

Master 21

Chapter 21: Party plans

Black flame crystal dragon (hatchling)

Exp. 10/100

Hp-100

Def-50

Mdef-50

Atk-75

Matk-75

Agi-30

Mana-50

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This was insane midnight was many times stronger than any of them! But this is only her level 1 stats? I wonder why she doesn't have charisma, is it because she's considered a monster and doesn't need it? Maybe charisma is only a human based stat. These thoughts ran rampant through Walker's head before he noticed her exp. "it will take longer for midnight to level up than us but it is a fair price to pay for her stats being so strong at a low level." Walker said out loud.

"So she'll be this small and cute for a long time then?" Surprising everyone Remey had been the one to pose this question. Her face was slightly tinged red but broke in to a brilliant smile upon hearing a small low purring sound from midnight whose draconic nature would always welcome praise.

"Well I can't say for sure but I think if we hold her back she could suffer, we all have heard stories of how strong dragons get and the sizes they reach. Plus what if being with us on adventures helps her grow to her peak? We will see many different things and fight many different battles." Walker was falling deeper and deeper in to thought. All the possibilities could suffocate him.

"Well if battles are something you need I strongly recommend volunteering for the field patrol. We are nearing the end of the harvest season and the guild will be asked to assist the guards as usual." Clara was spot on knowing that such a task would truly help the relations of young adventurers and the guards not to mention help them raise their rank in the long run.

"Oh yea she's right we'll have to face all those pesky giant locusts soon! They travel south as the season changes and eat everything in their path. My parents farm is usually pretty safe because we are closer to the walls but every year the ones near the outskirts of the guarded area lose plenty of crops." Gil growing up outside the walls would give the party a much beaded informant in preparing for such a quest.

"Gil exactly right, I'm glad your party has someone knowledgeable. There is also the bonus of keeping the defeated giant locust bodies. There are not many valuable parts but the small amount of meat is a good source of nutrients for animals and often the army. However where the value truly exists is the wings which can make a strong roofing material for alchemists greenhouses. They allow light and heat through but will keep cold winds out allowing the survival of certain herbs over the winter. The only downside is that they do not often last a year so the more locust wings harvested the better." Clara shared a large amount of promising information.

"This could actually help us a lot, I would like to get a stronger shield if we are looking to take hunting quests and we would need to stay near the city for this quest. I fully support taking this time to strengthen our defenses." Sue, as always, looked at the facts and chose the logical path. However as their defender Walker knew she would always desire a stronger defense.

"Well first things first we just completed our first party quest and collected our gold. Let's see where we stand with experience and talk about any points we have. I'd like to hear what everyone's goals are for themselves." Walker was thinking of what they may need to prepare and getting everyone's input would be helpful.

"On that note I believe I shall return to the desk, if you would like I can add you to the field guard log now and you will be notified by your systems when you are needed?" Clara saw that it was best to allow the party proper privacy.

"Yes if everyone agrees I believe we would like to be added." Walker looked at the others who all nodded in unison

"Excellent I shall do so, I hope you all have great ambition." Clara left with a wink slightly energizing the party who were eager to share their goals utilizing their systems.

"May I start?" Su seemed to have already decided. With a quick nod from Walker she continued. "The only thing I want since I got my system was the ability to protect those around me. I don't like to attack and hurt others so I put all my points toward defense, magic defense, and hit points. This should make me an immovable mountain later on." She had a clear image of herself. The confidence in her statement was inspiring.

"I know you want to protect us but if you can't get there in time there's no point. I think putting some points in to your agility could really maximize your abilities." Walker had noticed this when she first accepted the party invite but knew that as lower leveled adventurers they would grow together quickly to fill the weaknesses they naturally had.

"I see that's a good point, a mountain can't move to protect a village..." Su drifted off in to thought as she searched herself for a better mental image of strength.

"Well mine is simple, I already have better skills towards hunting and archery not to mention silent movements through forests. I'll just discuss stealth and my damage. I want to balance my magic attack and attack. That way when I get to the magic arrow skill I can deal the same damage with a real arrow basically giving me endless ammunition. Along with the ability to escape. I think the term is sniper." Gil had actually been distributing his few stats properly but Walker was curious, "why have you added stats to charisma?" The question was well founded since it was the only outlier in his plans.

"Well seeing as I grew up in the fields I could have stayed there and hunted without joining the guild. But I need a safer environment not to mention the guidance of the guild so I don't fall in to the usual pitfalls of hunting alone outside the walls. So to that end I have always tried to add one or two points to charisma so it would help me join a party and get along inside the city." The reason was much more

simple than walker expected but he was glad because having a little extra charisma could help smooth a rough situation.

"Honestly I think you've made smart choices, I worry about your defenses but I think that can be improved over time." Walker really didn't see any issues, he could see Gil becoming a great scout who could sneak up behind an enemy and land much needed attacks in critical situations.

"Well you don't need to think hard about my goals!" Remey adopted her usual rough attitude

Chapter 22: Party plans 2

"Obviously I'm going to be making enough money for the orphanage so all my brothers and sisters can attend the academy." Remey had said something to why should have expected but Walker still could imagine her yelling she wanted power.

"That would be the best way to rise in status. The academy graduation could easily yield them a title which allows for an easy life. Even if not they won't ever starve." Su seemed more knowledgeable on this subject than expected.

"That leaves the leader! Tells us your dreams and ambitions." Gil jumped in laughing at his own bravado.

Walker was thinking and could see many paths before him. He knew he would need to feed Midnight no matter what. He may not be a true tamer but since they had an equal bond he could not betray her trust. He would also like to support his family, his father has worked incredibly hard and deserves time to relax. However the drive to meet more people, see new things, and travel was a strong flame in his heart.

"I have responsibilities to support my family and help Midnight grow stronger. But through all the running around trying to find my system I've discovered a thirst for new adventures. So I will explore, maybe take Midnight to the mountains to find other dragons, I know the ruins to the south west have treasures so maybe there one day, and what kind of magic could I learn from elves if I could get through all those forests?" As he spoke more and more ideas came to mind he felt the need to write them all and keep adding to the list.

' the user has expressed a desire to store information. Through his actions the skill mental archive has been taken from the Scholars system.

