

## Master 141

### Chapter 141 - 141. Bonfire

Every once in a while a curious tribesman would come by to see what the earth walls were all about. Peeking their heads in they would see the group making up bedding and a small place for a fire and run off to share the gossip.

Fairly soon a group of children had gathered daring each other to go inside and convince them to show off their earth. Soon the commotion was enough to draw everyone's attention.

" you know if you don't go out there they'll eventually rush in here and we'll have to clean everything up again." These words came from Remey, apparently she was used to the same thing happening in the orphanage. If you weren't careful your hard earned clean room would be a mess in a second. It was a lesson learned through experience.

" I feel like every time I get most of my mana back I have to use it all again, at this rate I'll run out forever." Standing up from his newly set up bed walker headed toward the entrance he'd made earlier. Seeing about ten kids huddled together trying to convince each other to go inside walker knew Remey was right, it was only a matter of time. " so I hear someone wanted to see some elemental !" Walker increased his vibrato to draw their attention.

Seeing that their ears perked up and eyes focused on him he knew he had his audience. Raising his hand he used a single mana to push some wind their way. Slapping his hand down the gust of wind flew from him ruffling all of their hair and causing their cloths to billow slightly. Chorus of giggles and squealing greeted his ears. "So can I ask someone to guide me to an open training area?" With the ice broken a few of them grabbed in to his arms and started to drag him away. Most of them ran way ahead getting close to one of the big ice walls. Soon the open space seemed large enough to play in.

Eyeing the scratchings on the ground he could tell this was the designated playing area. A few childhood games came to mind as he notices squares and numbers drawn in. Thinking back he remembered a large metal slide in the noble tier he had seen once. Maybe he could do something similar with his elemental manipulation.

"Alright alright stand back! Stand back! Open your eyes and watch the earth rumble!" Placing his hands on the ground he channeled his mana in to the ground. Shaking started causing inflammation surprised gasps from the kids. Even adults had come by to see the commotion. From the earth steps began to rise at the top a sloped smooth surface descending to the ground. After five minutes of shaking a perfect earth slide lay in front of them. " now add some ice..." walker headed over touching the smooth slopes

surface pouring more mana in to it. Water was pulled from the air settling and freezing in to a mirror on the slide. It was complete an earth slide with a perfect slippery surface to slip and slide down over and over.

Walker climbed the steps he had made while everyone watched him, the kids seemed confused by even more excited. They hadn't seen a slide before. If walker hadn't seen one before either he wouldn't know what to do, but luckily he did. Upon reaching the top he sat his but down raised his arms and promptly flew down the slide. The air whistles in his ears and he reaches the bottom much faster than he wanted. Hitting the bottom h landed feet first and promptly tumbled twice before miraculously landing in his feet again he took a few unsteady steps. Glancing back at the group he only saw smiles, " well what are you waiting for? Get up there and slide!" His shout was all they needed as they all pushed and caught for the chance to get to the top. Even a few older kids and adults had made their way to the slide. It seemed his little creation would be a big hit.

Now that his mana was depleted again he headed a little distance away and took a seat on the ground. "Well you sure are a hit with the kids, any you've only just got here today." A skinny tall woman with grey brown ears greeted him. " I'm Janet my husband is Otis he mentioned you had some interesting skills so I took a walk and found this new creation. I've got to say you're living up to the gossip, but at this rate you want have a moment to breath at the fire tonight." Laughing to herself Janet headed towards the slide yelling for the kids to be careful and not to fight. It seemed the adults had come to organize the chaos but they all made sure to greet walker, word did travel fast here.

After relaxing and watching the children play for an hour or so he had relaxed and was sure the slide would remain intact and safe. It was just about time to eat and a few kids had already been dragged off by parents. Walker himself headed back to the little area they had finding everyone else all ready to head to the square.

" I feel like none of you would have even waited for me." Shaking his head he cleaned himself up brushing off some snow and trying to look more presentable.

" well hey we figured tour new playmates would drag you along." If one didn't know better Gil was trying to pick a fight. In turn walker tossed a snowball to the back of his head.

" hey don't start a ranger battle with a ranger! I'll bring you down with my hawk eye!"

" oh year right! I'll just learn a new skill and eagle eye every shot!"

The two bickered on in spectacular fashion until Su and Remey decided it was time to head to the square. Su grabbed gils arm and Remey grabbed walkers arm and off they were dragged. " let's go girls no more drama we have a dinner to attend" Remeys words hit hard ending the matter but she was right it was time to go eat.

Followed by Laurence and the others they headed back to the square. The closer they got the more voices they heard. The scene that greeted them was spectacular. A massive bonfire made it seem to be daylight in the center of the square. Many small wooden table had been brought to line the outside of the square leaving plenty of space between the fire and myriad of food.

"Wow they do this every night?" Riley with a rare line felt he had found his dream. Rushing off to join those eating he seemed to find a group of tribesman just as involved in the live of food as him. Laurence wanted to stop him but knew it was inevitable, at least he was off with likeminded individuals.

"Elise let's go find some desserts! Su come on we're finding desert." Just like that the girls had rushed off following someone who seemed to be carrying a pudding.

" well looks like it's just us, do we go to eat with the elders?" Laurence had been here before and his plan to eat with the elders came from previous visits. He knew that it was an unsaid rule for guests to respect and down with elders if possible.

" sounds pretty good to me, the man with with the scars seems pretty interested in what we can do. I'm sure he's already heard of my elemental manipulation." The two headed towards a smaller group of tables where the elders were seated.

"Ah and so the young decide to come and visit the veterans. I'm glad you had the time to come join us for dinner. We've heard you made a very large impression in some of the rugrats after you made a private space your yourselves." The one eared elder seemed happy to see them and made sure to emphasize that he knew what they had been up to. This was almost certainly the elder to watch out for, very sneaky.

" we felt that it would only be right to come greet our kind hosts. Not to mention I'm sure after hearing about my antics you're curious enough to what else I can do." After turning in the charm walker smiled and reached for a cup of water the elder offered to him.

" you have that right, you can manipulate three elements. Wind, water, and earth. That's a pretty rare feat." The elders were very impressed with the skill walker had shown but even more so with the simple fact that he had done something for the children.

" well actually I can manipulate all the elements. The skill is called elemental manipulation. I can use pretty much any skill that's not a mastery skill, every weapon, any gear, hahah I can even dance." Walker couldn't help but laugh remembering his new dodging skill dance of the wild rabbit.

#### Chapter 142 - 142. Shock The Tribe

The elder didn't even blink, " ahhhA I see so it's every element, but if you are going to brag about dancing I think you'll be outmatched here." The elder was very confident in his words almost on cue they heard music start off.

Drums and strings seemed to fill the air. The big space between tables and the bonfire became filled with tribesman. The music started to pick up reaching a consistent beat. Those with less experience stepped back allowing room, the dancing started. The tribesman jumped towards each other seemingly to collide only to spin and change levels as the dodges past each other. This repeated to the best of the music, every possible collision was turned in to an elegant spin showing coordination. It was as if a rabbit was jumping to dodge a fox.

" I remember some years ago you Laurence were trying to dance rather drunk with our tribe. Care to take a second attempt with your friend here." It would seem that the elder doubted the possibility that walker could actually dance. Even more was the fact that Laurence had arranged this exact situation knowing walkers skill the second he saw it. That sneaky bastard, walker would need to get him back for this later.

" oh no I could never drag Laurence in to this. I would love to join in the dance I've been excited all day to enjoy your company so it's sad to walk away so quick. However this looks like quiet a fun step." Walker looked towards an open spot in the group and waited for the right moment.

The best began to pick up again the speed increasing to the point it left only nine dancers able to properly use the step. This was not daunting in the least to walker, he was confident in his skill and knew he could keep up with his agility.

On the down beat he jumped directly at Otis we was dancing in the group. Otis's eyes were wide seeing the incoming walker not expecting him to suddenly jump in. They were a heard length from impacting as

their feet touched down. Suddenly the next beat rang out and walker spun, the two dodged perfectly endearing a crouch and turning to their next jump. Those watching became completely speechless. It was impossible! Inconceivable! No one other than a rabbit trait Demi human could learn the dance of the wild rabbit.

" so I may not be able to dance but if my eyes aren't lying to me, I found someone who can." Laurence had a smug smile while glancing at the elders. However his words of victory from on deaf ears, the elders had all stood from their seats witnessing an impossible feat.

