystals at all and his attributes were at their lowest. He was only a little more powerful than regular NPCs. Chen Mo used Slime King's Roar and him and Fatso caught up to Moorcher in no time.

"Die!" Moorcher would not go down without a fight. A magic staff appeared in his hands and he raised it. A green light shot at Chen Mo.

A whole party would not find it easy to kill Moorcher. This, here were just one person and a pet!

He just needed to hit that weak human Adventurer two or three times to kill him!

However, Chen Mo was not just any regular guy and Fatso was not just any other pet.

As expected of the map defender, the green light that shot out had target-locking attributes. Chen Mo used Fatso to block the shot without hesitation.

Hey, it's a 100,000HP meat-shield. Why waste it?

“Roar!” The green light hit Fatso for over 1000 damage. Fatso roared in anger and hit Moorcher.

As a mage, Moorcher was not the best at dodging attacks. Chen Mo summoned another Mutated Slime to join Fatso in battle and Moorcher was toast.

Chen Mo did not want to drag things out, so he used all his best stuff.

Moorcher had only 50,000HP. Without any Forest Crystals and without undergoing any mutation, Chen Mo and his slimes, big and small, killed Moorcher in under two minutes.

System prompt: Your party has killed the map defender!

System prompt: Conditions fulfilled. You passed Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill!

System prompt: Your party is the first in GENESIS to pass Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill. You have gained the achievement “Strongest Skilled One”!

System prompt: You gained the Achievement Title “Strongest

Skilled One”!

Title: Strongest Skilled One

Description: Only given to the party members of the first party to clear Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill. It is a badge of honour and strength. This Title does not need to be equipped to apply attributes.

Attributes:

Honour +10

Special effect: Skill Strengthening

– Skill Strengthening: Boosts the effect of the player’s Natural Skill. Different Natural Skills have different boosting results!

Holy shit!

Another passive Title, and one that strengthens Natural Skill!

He’d struck gold, participating in this Hell Trial!

However, Chen Mo knew that the main event had yet to come.

Chapter 67 - Natural Skills

System prompt: You have successfully passed Hell Level of the Trial of Natural Skill! Please choose two of the following five Natural Skills for your reward!

– Trap Mastery: +1 active trap to the limit on all trap skills. Trap skill cooldown time reduced by 10%, power +10%. Secondary weapon slot unlocked.

– Bow Mastery: Bow-drawing speed +20%. All bow-related skills cooldown reduced by 10%. Attack power +10%. Special tool slot unlocked, secondary weapon slot unlocked.

– Taming Mastery: Pet slots increased by two. Simultaneous pet appearance +1. Pet healing effects +20%. Intelligence attribute increases pet's attributes, making it more effective in battle. Spirit attribute increase pet's combat initiative. When the pet dies, the player can revive it automatically every 12 hours. Secondary weapon slot unlocked.

– Concealment: Speed penalty while using Camouflage reduced by 30%. Camouflage effects increased. Attack power while Camouflaged +20%. When attacked at night while Camouflaged, Camouflage effect will continue for 10 seconds before wearing off.

– Plunder: Small chance of gaining coins or items and equipment directly after killing a monster. Very small chance of gaining items and equipment which would not normally

drop.

Five Natural Skills! And he can choose two!

Chen Mo knew that there would be a good reward but he was stunned when he saw that he could choose two from five.

The forums had a fair share of players who had already passed Nightmare Trials and the reward was one Natural Skill and one Class Skill. The player can also choose to be sent to a smaller city under the jurisdiction of the three main cities.

Chen Mo expected the Hell Trial to give better Natural Skills and Class Skills but did not expect the reward to be so much better than what he'd imagined.

Natural Skills cannot be compared to normal Class Skills. There was a huge difference between learning one more Natural Skill and one more Class Skill.

Players who did not participate in the Trial of Natural Skill need to go to the Profession Union in one of the three main cities and complete an Advancement Quest to get a Natural Skill.

In other words, everyone could only learn one Natural Skill now and you would need to get to the second Class Advancement to learn a second.

Nobody could say for sure what level the second Class Advancement was at but the word on the forums was Level 40.

Level 20 players had yet to appear so Level 40 was a long way off.

Chen Mo getting two Natural Skills in one go was like a second Class Advancement.

Of course, the Natural Skill was definitely different from those at the second Class Advancement.

Trap Mastery, Bow Mastery and Taming Mastery were basic skills for the three main hunter builds – trap build, poison arrow build and pet build. If you get one of these three Natural Skills, you could learn a more advanced Natural Skill at your second Class Advancement. Chen Mo could learn two Natural Skills now but he couldn't learn an advanced Natural Skill yet.

It was different from the Class Advancement but it was still advantageous to learn an additional Natural Skill. If Chen Mo wanted, he could do the trap build and pet build at the same time. With these two builds combined, his individual attack power wouldn't be as simple as one plus one!

Which two should he choose?

Chen Mo was no stranger to Trap Mastery, Bow Mastery and Taming Mastery. The forums had many posts discussing and analysing these three skills.

The description of Trap Mastery clearly stated that trap power would increase and hunter players can finally equip a secondary weapon and secondary weapons were special equipment. For example, if Chen Mo learnt Trap Mastery, his main weapon would be a crossbow and secondary weapon a glove. When he used a crossbow to attack, the attack power would be calculated from the crossbow attributes. If Chen Mo placed traps, the attack power would be calculated from the attributes of the glove.

Bow Mastery was like Trap Mastery – it also increased the power and unlocked a secondary weapon slot. However, the secondary weapon that the hunter can equip is a little special – daggers and bolts can be equipped. If dagger and crossbow are equipped, the main weapon would be the crossbow when it's used to attack. The dagger would be the main weapon when it's used. Both weapons were automatically interchangeable without having to un-equip and equip. This Natural Skill was quite popular among the hunter players.

However, for those aiming for a poison arrow build, the thing of most interest to them was the unlocking of the special tool slot.

This special tool slot was special indeed. Players could put an arrow in the slot and refine it, making every arrow carry some poison damage. Other than arrows, players could also put special powders that affect monsters in the slot like Mercury Powder, which could be used against Vampires that appear around Shadow City.

Taming Mastery was a Natural Skill for players aiming for a pet

build. Those who learn this can summon two pets at once. Intelligence and Spirit attributes of the hunter affect the pets, so if a hunter did not learn Taming Mastery, his or her Intelligence and Spirit points were not of much use.

Hunters who go for the pet build can also equip a secondary weapon, which was a special magic staff. Their Intelligence and magic power were much higher than crossbows.

However, the magic staff that hunters can equip was different from the magic staff mages and priests use. It was a magic staff too but it had to have a special secondary weapon slot or it couldn't be used.

