

## Master 1261

Chapter 1261 1261. Grass

The party spent the rest of the night relaxing and chatting with the guards. They were adventurers for many years and usually took longer escort missions. Hence why they ended up being redirected to guard the ravine. They weren't very big on minster fighting quests and all had defensive systems. They had a mage that was best at scouting and stat boosting . Two shield users, and two spear users. Walker was glad to chat with them for a bit but Su seemed to get the most out of their conversations.

While the rest of the party chatted away the night, Onyx had looked down in to the ravine unable to see much. He just wondered what they would find down there and if they would have better answers for how many of his species of monster were left. He could feel the fluctuations of different manas down in the depths but it was nothing that pointed to any monster or being in general to his dismay, it would be a mystery until the morning...

"Hm, and here I thought you would have been up a little earlier. Don't let yourself get too exhausted." Walker found that Onyx woke up shortly after him. The two were the last ones to wake up.

"Brother, I think I know why you always sleep so late. I feel more and more tired than usual." Walker smirked at this and gestured for Onyx to come over toward the ravine as the sun was breaking the horizon.

"I think we can set up some light elemental crystals around the edge. Maybe we will spot something while we eat breakfast." The plan was good but Onyx didn't have much hope. He wasn't feeling anything out of the ordinary just yet. However, the day hadn't even started.

"You two look like you slept well. Having others to guard us after the other night is way better than staying up and switching off." Gil looked ready to run for miles. He had a vibrant air about him.

"Let me guess. You were up to hunt early?" This could be the only reason that Gil was so energetic.

"Actually, no. I slept in like you a little. I just got up a few minutes ago. But Remey has been up for a while. She was saying things about how the grass was a weird color?" He turned and pointed out Remey slowly walking around the grass looking down at it. Even Su had joined in. The only two that were on the side watching were Midnight and Alice who looked like they might fall back to sleep any second.

"I'll go and see what's going on." This was enough to peak Walker's curiosity. Out of all of them, Remey was the one that would notice the strangeness of any plant. Gil would have a good chance too but due to Remey's years of seeing and examining herbs even without her system being related to them, she would be able to tell.

"Hey, What are you looking for? Something rare?" Walker had the feeling that Remey might be trying to find a rare herb.

"It's not really rare. But it's hard to get. The shadows were weird against the fire last night. I thought that it was the abyssal serpents we came searching for. But when I woke up I noticed it still even though there wasn't much light. Now I'm trying to figure it out. I think it might be shadow grass growing around here. If that's the case I need some of the seeds." Remey knelt down and pulled up a little grass shaking her head. "I think when this ravine opened up it released dormant shadow grass seeds and they are trying to sprout. Normally they grow in the shadows of hills. They are much harder to see there. They will die out here if left alone."

"Do you think that could make you a darkness affinity potion?" Walker hit the nail on the head with his guess.

"Exactly. We will need a lot of it to experiment with that theory. So, If I can get seeds we can have a good crop in about a month. It grows fast and you might not even realize that- Ha!" Remey grabbed a handful of dirt from underneath a fallen and dried clump of field grass. "This is it." She showed Walker while covering it from the sun with her other hand.

The very thin and frail grass in her hands had an odd wisp like shifting motion to it. The wind didn't seem to be the cause but the changes in the light. It also had a very dark coloration that perfectly matched the shadows so it made a lot of sense that it would be able to blend in to the shadows of hills. "That's actually really cool. I would never have spotted that."

"See the little white dots on the roots? Those are the seeds. Eventually, they will grow in to large root balls that can be split. But for now, I will cover them in cold water to make them dormant. Then I will have you store them." There was pride in Remey's voice. She had found exactly what she thought was causing some of the strange shadows the guards had seen. "This doesn't explain everything but it sure does explain a lot." The pure smile that Remey had on her face was something that Walker wished she would show more people. She didn't always need to look serious and ready for a fight.

"Well, Onyx and I set up some light crystal bait. We might spot something near the edge of the ravine. Although, we are heading down there in a few minutes. If you are ready just let us know. We won't interrupt." Remey watched Walker head back. She quickly started on her work preserving the newly found shadow grass seeds.

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## Chapter 1262 1262. A Large Cave

"There was nothing to be seen on the crystals that we put down as bait. That means we are heading inside now. I want Su to lead the way. I don't know what could be down there but the earthquake out here must have disturbed some underground monsters with how the mana is fluctuating." The entire group had eaten, woken up, and were fully geared up. They wanted to get in to the ravine and investigate. They hadn't needed to travel far but there was a lot of excitement to help out Onyx with his overall goal.

There was a soft growl of support from Midnight. They all felt the same way and stood just a little taller. "Down we go." Walker pushed the ropes they were using to head down over the edge of the ravine.

"We will be here with an eye out. If anything goes wrong use those fancy skills to warn us and we will send notice to the guild before we come and start bashing any monster that bothers you to a pulp." The guards that the guild had assigned here were not weak by any means. The only reason the party could be considered as stronger was the simple fact that they had more unique and fusion skills. They had developed their skills at a lower level to a slightly higher degree evening out their strength. The guards had higher levels from long term escort quests but a little less real battle experience in varying environments like a cave.