Otis having still not recovered from walkers earlier related feats was again thrown in to confusion. But instead of faltering his body continued to move, this was instinct after all.

All that were dancing were the tribes top warriors, only they had mastered the dance of the wild rabbit to such degree. Walker saw the strength they all possessed and almost felt bad for immediately gaining the use of the skill. This thought didn't sit long because he forced it away, his system was that kind of system If he doesn't accept it and use it he may fail to protect others.

Continuing the dance walker faces every other warrior participating. All showed plain as day their surprise that they did not collide. Now that someone had proven they could keep up their vigor rose leading to more and more encounters. Once they were all sweating bullets the beat began to slow, everyone started to part from the middle leaving only Otis and walker.

" boy you haven't learned the dance of the rabid rabbit have you?" This was the next step in the dance but it was technically a skill only the highest warrior of the tribe would learn often only one of two learning in a lifetime.

"No I have only learned dance of the wild rabbit. Should I leave?" Walker worried if he stayed dancing he may ruin Otis's performance however his reply was the opposite.

" well take a chance and try to keep up. Maybe you can learn it and push me to our mastery skill. If anyone can push me closer to the step of the golden hare it may be you." Otis raised a hand signaling to start the piece.

The music became erratic, shouts and trilling came from those watching. The look in Otis's eyes became wild and his steps became closer and more aggressive. Soon new moves were being added, Otis would

sweep his leg trying to hit walker off balance then jump away only to return with another near miss. The spins now came with backhanded swipes to push walker off balance. This was the next step in the dance? It had become much less elegant and more unpredictable.

The music increased speed soon putting walker on edge. Otis was reacting faster and nearly catching him. Some hits would stagger him but walker would narrowly catch himself and jump again in to a spin. This dance was getting annoying, he couldn't keep up. The pressure was building inside Walker, an anger even he didn't realize to be pent up.

The beat echoed his heart, blood thick in his veins, he was going to lose it at this rate. The pressure reached a peak and without his warrant his voice was heard, " aahhggg no more!!!" He refused to be put off balance anymore, this was it the last straw now he would hit back.

Feeling his frustration onyx had wrapped around his neck biting his own tail. Having become a tattoo walker looked more intimidating. Midnight had felt the same and come to the edge of the crowd. Snarling and growling echoing through to walker, he could feel her encouragement, there was no more taking the hits and retreating.

' Due to great mental stress the skill: dance of the rabid rabbit has been learned.

Dance of the rabid rabbit- passive

Having lost hold of their mental fortitude a rabbit in rage becomes erratic. Turning against even the predator after their life, a rabbit shall show its claws.'

Walker stopped for a second his eyes bloodshot. Otis was about to swing in to the next spin but instead of connecting to the stationary body of walker something more happened. Walker lowered his level and swept with his leg. Otis tumbled and landed with his knees bent. Now they can go all out.

The two lost more elegance and added more to their chaos. Feet swung in spins to push and prod each other in to falling. Walker no longer lost balance but instead flowed move to move his own hands flying to push. There was no thinking on what they would do next or how they would avoid the blows, just instinct remained.

A short time of this passed both their eyes deadlocked on each others. Small flecks of gold reflected in the eyes of Otis but nothing else. The music had started to slow, falling in to a swift lull. Peaceful feelings encompassed their instinctual movements speaking of green glowing plains and soft winds. Eventually they weren't striking out in the sounds but just dancing as before. The music came to an end leaving two heavy breathing individuals. The tribe watching on was silent, the elders silent, even walkers party members were silent.

The one eared elder approached the two giving them a serious look. " you came to our tribe an unknown to us. Yet you show the skills long since endeavored by our warriors. Not only that but you show growth when pressured by our strongest. You may not possess the traits of the rabbits like us. Yet you are our earless brother. You may always come to dance with us as you need, welcome home." These words are soft spoken but powerful. Everyone heard them and none denied the meaning behind this. The elder had welcomed him as one of them and so it shall be.

Shouts echoed through the village at his words and Otis finally broke his staring match with walker. He had never been pushed that far in some years and he felt much closer to breaking through to the mastery skill. Step of the golden hare was a once every 50 years appearance. Otis knew he had the capability it was only pushing himself past the chaos of the dance of the rabid rabbit to reach the camp perception beyond.

He nodded to the elder and reached out to walker, " come on us warriors need to eat out full before the morning hunt." There was no longer a serious exterior to Otis, walker saw the ever striving man in front of him for who he was. The two had spoken in their actions and showed their determination. No longer strangers but distant cousins finally reunited as family.

" have you seen your muscles? How will I ever manage to fight past you for food." Trashing each other the exhausted pair went to the nearest table to start eating. Naturally they became crowded by many other tribe members, it would be a long night.

#### Chapter 143 - 143. Morning Hunt

The night had lasted longer than expected. Walker was dragged every which way eventually landing near the elders once again. The others were able to finally get near him after being attacked themselves by questions. The elders seemed much more open to them after seeing walker dance and even went so far to ask for stories, they wanted to know how he got to where he was today. Naturally they told their tales, leaving out some parts of the ancient ruins to match the adventurer guilds reports, the elders memorized each word.

The stories would later get told to the others in the tribe, being bunkered down for the winter the tribe enjoyed sharing new stories from their travels. Having something new brought to them during the winter was an exceptional treat.

Reveling in the stories of Laurence's first time in the tribe the one eared elder gave walker a little a munitions for some revenge. Laurence was otherwise too embarrassed to rebuke the story and had called it an early night.

The night grew late and the bonfire finally started to die down. The elders had long since left themselves leaving only the party and a few others.

" well I recommend you all head off to sleep. Tomorrow morning we'll be hunting for snow imps, their hide is great for crafting ice resistant gear. They also often store water crystals in their body so that may be an added bonus." From what Walker remembered snow imps were small devil like creatures, their fire counter parts had wings. The ice imps possessed water elemental attacks in the form of ice needles and had slightly tougher bodies. Without wings they had developed a skill allowing them to skate across ice and snow to run or attack.

Watching as Otis left them they all decided to heed his words and headed off to their own bed. Laurence had managed to get some wood and started a fire to warm their walled in area. With the crackling if a fire and the warmth to accompany it walker was asleep before his head hit his pillow.

Feeling a tugging in his leg walker groggily raised his head. Midnight was shaking his pant leg to get his attention. The sun had yet to break the horizon but he could feel it was close. Remey was already up shaking Su and Gil awake in turn. Onyx at some point had found a spot on Midnights' head to rest, most likely due to her being warmer sleeping near the fire. The two looked at walker with obvious intent; food.

Taking out some light crystals for onyx and a few dark crystals for midnight the two seemed happier than kids in a candy store. Midnights crunching was enough to rouse Elise and Laurence from their sleep as well, Riley however was still on cloud nine.

Everyone was still tired from the night before, walker could feel his muscles protest his actions as he stood and stretched. Laurence soon stoked the lure back in to flames which helped everyone start back up. Once su had fully risen she helped walker warm some bread which finally woke Riley...of course it was food that woke him.



While they ate they had put their gear back in fixing their winter cloths to block any wind. Today didn't seem to be too bad, only a soft cool breeze brushed by them.

Elise in her tired state raised a hand feeling the wind. " today won't be windy at all, by noon it will be still. Stella come on out!" A flash of red and Stella had returned front the beast ring. Elise must have a skill to sense the wind, this made sense since she was an avian tamer. Without important skills like that she could accidentally summon a bird in to a potential tornado.

Shaking her feathers and looking at Elise with slight annoyance it was clear that Stella did not enjoy the cold morning. However Laurence produced some extra winter gear perfectly sized for Stella, after adorning it she seemed much happier to be out and about with everyone.

" wakey wakey!" A few knocks on the earth wall and a call from Otis was greeted by gils tired grumble. Otis stood in their doorway looking no more tired than when they met him, how was he not insanely sore from last night? This was the Only thought to echo through walkers head.

Everyone had managed to eat something, walker hid away the remaining light crystals in the pouch on his shoulder and onyx followed them, a moth to the flame. Midnight had ravenously devoured the dark crystals and even some pieces of bread she had sneakily stolen from Gil.

Fully equipped the group was ready to be on their way. Leaving the village through the hole in the walls they found the plains sparkling with ice and sun. The clear skies gave them an almost blinding view. Without any wind Stella was in the air faster than one could even glance at her.