Someone on the forums had demonstrated the use of this secondary magic staff. Compared to the mage and priest weapons, its magic attack attributes were much lower but still more powerful than crossbow and dagger weapons.

These were the three main builds for hunters – all distinctly different, with different specialities.

Furthermore, though the descriptions of the three hunter-oriented Natural Skills did not mention it, higher-level skills for hunters require a related Natural Skill for the player to learn them. Chen Mo had five to choose from but there were two rare ones that other players had never seen before. He had to learn one of the three hunter skills though, or he would not be able to learn higher-level hunter skills.

If there weren't a Free-Skill System, Chen Mo would have taken time to consider his options before choosing, but he knew about it and had long decided upon the trap build.

Using the Free-Skill System, the failure of setting traps was significantly reduced. There were also many varieties of traps, which suited a Lone Ranger like Chen Mo.

Chen Mo could choose the other two Natural Skills too but after thinking about it for a short while, he shook his head.

The three Natural Skills allowed him to unlock a secondary weapon slot but it was just one. Even if he learnt two Natural Skills, he wouldn't unlock two slots and use two secondary weapons at once. The value of learning two Natural Skills halved.

Chen Mo looked at the other two skills – Concealment and Plunder.

These two were rare Natural Skills. Nobody on the forums had mentioned them.

Chen Mo wasn't sure about Concealment, but he had a good feeling about Plunder. This Natural Skill could be the ticket to becoming a 'Fortune Hunter'!

Chen Mo was good at analysing. Honestly speaking, Plunder would not bring him many benefits in the near future since low-level beginner monsters wouldn't drop any fantastic items.

Choosing Plunder would not give him as much of a benefit as Taming Mastery, since that allowed him to summon two pets at once and increase his damage output significantly.

However, Plunder would be more useful the higher he progressed through levels and it will never have an expiration date.

Gaining this special Natural Skill may even unlock special quests or events in the future.

This was not just Chen Mo's speculation. Though GENESIS had been launched not long ago, the players on the forums had already found that the quests they receive and events they encounter varied greatly due to their Natural Skill.

Anyway, if he chose Taming Mastery and did not choose an advanced pet-build Natural Skill at his second Class Advancement, his Taming Mastery would become weaker and weaker and gradually become insignificant.

On the other hand, Plunder was a Natural Skill one could get only after passing the Hell Trial – its rarity needed no elaboration.

Value goes up with rarity – since Plunder was so rare, it must have a reason why.

“Trap Mastery! Plunder!”

Chen Mo quickly made his decision.

System prompt: You will learn the skill “Trap Mastery”. Do you want to use ‘Skill Mutation Scroll’?

Haha! It really worked!

Chen Mo saw the system prompt and he was jubilant!

He was not hoping for much when he brought the Skill Mutation Scrolls with him but they unexpectedly worked on Natural Skills too!

Who else can have Mutated Natural Skills in this game other than himself?

“Yes!”

System prompt: You have learnt the Natural Skill “Trap Mastery (Mutated)”!

Trap Mastery (Mutated): +2 active traps to the limit on all trap skills. Trap skill cooldown time reduced by 15%, power +15%. Secondary weapon slot unlocked.

System prompt: You will learn the skill “Plunder”. Do you want to use ‘Skill Mutation Scroll’?

It worked on Plunder too!

It’s a good thing he came prepared! He knew Nightmare Level gave an additional skill as a reward, so he had brought more than one Skill Mutation Scroll.

“Yes!”

System prompt: You have learnt the skill “Plunder (Mutated)”!

Plunder (Mutated): Chance of gaining coins or items and equipment directly after killing an enemy. Small chance of gaining items and equipment which would not normally drop.

Chapter 68 - Shadow City

Chen Mo's mutated Trap Mastery attributes were boosted but he couldn't tell if Plunder had any added attributes. The description had changed though.

The normal Plunder stated "monster" but in the mutated Plunder, it was "enemy" – did this mean Plunder worked on players too?

If this was true, he really made the right choice to learn Plunder.

Success rate also changed from "small chance" and "very small chance" to "some chance" and "small chance". There was an increase in the success rate too.

Chen Mo didn't know what the original success rate was so he'd have to see how his luck went.

"Itsy Bitsy, how many options do you have for skills?" Chen Mo asked Itsy Bitsy Fighter.

He was already familiar with the three hunter Natural Skills and Concealment seemed complicated to use, so he had quickly eliminated it and did not spend much time deciding.

"Five," Itsy Bitsy Fighter replied gloomily. It looked like she had a hard time deciding.

“What did you get other than the three fighter Natural Skills?” Chen Mo asked curiously.

Fighters had three basic Natural Skills too – Double Sword Mastery, Shield Control and Blood Vigour.

Fighters who chose Double Sword Mastery could equip two main weapons and the attack power would be the average of the two weapons, but both weapons’ special effects would work simultaneously. If skills of both weapons were used at the same time, attack power would be increased by 20%, allowing fighters to have tremendous damage output. However, fighters with two main weapons would have reduced attack speed due to having two weapons to draw. The advantages and disadvantages were clear.

Many fighter players on the forums chose this build for the enviously high damage output. They also believed that they could overcome the slow attack speed if they managed to get equipment which increased attack speed, cancelling out the disadvantage.

Shield Control was for players going for the sword-and-shield build, where the fighter could attack and defend. Attack power and defence were not particularly strong but defence and HP were much higher than the other two builds. The fighter can also counterattack while on defence so this suited players who were not used to fighting on the frontlines. It was a more balanced build.

For Blood Vigour, the less HP a fighter had, the stronger they became. People on the forums called those who chose this build Berserkers. The Berserker skills were unique – all became more powerful the less HP the player had, making it quite an extreme

build. When a fighter's HP's high, the damage output would be average, or lower than the sword-and-shield builds. When a fighter has low HP, the damage output could be even greater than a dual-weapon holder's. A fighter who chose this build needed excellent awareness and mobility or he would be killed by the enemy before he could react when his HP dropped to critical levels.

“Chain Kill and Battle Spirit,” replied Itsy Bitsy Fighter.

Chain Kill: Every monster death while chain-killing temporarily increases player's attributes. More monster kills increase attributes more.

Battle Spirit: Monster's soul can temporarily attach to your character after you kill it, adding its attributes to yours. Attributes added are directly proportional to monster's original attributes.

Woah! Both were really strong Natural Skills! It added directly to the attributes no matter which you chose – the only difference was in how the attributes were gained.

Chain Kill, in particular, could make a strong player even stronger!

However... This Natural Skill would not be of much use to Itsy

Bitsy Fighter.

The Level 11 to Level 13 monsters surrounding the three main cities were simple enough to deal with but Level 14 and up had a sudden spike in strength!