Sliding down the ropes was not as fun as the party could want. The ropes were rough on their hands. Even Remey felt it through her gloves which Su had made sure she would wear in case she tried to use her new alchemy flame gauntlet skill again. Their feet hit dry and soft dirt. "It seemed like this was pretty well sealed. I would have thought that there were more underground rivers or streams in this area." The theory that Gil had was seeming wrong at the moment.

"This might just be off to the side of one. The cave looks carved out a while ago. Hopefully, it wasn't monsters that carved it out...or maybe we hope it is." Walker wasn't sure if it would be better for it to be a monster tunnel or an ancient ruin carved tunnel. If it was a monster there may have once been an abyssal serpent that was the cause, or some worm type monsters. There were too many possibilities. However, if they were ruins then it could be anything from hidden treasures to traps and monsters. Overall it was a tough gamble.

"Walker, can you use the light elemental crystals to make a light orb that won't dissipate for hours?" Onyx had the idea some time ago and thought it would work very well since it was always better not to light a torch or anything in the caves.

"That should work. I have never had to but I should be able to make that work." The crystal he chose was a little on the smaller size. After creating a light orb in the sunny open part of the ravine, he directed the mana from the crystal in to the light orb. It caused the light orb to float directly on top of the light elemental crystal and remain alight without too much of Walker's mana manipulation.

"Perfect. That will also attract any of the abyssal serpents that might be around." Su liked the idea of having a more consistent light source. It was a risk to alert monsters within the caves but it was better to be able to see and defend against them since the monsters already had the advantage over them." Alice should carry it though. She will be able to use the light better than the rest of us." The comment was immediately supported by the rest of them. Alice didn't even hesitate. She didn't need to carry a staff anyways. The high priest had given her one but for the boosts that came with it, she just had to have it near her.

Gil had prepared light elemental arrows specially for this. They were not the arrows that could heal by shooting people which were still a more experimental arrow since it also hurt the target. Gil had to retire those after he spoke more with the enforcers. The arrows he had made were special because they contained some flint and steel dust on the ends. They would cause small sparks that damaged the arrow head. It would cause the arrow to break every time but also cause the stored light elemental mana to escape at once in a flash. It was perfect for the caves if they wanted to blind something or create an environment heavy with light elemental mana temporarily.

"Come on, let's go find Onyx some students!" Remey pushed Su ahead. Onyx didn't even say a word. He was too happy to hear how excited Remey was to do this. He was holding his hopes high. He knew even if they didn't find anything that they might discover something interesting. Their lives always seemed to fall toward amazing events whether they liked it or not.

Their feet kicked up dust as they moved in to the cave. The light became dim since the sun was no longer providing them with anything. They were in the darkness. The only sound seemed to be them as they moved. Even dropping water which they had heard in other caves was completely missing from the surroundings.

"I can tell this was carved away by something." Walker ran his hands over the nearly uniform scrapes on the walls. He just wondered what had done it and how long this had taken, the size of the cave was not small. It was many times taller than they were.

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#### Chapter 1263 1263. Faded Murals

The group had been walking for a little while and was still not seeing much. "I think it just goes straight forever." Since Gil was losing his patience not seeing anything change he had made this simple conclusion.

"Then why are we starting to see that?" Remey pointed ahead and stuck her tongue out at Gil. Since Gil had been getting bored with seeing the same thing he had barely missed the sight of the large cave tunnel splitting.

"I would say that we know this wasn't made by monsters now, or at least it was made intentionally by some race using some or monsters." Su jogged ahead and looked at the wall between the fork in the tunnel. "There are some runes carved here. They are a little rough so maybe they aren't the same as the other ancient runes we have seen.

"I can give my all around appraisal a shot and see if it shows us anything. They do look different though." It was always worth the shot to use his appraisal skill. Worst case they were still in the same position that they were before.

'Ancient directional rune- (degraded)

This rune used to be used for channeling a being's mana and directing them toward a certain direction. This rune is severely deteriorated and very tough to use without causing further damage to it. This was nowhere near a perfect rune and lacked the proper development.'

"It's older than the mage tower?" Since Alice had been interested in the light elemental floor of the mage tower, she had gone to view it. She wasn't able to see and learn much since the mages that went with her could not make sense of everything to explain to her. But the experience had given her some guidance when it came to how the ancient runes looked. Therefore, she had the feeling that this rune was a worse version of the runes in the mage tower.

"I would say you're right. That could mean that these runes are from the same race but before they moved to the desert city. Still pretty amazing...I wonder why they would be underground?" Walker was trying to come up with theories but was totally lost. He had no idea why a race would move from the underground where the dwarves had been perfectly happy to the desert. They were two very harsh environments.

"We might find more as we go. The real question is, brother, do we risk using the rune to see where it will point us?" Onyx was not willing to risk this unless everyone agreed. He wanted to see if they could trace the steps of this ancient civilization that seemed to have a much deeper history than the world currently knew.

"That's up to who should be the one to try it. Walker might have the best control of his mana, but I have the best al defense. If anything happens I will be the least harmed and can have Walker and Remey help heal me with and potions." Su was willing to do this since it would push their exploration further. It would make a lot more sense.

"I'm fine"

"Let's do it"

"Mhm"

"Looks like everyone agrees." Even Midnight was nodding her head next to Walker.