" yesterday's hunting party spotted a few snow imps in that direction. They managed to steal some white radishes they had dug up from the frozen ground. This is the best time to harvest them but they are a favorite for some monsters around here." These white radishes were indeed popular, they could only be harvested in the coldest of months if harvested any other time they would rot away in minutes. They held high market value and high nutrition, parents were the biggest buyers in the city to help their children grow strong.

" we will follow you lead, everyone in the same formation we used yesterday. Su you can shoulder Otis as the defensive line." Walker gave his orders as the leader and soon the tamers were in the center with midnight and Remey on the sides. Gil was slightly back in front of walker. Otis fell in next to Su in the front two piece looking like an unbreakable wall.

Heading forward they all soon reached a place where someone had dug holes in to the hard ground. Frozen roots lay exposed showing chunks of icy dirt. Mounds of this and snow were next to each hole but something felt off. " wait ready up! There's something in the mounds of snow!" Walker had spotted a tiny blue horn sticking from one of the mounds.

Everyone jumped in to guard, " Gil pierce that mound there. Aim a bit below that blue point sticking up." A sneaky grin appeared on gils face, he knew exactly what Walker was thinking. Instead of being ambushed now they were do the ambushing.

His arrow streaked through the air between them. A sickening think sound was made as the arrow was buried deeply within the pile. High pitched whining and screaming canes from the mound and four fingered claws tore through the pile revealing a blue skinned imp with a single arrow through their shoulder. It's scream alerted the others, soon four had broken from the mounds. They had been waiting to ambush those that came after the foragers.

The one shot by Gil had fallen in to blind rage. It's hand raised and ice needles formed in front of it. Su moved with haste locking her shield in front of Elise, the ice needles shattered upon impact not even leaving a scratch on her shield.

Otis crouched in the direction of the farthest snow imp. At some point he had put on cool blue gloves, his fist clenched he rocketed off toward the imp. The speed was intense, not a single person or monster there could stop it. His fist collided with the imp in the next moment completely crushing its face, slammed in to the ice and snow in the ground it could be said it had been thoroughly crushed.

Midnight had vanished from where she was. A tearing sound and a look toward the imp Gil had shot with an arrow revealed her. She was shredding the imp, rightfully angry it had attacked her friends.

Stella nose dived toward another snow imp he talons outstretched as she neared the ground. She flung he wings out catching her momentum grabbing the imp. Being caught in her talons was definitely not a present experience as it was flailing constantly for freedom. While the imp struggles Stella flew back up as high as she could manage, then the imp got what it wanted. After being released it fell faster and faster picking up speed, the second it came in to contact with the ground its life was over. The impact made the ground vibrate slightly accompanied by a solid thunk.

Gil and Remey had focused on one of the two remaining imps, every time it would retreat Gil would aim at it giving Remey the chance to land a blow.

Walker had focused on the last snow imp knowing Gil and Remey would soon finish off theirs. Walker decided to move forward pulling his scythe from his inventory. It was time to get up close and personal.

Chapter 144 - 144. Great Ice Imp

The snow imp tried to fire off ice needles but every single one missed its target. Walker danced around the attacks with ease. As he spun he didn't even use a skill to swipe the scythe down on to the imp. Loading its arm the imp was stunned and couldn't react. Seeing the opening walker moved in again for the next attack. The imp released a blood curdling scream deafening walkers ears. The sound didn't stop his next strike which gladly ended the scream.

Gil and Remey had defeated their own snow imp leaving way to a delightful system message.

' defeated five lesser snow imps

250 exp multiplied to 2500 exp gained'

It may only be a drop in the bucket when experience was involved but it was a step closer to their goals.

Otis had dragged the two snow imps to the group, Stella remained in the sky watchful. Walker quickly stored them away which made Otis fairly grateful, now they could hunt more without needed to head back to drop off their Boone.

" oooo I wish I could fly up that high with Stella...stupid snow imp." The idea of being that high in the sky was scary enough but Elise just seemed jealous.

Midnight huffed in agreement, " oh of course you want to fly up there too, don't worry when I get stronger and your wings grow more we can fly together." Elise and midnight seemed to be closer friends every day, it most likely had to do with the fascination of flying however.

" well after seeing that imp fall from the sky I think I'll stay steady on the ground." Seeing the remnants of the imp Gil didn't even want to consider flying. Thankfully Walker had stored it away so they weren't all reminded.

"Eeeehhhghueeeeeee" a guttural screech shook their bodies. They were about to make a plan to sweep the area for more imps but it seemed something else had already found them.

Everyone jumped in to defensive stances to get a view of what made the god awful noise. The sounds of cracking ice soon became loud. Double the size of the snow imps a larger more brutish imp came in to view. Its arms were wrapped in solid blue foggy ice. Claws came to deadly sharp points and its horns were thicker than the other imps. Its steps caused the snow and ice to crack and break, it was much heavier.

' daily quest. Defeat the greater ice imp

Slay the greater ice imp to secure a safe area for the rabbit tribe to forage.

Repeats:

60exp'

The daily quest went completely ignored as the new enemy grew closer.

" leader can you tell what that is?" Su was hoping walker could discern its identity as she prepared herself for some harsh hits.

Otis spoke up not sounding happy at all, " that's a greater ice imp, it likes to boss around the snow imps. This explains the ambush, its skin is much tougher and its strength is very high." This was not the first greater ice imp he had fought but it was never easy to take one down. Its hits were hard enough to knock even him out for some time so the group he was with could easily be killed.

Walker wanted to know more, he hadn't read about this monster from the library and knew they would need to find a weakness. Hoping his appraisal skill would come to the rescue he used it quickly,

' greater ice imp

Due to its enhanced strength it has lost the fine control to create ice needles. Instead it creates crude spears and clubs from ice. It's claws are the toughest ice it can create easily shredding steel. Piercing its skin is just as challenging due to its nearly frozen body. Extremely weak to fire elemental attacks it rarely leaves frozen underground caves.'

" it's weak to fire based attacks, Laurence don't summon Bengal if a hit lands it could spell the end. Try and get Hyde to make a small fire, I'll try to use the flames and my skills to counter it. In the meantime Gil use your bows skill to pierce its legs to slow it down. Remey join Otis and distract it do not get in range it can create ice so ears or clubs. So you hold back it can break through your armor Instead protect Laurence and Hyde." They mobilized immediately, Hyde naturally roles in to a ball in fear but since he has even practicing with Laurence was still able to fire off some quills. Walker pulled out some fire starter from his inventory, he was praising his mother in his head for being so diligent in preparing his first backpack with necessities.

While they painstakingly set up a small fire, the great ice imp had gotten close enough to use its skill creating a large ice club. The ice was jagged and had many protruding shards. It was safe to say that one hit would do more than just knock someone out. Remey and Otis taunted it with shouts while they ran around it. Just narrowly avoiding its swings causing the imp to become angrier.

Its minions had been slain by these weak things and it couldn't help but feel even more rage. The great imp tried to step forward and catch the two running things off guard when it felt a huge amount of pressure in its leg. Protruding from its calf was a green arrow letting off sharp whisper of wind. This pressure drilled in to it slashing its skin. With an increasingly angry roar it stumbled slightly.

Gil felt the loss of mana at this shot but knew he had done well seeing the great imp lose its footing. Holding off this thing was much more important than losing some mana at the moment. He fired a normal arrow as a distraction, its skin was too tough but Gil knew if he fired back to back wind arrows it would use its tough ice wrapped stems to block, it would be a waste of mana.

Walker saw the rampaging greater ice imp and knew he could give them an advantage. " multi buff!" He shouted to notify everyone as a wave of hit them boosting them faster and stronger. Now the battle they dodged attacks didn't even have a chance to hit Remey or Otis. Not that Otis really needed the buff he was extremely fast himself. Laurence had yet to experience this and felt his mind clear a bit, this sped up his fire making with Hyde who finally fired quills on to the tinder they had piled up. Realizing that

midnight may try to sneak attack the imp walker gave her a look, " midnight stay here and guard out backs. We can't afford to be attacked by anything else that shows up." This simple order was to keep her away from the imps club but also to keep any other imps from showing up. Who knew how many the greater ice imp controlled.