Mental archive- 0 mana cost

Within you is a vast sea, shaping this sea there is an archive full of knowledge. You can store any and all information you consume within.

Would the user like to learn mental archive?'

" oh this will be great I'll be able to remember maps while we travel. Yes, learn mental archive.!" The sudden outburst worried the others but they started to brush it off having a feeling walker would explain something cool soon.

'User has learned mental archive.'

Immediately walker felt his mind had expanded. He could sense a space within him filled with bookshelves full of blank books. As his thoughts raced he could sense words appearing in him. The words of his companions and all his experiences written and ready to be recounted in an instant.

"I just got a skill, this will help us immensely. I wanted to remember everything I was thinking and everything you all said and suddenly I got a skill called mental archive. It records the information I absorb and records it in a mental archive basically to me it looks like a library in my mind. I guess I'll never be without a map." Walker ended with a slight laugh happy to share the good news of how he'll be able to help more.

"Well at least it's not another dragon or flashy space magic" Remey said releasing the tension in the room as everyone had prepared for something dramatic.

"So now that We've said what we strive for I think we should talk about gear we might need. I know I might be leaving you out of this Gil but the materials you gathered would most likely harm your skills. I think it might be hard to move around in heavier scale armor let alone be noisy".

Gil didn't look sad at all; he knew his speed and silence was an important factor to scouting and hunting. But he had been thinking about these scales as well and came up with an idea. "We should make Su a better shield, I think she will benefit more than most of us based on the strength of the materials, I also have a feeling it might be lighter than the shield she has." Walker immediately nodded in agreement and Su's usual serious face was showing a slight smile.

"We should strengthen those iron knuckles you have there too, Remey. If you're out dealing high physical damage we will be in a bind if they break." Walker jumped on to the flow Gil had started continuing it. "I also would like to see if I can have some sort of staff made, if I'm going to heal and support and even use attack magic later it will be important in conserving my mana."

These ideas formed a nice plan but there was one thing they needed to do to truly implement it. "I guess tomorrow we will be heading to the forge. I'm not sure if it will be easy to find someone who will work with us since we are lower tier but I think we can convince them by showing them the materials" with that walker gave them all directions to his home so they could meet and walk together. The excitement could be seen in every one of their eyes, visiting the forge as a lower tier adventurer was a big deal!

The day had definitely begun to fade as Walker left the adventurers guild saying farewell to his party. Midnight was quick to stand by his side constantly looking at her eyes absorbing new things constantly. Walker had hoped she wouldn't immediately rush to eat anything being sold on the streets as he knew how ravenous she was with the newts.

Due to the transition from day to night he was lucky to avoid the busier areas of the market. Once dark encroached the night life exploded as inns and other eateries opened their doors to drinkers.

Soon a thought began to emerge as he walked...how do I introduce a dragon to my family?

The shock of this though immediately stopped him in his tracks causing midnight to perk her head up and look around for danger. Walker had totally forgotten in his excitement and planning that he needed to explain to his family that he now had a dragon in his party! Not to mention one that was equally bound to him for life! The thought of terrifying his little sister caused his brows to crumple in worry. But he had to choose. He was only a few minutes walk from home and he needed to muster his courage no matter what!

It was time to meet the family!

Chapter 23: Lisa's best friend

"Wait right here at the door, I need to prepare them for this." Walker's voice had worry in it and midnight sat quickly unsure of what was about to happen.

The door opened revealing his father, mother, and Lisa sitting at the table just about to start eating. The spot walker usually sat and had a plate waiting for him but curiously there was also a dish on the ground.

"Well? Where's this dragon the guards rushed to tell me about today? You didn't leave it at the guild did you? I was looking forward to seeing it again!" Garret said expectantly.

The frustration etched in Walker's face was tangible. He realized by going through the south gate earlier he had missed out on surprising his father at home. Well at least he could still surprise Lisa and his mother with how small and cute midnight was.

"Midnight! This is my family. Garret my father who you saw earlier, Hilda my mother, and my adorable little sister Lisa. Everyone, this is my new friend Midnight. Due to some unfortunate circumstances we've become bonded like family and we will be sticking together for a long time."

Midnight jumped in and ran to sniff and examine the new people feeling that it was safe to do so from Walker. Quicker than quick Lisa slipped from her chair grabbing the plate on the floor and placing it in front of midnight. The roast chicken was steaming hot and baked to perfection. The only feeling walker could notice from Midnight was ""food!"" Which made Walker feel like Lisa had planned this out to steal midnight from him.

With a small laugh " well if I don't follow their lead I guess I'll go hungry" walker went to his normal seat and began telling them of his first adventure. The feelings and descriptions poured out from him as his family saw how excited he was to see his party again tomorrow. The new skills were of only a small shock to his parents who he mentally prepared themselves for a huge shock just in case.

Dinner passed quickly and not surprisingly midnight took it upon herself to follow Lisa everywhere. Lisa seemed very happy with this development proclaiming midnight to be her new little sister.

"You know if she's your little sister that means you're not allowed to cry when we leave for a quest, she'll be looking at you as an example." Walker figured a bit of teasing was appropriate since he knew she might try to keep them from leaving the house tomorrow morning.

"I don't cry when you leave! You're just imagining it because you're jealous midnight is playing with me!" Lisa stuck her tongue out while closing her eyes.

"Please don't teach that face to midnight it's not as cute as you think it is." At this midnight gave a quizzical look while cocking her head curiously. "By the way don't you have some sewing to do? Don't you want to level up and make your new little sister something warm for the winter? Haven't you heard that dragons like to stay warm?" With this thought Lisa's eyes grew wide in realization. How could she let midnight go cold, the snow would get here soon after harvest.

"Fine I'll go practice but Only because I don't want midnight to get cold when you make her go out in the snow on quests!" Sticking her tongue out once more she ran off from the kitchen leaving behind a lost looking midnight.

"Don't worry she'll be back in the morning, now would be a good time to figure out where you want to sleep as well." After Walker said this midnight seemed to understand quickly and began walking towards Hilda's kitchen, a curious walker followed. Midnight curled up against the big stone oven. Walker knew if he so much as touched it he would burn himself but it appeared to be the perfect spot for midnight to sleep the night away. It had been a big day and it was understandable that she would readily sleep.