"Then, Su will handle it." Onyx watched as Su pressed her hand to the rune on the wall. It was slow but a slight glow emanated from it. There was a slight trail of mana that extended toward the right side path before the rune seemed to lose shape and the stone on the wall deformed slightly.

"I think we are going to the right...I also broke it." There was a sheepish tone in Su's voice since she felt bad for breaking something ancient. However, it was for the explorations continuation. It needed to be risked.

Walker glanced back at the rune to see the status of warped broken directional rune taking the title of the previous appraisal. It was enough for Walker to wonder about the shapes of runes and how they

might lose their purpose or functions when too much time or mana was added to them. But this was a thought for later. The tunnel had begun to change. There were small bits of rocks on the sides of it showing that this had been a much heavier traveled tunnel once upon a time. There were even still markings on the walls from things that had scraped against them while moving forward.

"You don't think they used to be a transportation tunnel of some sort, do you?" The thought hit Remy pretty hard. She could understand why the tunnels were so large and covered so much ground. It also made much more sense why they would find a rune that sent travelers in a certain direction.

"I would say you're right. They are ancient, but there are pretty telltale marks from a merchant path. The soil is so soft because it used to be pretty flat. This is what happens over time when those flattened damp trails become dry and slowly lose their structure." Gil proved his point by digging slightly to reveal the hardened soil underneath. It had indeed been a traveling trout at one point.

"Then that means we might be in store to find something very good. Maybe that desert city that the desert elves found connects to a series of ancient tunnels that were made somehow. If so then the race that made them may have developed this way and eventually became stronger creating their best city yet?" It was all a theory of how the desert city had been created, but if the race lived underground at one point then it could be a way they survived the desert and surrounding areas.

"Maybe we should just start looking at the walls. They might have some answers." Onyx had stopped slithering forward and was looking at the walls with intense focus.

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Chapter 1264 1264. Dangerous Past

Colors covered the walls. There were many fading images that showed pictures of different things. "These look like crops. I would say they are corn and wheat?" Walker was running a hand along the worn colors finding that they had been absorbed by the walls so they had once been painted on.

"Then what are these?" Su was still ahead looking at some of the other creatures painted on the walls. There were many that didn't seem to fit anything that they knew to date. The monsters that the party had seen and studied were all monsters that existed now or recently. But the ones they saw were larger.

"That one has to be a sea monster of some sort. Like a leviathan but bigger and with a lot of spikes." Gil was referencing what seemed to be murals of water coming together in a massive lake or ocean. The

spiked monster was large enough to take up the entire water source and definitely would be able to take on any monster they had seen as of yet. Even the mother kraken would easily be swallowed by such a creator.

"Wait, doesn't this one looks like Scylla in her mastery skill? It seems bigger and...more evil." There were multiple leviathans attached to it and a very large mouth that had scales leading down it. The monsters that seemed attached to it by tentacles or rope like limbs were those of vicious hounds almost double the size of any that the party had ever seen. They could have destroyed multiple cities just by walking through them.

"Then these must be...worse." Onyx looked at the creatures that flew through the skies in one of the murals. They had the similar appearance to dragons but were much larger. They were behemoth monsters that seemed jagged and twisted. The images were rough but some breathed flames that lit the skies in the murals on fire. "If these were what dragons grew to be after thousands of years I would not argue it. They seem too powerful."

"Wait, we were wondering why they might be down underground and in the desert. Wouldn't this explain it? They are here to hide. If anything was up on the surface they would be trampled by these things. Look at this...Onyx! Look at this!" Walker was stopped mid sentence. He found a picture that was very faded on the wall. They were all too familiar.

"Brother! Brother! Brother!!!" Onyx was lost for words. He was too excited to see what was all over the walls. The rough and faded murals showed dark scaled serpents that crawled from the earth to sit on top of mountains. They were met by similar sized serpents that flew in the sky with white scales.

"Those have to be abyssal serpents and heavenly serpents! We need people to come and investigate this place. Send a notification to Clara now. We need to make sure that she passes on the information that this place should be connected to the mage tower. And that it is even older." Restraint was not something that onyx had at that moment. He was too excited. They had found something that perfectly explained where his species had been and what they had come from. He knew that abyssal serpents were an old monster but he did not know that they were even seen by ancient races. Even more, they were seen right beside the heavenly serpents, which Alice and He were trying to raise together to have the same potential future as him.

"I did. I did. Just look at everything where. We can take our time to explore this. There are a lot more murals it seems." Walker looked ahead and saw that the large tunnel changed again. It seemed to be blocked by something ahead. "I think we reached the end of the tunnel. Maybe this is where the travelers were headed."

Alice brought the light orb attached to the light elemental crustal closer. They found that there were multiple parts of stone fitted together blocking the tunnel. Some cracks had appeared over the years but it had obviously been some form of door. "More runes." Alice spotted them and pointed them out to Walker.

"I can already feel them, they are earth elemental runes. I bet that these are here to help the door open. Even years ago they were able to ake things like this. Before they had the same runes at the mage tower!" This was just another discovery. Finding things like this was just too amazing.

"Well, are we opening it?" Remey wanted to keep pushing forward with the journey. They had finally found something amazing. Something that they had not seen before and something that they knew would help the world learn.