Players who had fought with monsters Level 14 and up all agreed that the beginner village was a paradise compared to what they experienced!

Monsters Level 14 and up were powerful and difficult to kill.

An inexperienced player like Itsy Bitsy Fighter would probably not be able to use Chain Kill to the fullest. In Chen Mo's opinion, Battle Spirit was a better fit for her.

But Itsy Bitsy Fighter did not ask him for help and thought hard on her own. Chen Mo did not volunteer his opinion either.

They had not interacted much but Chen Mo more or less understood Itsy Bitsy Fighter's character. If she did not understand something she would definitely ask. Since she didn't, that meant she had her own way of thinking it through and Chen Mo was not about to interrupt.

After a while, Itsy Bitsy Fighter finally let out a big breath. She had chosen her Natural Skills.

“Big Brother Silence, I've reached my online limit. I think I'll get

logged off by the system right away when we leave this map. Which city are you going to? I'll go too!" Itsy Bitsy Fighter looked at Chen Mo and asked earnestly.

They had spent quite some time in the map – about three hours. However, the Hell Trial map was special and a player would not be logged out of the game even if he went over the daily online limit.

“Shadow City.” Chen Mo was glad Itsy Bitsy Fighter chose to go with him. He did not know many people in-game and it was nice to have someone accompany him while grinding levels. If he needed help he would have someone he could trust... though he wasn't sure if inexperienced Itsy Bitsy Fighter could be relied on for help.

The two of them finished choosing their Natural Skills and the system awarded them an extra skill but there were no additional rewards. A teleport interface appeared in front of them, prompting them to pick a city they would like to be teleported to.

“The options available are the same as what Nightmare Level players got.” Chen Mo was a little disappointed when he saw the options.

Other than the three main cities, they only had six other smaller cities to choose from.

But Chen Mo knew that even if the system let him teleport to a higher-tier city, he could only use the system-given Main City Teleportation Scroll and get teleported back to one of the three main cities.

Players who passed Nightmare Level could choose from the six additional cities and receive a Main City Teleportation Scroll which allowed them to teleport to one of the three main cities.

It looked like they had options but those who chose to go to the smaller cities mostly used their scrolls to teleport back to one of the main cities in the end.

Other than the Level 11 to 13 monsters around the main cities, the monsters around the other cities were too powerful. Even the Level 11 monsters were too much to handle for regular players.

There wouldn't be anyone to kill-steal you but the monsters were too powerful and if you were not powerful enough it would be difficult to level up, let alone have a decent levelling up speed.

System prompt: You teleported to main city "Shadow City"!

System prompt: You gained one "Main City Teleportation Scroll".

Main City Teleportation Scroll: Teleport to the nearest human main city. Unusable if distance is too great from main city.

Chen Mo selected Shadow City and the scenery before his eyes changed. He appeared in the marketplace of an ancient city.

This was Shadow City's revival point. Players who teleport to Shadow City appear here.

A white light flashed in his surroundings from time to time. Chen Mo did not see Itsy Bitsy Fighter but assumed she must have been logged off by the system.

Chen Mo looked at his quest interface and the quest "Impossible (Helper)" was complete. He couldn't receive his reward yet, though. As an assistant, he would only be able to receive his reward after the main quest holder had received hers.

It was his first time in Shadow City but Chen Mo was in no hurry to get out of the city. There were many players in the city hawking their wares or looking for people to join their parties. The city was full of hustle and bustle.

However, if it weren't for the many players running around, Shadow City could not be said to be a prosperous one.

This was an ancient city, falling apart. It was large, true, but you could see that it was in a state of decline.

The other two main cities, East Sea City and Storm City, were in similar states of decline.

The players who had called the beginner village a paradise were not lying.

This was how it was in the three main human cities. In this game, humans faced imminent danger. Monsters outside the cities were too strong!

Other than the Level 11 to 13 monsters, those Level 14 and above were much too strong. Players who could take monsters on one-on-one were lauded as pros by everyone!

Chapter 69 - Greedy NPC

“[Red Tide] Recruiting brothers-in-arms willing to stick together through thick and thin!”

“[Spinach Alliance] is recruiting pros! We have 22 members, all with excellent reflexes and gameplay awareness. Come for an interview if you want to expand your horizons!”

“[FFF Squad] recruiting members! Those with girlfriends can get lost!”

... ..

Chen Mo passed a building in decent condition and saw a mass of players shouting their offers.

This was Shadow City Guild Hall. Setting up a guild, joining a guild and accepting guild quests were all done here.

“Bro, do you want to join our guild? Flying Feather Guild is different from the other rubbish guilds out there. We are strict in our recruitment requirements and only accept pros. Our guild is very prosperous!” A young man saw Chen Mo and his eyes lit up before he quickly walked to Chen Mo.

Chen Mo had hidden the glow of his equipment but this young man could still tell that his equipment set was quite rare.

“I’m sorry, I’ve already promised my friend I’d join his guild.”
Chen Mo rejected the offer.

When the young man heard Chen Mo’s words, he gave up on recruiting him. He knew it was not easy to get pros to join and he had planned to try to convince Chen Mo but if Chen Mo had already promised his friend, nothing he said could convince him.

Chen Mo did not linger but he found that all the guilds recruiting had strict requirements. The candidates had to have either very good equipment or excellent gameplay awareness and reflexes. The guilds did not want ordinary players at all.

It was easy to understand why their requirements were so high.

Setting up a guild in GENESIS was very different from other games. A freshly-made guild can only have 30 members. If the guild wanted to level up, its members needed to go out beyond the city walls and unlock zones to get Guild Points.

A guild needed just 10 Guild Points to get from Level One to Level Two. However, the total number of Level Two guilds in the entire game had not gone above 10 yet.

The monsters outside were too strong, making unlocking zones very difficult.

The wilderness outside the city had been divided into zones by the system. These yet-to-be-unlocked zones were enveloped by a

white fog, which severely limited one's visual field, even during the day.

In each of these locked zones was a small magical formation. When a player finds this magical formation, he can unleash the Elite monster of the zone.

Zone Elite monsters were very powerful and had different battle settings from normal monsters. Only the player who unleashed it and his present party members or guild mates could attack it. If others attacked it, they would not be able to harm it. Conversely, their attacks would make the Zone Elite Monster become even stronger.

Being strong didn't mean that you could kill the Zone Elite Monsters either. You needed to gather Cursed Blood from the smaller monsters in the same zone to kill the Zone Elite Monster.

Cursed Blood was a special item. There was a small chance of it dropping from monsters in the locked zones but every zone required different Cursed Blood. The Cursed Blood was also untradeable and cannot be stored. Furthermore, the Cursed Blood dropped during the day would be returned to the system every night at midnight.