Following the lead walker found his way to his bed and almost before his head even hit the pillow he was fast asleep.

Curiously he didn't dream, he found himself within his mental archive. Walker thought this strange at first but immediately began to think. Well my body must be asleep. I remember going to bed and since this is just in my head I guess I can hangout here while my body rests.

The shelves were filled with an uncountable amount of books but as walker wandered and pulled out random books he realized most were blank. Some were full of things he'd said, he even happened across his conversation about his parties goals. The more he explored it however he noticed even previous memories from him searching for his system were present. He wasn't sure what this meant but was happy to be able to recall the attempts. Thinking of tomorrow's plans he looked at a book that had him wandering by the forge and he was curious what skills he might be able to acquire.

The temptations of unbreakable shields and Magic's swords would surely cause anyone to falter.

With these thoughts he drifted off to sleep...

'Daily quest:

Find the three struggling blacksmiths and assist them in their system quests.

Reward:

All around appraisal skill, party 3exp. each'

As the fog in his eyes cleared, Walker read the notification and smiled. Today will be a great morning!

Realizing he could hear a bunch of noise in the direction of the kitchen he walked out to see his party gathered around the table. Gil seemed to have really hit it off and was talking with Garret, while Su was cleaning off some of midnight scales with a rag. Remey surprisingly was talking to Hilda. "Finally you took forever, if miss Hilda hadn't offered to give me some bread to bring home with me after we go to the forge I would have left without you!" Remey was the first to notice walker but as he was about to speak. "Mooooovveee!" Lisa ran past him with a handful of sandwiches, it looked like she had gotten everyone's breakfast ready while they talked. Well at least walker suspected his mother Hilda had made them and Lisa had only gone to gather them.

"Well I may be late to the party but it seems like a perfect time to eat and start our morning walk. We got a quest to do after all!" Walkers word brought everyone to attention since his party members had already seen the party notification that they would be helping the blacksmiths for experience .

Chapter 24: Heat of the forge

Garret ran out the door faster than the rest since he needed to report to his job. Lisa tried to sneak out to follow walker and midnight but with a quick grab from Hilda that plan failed quickly.

"Don't worry we'll be back later, maybe I'll even bring something nice back!" Walker's voice could barely be heard by Lisa as Hilda scolded her but Lisa would make sure her brother held up his promise.

The walk wasn't that long for the party since the forge was near the adventurers guild. The location made it easier for adventures to do business and since they were also near the alchemists building it was easy to understand why this was the main market street.

"So I guess our leader will be needing wake up calls." Gill's tone was serious but by the looks of his face he was only teasing.

"He can wake himself up, I'll only be heading there to see Miss Hilda. Her bread will last long enough so we won't throw any out at home. I don't know how you could have kept this secret for so long." Remey gave a slight glare at Walker before looking away but Walker felt she was actually happy to have come this morning.

"I'm just glad Lisa didn't latch on to our legs so we couldn't leave, I'm going to see if I can pick her up a new set of needles. She has the seamstress system so one day she might be able to provide us with some nice clothing for more important quests. I might even get an older brother discount!" Walker laughs as he said the last part but Su was quick to cut in "don't take advantage of your adorable little sister. But to be fair it does sound useful knowing someone with such a system...maybe the scraps from our gear can make high quality needles for her. I'm sure as she grows she will easily wear out the tools quickly ." Su hit on some important meanings one of which was one the party would always have to remember; gear maintenance. A hunter without a bow is weaker, a mage without a staff is stunted, and a tank without a shield is without skills. Remembering to be prepared could be life or death.

"Well in the practice of preparation maybe I should buy some basic weapons in case something happens. I should be able to use any of them as long as they aren't master grade weapons. I should also take time one day to unlock a few more skills for attack and defense." Walker thought out loud prompting the others to go silent for a minute.

"You know you'll think yourself in to insanity if you don't put it all aside. We don't need you wearing yourself out since we just got here." Gil made a good point walker had become lost in thought and didn't even notice the large two story building. The forge had offices for those in charge in the second floor and a very large first floor with multiple forging rooms. The large grey smoke stacks carried mixtures of black and white smoke in to the sky. From what walker understood the basement was mostly their storage for ores, monster parts, and other crafting items along with fuel for the endless fires. The

entrance was almost always open to release the heat that built up inside so seeing right to the front counter was easy.

The inside greeting room was simple, no chairs just open space full of well worn woodwork lightly dusted in coal. Many people visited and often carried heavy weight with them causing a rugged look on the floors. It was not an uncommon sight to see someone covered in soot behind the counter since the lower level blacksmiths would take turns training and watching the front throughout the day.

Currently a smaller but well muscled boy was behind the counter, he was cleaner than what was expected showing off slightly pale skin, dirty blond hair, and a face that showed welcoming features. He wore the usual leather apron and boots along with a tool belt giving the impression he was ready to jump to a project any moment.

"Hello hello there. The name's Rodney and this is the forge...well I'm sure you could tell that but ya never know. So whatcha need? Armor? Swords? Magic stones?" This boy was a bit energetic but that's not a bad thing.

"Actually we're hoping to have three or four items crafted plus we would also like to help out while we are here." Walker spoke up quickly after accepting the high energy Rodney.

"Sounds like a plan, I'll need to know what you wish to craft and what materials so I can escort you to the proper blacksmith. The prices will vary depending on what you need so I hope you're prepared." Rodney spoke as if he was very accustomed to the process.

"We are looking to have a great shield made, modify some iron knuckles, have a staff created, and if possible a set of needles made from the scraps. All will be made out of black crystal dragon scales and darkness crystals. The only item that really requires a crystal though is the staff the other crystals we have we will most likely save for future use." Walker had already planned out his order so he readily listed the necessary details.

"Alright so a great shield, knuckles upgrade, magic staff with a darkness crystal, and needles. Sounds good and all crafted out of dragon scales...**DRAGON SCALES!!!** Are you serious you have dragon scales!? Holy lord! You even brought a baby dragon with you!!" Rodney had been going through the motions and it dawned on him that dragon scales had been brought to the forge let alone a baby dragon. This was incredible, he had been waiting for just this opportunity, he knew many in the forge that would try and steal this opportunity. He also knew two others who would fight tooth and nail for a single scale.