"No, wait for Onyx. he needs to get his bearings first." Walker saw that Onyx was beside himself still. Finally, they were close. The entire group knew how much Onyx had thought about finding others of his species. They knew that it was the same feeling that Midnight had about dragons. It was the same feeling of wanting to be with family. This didn't mean Onyx was against being with the group, just that he had always asked, where are there others just like me? Anyone would wonder the same things.

"We can move on. This is good. We are on the right track. But it might be dangerous. This door hasn't been opened for a long time so I want you to be careful and reinforce the tunnel first." When Onyx recovered, he was clear and prepared. He didn't know what would be on the other side of this stone door. Just that it was old and might not be able to hold itself together when moved. The cracks from aging made this clear already.

"Then I will do my best." Alice held the light orb and crystal high to help Walker as he began to use his high earth sculpting skill.

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## Chapter 1265 1265. Records

Rumbling stone was nerve wracking. The cave seemed to drop more dust on the group than expected. There were some cracks that seemed made intentionally to let the stone door fall in to empty spaces on the sides of the walls. The other cracks were caused by time. That means some of the stone door fell away and blocked the tunnel from easy travel. However, it was nothing for Walker since he was able to

use the earth sculpting skill to keep the cracks from forming on the walls around him, especially the ceiling. It kept the tunnel's integrity intact.

What was revealed was not easy to see. The group was unable to look past the small bubble of light they had from Alice holding the light elemental crystal high. The light orb only penetrated the darkness so much before they realized that the entire space before them was too large. "Let me make more light orbs. We will see what is here." Walker started to throw out light orbs as he also pulled out the light elemental crystals to attach to them. He wanted the entire area lit without having to control the mana so much. He also wanted to be able to explore for a long time.

Slowly the space was revealed. Many stone shelves and a large open center were revealed. "Don't tell me this was a massive underground storage area..." Remey felt that she was in some large vault that people would pass through to trade and store goods. From the stone shelf's conditions, she could see the petrified wood that had once made up small barrels or crates. There were stone cups and containers that had cracked as they aged.

On top of all this, they could see some elemental crystals that had managed to weather time or shattered in to crystal shards. These must have been very valuable at the time because there was only one set of broken stone shelves with them on it.

"If this was a travel area between their underground homes like the desert or even before it, then I would say this was a place many of them stopped." Walker wanted to move to investigate things more, yet he was stopped in his tracks.

'Abyssal serpent skeleton

This abyssal serpent had perished many years ago. Due to the unique elemental affinity, the skeleton is still left behind. The skeleton is slowly losing the stored mana within the bones to degrade further. It is a unique characteristic that a parent abyssal serpent or similar serpent monster possesses to assist their eggs to absorb the mana and lay dormant for a longer time.'

Walker whispered this to the group. He was a little awestruck by the size of the abyssal serpent skeleton that snaked around many shelves. If the party wanted they could easily walk through the entire skeleton as if it was a tunnel. "I could grow bigger than this...It's amazing." The entire group was equally amazed.

Since they all felt that the area was full of amazing things, they started to explore in pairs. Gil was looking through some of the stone shelves near the center. "I think all this dust used to be books. But there are also these slabs of stone with carving, hmm. Walker, Midnight and I found some stone slabs with writing on them!" This brought Walker and Alice over to them to get a closer look.

'Transport record slab

This is a slab used to record the goods brought through the checkpoint. It has specific information on it regarding trade between groups and dwellings. The runes can be directly matched with the ancient language used at the time'

"I can't read it but I can appraise it. These are all records. I doubt we will get much out of them until we can get people to study how they used runes to match their language. We also need to find more of their written language." Having some of the older written language would help those studying it back in Genesis to find out a better way to translate things. It was a very useful discovery.

"You are going to want to see this over here!" Su and Remey both called out to them. Their voices were shaking with energy so Gil, Midnight, Onyx, Walker, and Midnight rushed over. Onyx had been looking at the large skeleton still but was now ready to see what would cause Remey and Su to be so animated.

They all stopped when they got toward the skull of the abyssal serpent skeleton. It had stopped right in front of some much more reinforced stone shelves. They had runes carved along them with small parts of rusted metals attached. The runes seemed to be directing all mana in the air toward the shelves. But this wasn't what they were amazed about. What they were looking at was one of the light orbs that was growing dimmer and dimmer by the second.

Small worm shaped shadows were moving around the light elemental crystal on the floor providing the light orb with mana. They moved very quickly and had obviously come from the shattered eggshells on the shelf. "We moved around the side to find that the next tunnel is collapsed from the earthquake we assume. Then turned around to find this. Onyx, we found them."

Words could not be spoken. None of them even knew what to say. The seven to ten little worms of shadows were clearly abyssal serpents that had just hatched. The light elemental mana that had started to slowly seep into the caves from the ravine being opened were enough to help them get closer to hatching. As soon as the light crystals were added, they had hatched and started to feast on them. Even more, the shelves had additional eggs that might be other monsters or perished monsters. Walker could only understand that the ancient race had once raised these monsters and transported them around.