This was why unlocking zones was very difficult. You needed luck on top of strength.

On the other hand, if you managed to unlock a zone you would reap quite a few rewards.

Other than earning Guild Points, all guild members would receive a large amount of EXP. Depending on the difficulty level of the zone, every person could also receive a piece of Blue Grade or Green Grade equipment, and Prestige was sometimes awarded too.

Of course, maps could be unlocked too but there were not many maps in GENESIS and it was not as simple to unlock them.

Naturally, it was tough to level up a guild when unlocking zones was so difficult. That was why the guilds that had been formed did not want any useless members. It cost 10 gold coins to make a guild and this was not a small sum.

Chen Mo went about learning some secondary and supplementary skills as he familiarised himself with Shadow City's layout.

Investigate, Harvesting, Skinning, Medicine brewing, Fishing, Sewing, Casting, Alchemy, Cooking – the list went on. There was no limit on what supplementary skills players could learn; you just needed five silver coins.

There were many players who did what Chen Mo did but they quickly found that it was tough enough to hone one skill till it became moderately useful. Levelling up several skills at the same time was almost impossible.

All the secondary skills used up Strength. Investigate, Harvesting and other supplementary skills used just a little Strength. Skills

which produced items like Medicine brewing and Cooking used up a lot of Strength. Every player's Strength was limited so once it was all used up, the player had to rest and recover.

Most people learnt Investigate, Harvesting, Skinning and Cooking – skills that did not take much time and made things more convenient for themselves.

Chen Mo had no intention of levelling up his supplementary skills; he only wanted them in case he had need of them.

However, not all secondary skills could be learnt so easily. A player on the forums had shared that the Jewellery Shop boss in the three main cities would teach you a special skill after you talk to him and bribe him with one gold coin.

Chen Mo was curious, so he went to the Jewellery Shop.

“Boss, why are these lousy jewellery pieces so expensive?”

“Yeah, it's ridiculous!”

Before he could enter the shop, Chen Mo heard some players complaining.

When he entered the shop to take a look, he was struck dumb.

There were several pieces on jewellery in the shop but Level 13

White Grade Jewellery already cost 108 silver coins. The pieces of Blue Grade jewellery were 588 silver coins each. There were only five Green Grade pieces and those were 18 gold coins each. The single Purple Grade Jewellery had a price tag of 188 gold coins.

You call this doing business? More like daylight robbery!

Players fresh from the beginner villages usually had just a few silver coins. Between players, the prices of equipment depended on the attributes. White Grade was a few to a few tens of silver coins; Blue Grade was 10+ to tens of silver coins; Green Grade five gold coins or thereabouts; Purple Grade prices depended on where you looked for them and market prices.

“Scram! Don’t bother me, you penniless beggars! Don’t buy if you don’t have money!” The Jewellery Shop boss was a fat and balding middle-aged man. He glared fiercely at players who complained.

“Damn it, let’s kill this guy if we get the chance!”

The group of players were very offended at being scolded by an NPC, but they did not dare to act rashly. They could only curse him in their hearts.

This was the main city and City Guards patrolled the area. Attacking an NPC was like courting death.

Chen Mo found it surprising how the main city NPC, when compared to the beginner village NPC, seemed so much more

human-like.

The group of players left and Chen Mo stepped forward.

“Boss Boboa, I hear you know a very special skill. Can you teach it to me?” Chen Mo spoke quietly.

“Get lo-No, no such thing. Don’t listen to gossip!” Boboa was about to scold Chen Mo too but when he saw him, he paused and stopped mid-word.

Chen Mo found it a little odd. This dialogue was not the same as what he had expected. Maybe this was due to his favour points?

He had 15 human favour points and 10 honour points on top of that. Boboa’s attitude change could be because of these two attributes.

“Don’t worry, Boss Boboa. I will not tell anyone. Here, this is a token of my respect!” Chen Mo slid a gold coin over to Boboa.

Boboa’s eyes lit up right away when he saw the gold coin. He swiftly picked it up and whispered, “The teaching of this skill has been banned but I’ll teach you since you’re so sincere. Remember – learning this skill has nothing to do with me!”

System prompt: You have learnt the skill “Decomposition” from Boboa!

Decomposition (Novice level): Break down equipment into one or several types of materials for refining.

That's right. The skill you could get from Boboa was the pain-in-the-ass skill "Decomposition".

This was not a secret on the forums but not many were willing to spend one gold coin to learn a skill like this.

The materials which you could get using this skill were too basic and not even enough to make 10% of the equipment you decomposed. Equipment was so expensive and decomposing one meant losing one – there was no making money on this.

Chen Mo did not use Decomposition after learning it. However, his main purpose in coming here was not to learn Decomposition.

Chapter 70 - Elena

“Is there anyone else who has a speciality like yourself in Shadow City, Boss Boboa?” After learning Decomposition, Chen Mo furtively slipped a gold coin into Boboa’s hands again.

He knew Boboa was a greedy NPC. Chen Mo wanted to try and see if he could get more information out of him since his human favour points seemed to be working well.

Boboa’s eyes lit up again and he quickly pocketed the gold coin, but he sighed, “You are very sincere, Adventurer. Unfortunately, I don’t know anything about this.”

WTF? You don’t know and you still took the coin?!

Chen Mo parted with yet another gold coin. The damn fatty pocketed it again without hesitation but this time, his words were different. “Please don’t do this, Adventurer. I really don’t know anything.”

You fat, greedy bastard. Others probably would have cracked at two gold coins but he still wanted more!

Chen Mo gave Boboa another gold coin and he snatched it up like lightning, all the while saying, “You can’t do this. How can you do this? Oh, you’re putting me on the spot.”

Damn it! Still not talking!

Chen Mo relinquished his last two gold coins unto Boboa, determined that if this fatty still kept mum, he would kill him given the chance and see it as a merit to humankind.

Boboa seemed to sense Chen Mo's killing intent, for this time, he finally glanced cautiously about himself, as though afraid of being seen, then quietly said to Chen Mo, "Since you're so very sincere, Adventurer, and seeing as you've learnt Medicine brewing, I'll tell you something. Be warned though, I am only telling you what I know and whether you succeed or not depends on your own ability. That wretch is a strange one and she ignores normal people, especially upstanding ones like yourself. I'm afraid she will chase you away on sight."

"What does it have to do with Medicine brewing?", asked Chen Mo curiously.

"Heh heh. You didn't know this but there are many types of medicine brewing skills in this world. The one you Adventurers learn is only a very basic skill. Of course, even if it's very basic it is also the easiest and most useful skill. That wench learnt a Medicine brewing skill that is detrimental to us humans so she has been ostracised. She now lives in the wilderness beyond the gates of Shadow City and over the years her personality has become warped." Boboa smiled impishly.