"Shhhh shhh you can't tell anyone I need you to come with me, I'll give you a really good deal to craft with those scales so don't worry." Rodney gathered himself and practically jumped the counter trying to whisper to Walker and his party to follow. The shocked and quizzical looks from everyone were quite funny, although midnight just seemed to be feeding off the energy and slightly bouncing around.

Chapter 25: System quests

Rodney began leading them past many rooms to a large corner room with the generic forgoing tools. However the pit of fire was significantly larger along with a dark grey happen that seemed to have been used for thousands of blows.

"Just wait here a minute I need to find someone, I promise this will be great. Just don't leave please please ok?." Rodney was almost jumping as he rushed out the door.

"Sooo anyone else know what's going on?" Gill was the first to break the silence.

"No idea but that guy has more energy that a horned rabbit." Remey made a very clear comparison cause if everyone imagined Rodney as a fluffy brown white haired rabbit bouncing through the plains.

Su couldn't help cracking a smile " well whatever is going on I have a good feeling. Although the happiest seems to be midnight". Su motioned toward the forge where midnight had crawled on to a shelf connecting to it and pressed as closely to the smoke stack leaving the room as possible.

"Well it does make sense, she should be able to breath flames at some point right? Maybe the heat will help her. If she learned a fire skill she could help out with things much more." Walker was imagining midnight releasing giant fireballs that could consume the heavens...he definitely got carried away.

Loud footsteps could be heard heading toward the room. Rodney burst in, "these are the ones with the scales they can help us I only told you two like I promised. It only took six months working the front to find someone!!"

A large man whose body barely fit through the door and his reddish brown beard seemed to take up all his face only grunted in response. If this man was to speak would the building fall? This was the question

the party was asking themselves. Behind him a smaller man who looked in need of a good meal wearing clothes obviously too big for him and almost the opposite was completely bald.

"OK so thank you for waiting, I know I rushed you in here but I promise this is very important. So I know you look like an adventuring party and I'm sure it's a reeeeeally awesome story about how your tamer got a dragon. But Later later." Rodney was speaking much too fast causing the large man to grunt again but in what's seemed to be an irritated manor. At that the skinny man stepped forward in front of Rodney even seemingly calming the high energy.

"First of all my name is Sherman, thank you for the time and stomaching this one's rudeness. I was told you're looking for some items to be crafter, my personal skill set is with magical staffs hence my system is the magical weaponry system. Now this fella here is Brutus he specializes in defensive gear his system is the protectors craftsman system. And of course Rodney there is an all around type with a blacksmith system. Now I know this is a lot but now to the point of all this, we have systems like most others but our quests require us to create and oftentimes we hit a snag where we are required to use certain materials. With that I'm sure you can catch on that we need to use dragon based materials to finish these quests. While I fear the next material will be even rarer it is plenty rare enough for smiths here in the lower tier of the city to encounter them. So in our and your interest we would be willing to negotiate a deal for our services." Sherman seemed to be the sort of man to lay out all the information first very up front.

"Ah I've heard of this with carpenters before, I once met one that was traveling to find a hundred year old willow so he could craft something out of it for a quest." Walker recalled an older man he had met while following his father to work one day. "So I see what benefits you all would gain, I'm sure by completing the quests you'll gain important insights in to your professions. My party is preparing to guarding the fields and require the gear we mentioned before to assist in our safety. Due to our current standing we are limited on funds along with materials so what can you do for us?" Walker seemed to go in to an unforeseen business mode remembering the merchants he had met who seemed to sneak their ways in to the heart and steal wallets with pretty words.

'Due to the users actions the passive skill negotiability has been taken from the stall owners system.

Negotiability- passive skill

When bargaining for deals the user of this passive skill always seems to tip the scale in their favor. Words flow more elegantly and even a rock could be sold as a gem.'

Walker was surprised by this but refused to show it on his face, this passive skill may not be too flashy but he would see if the results were noticeable.

"I'll do it for free. My quest has stopped me from crafting until I use dragon materials, everything I try to craft cracks until I complete this quest. My system is mean but I've heard that one day I might be able to craft much stronger materials so I guess I can't be too down about it." Rodney was all smiles; he was the first one to answer.

"Hmmm" Brutus continued his streak of not speaking. I lay holding up his hand with five fingers.

"Ah well if Brutus only wants five gold I'll match that. It's really just for our time. Our quests aren't as strict as the boys but for Brutus I'm sure he will be able to advance his prices since his system guides him in such a manner. Mine is just limiting me from using my attuning skill which I use to adjust magical weapons. Overall we will benefit much more than any price we give but we can not afford to do something for nothing since we pay the master of the forge to use the spaces. So what are your thoughts?"

Chapter 26: Coal dust

Well they thought they would have to fight tooth and nail to get what they wanted but to everyone's surprise the party had gained an amazing deal.

"It would be incredibly rude not to accept that offer, no matter how prepared I was to give you hell in a battle of words to get what we need." Walker responded with a firm laugh. "To be fair we will also be staying here to assist where we can if you don't mind? Unless you are all unable to begin working at this point in time?" Walker had closed the deal and even offered assistance however the smiths didn't not know that it was also part of the party's quest as well.

"Yes please I'll take the help, the more the merrier I'll be making the needles and enhancing those knuckles I'll need two scales, one person to catch the trimmings I'll use for the needles, and the owner of the knuckles so I get the shape right." Rodney spoke up quickly, eager to get back to work and be down working the front.

With a nod Gil and Remey began moving towards the door "hurry up kid my knuckles are itching for an upgrade so I can teach the kids a few morals back home." Remey looked like morels may mean fights

but nobody dared say it out loud. With that they could hear Rodney speaking way too fast all the way down the hall.

"From your gear I take it you will be using the shield?" Sherman asked Su directly

"Yes that would be me".

"Good then follow Brutus and bring four of the scales, your shield will take the most due to its defensive needs. Lastly I'll be taking two scales and a darkness crystal for the staff. We will remain here since this room is open." After that Brutus let out a Hmpff and turned around while Su quickly grabbed the scales from Walker and followed.