The small whips of smoke was growing more and more. This was mirrored by the greater ice imps rage, its attacks were more wild causing Otis to resort to the dance of the wild rabbit. Remey had started to retreat knowing she couldn't properly dodge the attacks any longer. Instead she remained farther away throwing handfuls of snow causing it further irritation. Unable to land a hit the greater ice imp used its ability and created a second ice club. This was trouble.

Now having to dodge double the attacks Otis was visibly sweating. He wanted to fall in to dance if the rabid rabbit but he knew if he did he could accidentally cause an attack to land on an ally. Gil seeing this used another wind element arrow burning up more mana, it managed to hit the same leg slowing the imp more. The other arrow had dissipated leaving sliced up muscle exposed. The imp growled as blue blood flowed from its wounds.

The flames had finally sprites from the tinder! Now walker could take his turn to attack. He swapped his scythe for his staff and began to channel the flames in to a ball. Since he had used his evil consuming flames he was able to better shape and direct the flames.

' due to past experience in fire elemental manipulation the skill fire flower has been taken from the flame enchantress system.

Fire flower had been automatically leaned due to user actions in creating the al attack before the skill was given.

Fire flower- 3mana cost

A compressed seed of flame is created and fired at an enemy. Once contact is made the seed bloom wrapping the enemy in flaming vines. Once incapacitated the flowers bloom causing small explosions inflicting fire damage and burns.'

Feeling a change in the fire he let the instinct guide him. The flames grew no longer needing the tinder and instead being created through walkers mana. They compressed more and more until a small bead of

intense heat floated in front of walker. He knew this attack could cause area damage and his ally's would need to retreat. " everyone get back I have a big one coming!" With his warning heard Otis and Remy rushed back to where Su was. The small fire bead shot through the air piercing the center of the great ice imps chest. The attack looked to do no damage whatsoever... Chapter 145 - 145. Flame Flowers

"What! What happened!" Walker had felt all the pressure of the flames he compressed and sent at the great ice imp but there was no damage? How could this be? He desperately checked his mana seeing he still had more than enough. However he noticed the system message about the new skill...maybe there was still a chance.

The greater ice imp was stunned for a moment, it had felt fear at the first sense of flames but now realized that the attack had done nothing. It's rage subsided in to a feeling of arrogance, it would crush these enemies.

Laurence was stunned, walker had called for a retreat leaving the monster to move forward. The attack had done nothing, the plan had failed and now they were sitting ducks. Stella seeing the advanced started to descend to strike at the imps eyes. Seeing this walker panicked, the attack was supposed to bloom and explode Stella could be hurt.

" Elise! Stop Stella! The attack will hit her too!" Walkers words didn't go unnoticed he said the attack would hit her to, was his attack still not finished?

Elise dropped in to a bought of fear, Stella couldn't get hurt. If she lost Stella it would be equal to cutting out her own heart. Elise desperately sent her thoughts to Stella who was descending faster and faster. "STELLA!!!!" Elise screamed with all her might , she needed to protect her. She was powerless just a tamer without any skills of her own. She had always relied on Stella for battle and support but now that Stella was rushing in to mortal danger she couldn't do anything.

Elise began to move, her body seemed possessed by pure emotion. She refused to allow her heart to be torn. These feelings resonated with her.

Walker looked in horror as Elise ran toward the greater ice imp. Elise would die too...they would loose their new friends. He was too far to grab he and pull her back. He wouldn't be able to save her. His heart sank, everyone else was shocked feeling the same fear of loss and powerlessness.

However Elise started to change, her tamers cloak began to tear as wings began to spread from her back. Her features sharpened and her shoed fell to bits as talons formed. The grey and yellow feathers

on her wings shown in the sunlight dropping everyone's jaws. Elise leaped and flapped her wings moving faster than she had ever moved before. She intercepted Stella who was already too close to the imp. The two collided and fell out of range of the greater ice imp.

Hundreds of flaming vines erupted from the minuscule wound on the greater ice imp's chest. The vines burned and tangled around it stopping its movement. The ice clubs dropped to the ground as it became a cracking of flaming vines and screeching growls. Buds began to form soon growing in to large balls of flames. The buds bloomed showing thousands of pristine red and yellow petals. A moment after the bloomed they exploded in to balls of flame, each petal spreading and burning the target inside. The force knocked everyone off their feet sprawling them in the snow.

Scrambling to stand in light of the explosion stunning them Otis and Walker were the first up to focus on the badly breathing greater ice imp. The attack had yet to finish it but had greatly burned it. The winds from Gil's arrows were much worse after being hit with fire and it would be impossible for the imp to stand again even if they didn't finish it off. Walker looked at Otis who nodded. Otis would not take this kill for the tribe, he had respect for Walker as a leader who had put his bet's plan in motion. With a returning nod Walker came forward.

Creating a spear from earth and combining it with his mana shot Walker aimed at the great ice imp's head. He released it piercing the monster's brain ending the battle.

' Greater ice imp defeated

100exp multiplied to 1000exp gained

Daily quest completed: defeat the greater ice imp

Reward:

60 exp multiplied to 600exp.'

There was no time to look in to the system message, Laurence had already taken off running to Elise.



Walker and the others burst off immediately as well. They found Stella with a broken wing holding Elise who was completely unconscious. Elise had reverted back to her normal form torn clothing and all. Tears fell from Stella's eyes on to Elise, not a single person doubted that she even cared about her own broken wing and only for Elise's well being.

Laurence fell to his knees and began giving Elise a once over, Walker followed his lead and started inspecting the damage to Stella. It only appeared that Stella broke a wing and had minor cuts and bruises from the fall. The ice was not a safe landing spot and definitely caused most of the cuts. " Su, Gil, Remey I need you three to hold down Stella while I heal her wing, I'm going to hold it in place and use light heal until it is properly in place. Stella this will hurt but I need you to be still so it heals properly. You and Elise will be fine we are here and refuse to let anything happen." With that they moved in to place.

After they had Stella held in place Walker moved her broken wing in to alignment. The silent screams sent shivers through her body. Steeling his will Walker began to cast light heal over and over. Watching the joint and broken bones slowly fuse back together with each heal spell. Five uses later it seemed that the bones in her wing were back together and could be left to heal the remainder themselves. Stella had become numb and exhausted through this process passing out in to their arms. Now it was time to see how Elise was doing.

Laurence and Otis had found no other injuries other than a purple bruise to her head. " other than this bruise I think she just exhausted all of her mana, it's safe to say she will be out for a few hours. Walker can you heal her just to be safe? She may have hurt her head" Walker gave a nod and used his light heal skill, the bruise faded almost instantly. Elise seemed to be resting well.

Collectively they all breathed a sigh of relief, " five snow imps, a greater ice imp, and Elise risking her life to save Stella from my new spell. I think today has been too much." Walker looked and felt emotionally exhausted. Midnight nuzzled her head on his side trying to calm him down. Onyx who had curled up for safety in the pocket in his shoulder popped his head out trying to do the same.

" yes I think our hunt should be over now, it will be much too dangerous to keep these two out in the open. Let's get them somewhere safe to rest." Otis said what they all thought. No way would they risk anything more, it was best to return to the tribe.

Walker stored away the greater ice imps body to sort out later. He would confer with the elders on what it could be used for after Elise and Stella had woken up safely.

They all needed some time to sort out what had just happened in their own heads. Walking back in formation Gil finally spoke up, " so can anyone tell me what just happened to Elise when you know grew wings like a harpy?!" The single thought everyone was having was finally said out loud. Laurence who was carrying Elise seemed to have an answer.

Looking at Riley who was now carrying Laurence's bag the two nodded. They were both tamers and knew of the skills a tamer could possess, however as a party themselves they had to weigh the decision to share the specifics. This wasn't out of distrust but a lesson taught by the tamers guild as they grew.

Making the agreement that it was acceptable to share Laurence continued, " many tamers have skills that allow them to use traits of their tamed beasts. Such as flying or hearing, some can even temporarily grow a tail. Although I've never seen it as intense as completely changing a body. We will need to ask Elise when she wakes up. I have a feeling she gained her mastery skill. It was incredible." If what Laurence had said was true they all had just witnessed the unlocking of a mastery skill. These were the key skills in someone's system, not only did it show their true power but was also their trump card. The use of a mastery skill could change any battle instantly.

Not everyone managed to gain a mastery skill, some didn't even have one as part of their system. More so there was also the quests and hidden requirements to unlock it at all. Some would go their entire lives not even knowing they had the potential for a mastery skill. Others would unlock it in great moments of pressure, this was most likely one such moment.

