

Master 241

Chapter 241 - 241. Snowy Mountains

Having finished their day long practicing Walker took the time to show the wandering blacksmith around the mansion, he seems fairly interested in the many metal fixtures around the place that had been shaped in to intricate figures. This was obviously his black smith personality acting out but Walker did not mind in the last.

When they reached the library Walker remembered that there were a small number of books on forging that he had organized but not even read the titles of. "I have no idea if you like to read but this small shelf here has about eight or ten books on forging. Feel free to browse through them. I know you might want to relax a bit after today." The wandering blacksmith grabbed at the books with a huge grin on his face. The first book only looked to be on basics and he placed it down as fast as he picked it up.

The reaction to the second book was much different though, his reaction to the book titled, "Crafting in the snowy mountains" Was one of obsession. This was because the wandering blacksmith had yet to try going up in to the higher mountains to craft, the simple fact that they posed a danger he could not defend himself from was the reason why. He would need an escort to do such a thing or the protection from one of the ancient dragons in the villages. He had always wanted to explore and try many forging techniques and the ones spoken about in this book were all new to him.

Seeing that the wandering blacksmith had found a chair and been absorbed by a book he decided to let him be. When he was about to leave the room he found that Maria had attached herself to his leg. She had been reading in the library as well. But now with the addition of a stranger she was afraid to stay alone.

"Maria this man is the blacksmith that is helping us in the forge. He is staging here for some time and is very nice. Please be polite when you see him and wave." Maria still did not release herself from Walker's leg because of how unsure she was with this new person. The wandering blacksmith had heard this and given a little wave before returning to his reading.

Walker knew it would take time for her to get used to him and decided it might not be a bad thing to stay and read for a bit himself. He grabbed a book on monsters that lived in the sun hollow forest and took his time to learn what they may face. Maria took up a seat next to him and used Walker as a backrest to read in to her own book.

Walker was surprised to see that she was reading a book on the church. It would seem that when he told her that his friends from the church would be visiting it had made her more dedicated to find out

what the church was like. There were many teachings on light elemental along with healing. These things were scarce to come by in the demon territories and were very attractive to Maria. The two started to read the rest of the day away until the strong aroma of food reached them.

In only two hours the wandering blacksmith had finished his book on theories related to crafting in the mountains. He had many things to consider and was already planning his own journey to the mountains. His mind was a strange place but Walker knew that something had inspired him.

Maria herself was more excited to eat tonight than before, evidently she had become one of his mother's biggest fans. The spicy foods she had were something she had never been able to experience growing up and she had fallen in love with the new flavors. Of course this was also due to his mother spoiling Maria with various desserts just like how she spoiled Midnight by giving her food whenever Midnight looked at her.

Walker placed his book back on the shelf full of insight to what they may face in the deep sun hollow forest. The poisonous plants aside, he was most worried about the living mushrooms. These monsters could look just like any other mushroom but grow to double the size. They also had various species that could spread their spores to not only multiply but also poison an enemy. They were notorious for paralyzing or poisoning a traveler then using their body to spread spores and grow. For the unfortunate travelers to be attacked in this way their death was often slow and painful.

This inspired Walker to purchase some antidotal potions before the party left, but there was plenty of time for that. Now was the time to dig in to a meal and try the new recipes his mother had experimented with in the day. Once everyone had gathered Walker stood up to get everyone's attention. "This is the blacksmith that is joining us in the forge to get our gear all sorted out. He will be here for some time and doesn't say much. This is our family. They can do plenty of things and are always on the move. If you need anything I am sure they will be able to help." The wandering blacksmith waved a hand and smiled at the greeting. Garret seemed the most interested along with Gil's father.

"You said the other day at dinner you won't need to forge anything for the party until after auction right? So it won't be a problem if the two of us bother your blacksmith friend with some small jobs right?" Hearing this the wandering blacksmith nodded his head not even giving Walker a chance to reply. He had a thirst for all things forging and did not seem to want to turn down any request from those who were letting him forge with dragon flames.

"Perfect, we have some repairs and such for my armor and Gil's father was just telling me he needed some arrowheads for the next hunt he plans on so we will be bothering you tomorrow." With that they had all started to eat, sometimes someone would ask the new guest about what he had done and

somehow he was able to explain enough to answer the question. The skills he had developed by not talking were rather impressive.