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## Chapter 1266 1266. Tunnel Carvers

"Onyx, there's more. There are eggs on this shelf. Some are definitely unable to ever hatch, but there are heavenly serpent eggs too. Maybe five or six. Then there are another eight or nine abyssal serpent eggs. There are other things too that I need to appraise. We will need the tamer's guild to come and help us. We are going to need...archeologists, rune mages, rune carvers, tamers, and anyone with high appraisal skills. Maybe more." This was a discovery that perfectly rivaled the mage tower.

"He's right. You found a lead that was much more than what we thought it would be. Onyx...Onyx?" Su tried to stay calm and praise Onyx but found he was frozen. He was basically a statue looking at the wriggling abyssal serpents in the shadows.

Before anyone could try and snap him out of it he started to grow to his full size. He looked down at the wriggling abyssal serpents that froze before his gaze. It was clear that onyx had started to speak to them. Even Midnight was lost as to what Onyx could be saying since he normally let her in on things as well.

Everyone watched as the little shadows slowly approached him and examined him before they all began to rise out of the shadows. Their bodies were obviously frail. But they were definitely abyssal serpents. The size was much smaller than onyx had hatched but they had the bare minimum elemental mana to hatch over a long period of time. It was expected that they would be stunted to a certain degree.

"I will make sure these little ones start to catch on and learn a few things. I will leave it to brother to handle the other eggs. I am very excited..." The way Onyx spoke this in everyone's minds made them wonder if he actually believed what was happening or if they were somehow in a dream with him. Either way, he would make sure everything went perfectly.

"We will do that. Now, first comes first. Let's see if I can store away the dormant eggs. If they can then it will be perfect. If not then they might hatch at any time." Walker looked at the eggs left and hoped he could store them all so that they would not need to wait for tamers to come and help them. That way Walker could get the eggs to those that could welcome them in to the world sooner and with brighter smiles.

Since Walker was the one with the appraisal skills, the others were right behind him to help where needed. The only one that stayed right next to Onyx was Alice. They had shared a special bond while

training their light elemental skills together. Since she was also by his side helping to hatch the heavenly serpent egg he was glad that she showed the same interest in the newly hatched abyssal serpents.

'Spoiled monster egg'

'Spoiled monster egg'

'Spoiled monster egg'...

This description showed up multiple times while Walker was appraising. He was not too happy with the fact that they were finding so many spoiled monster eggs. The problem was that they had been there without the proper nutrition for so long. Some monster species were able to go dormant in their egg state for very long periods of time. The heavenly and abyssal serpents were two such monsters.

'Titan mole egg- (dormant)

This is an extremely fast growing species of mole. They were once the largest species of underground mole in the world but have slowly become the rarest due to their very short lifespans. They are able to grow from hatchling state to adult state in a single month. They will constantly eat earth to build large armor around them while not actually gaining mass as a creature. They are mainly a al earth elemental monsters instead of physical. Their titan name comes from their ability to create this massive body of earth to protect them at all times. They are able to make extremely strong tunnels for long stretches underground'

"This is the monster that made the tunnels! It has to be. Remey became interested in the egg which looked like a small brown rock. If anyone had walked by it on the ground they would have ignored it thinking it was just mud and dirt.

"So that's how they did it. I wonder how strong its earth affinity is if it can make a body big enough to make that massive main cave. Something so small can make the very ground we walk on its body." To say that this was amazing was an understatement. Walker was pretty impressed overall by this.

"It looks like there are four more on this shelf. I wonder if they are better preserved because they are under the ground but not in direct contact?" Gil's theory was correct. Every single one that the group found they were able to store away.

"Hmm, they would be like me then. Great physical defense and earth elemental skills." The earth spirit had started to look around and seemed to like the eggs very much. When Su related it and her to them the spirit seemed even more energetic.

"Midnight, do you see more over there?" Walker saw that Midnight was examining the last section of shelving. There they found the majority of eggshells with two more abyssal serpent eggs. "Ah, so this is where most of the ones that hatched came from. It looks like this one will hatch next but the other is still dormant. Overall, nine more abyssal serpent eggs, five heavenly serpent, and six titan mole eggs. The rest aren't going to do anything. Let's see what Onyx has decided about his little students, hm?" Midnight huffed happily. She was glad to see that there were not all spoiled monster eggs. These eggs were the start of the abyssal, heavenly, and maybe even titan moles becoming their own races. Not that they knew if the titan moles had the potential.

#### Chapter 1267 1267. They Are Family

Midnight rushed over to Onyx ahead of the others. She was ready to see what he had to say about the newly hatched abyssal serpent that he was not looking over. "Sister, they already named themselves. Can you believe that? They named themselves after the order they hatched. I will teach them to get to the place I am to communicate with others but they recognize their order. It's perfect and easy. But they are too hungry." The small abyssal serpents had already consumed most of the light elemental mana in the first elemental crystal.

There was no hiding his words from the others. They all heard him since he had basically shouted it to the world mentally. "You seem pretty happy. It looks like they can even hide in your shadow too. That's so cute!" Su was broken. Her serious demeanor was washed away by the little abyssal serpents hiding in Onyx's shadow when the rest of the group arrived.

"I will let them know who you are and that they are safe with you here. They don't really understand much of what I say but they know I am bigger and here to help them. They really like Alice since she was humming before and made the light elemental mana easier to eat." It seemed all too easy to make Alice blush with this. She was somehow becoming loved by her own fan club of abyssal serpent hatchlings.