Walker brought out the crystal and last scales along with five gold for Sherman. "Everything looked to be in order, now that the crystal will be last, first we need to heat and shape those scales with some real metal. Using my combine skill they will fuse and share properties meaning I'll be able to pour and shape your staff then attach the crystal and begin Attunement." Sherman laid out his plan after taking the gold and moved toward a medium sized pot that had been scorched black by years of use. "Bring those scales and drop em in I'm adding the iron and some copper, maybe some extra carbon...or some...this tooo.." Sherman began adding small things to the pot mumbling to himself as Walker dropped the scales in to it as well.

Sherman continued moving around until "let's add just a little of this, and slide it right into that Forge fire we'll see how long it takes to melt down but while we wait how about you tell me what you were looking for in the staff?".

"Well my party lacks magical damage so I will be filling that role. So I will need mana, and matk improvement. I chose the darkness crystal to add an element to the staff instead of a non elemental staff if that is alright?" Walker knew mana would be a problem but was remembering that having elemental attacks could be incredibly useful.

There were basic elements such as fire, water, earth, and air. Some rare combination elements like ice, magma, lightning. He also knew of darkness and light elements. Some rumors existed that there were even more extending all the way to space and time but the rarity was so high that they were most likely just myths.

"Good good all of those are doable and I can even promise to add the dark element to the staff without issue. Since your party seems to be young I would be willing to buy any additional darkness crystals from you. They tend to be more rare than the basic ones and I know a client who has been looking for one." Sherman confirmed but also surprised Walker by asking to buy a darkness crystal. Walker knew that the rarer the crystals the more expensive since he had heard of the basic elemental crystals selling for 80G as materials but he had no idea what darkness or its counterpart light crystals would sell for.

" I do have an extra and would be willing to sell it at market price." Walker pulled out the second darkness crystal and offered it to Sherman who smiled and reached for a pouch on his waist.

"120G is the current value due to its rarity in the area as of late. Here it is, I'm sure you'll cross paths with my client at some point as their darkness affinity is obvious in their gear and skills."

Midnight who had been resting silently was perplexed by the exchange for gold but suddenly stood up and returned to walker's side. "black food" was what walker felt coming from her. Pulling out the final crystal walker thought towards her "you want this to eat?" Without a second of pause midnight snatched the crystal and swallowed it whole. This surprised both Sherman and Walker who witnessed a slight shimmer in her scales before midnight returned to her warm resting place to nap.

"Well I'd like to say it's strange but if that little dragon had black crystals her element may be darkness. I guess you gave her a pretty nice treat." Sherman laughed as he returned to the forge brandishing thick leather gloves giving the pit a shake. "Move that mold toward me it's time to pour!"

Without hesitation walker looked over at a heavy metal block with a small hole in it on wheels and pushed it with all his might toward Sherman. The second it was in place Sherman pulled the pot and poured molten white orange liquid in to the block's hole until it was full. Small black wisps came off from the metal as dust burned off.

"Get that coal over there and start shoveling. If this cools down too fast it will crack. We need to slowly lower the heat around it!" Sherman's orders were firm as he himself also threw some coal around the block and let it start to burn

The time passed slowly as Sherman would order for more or less coal and sometimes oil to be poured over the block as it could be slowly seen losing its heat. Walker was now roughly covered in black coal dust from head to foot, not surprisingly midnight looked the same. For some reason Sherman seemed to be clean though, walker wondered if it was a perk of his system.

More time passed and soon Sherman had stopped the orders completely and grabbed a large hammer swinging it down on the block separating it in to two pieces. The metal inside was revealed to be black iron with twists like a dragon's tale and an open claw at the top empty and waiting. Grabbing it with his gloves he lifted it up and in another had grabbed pliers. " hold the crystal in the center of that claw while the metal can still bend. I'll be attaching it there" Sherman spoke out again causing Walker to jump to it and carefully hold the crystal perfectly in the center of the claw. For every one of the five claws Sherman bent to touch the crystal it seemed to fuse more with the staff almost sinking in to it until the final claw touched causing shadows to dance in the flames of the fire welcoming the elements.

"Hahahaha perfect perfect now kid time for you to let your mana flow in to this black dragon staff. I knew the dragon claw mold would fit the crystal perfect all that's left is fitting it to your mana so there won't be any misfired spells."

Chapter 27: Showing off

Walker felt his mana begin to be sucked away in to the staff as a dark glow Emanated from the crystal.

'5 mana consumed. Black dragon staff has been acknowledged by the user.'

Black dragon staff- darkness element

Matk +3

Mana +10

"Well that was a bit of a surprise but it accepted your mana very easily, hmmm I would assume you were talented in the darkness element all along then. Well anyways the item is finished and in a record time of only 5 hours too. If you happen to get more scales and crystals please ask for me so i can adjust this black dragon staff. If you give me the right materials maybe I'll be able to improve it to a grand dragon staff." Excitement of future prospects could be seen in Sherman's eyes but were quickly replaced with faint tiredness as he had used many skills in this endeavor.

' one black smith has been helped two remain'

The system prompted Walker that progress had been made so he said his thanks and goodbyes to Sherman while dragging midnight from her nap to find the others who were definitely still hard at work. This made sense to him since it could definitely take more time making a shield and also enhancing equipment. The enhancement needed to be shaped properly so taking that in to account slower work was definitely needed so Walker decided to follow the large thud sounds of a hammer to a larger door.

Upon entering the room walker saw Su in a similar state to him but she was wearing large gloves as well holding a large black shield with similar texture to Midnight's scales. While she held it in place Brutus would come down with his hammer forcing the hot metal to finish taking shape.

"Well I guess they won't need me, and here I thought we could help" walker spoke to midnight while standing at the door and decided to take a moment of rest as he watched Brutus pick up the shield and plunge it in to a bath of oil with a sizzle.

"I saw that the quest updated so I assumed you were done, I should only be a moment leader." Su had noticed the two watching and confirmed the situation.