After dinner Walker showed off the wandering blacksmith's creation. "It can store up to twenty mana! This is just what we will need!" Walker couldn't control his excitement explaining this to the party.

"So if we have those added to all of our gear you're saying we can add a huge amount of stored mana to keep using our skill?" Su wanted to be sure that this would be the results before she allowed herself to think on how she would adapt her strategy.

"Exactly, what if we had another hundred mana to use when we were in a battle? We would be able to take out larger enemies while we are at a lower level while using the proper strategy."

"I could punch my way through an army!" Remey raised a fist imagining solo destroying an army of monsters by herself. As much as they had all been deterred by seeing Barry take down a horde of horned rabbits the sight had still stuck with them and made them all want to be able to do just that themselves.

"If I had that much extra mana then I could use six or seven of the wind element arrows using my bow. It could change the way I fight completely." Gil had been worried about needing more close combat skills in the forest but if he had the ability to use his bow's skill more than he could try to use it more often.

"Even my shields would be able to be equipped like this?" Su worried that her shields would be unable to have the mana storing ability because they could take damage. If the crystal gem had taken a hit it would probably break.

"I think there will be a better spot to keep the gem on them, maybe by the handles you hold. Then instead of being hit by the enemy it would be protected like your arm will be."

"I agree leader, I will mention it to the blacksmith."

"Wait, what about mine? Won't I be able to break them too?" Remey caught on to the worry.

"You can equip something like the necklace or have it added to your thin armor. We don't have to have it put in to the knuckles or gloves." This was enough to stave off her worries.

"Oh good you are all still awake." Gil's mother found them all still at the table talking about gear. "I will need some help in the garden tomorrow. The sun should be nice and warm melting out the rest of the chill. I talked with a few farmers today and all of our skills say that the ground may still be frozen but the cold should be leaving us. We can finally start planting some seeds."

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Chapter 242 - 242. Planting

This was perfect timing for them, the garden was pretty much ready to accept the seedlings since Gil's mother had tilled the soil with her skills. This being said the real challenge was to get all the seeds and seedlings she had started to grow in place. "I will focus on the willow tree, it will need my skills to start out properly and catch up to the other plants. The spirit lily is already planted. I dropped the seeds in to the pond this morning during the rising sun. Not a single person is allowed to disturb them, I already made a scarecrow to keep any animals away." Not a single one of the party had noticed her making a scarecrow but it sounded good that they did not have to worry over the most delicate plant.

"We can all be up early to help you put no problem!" Walker answered for them not wanting anyone to find an excuse to sleep in.

"Hm good. Then I will see you all bright and early." She left them all to keep chatting but realizing how late it was they decided they should go sleep as well.

The party slept well, especially Walker and Midnight who had spent the day in the hot forge practicing their fire and watching the wandering blacksmith create something amazing. Of all the people that was up first to wake all of them up it was actually Gil. It was a trick he had gained from his mother to wake up right before the sun would start to rise. It was the basic instinct of someone who worked the fields.

Tossing on their rattier clothing the party was ready to get muddy from the days work. Walker was wondering if his elemental manipulation would come in handy. If he used high earth sculpting then he may be able to better create places for the plants to rest.

Finding Gil's mother already outside in the garden with a pile of gardening tools she started to distribute the seeds. "Gill you will be planting these oozing vines along the wall there. Keep the pointed part down so that the vines will sprout properly!" Gil took the handful of seeds and a small trowel before moving to the wall to start a row. "And space them out at least three feet so they can spread!" This was a general rule for vines so that they could have space to grow for the years. Gil did not need this reminder though since he had heard it a thousand times when his mother had him plant pole beans.

"Remey you are in charge of fruit. The strawberries will go in that row there. The kiwi are going to be the next row near them so that when they grow they give the strawberries some shade. I already have those apple saplings planted on the other side of the strawberry row. Su come here, the blood fruits are your job. They are a larger bush and will take up some space. They will go as far around the opposite side of the wall that Gil is going on so that they can really spread out. Just plant them at least six inches deep so that the roots can really hook in to the moist soil." She handed them the seeds they needed and off the two went to their respective areas.

"Miss Jane, will my high earth sculpting skill work to make places for the seeds?" Walker wanted to still be as polite as possible since Gil's mother had done so much work already but instead he received a bit of a glare.