"If this skill is detrimental to humans, what is the use in me learning it?" Chen Mo felt cheated. His five gold coins might have just gone down the drain.

“I’m tens of years younger than that wench and I was still a butt-naked babe when she was kicked out of Shadow City. What I know is all from rumours and gossip so I can’t answer you, but take the Decomposition skill I taught you as an example. It was banned because breaking down equipment reduces the number of equipment available to humans.” Boboa smiled wolfishly as he explained.

... ..

The wench Boboa talked about was Elena. Chen Mo asked for her location and exited Shadow City.

Outside Shadow City was Forest of Shadows.

Those who’d never been to Forest of Shadows would think it was a gloomy forest.

Chen Mo also thought that way when he heard the name of the forest. However, when players went to Shadow City and to Forest of Shadows, they realised how mistaken they were.

This was not a forest but a grove of huge trees, full of light!

The trees grew out of ash-black ground and each tree had a diameter of four to five metres and measured over 100 metres high!

These trees were astoundingly huge and their roots coiled and intersected with each other, forming arches and bridges. In

contrast, the leaves on the trees were pitifully little and only small scattered patches of green showed against the trunk of the huge trees.

If the human city were not at his back, Chen Mo would have thought that he'd come to a land of giants.

There were large spaces between trees but huge roots poked from the ground, intertwining on the ash-black ground, covering up the spaces and making the trees seem closer than they were.

Sunlight passed through these roots, and formed a halo of colour.

Monsters spawned around the roots and many players took advantage of the cover of the roots to kill monsters more easily. However, this only worked well for Level 11 to 13 monsters. After Level 14 and up, it was difficult to use the roots to block monster attacks.

Player levels were still low and it was very crowded around Shadow City, making it seem like another beginner village where many were going about kill-stealing. What was different was that PK (Player Kill) was now allowed. Chen Mo did not go far before spotting two or three teams fighting each other.

There were more people than monsters in the Level 11 to 13 range so no monster slowed Chen Mo's movements. Elena lived not far from Shadow City and he found a wooden hut under the arch of a giant tree root after about ten minutes of walking.

The wooden hut stood out. Even from afar, Chen Mo could see a group of players loitering in front of the hut.

Many players on the forums had unlocked hidden quests, and Elena's special abode looked like a place from which the players could not help but try their luck in getting a hidden quest.

“Get lost, all of you! I won't hold back if you keep bothering me!”

Elena's temper was as Boboa had said – bad. She had been harassed by the Adventurer newcomers these past few days and she was at her limit.

“Master Elena, we are deeply sincere in wanting to learn from you. We will help you wholeheartedly – we will do anything you ask of us!”

The group pleaded earnestly.

Elena was dressed in black magic robes trimmed with silver, lending her the mysterious air of someone with hidden depths.

“Shoo, or I'll kill you in three seconds!” Elena shouted, her face a cold mask.

“Master Elena, please trust our sincerity...” The group did not give up easily but some quietly backed away after hearing her words.

“Pah! I’ve warned you! I’ll grant you your death wish!”

Elena lost her temper and released a cloud of blood-red powder at the players with a wave of her hand.

“Shit! I’ve been poisoned! This NPC can actually kill people!”

The expressions of the players who’d been hit by the blood-red powder turned sour.

-500 damage points floated above the 10+ players’ heads one after another, forming a small cloud of -500 numbers. It was a sight to behold, indeed.

The players were only around Level 12 or so and their HP were in the 1000 range. The high poison damage felled them all in two or three seconds and they died.

“Holy shit. Good thing I moved away quickly.”

“Forget it, let’s go grind levels. Approaching that NPC is a waste of time.”

The surviving players’ expressions changed and they stayed away, glad to be alive.

The players quickly departed and soon, only Chen Mo was left.

It was only then that Chen Mo had a good look at Elena.

Then, he was struck dumb.

From Boboa's description, he'd thought Elena to be an old woman of 70 but he had to toss out that notion after seeing her with his own eyes.

The Elena he saw had no trace of advanced aging – she was a mature red-haired lady in her thirties.

Looked like Elena was not a normal NPC!

Elena was harder to deal with than Boboa had said. If it were anyone else, the five gold coins invested in Boboa would have gone to waste but Chen Mo had dealt with people like this before!

Chen Mo equipped his Hoodlum title in one quick move!

Chapter 71 - Quest Requirements

Chen Mo walked towards Elena and her gaze lit upon him.

Elena looked Chen Mo up and down, then nodded. “You’re not bad. Much better than those earlier. Better than those three people I saw a few days ago too.”

The three people she saw a few days ago?

Chen Mo was a little surprised. That meant three people had come before him and left a good impression on her.

This was not an easy thing to do.

When he got close to Elena, Chen Mo confirmed that the good impression she had of him was not just due to the Hoodlum title. She was not like Gleason – her blue eyes held no hate. She must have been willing to let him approach because of other factors.

He had human prestige points, favour points and honour points so maybe the Hoodlum title worked too but it was not the main contributing factor.

“Master Elena, I heard of you from Boboa,” said Chen Mo respectfully.

“Pah! I knew it, it was that fatty! Nobody else in Shadow City

would have remembered me other than him.” Elena scoffed, then looked at Chen Mo. “What did you come looking for me for? I’ll say this first – you humans are weak and small. I’ve got nothing for you to help me with.”

Did that mean you would need my help when I’m stronger?

Chen Mo grumbled to himself, then spoke of his purpose, “Boboa said that you know a very special Medicine brewing skill.”

“You want to learn it?” Elena squinted at Chen Mo.

“Yes!”

Elena was quiet, as though thinking about it. Chen Mo did not speak, lest he interrupt her. If Elena was not willing to teach him she would have rejected him right away but her taking time to think meant that there was a catch.

After a bit of thinking, Elena said, “It is possible to teach you but I’ve suffered over the years because of this skill. I’ve seen many ungrateful people so I won’t teach you for free. I have two requests and I will teach you if you manage to fulfil either one of them.”

“No problem!” Chen Mo replied quickly. It was perfectly natural to have to do a quest in order to learn a skill. He’d never expected to learn a skill just by chatting with Elena.

“First, Boboa has a blood-red cat’s eye stone that I want. Second,

I've been low on funds these days so I need 100 gold coins. You just have to bring me either the blood-red cat's eye stone or 100 gold coins and I'll teach you the skill!" Elena spoke lightly.

Chen Mo thought it wouldn't be too difficult since it was one of two, but after hearing her words, he found that it was the opposite.