Before a few minutes had passed Brutus had dried and shined the shield with many different cloths and handed it to Su. Walker quickly checked the quest progress to see,

' two blacksmiths have been helped one remains'

The system had already taken the completion in to account.

"Hmm thanks" a deep voice in almost a whisper said, surprising the two but before they could react Brutus had begun walking out the door towards another room.

"Well I guess that leaves Remey and Gil then, my bet is they are right down the hall since I can just barely hear Rodney talking too much" Walker said with a laugh and he began looking with Su for the other two.

"Sharp needles are important but not on just one size, they need balance if it's not balanced there's no point. All weapons need balance or they.." opening the door Rodney's voice stopped and he jumped from the grindstone grabbing two packages.

"The knuckles will be cool in a moment and here are the sewing needles. I kinda got excited and made some throwing needles from the rest of the scrap. Cause why waste it right?"

Accepting the package walker mumbles his thank you slightly stunned Rodney had even done something extra. He wondered if Rodney would become a popular smith with his work ethic.

'Black throwing needles

Atk+1

Able to add poisons '

These needles looked pretty useful, they could be used for mid ranged attacks and even help paralyze a target if treated properly. Walker finally rested his eyes on Gil and Remey and found that they were much cleaner than himself and Su. This must be a side effect of only strengthening and not fully producing a weapon; less coal.

'All three black smiths have been assisted. The requirements for the quest have been reached.

Reward:

3exp each party member, all around appraisal skill.

Rewards have been distributed.

All around appraisal skill has been taken from the Master appraiser system. User has learned all around appraisal

All around appraisal - 0 mana

Can appraise non master class objects to a certain degree. Sometimes weaknesses to monsters, hidden skills, and other mysteries can be discovered through use.'

"Yes we did it!" Gil was the first to chime out happy to get more exp and see the fruits of their labors.

"Check out these knuckles! I can hit things so much harder now." Remey was shadow boxing making it hard to see the new black veins in Her iron knuckles, there were even spikes on them too which would definitely cause some extra damage.

"Between my staff, your knuckles, and the shield I'm very happy. Not to mention two types of needles I was really surprised you could do this extra work Rodney!" Walker was smiling ear to ear feeding off his excitement after reading the skill.

"Well I need to do my best to build up a customer base now that I can craft! I hope to see you all soon!" Rodney began leading them out knowing they were dirty and definitely tired from the day of heat and coal dust. After waving goodbye, Walker was looking at a fruit stall and decided to try out his new skill.

"All around appraisal" walker said quietly not to allow his party to hear and tease him.

'Apple +.5 health

Nutritious and weak to worms. Rumored to keep the cleric away.'

Walker was interested in the addition to health upon eating the fruit but began theorizing it must be the healthy aspect and not all fruits would do it. He then realized this could be incredibly useful in discovering an enemies weakness since it showed that worms were apples weaknesses.

Smiling even more fully, the party was walking through the street more than showing off their new gear all the while covered in dust looking like they'd never seen a bath.

Chapter 28: Gift and rest

As the party parted ways due to their desire to clean up, Walker used his new skill on the shield and knuckles to see how they came out.

'Black scale shield

Def+5

Mdef+5

Hp+10

Crystal knuckles

Atk+10

Def+2

Possible bleeding'

Walker was impressed, he had an idea Su would want balanced defense but the addition of hp boost was a huge bonus to a defensive position. The attack on the knuckles was astounding not to mention those spikes must cause the possible bleeding which could help weaken strong enemies.

As midnight happily walked beside him observing his comical faces as Walker used the new skill everywhere he had an idea. Taking out the sewing needles he was curious what effects they might have after being crafted out of a rare material not often used for such needles.

'Draconic sewing needles

Agi+5

Self harm immunity

Elemental thread'

Walker stopped suddenly, mid-thought confused, and was looking at the house where she knew food was in the distance to Walker who was not moving. She didn't understand why he had stopped knowing he could eat soon. But Walker was in shock not only did these needles improve agility but they could keep the user from harming themselves while sewing with them. The even bigger shock was elemental thread! This meant that as these needles were used for sewing they could impart elements on to the fabric. This could drastically change the worth of the item created. Walker knew that giving these to Lisa would promise her steady business in the future so he would not need to worry, however, he also knew she would be worried for mana at all times due to the requirements of using the items skill. Mixed emotions of worry and happiness were obvious on his face.

He took another step wrapping the needles up again and prepared to give Lisa the gift of her life!

Upon entering the house Walker knew Garret would still be at work and could hear his mother clattering away in the kitchen so decided not to interrupt her. Seeing Lisa in the kitchen with a swatch of fabric layer out in the shape of a cloak he wondered who it was for but decided that he would much rather show Lisa her new needles.

"I know you're hard at work so I guess I won't bother you with a gift right now." Walker smirked knowing Lisa would be completely enticed by these words.

"What! Of course I'm not busy at all, I'm just playing so I can accept a gift!" Lisa had jumped from the chair and ran to Walker pretending nothing was on the table at all.

"Well if you're sure I guess you can have this." He handed her the rolled pouch of different sized needles "these are called draconic sewing needles you'll be able to sew faster, never hurt yourself, and even mix the elements themselves in to your thread. Just don't over do it OK? No one wants to see you asleep at the table working too hard." Walker's words made Lisa's face become one of awe.

"These are great wait..." Lisa trailed off and looked even happier now "I just got a quest I get to use my new needles already. Just you watch brother, I'm going to make something amazing!"

Walker was surprised he had accidentally started a quest for his sister's system and it had completely absorbed her as she rushed to the table and began measuring and cutting at a furious pace.

Unknown to Walker his sister had just received a quest with a title 'a gift for a gift'. Titled quests were a rare occurrence for the systems it basically meant a huge growing point was about to occur for the user. Lisa had not yet realized this but when she completed it the rewards would surely become great.

As the time passed walker had cleaned himself up and recounted his days adventures to the family explaining the new gears his party had. Lisa had cut in showing off the needles and telling Walker just to wait and see in a mysterious voice. Garret had returned late noting that some guards had been injured while guarding the fields and that this year might be tougher on the harvest. After eating they all cleaned up, Lisa rushed to her room to go back to work which was slightly unusual but Hilda remarked that the gift must be motivating her. Walker returned to his room finally ready to rest.