#### Chapter 146 - 146. Return To The Tribe

With Laurence having explained his theory the conversation fell back in to silence. They all had a lot to think on and everyone was still worried for Elise and Stella. Until both had woken up they would not leave their side.

They seemed to reach the village much faster than when they left, easily entering and returning to their own camping spot. Otis left after making sure they had returned safely, he needed to report to the elders that they had cleared the foraging area and also the danger the greater ice imp posed. Rare monsters like a greater ice imp were a major threat to most of the tribe and more caution would be needed in the future.

The two had been placed down on to bedding and covered to stay warm. Gil started up a fire and everyone began to rest from the hard fight.

Many things had happened during their battle with the greater ice demon. One such was the fact that if a walker discovered a skill himself he would automatically learn it. The system definitely worked in untold

ways but this was a significant discovery. If he experimented more with the elemental he could learn the specific spells. The fire flower spell created flames with his mana instead of mana manipulation which can not do so. This was much better than evil consuming flames which he could create but couldn't harm all enemies. The downside of the fire flower is the pause before it takes effect, it also took some time to condense the flames. Many of walkers skills so far seemed to be like this which meant he was a big hitter but couldn't quickly change the pace of a battle.

His personal goal would have to be faster castes spells for long range. So far in closer range he can rely On a scythe but while he was in the beast kingdom he told himself to find another close combat weapon. This would only solidify his close combat skills. He also wanted a new shield to be able to block when needed, he had been slacking due to the loss of his fathers shield. Maybe he could repair and enhance it?

Another instead of this was what Laurence said there were skills that allowed tamers to use traits of their tamed beasts. Yet these weren't always mastery skills, so could walker learn them? The real question was how would he learn them? He knew that learning monster skills and Demi human skills were not out of his scope but a tamer skill to use a specific trait? He couldn't even imagine the unique situation to spur that response from his system.

Everything seemed to boil down to three main points. Understanding of the elements, having a variety of gear for every situation, and trying everything to learn more skills. It would seem he didn't have enough time to do it all at once...

" mmhhff" it had been a few hours since they returned and the sound of Elise stirring git walker attention. Laurence was right there as well refusing to rest properly until he spoke with her. Her eyes fluttered clearing unknown to where they were and what they were seeing.

" Don't worry, we're in the tribe. Stella is ok and you're ok. You both fell unconscious during the battle. How do you feel." The anxious look on Laurence's face could fill volumes. It had taken years for him to become strong enough to lead the younger tamers and he refused to let any fail to return.

Looking around almost afraid to move Elise began to slowly move her fingers and toes. She did this until she had finally moved and stretched every muscle. Her fear of being harmed after the battle was too strong not to test everything. She became still again letting a long drawn out sigh, " tired I'm way too tired. But I'm not hurt...how?" Of course you're be tired you used all your mana. The two wanted to yell at her but held back.

" well actually we had hope you could explain to us. You suddenly took on the appearance of a harpy and flew. Crashing in to Stella before walkers attack exploded and hurt you two. You hit your head pretty hard and Stella broke a wing. You were both healed by walker but naturally it was a lot of stress and mana. You two were unconscious so we carried the two of you back. Stella is still resting, she went through a lot and shouldn't fly for a few days." This was the most calm Elise had been since meeting the party. It was eerie seeing the uncontrollably energy missing from Elise. Obviously she could feel responsible for Stellas injury, however, she knew if she hadn't Stella could be no longer in this world.

Going through her system she saw the skill she had used. Her eyes became slightly frantic as she read and understood what it meant. She wanted to jump up and be happy but she knew she couldn't until Stella forgave her for hurting her wing. There were some things even she needed to control properly. Knowing Laurence and walker would want an explanation she took a deep breath. " so I may have unlocked a mastery skill called soaring integration....I can mirror the body and abilities of my tamed beast by constantly expending mana. I also need to have a strong bond with my tamed beast to use it. If Stella didn't trust me so much," tears started to fall down her cheeks, " I-I wouldn't be able to use it, but I just-uurrt her with it...I might be a terrible sister." Elegies had finally released the flood of emotions from the fight. The weight of gaining a mastery skill, of nearly dying, of hurting the most important family she had, all of this fell on her shoulders at once.

Scratching sounds came from the other side of the camp, Stella was struggling to stand completely exhausted still.

Stella had awoken to Elise crying and knew immediately that it's cause was her. She didn't want Elise to feel bad for hurting her, she had seen the flames burst out from where she had been aiming. Stella knew she had t listened and attacked almost dying. The fact that Elise had so strongly wishes to protect her that she had in turn risked her own life and even used a mastery skill touched her heart in a profound way.

Ever since Stella had met Elise she ha sheen nothing but grateful. She tried every day in hopes that she had developed enough to speak the only words she would ever want to say. However day in and day out she found she had yet to grow enough. Without Elise she wouldn't be here nor would she have gone on adventures seeing things a harpy could never see. The dreams that mirrored Elise to fly through the sky together never ceases.

Stella moved slowly toward Elise who had buried her head in her hands hiding the tears. Kneeling down next to her Stella grabbed Elise's head forcing her to look at her. The two touched foreheads eyes closed. Walker felt he had intruded on something private, the two needed space and he gave it to them. Family deserves time alone especially after a hard battle. As Laurence and walker decided to leave on a

walk they already noticed Elise had stopped her tears. Giving walker a slight nod they walked toward the village square to see the elders.

The village was lively as ever, they all enjoyed the rare sunny clear days in the winter. The fact that no wind buffered the plains today was a blessing causing many to leave to hunt and forage.

Many rabbit tribesmen were vigorously haggling to get the new food brought in during the hunts. Seeing Otis who was training a few younger children walker knew it must be part of his duties as head warrior. Otis noticed the pair instantly and left his trainees to continue their practice. "you are going to bring the hunted to the elders I take it? I spoke to them about allowing you to keep the greater ice imp. They agreed but would like the bodies of the snow imps."

Walker had already planned on giving the snow imps to the tribe since it would be another factor increasing their relations. However he also had hope the elders could give him direction on what to use the greater ice imps body for. He had no idea of what parts were crafting materials, if they were stronger and more rare than snow imps it must have some exceptional value.

Before they three headed the rest of the way to the square walker decided to have a little fun to lighten the mood. "hey Otis, would you mind if I tried something with your students over there?" Working Otis's curiosity he smirked wanting to see what would come of this.

"no problem, give them some pressure it's good for the bones." The smirk became devilish, Otis was definitely an evil instructor.

Chapter 147 - 147. Testing The Trainees

"Hello there! I'm walker as some of you may have heard. Your kind teacher Otis has given me permission to pose a little challenge." The young trainee warriors were surprised by walker's sudden intrusion on their training. Some looked excited but hearing that Otis gave permission they fell in to fear. Otis was notoriously tough on everyone he trained, it did make them stronger, yet it didn't stop how torturous it was.

"This will be pretty simple, I'm going to create a target similar to a monster we battled early this morning. Your goal is simple, break it to pieces by any means necessary. Sound good?" The trainees

looked much more confused now...that was it? Had Otis gone soft and let someone nice take over. The slight glimmer of hope began to bloom in them.

Seeing the trainees smile and nod at the seemingly easy task walker touched the ground. The earth began to rise. Large hands made of earth formed, pointed claws on the end. A mouth open in a screech showed sharp teeth. Two earth clubs formed in each hand, the intimidating greater ice imp took on earth form in all its toughness. The trainees were stunned, a monster he had fought earlier this morning? That was a giant snow imp!

Otis took note of their face and decided a bit of instruction was needed. " yes this is known as a greater ice imp, it's rare but does come down from the mountains in the winter. We had some trouble with it this morning but managed to crush it. This earth version is probably slightly weaker than its real defense but should pose some fun challenge." There it was the evil glint in the eyes of Otis, the look that made the trainees fear rise. Whenever he had that look they knew they would be too sore to walk properly the next day.

"Alright alright let's not tell stories just yet. Like I said the goal is simple break this and you win." This looked intimidating but the trainees knew it was just earth, they could break it.

The largest of the trainees crouched to the ground their leg muscles visibly tightening. Like a slingshot fired the trainees speed was impressive, in a moment he was about to slam in to the earth imp target, however, that would be too easy.