The blood-red cat's eye stone must be a rare and valuable item, and he had to get it from greedy Boboa's hands! He sold a Level 13 purple necklace for 188 gold coins – the blood-red cat's eye stone would go for at least a few hundred gold coins! Even if he got a quest from Boboa to get the item, the quest would probably cost him a few hundred gold coins. A Level 10 player like himself would surely not be able to meet the requirements of the quest!

The second request was much more straightforward, but asking him for 100 gold coins was no different from robbery!

The only ones able to come up with 100 gold coins now were the real-life rich people. Even those people would find it difficult to gather the money since players had very little money. It was not something you could have just because you wanted it.

Elena had mentioned that the skill was called 'Blood Refinement Technique'. The skill sounded quite powerful so if it were another player, he or she would have been very willing to pay 100 gold coins to learn it.

However, this skill was not one you could learn because you wanted to. Many players had come to plead with Elena and she had

ignored them.

“What, you regret it now?” Seeing Chen Mo stand silently, she arched an eyebrow.

“How could I? Master Elena, please wait for my good news!” Chen Mo replied immediately.

“Good. I’ll give you three days. If you can’t fulfil either requirement, take it as I’ve never said a word about this.”

Elena set a time limit for the quest.

System prompt: You accepted the quest ‘Elena’s Request’

Quest: Elena’s Request

Quest difficulty: Unknown

Quest details: Attain ‘Blood-red Cat’s Eye Stone’ or ‘100 gold coins’

Quest time limit: 3 days

Quest reward: Elena will impart the skill 'Blood Refinement Technique'

Chen Mo let out the breath he had been holding when the system prompts pinged.

Quests were roughly sorted into two categories in the game. One was like this, where all the details were listed and rewards were guaranteed.

The other was a promise with the NPC. The reward you get in the end could be different from the reward agreed upon in the beginning. There were even cases where the NPC backed out of the deal, as evidenced by some players on the forums. However, these quests sometimes gave you way better rewards than the rewards first agreed upon.

After accepting the quest, Chen Mo turned to get ready to look for Boboa.

He did not think it very possible to get the Blood-red Cat's Eye Stone from Boboa but he had to try anyway.

Just then, three players approached.

They were two males and one female, all with quite good equipment sets, especially the male and female who were closer together. These two looked like they had green, or even purple

equipment.

The other male had worse equipment. From the couple's attitude towards him, it looked like he was their lackey.

The lackey stepped forward and blocked Chen Mo's way. "What did you just speak to Elena about?"

"None of your business," replied Chen Mo brusquely. This person did not even have basic courtesy so there was no need to be polite with him either.

The lackey's expression changed and he looked about to pop a vein. They were not close enough to hear but what they saw of her stance told them that something definitely happened!

At that moment, the refined man next to the female player waved his hand dismissively, and the lackey moved away.

"Ah, bro, I apologise for my servant's attitude – he doesn't know how to speak well. Let me introduce myself. We are from the guild Lofty Clouds. I'm White Feather and you can say that I'm one of the core members of the guild. She's Waxing Moon, leader of Lofty Clouds and from Ling Clan Financial Group in real life."

White Feather introduced himself and Waxing Moon but said nothing of the lackey. When he introduced Waxing Moon, her chest rose very obviously in pride.

Lofty Clouds was not well known in the game but Ling Clan Financial Group was very well-known indeed in real life. Normal players would have felt smaller when they hear and are faced with a person of such a mighty background.

However, Chen Mo had never been awed by the people from powerful families.

“So, what does this have to do with me?” Chen Mo was not affected by White Feather’s approach.

“Bro, you’re mistaken. We aren’t trying to show off. We are just trying to tell you that if you know some information that others don’t, we can pay you very handsomely for it!” White Feather smiled.

“I don’t know anything. I wouldn’t tell you even if I did.” Chen Mo was not bothered to waste time on them. He turned and left.

The lackey was fuming. He stepped forward to intercept Chen Mo.

Chen Mo’s gaze grew icy cold and his killing intent was plain.

This bastard must be so used to getting his way in real life that he plans to do the same in-game.

“Stop it!” However, White Feather called off the lackey.

With no one to block him, Chen Mo couldn't be bothered to get entangled with them and simply left.

“Moon, you should change your servant. If you keep going down this path you will only disappoint your older sister.” After Chen Mo had walked a distance, White Feather glanced at the lackey and spoke calmly to Waxing Moon.

Waxing Moon's expression changed and she spoke coldly to the lackey, “Qi Mo, you can get your pay from HR tomorrow!”

Qi Mo was flustered upon hearing her words. “Lady Ling, please give me one more chance! I will not do this again!”

“You don't have to fire him. He should be capable since he was deemed suitable to be by your side. Give him another position.” White Feather shook his head.

“Thank you, Brother White!” Qi Mo quickly thanked him but in his heart, he cursed the guy from earlier. If it were not for that guy, he would not have nearly lost his job!

... ..

Ten minutes later, Chen Mo walked out of the Jewellery Shop.

He had gone to ask Boboa about the Blood-red Cat's Eye Stone but

Boboa had pretended to completely not know about it and claimed he had never heard of it. From Boboa's attitude, Chen Mo could tell that not even a bribe would loosen his tongue.

He had no choice but to go for option two.

100 gold coins was a large sum of money but Chen Mo could get his hands on it.

He had killed the Mutated Slime King BOSS in the beginner village more than ten times after all so he had over a hundred Blue and Green Grade equipment. If he sold them all, he should get over 100 gold coins, no problem.

Chapter 72 - Trading Equipment

The human race was downtrodden and there was no fancy place such as an auction house in the three main cities. However, in the north of Shadow City was an area which players used to set up stalls and sell their wares. Players just have to spend one silver coin there to set up a stall for one hour.

The trading area was full of players and very lively. Equipment was rare in the game, so there were more people looking to buy than selling.

The trading area had regular players selling their own things but there were also quite a few merchants.

A popular game was never without merchants, much less an advanced one like GENESIS. The game was still in the testing stage so game equipment and game gold values were not stable but if you manage to grasp the right opportunity, this was the best time to make money. If you were lucky you could buy a piece of equipment for a low price and sell for a few times higher.

There were quite a few merchants in the trading area and one of them was Red Jade Cultivator. She was average-looking but she stood out in the sea of male merchant faces.

“Big sister Phoenix, here are the Black Iron Arrows you wanted. 20 copper coins each, as agreed.”

After Golden Phoenix was kicked out of the Hell Trial map, she

had been sent to Shadow City with Little Demon. Red Jade Cultivator had a good eye and she knew that the two of them could be big clients as soon as she saw them appear in the trading area. She had gone up to them to chat and found that Golden Phoenix was looking to buy Black Iron Arrows.