"I said none of this miss stuff, use that again and I will make you clean out the poison ivy next time it starts to grow." This was a much heavier threat than Walker imagined. As a farmer Gil's mother had a skill that protected her from the poisonous itching oils of the poison ivy plant, Walker did not have such a skill. "And why would you disturb the earth mana? It is relaxed and flowing naturally. If you harden it up and force it to change the seeds won't get any nutrients, why do you think mages make the worst farmers?" Walker just sat there a bit silent, he had never heard that mages make bad farmers. Since he focused on would he make a bad farmer too?

"Now I hope you are ready to learn some things because first we are going to plant your dragon fruit tree." She practically dragged him to the stone bench she had moved to the center of the garden. The path she had outlined led to a round flat spot that Walker assumed would be covered in stone later. "The tree will be the shade for this spot here. If it is not grown properly forget about reading here you won't be able to stand the summer sun at all."

Gil's mother took out the dragon fruit seeds from her pocket and moved in to the tilled soil behind the bench. "Get over here and dig about ten inches down, these are the deepest seeds we need to plant." Walker scooped the soft slightly damp soil with his hands. The scent of first penetrated his nostrils. "These seeds need to be deeper because once they grow they will try and absorb as much sun as

possible. This means they will grow tall and be off balance. I did some research and asked around and one of my friends said that they normally grow in clusters of five or six dragon fruit trees that all share a root network. This formation keeps them standing against winds."

Walker headed her words and dug five well spaced out holes in the flower bed. He saw that the solid had already been treated with some small bits of fertilizer made from the plants and leaves that Gil's mother had taken out and ground up when they first moved in. The fact that she had not even wasted the weeds was rather impressive.

"Now I have a skill that adds some of my mana in to a seed, it will cause it to sprout within a few minutes and reach a younger growth stage within an hour. This is draining when planting an entire field but really beneficial when planting important crops. Just watch what I do and give it a try, this is a skill that farmers and alchemists can both use." Gil's mother held one of the small seeds between two fingers. There was a soft green glow enveloping the seed for just a second before she planted it and covered it up with solid. "Did you see the mana that covered it? That is what you want to happen, now try it out."

Handing Walker a seed Jane leaned back a small smirk on her face. Walker held the seed just like her and started to channel his mana in to the seed. The glow seemed to be starting. Crack! The seed shattered in his hands and fell in to pieces on the ground. Jane cracked up with laughter at this, she had known this could happen but said nothing. "Ha-don't worry, hahaha, I did the same thing, haa, when I first started." She rubbed a tear from her eye finding it extremely funny. "The farmer that told me how to master that trick did not warn me either, it's a right of passage. Once you learn how much mana a seed can hold you will get the skill. Here are the rest of your dragon fruit seeds, good luck." She left Walker sitting there frustrated on the ground with four holes left in the ground waiting for seeds to be placed.

Walker was dead set on making his seeds grow faster just like hers and decided to give it his all. However the next three seeds cracked just like his first attempt. He was pouring his mana in to the little seeds too fast causing them to be unable to hold all of it at once. This was a trick that took precision and not rushing. Taking a deep breath Walker held a seed and decided to start at the basics. How do I control my mana? This question was simpler said than done but since he had been doing so much training manipulating elemental mana he thought it would be easier.

Walker focused on the amount of mana in his own body, he imagined a small amount of it flowing from the center of his being and through his fingers in to the seed. This slow flow was softer on the seed which had almost no strength as of yet. This time the result was a bit different. The seed did not shatter and fall apart but instead Walker could feel it break slowly and split in half. This was not the goal he had

in mind but it was progress. "I need to be softer!" He took another deep breath and grasped at a seed, he started on his next try.

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Chapter 243 - 243. Germination

Crack!

Walker lost focus and another seed shattered. He had taken a step back in his progress. All it had taken was a soft breeze to pull his mind from the tiny amount of mana he was trying to infuse in to the seed.

This was not as easy and Gil's mother had made it seem. She was already off helping out with the others planting their seeds. She had already prepared the seeds for them since they would not be able to add mana to them using a skill like she could. As annoying as this process was to learn Walker knew that she had left it this way to that he would learn a skill.