Walker had prepared himself raising his hand, the air began to bend to his will gathering behind it. The second the trainee had given up sired footing on the ground he knew what to do. Whipping his hand down the air behind it rushed forward colliding with the trainee. Naturally the trainee without solid hold on anything was flung back tumbling until he found himself sitting on his butt bewildered. " and here I thought you might actually touch the target." Walker was shaking his head in disappointment.

Two other trainees saw this moment to hit the target themselves, the two had slower speed but looked to have punching techniques ready. Seeing the two approaching walker waited a moment, their attacks were heading to opposite sides of their target. The blow would most definitely crack the earth imp target. With a tap of his foot and a little mana the earth clubs the target held angles backwards and the two trainees punch them instead of the earth imp targets main body. Small cracks webbed from the clubs but the target wasn't harmed at all. The next gust of wind sent them tumbling just the same as the previous attempt.

Any lingering hope that this would be easy had been snuffed out of the trainees. Instead it was replaced by the steeled will to destroy their enemy. This trait had been hammered in to them over and over by Otis and now reared its head.

They began to attack in turn increasingly faster as they adapted to walkers knock-backs. The hits in the clubs ever increased causing more and more cracks to form. However they still couldn't touch the real target.

The first trainee had prepared to jump again this time watching for an opening. Seeing that walker just used the wind they released the pressure leaping low to the ground. The speed was more intense this time yet the result was much better. Both clubs crossed to block the attack, the damage had been building more and more and unlike the previous hits the clubs shattered in to pieces of stone and dirt. This was their opening the target was wide open.

Every single trainee able to rushed the target, walker didn't make a move. Otis saw the triumphant smirk in walkers eyes and knew there was something more. The trainees attacks landed at the same time shattering the target. The imp fell apart as water rushed out soaking them completely. Washed off their feet walker placed a finger in the puddle now encompassing all of them, activating this elemental manipulation skill the water began to freeze leaving a thin layer of frost over every trainee.

" Hmm you know Otis, it would seem your trainees rush it a bit too much. Not a single one imagined the opening was a trap to freeze them all in place. Imagine if it was acid, or even fire, ooo what if it was an explosion." The trainees who were now shivering slightly were horrified, what if this was real? They could explode!

" Ahhhh well they are young, good things this wasn't anything that dangerous." Standing a bit taller and taking a deep breath Otis shouted, " go home clean up and think about a solution to the trial you faced today. Tomorrow I expect everyone to have a plan of action of what could be done differently, along with the best one to beat an opponent that has high defensive power." With his words the trainees began to stand, so slid a bit on the ice but managed well enough.

" Sorry about the ice let me help a bit." Walker used some mana to draw fire from a cooking area nearby. The flames snakes in the air meting the frost leaving only a puddle. The shivering slowed in the trainees bodies. " that's better, no go get dry!" The trainees themselves were speechless, they had just gone against someone who manipulated earth, air, water, and fire! How crazy was this. Could they even survive outside the walls of monsters like him roamed around?

Slowly but surely the trainees come back to their senses and left on their way to their winter igloos. Today may not have been the insanely tough training they were used to but instead they had been challenged mentally. This was a very strong lesson to think before they acted.

Seeing them leave walker glanced at Otis, " so what did you think of my training, up to par?"

The look on his face showed it all, Otis was impressed with the direction walker had taken. " I prefer more forceful methods but I've got to say you may have shaken their brains a bit. Hahaha I'm not sure they will be able to think at night for fear they may run in to a master of the elements." Clapping walker on the back Otis pushed him towards the square to see the elders. Otis wasn't much of conversation due to his laughing at his own joke too much, but Walker didn't mind.

It would seem the second the trainees left they had started to spread gossip about walker using four elements and that the morning hunting party defeated a greater ice imp. A fair amount of adults had shown up around the square chatting and constantly glancing at Otis and walker.

Some feigned that they were trying to trade and others seemed to just plainly stare. The elders were seated by a small fire as they often were drinking a strong herb tea. Every once in a while one would speak and other would nod or shake their head. It would seem the inter workings of the tribe were slowly pondered every day.

The pair approached the fire waiting for the elders to take notice to be polite. The one eared elder was the first to take a look at them and soon finished his conversation with the others.

" I see you've managed to make it here, I take it the little tamer and the harpy are in good health?" The other elders didn't spare much of a glance but their ears twitched as the swayed the response.

" yes we returned and quickly put them to rest, elders. The pair had some hardship today and will most likely rest in to tomorrow. After they had awoken, we spoke to them about what had occurred. The two needed their space to process it all together, family deserves privacy but I believe they will be up and moving tomorrow." Walker wanted to blurt out and ask about the greater ice imp body but knew things needed to be taken in turn.

Brushing his chin the one eared elder then spoke, " I'm glad they are safe and have been healed. It is always tough for family to be injured, we feel it in our tribe as well." A momentary pause reflecting on



the statement he continued, " we heard you've all brought back an interesting harvest, care to tell us about it?"

#### Chapter 148 - 148. Elders Knowledge

Hearing the elders' words Walker first retrieved the five snow imps from his storage and placed them in front of them. " these are the snow imps that tried to ambush us by hiding within the snow and dirt piles. If the first one hadn't let its blue horn poke out of the snow we may have not reacted fast enough. Thankfully we did notice them and instead ambushed them. The battle was fairly simple until one let out a screech attracting the greater ice imp." Seeing the elder wanted to speak walker waited a moment.

With a pensive look the elder said his piece, " Otis has told us the ways of these snow imps. They often would not do so but seeing that they were guided by a greater ice imp it makes sense. These five may be small but can be used to make some tough ice resistant leathers. Their horns will be used in spears to channel water mana, I'm sure you will hunt more in the coming days until you're ready to leave." The elder was hinting at walker to collect a few snow imps of his own. Hearing that the horns could be used to craft arrows that could channel water mana walker had a few thoughts. Could Gil use them for his arrow heads with the withering wood arrow shafts? If so maybe he could use wind element and water element to make a form of ice arrow like the others from the auction. They had t bought the other arrows but instead opted for the arrow shafts, this meant that Gil could make a few unique arrows, if so he could put together a collection of unique hand made elemental arrows to use in different situations.

"I see, it would be wise for us to go hunting more in the time before Stella's wing is fully healed. I would also like to see those trainees answer the question Otis gave them after my little test." This got the attention of all the elders, having yet heard of this since it had just happened the elders were extremely interested.

Recounting his idea and actions to create and earth greater ice elemental target, walker spoke of manipulating it to block. He also spoke of pushing them away and filling it with water for when it was defeated. Hearing that he taught them a lesson on blindly rushing in after experiencing the near risk on the real greater ice elemental the elders were glad. Only a select few warriors had the strength such as Otis to rush in and crush an enemy quickly. Since the trainees lacked experience in battle learning the lesson the hard way in the safety of the village would prove fruitful.

" Ha Ha Hoo how sneaky, and here I thought Otis was a harsh instructor. We may have to use your tactics in the future. They must be terrified of your use of the elements, I can't imagine their faces." Having a good laugh the elder was thinking just how valuable having walker around was so far. What else could this boy do.

Feeling it was the right moment walker pulled the greater ice imps body from his storage. The larger body fell to the ground with a thud. The dense blue ice in its arms showed no sign it would melt anytime soon. The skin definitely was tougher than the snow imps and it's horns were fatter and definitely going to be valuable. "Elders I have spoken to Otis about keeping this defeated monster but I hope that you can share your knowledge with me about its uses. I lack the proper experience with these subjects." After his admittance to lack of knowledge the other elders began to nod while harshly gazing at the greater ice imps body.

After some time the elders started to look back at their tea and speak in turn.

" those arms covered in ice are useless, it may not melt easy even in the baking sun.

But don't plan on using it for anything more than keeping food cold long term." The old floppy eared woman dismissed the arms covered in blue ice quickly. Maybe this was something walker could sell in the beast kingdom for a small amount of gold to merchants.

" what your after is the thing that creates that ice. Inside by its heart is a special water crystal. It's called a condensed water crystal it's more potent than a regular water crystal so it's not used in the same way. It's so concentrated that it forms ice instead of water. Very useful in crafting staffs." Another rod the elders spoke finishing the firsts thoughts. It was almost as if they shared a mind.

" that skin there is good for the joints in armor it keeps out the cold and is strong but stretchy." Another elder piped up with more valuable information.