Black Iron Arrows were currently considered a luxury item. It could only be made after one has raised his Casting skill to Novice level, and obtained Black Iron Ore from digging in the wilderness outside Shadow City. Only a few people had raised their Casting skill to Novice level and one could only have a small chance of obtaining Black Iron Ore while digging if you had Novice level in Mining. There were severe limits on production. Though many Black Iron Arrows could be produced from one chunk of Black Iron Ore, production was still low. This item was also perishable so one arrow used was one arrow gone. Regular people would not be able to afford this sort of usage.

From the very first day when Red Jade Cultivator decided to be a merchant in the game, she decided that she would have good relations with her business contacts even at the cost of higher profits. She earned less than other merchants but she had already built solid product sources and clientele.

She had one person in her friend list who had a Novice level in Casting. Golden Phoenix could not get her arrows right away but she trusted Red Jade Cultivator's words and asked for her help.

“Not bad. I'll look for you again when I need to buy something. Please give me a good price.” Golden Phoenix and Little Demon had only taken a short tour of the trading place before Red Jade

Cultivator brought the Black Iron Arrows to them. The speed and attitude with which Red Jade Cultivator operated was very satisfactory to Golden Phoenix.

“Of course! If you need anything, just let me know, Big Sister Phoenix. I’ll definitely give you a lower price than others!” said Red Jade Cultivator happily. A customer who bought 500 Black Iron Arrows in one go was not easy to find. Even if she charged less per arrow, she still earned a tidy sum.

Just then, Red Jade Cultivator’s eyes lit up as she spotted a male player walking into the trading area.

She had stayed in the trading area for the past ten days and compared to the others she had seen, this player could be said to have the most pieces of equipment on him in the entire game. To her surprise, that person had not only a lot of equipment but several were pieces she had never seen before.

Several merchants had approached him, all smiles. Red Jade Cultivator wanted to go over too, but Golden Phoenix was still asking about some equipment so she pushed down her urge and concentrated on Golden Phoenix. However, she saw that person wave the merchants away and thought, ‘Oh, he must be here to look around and has no real need to buy anything.’ She did not bother with him.

She saw many players like that every day in the trading area. Many players were curious about what other items or equipment there were in the game and came to the trading area to satisfy their curiosity.

“This guy is actually here to sell equipment!”

Red Jade Cultivator looked up and saw her fellow merchants stare at a stall in shock. That male player had rented and set up a small stall. Once the stall was up, a big group of surrounding players went over and checked it out.

This was quite unusual and that stall had many good items on display!

“Big Sister Phoenix, it looks like someone is selling some good items over there. Do you want to go take a look too?”

Even the merchants around them were going over to browse his wares. Red Jade Cultivator knew then that that was not just a simple stall, and invited Golden Phoenix to go take a look.

“Sure.” Golden Phoenix liked the hustle and bustle and was curious about the items for sale in that stall since many people were getting excited over them.

“So many pieces of equipment – and they are all either Blue Grade or Green Grade!”

Red Jade Cultivator was shocked at what she saw.

The equipment most people had right now were 60% White

Grade, 30% Blue Grade and 10% Green Grade but everything this guy had was either Blue or Green Grade and not one White. It was just too strange.

Was this guy perhaps a merchant like her?

No!

Red Jade Cultivator was a good judge of people and this guy was definitely not a merchant. Judging from the prices he had set, some equipment had obviously been priced lower than market value and those were snapped up quickly. If he were a merchant who had gathered so many equipment pieces, he would not make such a mistake.

Not anyone can purchase over a hundred pieces of Blue and Green, and there were even quite a few of the most valuable Jewellery and Weapon type equipment too!

Golden Phoenix was also shocked but not at the Blue and Green equipment – at the person running the stall. It was one of the people who had participated in the Hell Trial with her!

“Bro, I want this magic staff!”

“I want that Green Grade bracelet!”

Chen Mo’s prices were not very high but it seemed like he had underestimated how rare equipment was in the game. He’d tried

his best to price them higher than what he thought they were worth but the speed at which they were selling exceeded his expectations.

In a short amount of time, he had sold about 90 pieces of equipment and was left with over ten pieces. They were all Blue Grade equipment with below average attributes.

Chen Mo had not sold all of his equipment but he still earned 142 gold coins, which was more than he needed to complete the quest.

Chen Mo opted to close his stall and the surrounding players dispersed. Most players did not take note of equipment sellers.

“Hi, do you remember me?” Golden Phoenix walked up and revealed her ingame name.

“Golden Phoenix?” Chen Mo was surprised. He had not expected to see her again in just a few hours.

He and she had not interacted directly before but Golden Phoenix’s actions during the Hell Trial were certainly eye-catching.

“That’s me. Looks like you’re a pro in hiding, eh? Let’s add each other as friends – we can help each other out in the future. How about it?” Golden Phoenix was decisive and cool, smiling as she spoke.

“Of course, no problem.” Chen Mo agreed right away and added Golden Phoenix as a friend. He liked to deal with decisive people.

“You know each other, Big Sister Phoenix?” Red Jade Cultivator’s eyes shone. This guy was definitely a big fish too!

“You can say that we just got to know each other. Hey, Silence, this is an equipment merchant I got to know today. She’s cool.” Golden Phoenix could tell what Red Jade Cultivator was thinking and offhandedly introduced her.

“Please take care of me, Big Brother Silence!” Red Jade Cultivator immediately used familiar terms to address Chen Mo to curry favour.

“Equipment merchant? Do you take these pieces, then?” Chen Mo nodded. Come to think of it, it was a good thing to know an equipment merchant. There was no auction function in the game so it would be inconvenient if he needed to look for something.

The remaining Blue Grade equipment could be sold to Red Jade Cultivator for cheap and he’d be rid of them.

They were all Level 10 equipment and the price would go down after a period of time so it was better to sell them at a lower price now.

“Yes, but we merchants will only offer prices which are lower than market prices so I hope that you’ll be understanding, Big

Brother Silence. However, I can guarantee that I give the best prices!” Red Jade Cultivator quickly nodded her agreement.

Chen Mo took out his ten-plus pieces of Blue equipment and Red Jade Cultivator offered three gold pieces for them. Chen Mo felt that this was roughly the appropriate price and he sealed the deal quickly.

Chen Mo added Red Jade Cultivator to his friend list and left the trading area, heading out of Shadow City and to Elena.

... ..

Under the roots of a gigantic tree not far from Elena’s hut, a party watched for players heading in Elena’s direction.

“Boss, that guy Brother Qi talked about really came!”

A person appeared in their field of vision and an archer in the party alerted the leader.

Chapter 73 - Blood Refinement Technique

“Let’s go!” The leader, Tall Sturdy Fighter, looked over and saw that he was right. He waved his hand and the six of them quickly walked over and surrounded the approaching person.

Nearby players kept their distance when they saw the six of them, then moved to one side to watch the show at a safe distance.