Holding another new seed in his hands he started the process again. The small amount of mana began to wrap around the seed. Walker felt he was holding back a raging river by himself. Bit by bit the mana entered the small seed causing it to bulge ever so slightly. There were no cracks and no visible damage to it. Now the problem was cutting off the flow so that the mana would stay inside. The last time he had tried this the mana inside forced it's way out and shattered even more violently.

He knew that he was adding just too much mana but if he held back too much then there was no difference at all. This time Walker allowed some mana to slip out of the seed and flow in to the air around him. The seed still did not crack but instead started to glow a bit more than it had before. Walker refused to celebrate until he could feel the seed would not take or give any more mana at all. Coming to a balance he was able to stop the flow and was left with a small glowing seed just the same as Jane's.

Walker quickly released it afraid that if he held it any longer then it would somehow absorb more mana and burst. With the seed in the hole that had been made he covered it all up and gave the soil a pat. This was his win, after trying this for an two hours he had planted his first seed!

' The skill speed germination- 2 mana cost

Infused a seed with mana to speed the germination process. The seed will be able to better absorb natural mana and nutrients from the soil.'

Walker knew that this skill would be nothing special to anyone else but to him this could be very useful in both alchemy and forging. It was rare but for some kinds of weapons it was important to have plant based materials. For example Gil's arrows, if he used a fully metal arrow then it would be too heavy to travel far and be useless. There were also staffs that could channel certain elemental manas better than forged metal ones. If Walker could use these farmer skills to create his own materials he may be able to have a higher quality weapon at a lower level than others would.

There was also huge profit in this since many of the more important buildings could only use these kind of rare materials. Some could not hold mana for runes or have proper strength to stand up to wear and tear. The best example of this was the forge, where all the materials of the building needed to be resistant to heat.

Getting in to the swing of things he used his newly acquired speed germination skill to infuse the other seeds and place them in to the ground. The seed that Jane had planted before had already started to sprout out of the ground. The small light green leaves were mixed with a red purple veins that seemed to pull more mana from the air and light as it grew. Walker wondered how much of this was the speed germination skill at work and how much of it was the plants natural growing rate.

"Oho, finally managed to get the hang of things there, and here I expected a greenhorn like you to spend all day on it." Jane had come up from helping Remey and Su who had planted half of their seeds. Surprisingly there were many more seeds sprouting in the strawberry row already. "Ah don't worry about them, those seeds grow faster even when left alone, I just gave them a bit of a boost. I'm not sure if you will learn this skill but I have a passive called green thumb." This was new to Walker and easily piqued his interest.

Seeing his curious look she knew that she had his full attention. This was what she had wanted, if she could get Walker motivated to keep gardening then she knew that he would eventually learn this passive skill as well. " The green thumb skill boosts the speed of growth for every plant you nurture, even just spending a few hours on them then you will wake up in the morning to a few inches of growth. I gained it after growing a hundred different plants. It was a reward for one of my main quests in my system."

Walker thought that this sounded like a huge challenge at the moment, he was so spread out that he could not imagine having the time to grow over a hundred different plants. "Wait, I just need to nurture them for a few hours? Do you think I can do that while practicing other skills?" Walker could see the start of a good plan.

"That's going to be up to you" Jane smiled knowing that he had taken the bait and was going to start working on these new skills with some good focus. "Now get over here, you need to learn to infuse the water with more mana so that it's easier for the plants to drink up." He felt that she was throwing the hardest possible skills at him to learn, but if he did not give it his all then there was no point.

She had set up three barrels full of water from a pump in the corner of the yard. "This water is already natural, it comes from the pump which is drilled down in to a natural underground pond. That already had more nutrients than other waters, all we need to do is add some mana to get things working. You should get the hang of it easily." Walker was left again alone with just the barrels of water and a feeling that this was not as easy as she made it sound. Jane hadn't even shown him how it was done.

Walker did the only logical thing and placed his hand in to the first barrel of water, he let the mana from his body begin to flow into the water. The water rapidly started to suck the mana up like it was an unending void. This was the opposite of the seeds he had just been infusing with mana, the water wanted to take all of his mana and leave him with none.

He could feel the water getting hotter, the top of it even seemed to steam a little. The level had definitely started to decrease, Walker glared at Gil's mother who was already fully focused on preparing things for the weeping willow tree.

Walker stopped the flow of mana with difficulty and stepped back watching the water evaporate at a much faster pace. This was similar to the seed but instead of shattering the water would start to evaporate into the air. It would also take on the mana willingly instead of needing to have it pushed in to it. This meant that he needed the strength to keep the mana from rushing in and making the hard work to disappear.