"Those horns and teeth are also good for weapons crafting. They can channel water mana which at a higher rate." Lastly the one eared elder finished the lecture in uses, walker could really swear they all acted as one.

" I thank you for the knowledge, I believe I have many ideas to ponder now that I know what uses this monster has. I would not have known that there was a concentrated water crystal by its heart without your input." Walker lowered his head in thanks shaving off the desire to drop in to thought into what else to use the monster parts in. He stored the body away so that it would not deteriorate.

With things seemingly wrapped up the one eared elder had his own further questions. " so what is your plan moving forward. How long will you stay?" This was something Laurence and walker had already

talked about , Laurence who had wandered off while walker had tested the trainees was most likely already back at their little camp. Knowing he already knew Laurence's thoughts out him at ease before he answered.

"I've spoken with Laurence and we decided on three days, Stella can get additional healing to make sure she is in tip top shape. We can assist in hunting during the mornings. I also plan on testing the trainees a bit, I think Otis wouldn't mind having a teaching assistant for a few days." This last mention seemed to greatly please the elders who valued walkers unpredictability. When training new warriors there was always an element of control and safety for them which often lead them to be a bit lackadaisical at times. Therefore adding the natural unpredictable factors the monsters had would better prepare a young warriors minds. This also would allow the elders to glean more information on walkers skills and the party as a whole, they were sure that this information would be very valuable and as the party's fame grew so would the desire for their information. This thought seemed cruel to use the party but it was part of the world especially since the tribe moved and communicated with many different groups through the warmer months.

" well then tomorrow I shall personally come to watch the trainees, I haven't been to the training grounds in a week or so. Maybe it can get my blood flowing a little seeing the young ones sweat it out." Otis became Stoney faced remembering his harsh training years ago under the hand of this very elder. The trainees may fear Otis for his training but Otis was the same at their age.

" We look forward to your input tomorrow elder, I'm sure that the trainees will prosper much more than usual." Otis knew that starting the compliments early would lessen the strength of the elders words come the next day, he also knew he himself could very well end up participating in training as well.

" oh well if it's going to be such a big event I have a new fire spell I just learned that I can use some practice on. Between that and recently showing off not to rush in we can focus on timing of attacks and retreats." Walker wanted to practice his fire spell and maybe even try to unlock a more basic version to use less mana in combat, but first he needed to know the danger radius of his new spell. Testing it out in a training would give him all his answers, especially to how long the spell takes to cause an explosion of fire.

" oho already have a lesson plan how studious of you, are you sure you're going to be an adventurer and not a teacher? Maybe a scholar?" Hearing the plan for the training the elder was pleased. After a bit more chatting they two were dismissed, Otis was visibly on edge.

" something wrong with my idea to work on timing with your trainees? I'm sorry if I overstepped the boundaries I know I'm a guest here" walker was worried Otis was not happy about him taking it upon himself to plan the training.

"It's nothing to worry on, I just can't help but remember being trained by the elder. He is very strict even now I fear he will drag me in to the lesson. Tomorrow could be rough" Otis had fallen in to thoughts of out memories walking off in to the clusters of igloos leaving walker to head off back to the camp. Otis sure had it tough if he was that afraid of the elder the training must have been brutal. Tomorrow was right around the corner and it would be busy.

Chapter 149 - 149. Simple Right?

Stella and Elise had been resting the entire time walker was gone. Upon returning walker found the two snacking and chatting with the others. Midnight and Laurence had fallen asleep in their respective bedding. Laurence had succumbed to the fatigue after worrying over Elise since the morning and midnight as slothful as usual couldn't resist a nap by the fire.

Walker updated the party in the happenings with the elders and the uses the greater ice imps body had. Gil became extremely interested " you're telling me I might be able to expand my elemental attacks by using arrows with special tips? If I could fuse my wind affinity and other elements it may prove to be a nice trunk card." Gil ran with the idea wanted to start pulling teeth and the horns of the greater ice imp immediately. Sadly he lacked the proper skills to utilize the materials so pledged to wait until they returned to the guild. With this decision made walker gave up the idea of selling the body but instead waiting until they returned home. It was another thing to look forward to when they took a break from their journeys.

They managed to eat and relax with the stress of the day finally behind them.

When the morning came everyone had gotten up early as the day before, Laurence was already lecturing Elise and Stella about staying behind today since Stella still shouldn't fly. Between strict glances and small rants he prepared some dried meats and toasted bread for everyone's breakfast. It was a fairly comical sight to see someone acting caring while reprimanding someone.

" good morning, I see you are off to a quick start." Walker tried to distract Laurence saving Elise and Stella from another round of lectures.

" oh good morning good morning. Elise and Stella will be staying here today. Elise seems alright but Stella still has swelling where her wing was harmed so unfortunately another day of rest. I also wanted to make a suggestion." Laurence got a little more serious, " after thinking on it I think we should head

out to hunt in different groups so everyone can be a little uncomfortable. I know that sounds odd but what happens if someone is hurt and we can't rely on their aid? It would be good to boost our individual ability." Laurence made a lot of sense here and walker had also had this thought cross his mind. Individual training would also be valuable to such ends.

" I definitely agree" walker Remey, Su and gils attention. " we will split up today, each go to a different hunting group to aid them. Midnight do you want to hunt or stay here with Elise and Stella?" Walker wasn't sure if midnight would want to go off alone with another group to hunt. Remembering she was a dragon after all and some might be put off by her hunting.

Looking at him carefully midnight growled slightly hearing walker suggest she stay. " well hunting it is then, I'll send you with Otis he shouldn't need much help but can easily back you up." With the arrangements made they are and geared up until Otis arrived.

Hearing their ideas Otis appreciated the goals and brought them to a larger group about to head off. Each party member including Laurence and Riley went off with another group of three. The hunting groups of four all when different directions, some forging, some hunting, and others scouting out potential dangerous monsters encroaching on the village.

Through the day Gil optimized his longer range taking down the odd snow imp without his group even seeing it.

Su ended up foraging for some white radish which relaxed her. She was able to talk, learning more of the village and its history. The tribesman found her pure caring heart a blessing.

Remey had some built up fury over the greater ice imp. She didn't like that she had to distract it and not attack the whole time. So with her restraints gone she mercilessly crushed every snow imp and ice wraith she laid eyes on. The tribesman began to shiver every time she burst off with her fist cocked.

Laurence used this opportunity to acclimate Hyde even further. The pair had been working more and more to get Hyde used to combat and people in general. This effort was paying off indeed. Hyde could now fire off flaming quills much more accurately sometimes even without curling in to a ball. It was safe to say Laurence was a proud father.

Riley was avoiding effort giving the three hunters with him a slight headache. However as ice needles reigned down on him Riley was finally forced to summon one of his demon boars. This decision shocked the hunters and caused its own brand of chaos. Riley really could use a bit more control on his wild aspect of his taming system.

Walker naturally shocked everyone with his elemental manipulations, however he mostly used mana shot by itself and his scythe to try and gain some close combat skills. He decided that punching would not be his forte but he would avoid it. He also wanted to make sure his mana was completely full for his return to training later, if the elder was there he wanted to put his all in to it.

The hunting hours passed in a flash and soon everyone had shortened back together at their little camp. Gil had been able to keep the three snow imps he took down with arrows, the hunters he went with said they hadn't even noticed them and could not rightfully take them. This was very respectable and only spoke to the tribes upstanding values.

For lack of a better work Su and Remey needed a bath. She was covered in dirt which as it had defrosted became mud. Remey on the other hand had learned that the blue blood from imps definitely smelled, not as bad as other monsters but still very much so. The two had dropped their gear and headed off toward a bathing area specifically for women. Naturally Su and Elise had tagged along leaving Walker, Gil, Laurence, and Midnight alone. Riley would have been included but patently he worked too hard and needed energy so he'd gone off to eat with his fellow gluttons.

Midnight seemed fairly upbeat as she had dragged back a horned white rabbit. These monsters changed fur colors with the seasons and often liked to charge at their enemy. The vicious pointed horn in their head held a toxic poison paralyzing their prey. Walker had seen Otis carrying three more, the two seemed to have had a very good hunt. Midnight would naturally be caught up in her small feast for a while before napping to burn off the meal.

"so would you two like to come to the training area and help out teaching the trainee warriors? I'm sure Otis won't mind, even the elder is coming." Laurence had already wanted to bring Hyde out for more conditioning.