Chen Mo frowned as he looked at the six people blocking his way. They looked aggressive and up to no good. It seemed like they wanted to PK (player-kill) him but they made no move yet.

“You’ve offended someone you shouldn’t have, fucker.” Tall Sturdy Fighter stared frostily at Chen Mo.

“Who sent you?” asked Chen Mo. He had his suspicions but this person was like the Richie Rich Club and probably had a little black book of names. He should confirm who it is or he’d waste time killing the wrong person later.

“Don’t play dumb! You know who you offended just a few hours ago!” said Tall Sturdy Fighter.

“The lackey of Lofty Clouds Guild? You guys are the lackeys of a lackey?” Chen Mo laughed.

“You wanna die?” Tall Sturdy Fighter’s expression hardened. Anyone would be dissatisfied at being called a lower being.

Tall Sturdy Fighter decided then that he was prepared to kill.

Their usual style was to attack directly but Qi Mo wanted Chen Mo to know that they were sent by him. If he just had Chen Mo killed without him knowing what it was for, he would never be satisfied!

It would only satisfy him if his victim knew that his own death was because of him and was powerless to stop it.

He had also done this several times in real life, so he knew this was the only way he could let go of his anger.

However, Tall Sturdy Fighter had yet to make a move when a little priest jumped out of the group of spectators and cast two buffing spells on Chen Mo with a wave of a magic staff.

“That bitch again! Xiao Lin, kill that one! The rest of you, stay with me and kill this guy!” Tall Sturdy Fighter glared furiously at the priest.

There seemed to be some discontent between them and the priest.

The archer named Xiao Lin broke from the group right away and made to attack the priest. When the priest immediately hid behind a huge tree root in a panic upon seeing the archer attack.

The other five under the leadership of Tall Sturdy Fighter charged at Chen Mo.

Chen Mo was well prepared and dodged.

“He’s fast!” Tall Sturdy Fighter was surprised. He could see that this guy had good equipment but his movement speed was abnormal!

However, they had more people and their equipment was none too shabby either – even if this guy was fast, he won’t be able to avoid them all.

System prompt: You were maliciously attacked! You can now defend yourself!

The system prompt pinged. Though none of the attacks had landed on Chen Mo, the system analysed the situation the moment they started their attack and judged that it was all right for Chen Mo to retaliate. Additionally, as members of a party, even if only one party member attacked, the other party members could also be attacked in defense.

Chen Mo did not defend himself right away but twisted and turned, dodging attacks and running towards Elena.

It was only a matter of time for him to kill five players with his equipment but he did not have many skills and he couldn’t kill them quickly without summoning Fatso. If he did, they would

scatter once the situation turned disadvantageous and he wouldn't be able to do anything about the five of them.

That was why Chen Mo decided to use a more direct method.

“Chase him! Don't let him get away!”

One would normally run away in a five versus one situation so it was not strange to see Chen Mo run.

Of the five, there were two long-ranged members – one a fire mage and the other an ice archer. The ice archer had obtained “Hand of Frost” from the Trial of Natural Skill so even his normal attacks had a small chance of slowing an enemy's movement speed.

“He won't get away! Eat my target-locking arrow!” The ice archer released a snow-white arrow and it zoomed towards Chen Mo.

Chen Mo moved to dodge and found that the arrow was following him. There were two ways one could avoid target-locking skills; one was to move a distance at the same moment the skill hit your body letting the attack hit thin air and miss, the other was to make use of obstacles and make the attack land on those instead of yourself.

Chen Mo was fast but not fast enough to shake off a target-locking arrow. It was also too close and there were no obstacles around him. The arrow hit him just as intended.

– 67!

A damage number floated up. It was not high but Chen Mo's speed suddenly slowed.

The signature move of all ice-based classes – slowing!

“You can't get away now! Get him!” Tall Sturdy Fighter smirked.

“Careful! That guy's running to the NPC – he might be trying to make use of the NPC to kill us, so make sure you don't hit the NPC!”

Tall Sturdy Fighter could see Chen Mo's plan and he shouted a reminder as he ran.

“No worries, boss! We won't make that mistake! This guy's going to die after a few of our attacks!” His party members were not worried at all.

It was difficult to harm an NPC unless you used area attack skills.

Chen Mo's speed was reduced by 30% due to the slowing effect and he had five people catching up to him but he still ran to Elena.

“Master Elena! Your task! I've completed it!” Chen Mo quickly said.

“Good. I didn’t get the Cat’s Eye but this isn’t too bad.” Elena nodded. This adventurer had completed the task in just a few hours. The speed pleased her.

At that moment, a fireball hit Chen Mo from the side, dealing over 100 damage.

The fireball had been intentionally angled to miss Elena even if Chen Mo managed to dodge it.

“What impudence!” Elena’s gaze grew frosty. She waved her hand and a light shot forth, striking the fire mage!

-13688!

A damage number of over 10,000 appeared and the fire mage was insta-killed!

“What’s going on?” Tall Sturdy Fighter was astonished. This NPC was too powerful! More importantly, he could not understand why the NPC attacked the fire mage when his attack did not hit her.

However, the next second, he was horrified to discover that the light that had hit the fire mage was bouncing off his corpse and to the ice archer. Over 10,000 damage points floated above the ice archer’s head and he too, was insta-killed.

The light did not stop there. In the next second, it shot towards

Tall Sturdy Fighter and his other two party members!

Tall Sturdy Fighter's five-man team was wiped out in the span of two breaths!

After killing them, the light bounced off Tall Sturdy Fighter's corpse and back to Elena's hand.

Heh heh! Surprised? Knowledge is power! Even little kids knew this but you brainless thugs who only know how to use your fists wouldn't get it!

You would naturally be counterattacked by an NPC if you attacked. On the forums, a player had revealed that when in the process of a quest, depending on the importance of the quest and the NPC's character, if the player doing the quest gets attacked, it would provoke the NPC.

Based on Elena's character, Chen Mo was sure that she would make a move.

Chen Mo had no idea how Elena killed the five people. He looked at her eyes and saw that they were glowing. He would be so powerful if he learnt this skill!

“Yes, this is indeed 100 gold coins. This is the Blood Refinement Technique. Polish the skill after you learn it but do not let the people in the city know that you have learnt this skill or there would be consequences.”

It was nothing to Elena to raise a hand and kill five people just like that. She took Chen Mo's 100 gold coins, waved her hand again and bestowed Blood Refinement Technique upon him.

System prompt: You completed the quest "Elena's Request"!

System prompt: You learnt the skill "Blood Refinement Technique"!

Blood Refinement Technique (Novice): Blood from monsters are used as a material to make blood drugs. You gain the monster's special ability for a certain period of time after consumption!