"Oh? You have already started to get them to like you? How is the heavenly serpent going to feel when it hatches and finds out that its ner sister has a nest of siblings for it to contend with." The teasing earned a soft slap to Walker's arm. But he could tell that she liked it. She was thinking about how it

would be nice to have so many friends around to help her train, keep her company, and most of all live a better life.

"They can be family. All of them."

"Now that is well said. They will be welcome in the guilds and out on every adventure!" Remey's shout in response to Alice caused the little hatchlings to slither back in to the shadows yet again. They soon reemerged to look at her curiously. They didn't know what she had said or why she was so loud. However, they could sense the light elemental affinity of the two interchangeable knuckles on her hips.

Before they could continue on and keep chiding about the abyssal serpent hatchlings, there was a soft rumbling. The dust from the ceiling began to fall on them while clouding the air. No one knew what was going on. "Is this another earthquake?" The earth spirit didn't seem to agree with Su's theory. It just melded back in to the earth dwelling shield. Everyone could feel the tension in the air.

"Then it might not have been an earthquake that caused this to burst open. It could have been monsters." Walker had everyone on alert immediately. The shaking stopped leaving them all ready for battle without a foe.

"As the party leader, we are leaving. We do not know what caused this and what further damage could come of this. The tunnel seems safe but I heard you call out that the continuation of the tunnel had collapsed. It's not safe. We will leave. The people we send here next can investigate." Onyx was sobered up from his joy. He was ready to be more serious and get somewhere safe. He had watched Walker procure the dormant eggs and carry the one soon to hatch. He also saw that Walker had stored away many of the stone slabs with rune language written on them. That way they would more easily convince people to come and explore these ruins in depth. They just needed to hope that the ruins lasted longer.

"I agree with that. I don't plan on staying here too much longer. I prefer where I can see the target I can shoot my arrows at." the rumbling seemed to have stirred Zephyr from her rest in their bow. She looked a little confused.

"Can you feel that? There's a lot of earth elemental mana around here now. I think there might even be a spirit like me."

"A spirit like you. A grand elemental spirit? Is that a good thing?" Walker waited with bated breath. So far Zephyr had been kind but that didn't mean that all grand elemental spirits were.

Her reaction was the same as any other person would shrug. But when Fleur started to pull Walker's hair back towards the entrance he felt it was better to leave. The mana was imbalanced and the area felt dangerous. At the very least they were better off getting somewhere safer.

"Come here. Hide away in my shadow and stay close. We will keep the light for you to eat while we go." The whispers of Onyx were still transmitted to their minds because of his excitement. It also helped them know where the hatchlings were so that they could better guard them. Su was prepared to use the earth fortress skill with her partner at a moment's notice.

The entire cavern had become dusty and harder to see. "I can feel a new airflow. Maybe another cave opened up." They all trusted this information from Gil and Zephyr. The pair had the best understanding of wind elemental mana, therefore, they were able to feel the slightest shift in the air traveling through the caves.

"There was that tunnel we did not travel down. We don't know where it went. What if it went to another room like this." The thought occurred to Onyx and then hit everyone else with the realization that they could be leaving even more monster eggs to spoil and lose the chance to live. The thought would eat away at them if they did not attempt to check it out. But there was still the danger of what was causing that rumbling.

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#### Chapter 1268 1268. Partially Explored

Leaving the main room that had found was hard. They had not been able to explore further because the rumbling had put them on dodge and it was best that the dwarves were there to properly reinforce the tunnels. Walker was cursing himself a little since they had not brought with them some dwarves or earth mages from the forest elf city. That would have put them in a better mindset. However, they were now faced with a bigger dilemma.

"If we just leave them there and they lose their chance of surviving then why do I waste so much time making potions to save people. If I will just let a living thing die then I should stop making potions to save people." Remey had rationalized it in an odd way built it struck a chord with Su.

"I agree. We don't know what is down there but if it means getting more eggs out of a place that doesn't have food for them then I am ready to risk it. Walker and I have earth related skills to help us escape better if the worst happens. If we run in to what caused the rumbling before then we will retreat and call for some back up. I'm willing to take the risk and scout it first."

"Onyx, let me ask you something." Gil was thinking very hard about how this could work while still protecting the abyssal serpents that should leave the caves first. "If you and Alice leave here to report back to the guards while Walker, Su, Remey, and I head down there to search, do you think that if we find more abyssal serpents they would follow us because of a light elemental crystal? Midnight would wait here to give a signal if anything starts to happen. She would be the warning if the tunnel started to collapse."

"That's not a bad idea. But I would prefer that we stay together. Although it is better to get the hatchlings out safely first. They should get to the light first. I think a day should have passed by now. We walked pretty far to get to the fork in the tunnels." Since the sun wasn't visible it was very tough to keep track of time underground. It was something that the party had struggled with when in the dwarven mines.

"I don't want to. It feels wrong to separate. But, you are right. I have a responsibility to these little ones. Alice can carry the egg that will hatch soon too. But I want you to turn around at the slightest rumble or feeling of worry." The stare that Onyx had while looking at them was one that spoke millions of words and feelings in an instant. He was sure that his family could get out of any situation, yet he did not wish to risk it. "I won't allow any more of my kind to suffer. Just go and we will wait for you. Just be careful." Onyx turned and started back toward the ravine. He was having a hard time doing this. He could feel his heart being pulled apart with his dreams and goals against his familial values.