"of course, I can't say I'll participate but Hyde and I will be watching. Don't worry about being loud Hyde had been making great progress, he's much more courageous now!" Laurence was very proud and it was written all over his face.

" you know I'll go! Maybe I can show off a bit more, you know we've kind of been a big hit here in the tribe. Simone is always peaking around the corner or sneaking glances. It's pretty nice to be popular." Well there it was Gil had inflated his ego a bit too much. Fame may prove to soon be his greatest weakness.

With that the three headed off, the trainees and Otis had already arrived. Seeing the stiff stances of the trainees it was plain to know that Otis had dropped the bomb. The elder was coming. The three greeted Otis, after a few words Laurence stepped back to a safe distance where a few parents had gathered, their interest was grabbed when they heard walker would be assisting Otis.

" hello hello! I'm glad everyone is back, the elder is coming which it seems you all have heard. But don't stress about it you'll make fools of yourselves so stiff and straight like that!" Walker addressed the elephant in the room, he knew telling them to relax wasn't a fix all but it at least made them conscious of it. Seeing a few start to stretch showed it was worth saying. " now yesterday we had some fun learning the value of not rushing in! Today we build on that and focus on timing." Walker used his elemental manipulation to raise ten earth pillars fairly spread out. " this will be simple you will attack the target myself or my party member Gil attacks." This alone gave him skeptical looks from the small crowd watching. They hadn't been present yesterday to see the penalties the trainees faced from rushing in all at once. The trainees were put on edge stiffening up again.

" well I see you went right to work! An old rabbit like me would have been late if I'd stayed a savings longer at the fire." The elder came up behind walker seeing the targets and hearing walkers words. Let's see what the sneaky boy has for our young ones today. This was the only thought the elder had.

Chapter 150 - 150. Strict Strict Strict

" Ah hello elder, you have perfect timing." Walker manipulated more earth in to a bench for him to sit. He also pulled an extra blanket from his storage, " I'm sorry to pull you from the fire, I hope this is more comfortable for you while you observe." Hopefully this gesture would earn him some respect but also keep the elder from jumping in too much, Otis was impressed by the blatant attempt to butter the elder up.

" very thoughtful, if every little one was born like you I could say the world would be filled with only kindness." Laughing to himself the elder settled in eyes examining the trainees preparing to evaluate everything that happened.

" first of all my party meme we Gil will be our ranger attacker. Otis will be our front line attacker. The two will demonstrate to you an example of timing for attacks please watch." With his words Gil notched an arrow and giving a nod to Otis. Otis launched forward in to range of the first earth pillar. Over his shoulder an arrow flew by lodging in to the pillar. The next moment Otis unleashed a soft kick to the

pillar. Immediately retreating the second arrow from Gil found its mark. Otis returned to Gil's side and the two went to rest.

"Now who can tell me what happened and why their timing would be beneficial to a battle?" Pop quiz time, the elder would get a kick from this since this required firm thinking on the why an action was used instead of pure instinctual battle.

The trainee that had used their strong legs to jump forward at the target the other day spoke up first. "If the target was a monster the archer would have caused damage with their first shot. This would put the monster off balance so they would be forced to take the attacker's hit. The second shot caused more damage to stop a counter to the attacker."

This was the response Walker wanted, it was a simple maneuver. It would be extremely simple to learn this tactic especially for younger adventurers that would often fight single targets in a group.

"Well I'm sure this was simpler for everyone to understand. Now the real challenge comes when you add a user. For example, Gil Otis are you ready? Well use the strategy we did on the greater ice imp." The two had a nod falling in to a ready stance. "Let's go then!" Walker pulled his staff from his storage and activated his fire flower skill, the flames began to build and condense as he spent his mana.

Gil fired an arrow as Otis attacked this was the same as last time however as Otis retreated it was Walker's turn. "Fire flower!" Walker made a point to yell out his attack to signal it would hit. This was more to demonstrate proper communication a spellcaster should use, often stories of the main attacker being hit accidentally with a spell would make the rounds as gossip.

The condensed seed of fire penetrated the target Gil and Otis had damaged. Walker started to retreat, Otis to states the target shouting at it like he and Remey had done.

"Otis retreat Gil cover!" Walker dropped the commands and Otis retreated back to Walker while Gold fired arrows towards the base of the earth pillar. The trainees were confused, the spell did nothing why did they retreat? There was nothing properly gained. However before they could start to ask flaming vines burst from the stone pillar, the tangling fire scorching the surface and causing cracks as it tightened. Within seconds buds were formed and moments later began to bloom. The three prepared themselves for the backlash, a chorus of explosions causing the pillar to shatter in to pieces deafened everyone around. The wave of air pushed everyone but Gil, Otis, and Walker back due to their preparedness. As soon as the knock back passed Walker had switched his staff for the scythe and rushed



forward brining a downward attack in to the larger chunk left near the ground. Leaving it stabbed in to the remains of the pillar walker stood and watched the stunned trainees.

The small crowd had taken quite the surprise some falling over completely. The elder still sat unfazed analyzing what was to come next. Waiting a few minutes for everyone's hearing to return walker motioned for Gil and Otis to come to him. Once the two stood next to him the trainees seemed to come back to reality a bit. Expecting walker to ask for the reasons they used this strategy they were all prepared to answer the oncoming question.

" how many seconds did it take for my spell to cause an explosion which produced knock back?" Every single onlooker and trainee was at a loss, not a single one had counted the time between the release of the spell and the explosion it caused. Seeing that they all had no answers Walker looked at Gil and Otis. " can you two gentlemen enlighten these trainees to how many seconds it took for the spell to fully activate?" Walkers words were filled with strength, this was the difference in experience that gave them the edge.

"12 seconds" the two responded in unison, the trainees were again awestruck.

" now I've only ever used this spell twice, yet these two were able to memorize the time it takes for this spell to cause its explosion. The reason? Because timing isn't just what order someone attacks it's also what time they attack, what time they dodge, what time they distract, what time they retreat, what time..." letting the sentence trail off he could see the gears grinding in the trainees heads. " since you have plenty to think I'm let's move on, form up teams, any users can utilize long range spells of not I will use a mana shot spell. Gil how many seconds does it take?"

" five seconds to fire not much of a building time only about half a second." Gil was spot on it was to be expected. Gil may be a bit goofy at times but when it came to keeping an eye on the entire battle he was fairly advanced, always keeping track with a sharp eye.

"In relation it takes Gil one second to notch an arrow, half a second to pull the bow, and two seconds to aim. That's all without using quick shot which cuts a second from aiming. His targets rarely dodge his arrow. He will work in place of a mage, he has a rather nice bow." This brought a smile to gils face, he had been practicing rather hard lately to limit the amount of mana used in his wind affinity arrow so that he could use a weaker version more often. If he allowed it to run its full course it could burn half his mana away but after exhausting himself too many times he managed to bring his overall number to seven shots.

The groups started to form and soon they were displaying their own combinations trying to blend their timing. Impressively that was an earth user with them that could fire small earth projectiles. This further enhanced the amount of times they could all practice. Once the final target had been broken the trainees lined up expecting more to be created instead something more sinister occurs...the elder stood.

"Ten seconds to create an earth needle! What were you focusing on the clouds in the sky? And you, are you only able to run and nothing more? Learn to use that speed in multiple hit attacks. Boy the next time I see you count with your fingers I'll double your math lesson.." the elders words went on and on. Now walker and Gil gained the full strict elder effect. It was indeed terrifying and they understood how Otis must have felt in his younger years training under the elder. " now walker make us more of those targets, we need more practice. You'll be joining them I expect that mana shot spell down by a second at least. Otis don't you dare think I didn't notice you were I to using your right leg to attack, what do you plan to hop on one foot the rest of your life? You Gil was it? Those wind arrows are too slow, they are but a soft breeze we could sneeze them off course!" And that was it now they were no longer instructors but trainees themselves. Otis could almost hear let's of his heart break, but he wasn't alone in his pain, Gil and walker were both standing with the jaws dropped. Over the course of the next hour everyone was pushed to a slumped mess of sweat and empty mana reserves. Walker now felt his mana shot spell was second nature to him while Gil wishes he'd never found this amazing bow. Otis was still stuck in a squatting position as punishment for not using both legs equally to attack. The only question they all had was, how could they make it to dinner without passing out right there?