The next morning walker woke up normally and headed out to breakfast.

"A notice came for you this morning. It's on the table with a sandwich, that basket there is for you party members when you go to meet them." Hilda's voice rang out from the kitchen where she was cooking.

The letter had the official guild seal on it. Once opened Walker read that his party was requested for field patrol so he was required to report to the adventurers guard upon receiving the notice.

After he had read the notice twice just to be sure, he roused himself from her slumber by the oven and headed out towards the guild. He was curious why he didn't see Lisa up as usual but figured she was extra tired from trying out her new sewing needles.

Walker proceeded to use his party chat function as he walked at a vigorous pace. The only one he had woken was Su who seemed to be a surprisingly slow starter. Gil had been wide awake being used to his mother's early farming hours and Remey was up due to the younger children at the orphanage.

By the time walker was at the guild he had half a sandwich left and tossed the other half to midnight who greedily ate it as if she was starved. But he knew well she had eaten a large helping of chicken and plenty of sandwich ingredients his mother had fed her as she was weak willed against Midnight's pleading eyes.

It only took a few minutes for the others to show up ready to go. It was time to meet Clara for the details.

Chapter 29: Field guards

The guild was very busy today, the fight to reach the counter was the toughest yet. Everyone seemed to be clamoring for a quest or other service.

The second Clara noticed Walker and his party she motioned for them to go upstairs showing four fingers. Walker led his party to room four and they all took their seats making small talk while they waited.

"So how many siblings do you have Remey? You've all met my sister so I figured I'd ask everyone." Walker had been wondering for a while.

" six younger two older. Five boys and three girls. The boys usually come to challenge me but the girls always run away cause they don't like fighting. I've told them all to try everything to find their systems but they don't listen without some tough love." Talking about her siblings seemed to make her much happier than any other topic. "I do know that Gil is an only child with how he acts he always wants attention." Remey stuck her tongue out at Gil as she said it to make a bigger impression lending Gil to menacingly grab an arrow from his quiver.

" I have an older brother but he left home a few years ago and hasn't come back. So more or less it's easier to think of me as an only child." This was a surprise from Su that no one expected. She always acted so astute and responsible that they thought her to be an only child the whole time. The look on her face said that was all she would share so no one pressed her for more. However it was perfect timing since Clara knocked and quickly entered the room without waiting for a response. Her tired complexion spoke volumes to how the day had been.

"I think you need this seat more than me", Gil quickly stood up pulling out the chair as Clara more or less collapsed with it.

"So you've received your summons you party shall join the rotation today, as will many downstairs who are trying to apply now. We received news that there is a giant locust swarm headed this way. The guild will most likely issue a quest based off of how many killed per reward. The price is not always 2G for a giant locust. However I do need to warn you if you see a female Also known as a jade locust run. Do not think just run. They are fast and their kicks can crush a grown man's skull instantly. That goes for midnight too." Clara finished by staring midnight directly in the eyes to make her point.

"Will our systems give us a quest do you think? Or is it just a normal guild quest?" Walker was curious if he could stack exp and gold rewards to level up faster.

"Most likely it will just be the normal guild quest, you should receive it once you leave the building. However a great many adventurers will be out today so who knows what could happen. You may end up sharing space to protect the larger fields." Clara had slightly dashed Walker's hopes but he still knew that his party would be able to make at least 10G today.

"Your party shall start at the east gate and rotate to the north. Although it sounds like a large area the odds of completing the walk before encountering locusts is small. Most likely you'll be stopped at the second or third field. Do not be afraid to watch more experienced adventurers first, this is a yearly occurrence...well not normally do we get a swarm but that's why we increase adventures in such occurrences." Clara seemed to be done explaining.

"Well it sounds like it would be the best practice to move out, although I don't see any reason for us to say this room is not being used any longer when we exit." Walker smiled knowing that Clara could take advantage of the time to rest as the party headed out towards the east gate.

' guild quest has been accepted.

Locust swarm is impending the party shall leave the east gate and patrol.

Reward:

2G for every giant locust killed'

"You know if we kill the locusts I'm sure they could be a good food source for midnight through the winter." Su had just had a brilliant thought. Causing Midnight to jump and prance ahead of the group hearing she would have a new food to try.

" that's a good idea, at first I thought we would just sell them for pig feed like most do but that sounds much better. We are pretty much being paid to strengthen a party member." Gil hit the nail on the head and the party had a renewed energy about them.

Quickly they got to the east gate and after registering that they were attending the position they signed up for began walking the roads used to transport grains and vegetables from the fields. Here and there they could see groups of adventures surrounding large locusts the size of a pony. They had brown and grey exoskeletons with black streaks throughout. Their large hind legs had sharp barbs and their mouths had small pincers that seemed perfect for eating any means of vegetables. They were definitely a plague for any farmer.

Upon viewing the sky the party noticed some very high up flying almost gliding over the fields seemingly not interested while others were spotted by adventurers as they descended to feed.

Walker using his keen eye was able to spot one and quickly notified everyone. "Su be ready ten feet in front of us that one should land. You'll need to distract it while Gil aims to fire and Remey gets close to crushing it. I'll try to hit it with a long range while Midnight, you get to it's left side and use your claws." Walker had announced the battle plan and everyone was on the balls of their feet ready.

Su rushed forward as the locust landed "shield bash!" She pushed her shield forward stunning the locust causing it to stumble a bit as it had tried to land.

Gil used quick shot and hit it in its eye

"Eeaaaakkkk" the locust became crazed due to the pain but it didn't even have a second to rest.

"Pulverize!" Remey burst forward with her knuckles in a downward motion completely smashing the locusts left front leg.

This attack caused the locust to move closer to midnight who's claws using shred took its back right leg in to three pieces.

"Su back up I'm going to attack!" Walker shouted following that with mana shot.

The locust couldn't hold on as the blast hit its head dead on causing black brown blood to ooze out as it collapsed on the ground.

'2exp received due to locust death. 1 giant locust killed added to the current quest total.'

The party was all smiling and barely broke a sweat. This would be a rewarding day if they could remain steady.