On the other hand, Alice was taking this as her reason for being there. She would be able to keep the little abyssal serpents safe and fed using her songs. They would be able to grow faster during their journey back. Nothing would stop her from playing her part. At the end of the day she had practiced battle songs even though she had always lived as a healer. But that just expanded her control of light. Things that allowed her to help others with her newfound strength were perfect. Therefore, she gave Onyx a soft pat on the head. She didn't need to speak for him to know that she was standing beside him and would give her all to help. This lightened Onyx's stress considerably.

"We will be back as soon as we check this tunnel, Be safe Midnight." Walker felt that Midnight wanted to come but recognized the importance of the task she was given. She would also have the opportunity to work on sensing the earth elemental mana. It was the best way for her to be prepared for anything that happened. Any small rumble, monster approaching, or even backup and she would be able to warn everyone of what was happening.

"If the rune didn't point us this way, should we be worried about what we might find?" Remey finally broke out with what she was worrying over. She had not expected they would end up traveling and finding what they had so far. She did feel responsible now and just wanted to get deeper insight from Walker who could sense the mana in the air around them better.

"I want to say we won't need to worry but if there is a breeze then that means this is connected elsewhere. It also means that we might be headed toward another cave system completely. It looked like monsters had been unable to head the other way because of the stone door. That was good for the eggs since they were safe. The real question we should ask, why were they sealed and left behind?"

This already plagued Walker's mind. The question was the biggest one that needed answering.

"Since Zephyr feels a breeze and so do I. We should be careful. I do need to say though, the tunnel shows some signs of activity. Like small holes were poked in to the dusty ground. I have no idea what leaves tracks like this but they aren't new. I just wonder..." Gil was at a loss for what the tracks were or even if they were tracks at all. It was very rare for him to be stumped by anything. Everyone knew this and made sure that they were just a little more prepared.

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Chapter 1269 1269. The Walls

"We will be more careful. My partner agrees that nothing has touched this space for a while, but look at the walls. Whatever was here obviously has left its mark." The marks that Su referred to were cuts in the sturdy carved walls. They were clearly left by things that were able to cut in to dirt and stone easily. On top of that, it seemed that they had cut up the murals for some unknown reason.

"If it was a person it would make sense for someone to want to destroy more murals. It seemed like there are stretches of caves that have them purposefully. I like the traditions. Maybe Genesis should use it as well. Anyways, there is a randomness to it. Look at the colors, green is cut off more than the faded reds and yellows. If it was a monster, then maybe, they were after what was in the pigments that created the paint used?"

"That's...actually really smart. Are you sure that you are Gil and not some mimic or ghost pretending?" Remey was a little unsure and softly poked Gil's side to test if he has indeed the person they knew.

"Just because you don't know something doesn't mean that it is a mystery to the world. Do you know how some paints are made? They are made from farmed flowers. Those reds and yellows you see in the kingdom's walls or a castle door are made from tulips. Red and yellow tulip petals to be exact." Pretending to pout was not the best look for Gil but it seemed to make Zephyr google while she drifted in the air trying to feel the flow of the wind through the cave.

"Then we have monsters that came through here and ate away at the walls for the green. I would say that leaves us with a lot of options but now we have to figure out what would do that. Moles are out since they eat worms, earth elemental crystals, and sometimes mushrooms. Bat type monsters are out since they eat the blood or small rat like monsters. Same for the rat typer monsters, they eat insects, or scavenge." Walker easily eliminated many of the types of monsters they could encounter down here.

"So that means that we won't have worms either. How would they know there was green on the walls? They can't see and they eat everything around the thing they want to eat. They can't eat just the green color off the walls." There was a proud pose from Remy for her input. These moments adventuring were where the group seemed to truly act themselves. They could converse without much worry about what they looked like. They had begun to act differently in the city since they were looked up to.

"I would say it has claws or sharp pincers then? Maybe fangs?" Su had stopped to look at the cut up murals only to have this small guess as to what things might be.

"In any means, we have an idea of what we might run in to while scouting down here. I can tell that the mana is slightly more agitated like there are more living things down here. But I have no idea what they are. Fleur seems like she senses the natural mana too. I bet we will be able to spot something ahead." The tunnel was slowing down and the murals were more and more carved up. The only certain thing was that this trail had not been touched for a long time so the tracks that were there were very old. That was until they reached the next intersection.

"Stop, wait here," Gil whispered and everyone froze. He was kneeling down examining the first. "The dust and soil are kicked up like something rushed down from left to right. This path we came from wasn't touched so whatever made these pointy prints were not using it. But this tunnel cutting through is used. Heavily used actually." The four way intersection was very clear cut. The tunnel Gil motioned to was like night and day. Dry dust versus unsettled kicked up dust was different in color and shape. The same pointed prints also stood out.

"So it's not that there aren't monsters but that they didn't go this way anymore. That means something that patrols territory. It also means that they don't know about the ravine being opened by the earthquake around here. I wonder if they couldn't go anywhere the way we came from because the

area was sealed? That could be why they didn't get through the sealed storage room." Walker's conclusion meant that these monsters might start to explore the newly opened area.

"I did notice that there were rockets on the opposite side of the ravine. That could have been a collapsed tunnel that connected to the one we came through. I just assumed it was from the ravine opening. I will think out loud next time." Su mentally kicked herself while staying alert for anything coming toward the intersection.

"Walker, that means you need to play the role of Midnight today. She stayed behind as safety so you need to scout ahead and see what you can find." Gil didn't even hesitate to hide the smile as he said this. He was making Walker scout ahead for once which was very amusing to him. It also showed off that he was not the best to scout here so he was leaving it to Walker completely.

"Well, since you can't scout ahead in a cave because you are afraid of the dark, I will. Just stay here and hold on to the light elemental crystal. The light orb is attached. Maybe Su will hold your hand." Remy stifled a giggle while Walker whispered this to Gil and used the shadow wrapping skill to slowly move down the right hand side of the intersection. He was following the most recent set of prints in the direction he thought they had gone.

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#### Chapter 1270 1270. Unsealed

With this, Walker had split up too. But this wasn't a bad thing. If something happened the group now formed a chain that could alert the surface of what dangers showed her. Walker also knew he had the party skill to warn them silently to avoid monsters being alerted. This was ideal for them to explore. He also was the best option since he had the shadow wrapping skill and control of other elemental manas. Therefore, he would be able to hide the scent he had from whatever was down here, many underground monsters had a better sense of smell than sight due to the darkness.

He still had Fleur by his side but what shocked Walker a little was the fact that she also pulled the darkness elemental mana toward her to hide herself. It was something he had no idea that she could do. Yet when he thought about it, he realized that it just made sense. Fleur was a nature spirit and could manipulate all mana. Did she have massive battle prowess? No. But she could control it and make it bend to her will to a degree. The real reason people could fear her was the fact that she could take control of the elemental mana around them and keep them from using it. Therefore making her powerful.

Walker did not need to communicate to her his plans. She could feel his ambition to move forward and explore. When he saw that the ground was becoming more and more heavily traveled, he managed to glance up and see the reason why. There were separate tunnels dug in to the ceiling and sides here and there. They were obviously not made by those that created the original tunnels. The cuts in them were the same as on the mural walls he had seen earlier.

His thinking brought him to the realization that this was not some singular or small group of monsters. That alone narrowed down the potential for what these could be. However, he needed more proof as to what it might be. The number was still too high. Many insect type monsters hit in large groups. This was evident in the desert and the volcanic areas which had many swarm type monsters that would nest together. One such was the firefly. They didn't seem very harmless due to their small size but once gathered they were a swarm of sparks that could burn anything to ash.

Here and there Walker started to pick up the small sounds of something hitting stone or something hard snapping together. He could only think of claws or teeth making him wonder if he was finally going to get a glimpse of what was up ahead. The tiny amount of light elemental mana he had used to create a minuscule light orb near his eyes to see better in the dark didn't seem to matter. There was a sense of sight that seemed to be taking more control the longer he was in the darkness.

Walker had noticed that Midnight didn't seem to have much problem with the dark, the same with Su. he could easily connect this to the dragon blood within them. He began to remember that he was told by the keeper in the dragon royal court that he would also exhibit dragon like traits. The sight improvement in the dark seemed to be one trait along with his easy ability to use a dragons' roar. But that was not what Walker was thinking about. Instead, he was thinking about the large carved out cavern he had come to.

The area had definitely been some form of underground city or living area in the least. There were cut apart buildings and open spaces. Walker could even make out what had once been a fountain still spurting small amounts of water. But what kept him from seeing it all properly were the eggs. Oval white eggs that clearly had something in them. Something that Walker recognized as grubs or worms.

Yet, this was still a small matter compared to what was moving around taking care of these eggs.

' Giant Earth Ant

These ants are known for their extremely strange life behavior. The entire colony is known to go dormant when the queen sleeps, sometimes for many years at a time. Therefore they go through cycles

of rapid food harvest before that happens. They are great at carving through the earth and stone while hunting for anything they can defeat and use for nutrients. The worker, soldier, and guard ants are only able to live for five years in service of the queen. That reason is why the queen will gorge herself on food to lay thousands of eggs at a time. Depending on the situation, a colony can completely obliterate a small area of land when it comes to the ecosystem. If they remain underground they will often be peaceful and slowly expand whatever cave they found as a home. They were once magma ants until they evolved to be a pure earth elemental monster when a volcano went dormant.'

Hesitation would cause problems. Walker turned himself right around and began to move as quickly as possible. These ants would not be able to stay underground. They would find the path to the surface and search for food. They weren't sealed off any longer in this ancient ruined city. They were able to leave their maze of tunnels and ruins. They would pose a threat. The worst part was that Walker had not even seen the queen. There were so many eggs and the queen with the soldiers, guardians, and the majority of workers were elsewhere.

Sending this information forward was a major priority. While he ran, Walker sent this to the party, Clara, and started to whisper in to the communication crystals for Scylla. She would be able to pass this on to the dwarves, Walker distinctly remembered that when he had read about these ants in a bestiary that they were hunted by dwarven miners.