The five continued on fight after fight easily finding their next target with Gil and walker in the lookout. They easily surpassed their goal of five giant locusts and after killing their sixth decided it was time to rest and recover.

Chapter 30: Rivals

The party found some nice rocks to use as seats and pulled out some no stale bread and water. They may have been a bit tired by the energy from chasing their goals that were fresh in their minds.

While they ate they were observing a spear man, infantry swordsman with a shield and a water mage take down giant locusts nearby. They had watched the three flawlessly fell two. The swordsman with sleek black hair and a burly build would halt the locusts movement, while the water mage with blue robes, glasses, and a very cliché wooden staff would use water in the shape of chains to hold them. After that set up the blond spiky haired spear man who looked lean and spry would land a decisive blow to the locusts head. The strategy was sound and fit perfectly for the three. After seeing them fell the second the party gave each other looks. They were all thinking; were we being out done?

"We'll rest another ten minutes to get our mana back to full then we'll show them who's the best!" Walker could feel the rising energy in the air and wanted to optimize the situation. Maybe it is better to have more parties around so we can push farther.

"GERALD!!! Retreat!!!!!" The shout from the spear man caused everyone to look up in haste.

Three giant locusts were currently ganging up on the swordsman but that wasn't the worst of it. A green hue could be seen on one. It had larger legs with more spines. The aura emanating from this jade locust was one of killing.

"Um guys...that's not good." Gil could barely finish his sentence when the jade locust released a kick sending the swordsman flying in to the water mage with a loud crack. Bones had been shattered!!!

"Sister Gloria! Gerald!!!!" The spear man was in a panic rushing to his now unconscious party members. They had been fighting for hours and were toward their end. The spear man Geoff was planning to rest with his party and walk back. They had claimed enough locusts and tagged them for the guards on patrol to pick up for the guild but now it looked like they would face their end. All for a few gold and exp...the two giant locusts with the jade locust saw this opening and turned to unleash a massive kick in Geoff's direction.

Thwack vvvrrmmmm!!! A crazy loud metallic sound and vibration echoed out. Geoff looked up to see an immovable girl holding a black shield in front of him. Her face was scrunched up in effort after a massive blow that took half her health to block.

"Get ugh up and move you carry one my party will grab the mage." Su had relayed Walker's order. Remey had quickly lifted Gloria and the stunned Geoff came back to reality hefting up Gerald and slowly starting to head towards the wall...too slowly.

"Su! Guard them! Gil and I will be distracting these three until you're all far enough away!" Walker had issued the order while him and Gil ran opposite circles around the locusts causing them to turn in distraction. Midnight was circling the jade locust to distract it but the jade locust was smarter and realized it's prey was escaping.

"Weren't these bugs supposed to eat plants!" Walker yelled at Gil.

"This green one is a female! It fights because it feels threatened it thinks you're going to kill it's mates and young." Gil having grown up in the fields knew more. Gil was letting arrows fold towards the legs of the giant locusts in order to slow them down .

Walker immediately saw this and fired a mana shot towards Gil's target, noticing black streaks as he was happy that the staff was properly channeling the darkness element.

His mana shot was enough to put the locust Gil was facing to its side which allowed Gil to use quick shot three times sending arrows through its head leaving only one giant locust and the jade locust remaining.

The situation was not good, upon seeing its mate fall the jade locust unleashed a massive screech.

"Eeeeeaaaaaakkkkeee" this sound was deafening and midnight could barely stand. Seeing this walker ran as fast as possible to get in front of midnight with his leather shield. The jade locust kicked out "perfect block!" Walker used his only guard skill and was pushed back. The leather shield tore in half and Walker was left with 2hp. Midnight was in front growling in rage seeing her partner being harmed.

Walker saw Gil holding off the other giant locust along with Midnight's growing rage. He felt too weak to immediately stand and wasn't sure how he would survive. Midnight's growl reached a peak and heat waves could be seen emanating from her. She puffed up her chest and released a ball of black flames towards the jade locust. The jade locust was able to dodge most of the blow but Walker could see its back right leg was burning to ashes, severely weakening it. However using this skill for the first time had completely drained midnight as she collapsed...she was an easy target.

Gil was stuck slowly whittling down the health of the other giant locust, midnight was unconscious and in the line of fire, and walker was a step from death.

"Nooooo!! Get up Midnight get UP!" Walkers voice was hoarse with emotion. He couldn't watch midnight get hurt. It was unacceptable he needed to move.

'Skill unyielding has been taken from the hero's system

Unyielding- 0 mana

The less hp the hero has the higher their matk, atk, agi.'

Walker stood up not even noticing the system notification. He brandished his staff and channeled all his mana within it. He was screaming from his heart for power that could crush this jade locust. The system answered...

'Skill mana desolation has been taken from the destruction gods system.

Mana desolation- 15 mana

Uses high amounts of energy to send a concentrated blast of unstable mana. The unstable mana destroys the very fiber of a creature's mana system, making survival impossible. '

A massive amount of energy usurped through Walker, the pain he felt from this was immense but he was numb to it due to his chaotic emotions. A ball of darker mana appeared before him condensed to the size of a marble then flew at incredible speed through the jade locusts body. The locust stopped and a blast of energy flew from its body. Walker had already collapsed, falling in to unconsciousness. The jade locust was devoid of life, its very mana system had been destroyed, its brain was mush, and any lingering life was soon to dissipate.

Gil had seen this and doubled his efforts using the last of his arrows and mana to kill the final giant locust with arrows to take it down. He fell to his knees along with the giant locust which has also fallen. Dragging himself up he dragged himself to where walker laid finding him to still be breathing Gil glanced up seeing Remey and Su rushing towards them with a group of guards and a few other adventurers. "Hahahaha I guess I can sleep now." Gil passed out next to walker.

Su and Remey were red faced and panicked upon reaching them. Tears could be seen in the corners of Remey's eyes. Su had steeled herself for the worst but noticing the three breathing her shoulders slumped and she dropped the shield releasing all the stress.

With the help of a few guards and adventures they were able to carry the three back to the walls. There were tents set up for injured adventures due to the season. Remey was able to get them in to a small tent with enough room for the three and along with Su took the time to rest while walkers wounds were treated.