After the first barrel had stopped losing water top evaporation he saw that a whole quarter of it had taken his mana and disappeared. Now he needed to find out just how much mana the water could take without evaporating. Instead of placing his whole hand in the water he only placed one finger, this already slowed the amount of mana that could leave his body. Using the same method to hold back the flow of mana Walker slowly let out bit by bit.

The water reacted much differently than it had before, it became much clearer. He could almost see the bottom wood grain of the barrel like it was empty, if it wasn't for his slight reflection on the surface he would say that there really was nothing in the barrel.

He stayed in this stance for what seemed to be years as the mana flowed out of him and in to the water a drop at a time. The water had finally started to give a al glow like the seeds had. This was the moment for him to pull away. He already knew better than to rush this so he pulled his finger out slowly and stopped the mana as he did so. The result was water that was perfectly clear and half a bluish glow of mana. "Ha! Not going to evaporate this time!" Walkers' cries for victory drew everyone's attention.

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Chapter 244 - 244.Watering

The rest of the party had nearly finished all of their planting and Remey had started to mix some fertilizer in to the solid around the strawberry rows. He was a bit embarrassed at this but realized that there were small drops of sweat running down his face. His hair was soaked and so were his clothes. He had not even noticed the entire time he focused on the water that the sun had been beating down directly on him. He was so focused that he had not even noticed Midnight and Onyx who were resting by the now sprouted dragon fruit plants.

"Well that was a pretty good speed, you only needed thirty minutes to finish that single bucket. I thought you would have passed out after the first try." Jane laughed a bit, she had clearly known that the water would try to take all his mana so that it could evaporate away in to the air. "The trick is to let the smallest amount possible each time, if you give it another shot you may be able to do it in about twenty minutes. I will do the other barrel since you will be low on mana by then." The two of them each took a barrel.

Walker used his previous strategy and only placed one single finger in, however he was shocked to see that Jane had placed both hands right in to the water without fear. Walker watched as the water became clearer almost instantly, she was much faster than he had been. Not wanting to lose too badly he started to focus and allow mana in to the water. At a much slower pace than Jane the water started to become clear. He knew that she had already finished but was waiting for him so he let a little more mana in to the water. The reaction was instant, the water gained a slight glow of mana and he knew he needed to start pulling back. In his haste he had almost just evaporated most of it like the first time.

Ten more minutes passed and he had finally finished his second barrel.

' The skill water activation has been taken from the farmers system. The user has learned the skill water activation through their actions.

Water activation- 3 mana cost per gallon

The minerals in water are not always easy for plants to absorb. By adding additional mana they gain a more easily absorb able structure allowing plants to take it in at a faster rate.'

"Done it's done!" Walker sat down where he was standing breathing heavily. The sun had started to get to him and he needed to rest to regain his mana.

"That was much faster, I take it you got the water activation skill right? Now that you have it you will be much faster and can add mana to larger amounts of water at once. You will have a huge difference in plants grown with regular water of mana infused water. Mostly in growing size and speed." Jane nodded with each benefit she spoke of. "If we keep up with the mana infused water then tend to them properly we will have flowers on the plants before the bees even show up to pollinate them. That will be where you wind elemental manipulation come in handy. I have a skill that makes pollination have a higher chance of happening but I can not bring the pollen to the flower without physically doing it. So your wind can make a little pollen tornado so they all will bare fruit later." She had already planned out weeks in advance. This was how the mind of a farmer truly worked.

"Sounds like a plan, but right now I think I am going to lay here and just relax." Walker was still tired but his breath had returned to him.

"Relax? That's a good one, Gil you're team leader has some good jokes!" She yelled over to Gil who could barely hear what she was calling for. "We have to start watering the seedlings that are starting to sprout, they won't last long without the nutrients in the water. We are starting the, much too early, but since the first shouldn't come we are getting a head start." This made Walker want to cry, she already made hi, use up all his mana and she expected more, farmers might just be evil.

Since Gil had finished up his planting he jumped in to the other rows with Su who was just about at the end as well. Remey had just placed her final bit of fertilizer down and looked to find another bucket.

Jane had refused to let them use the last barrel of water saying that she was sure that they would need it later. She looked like she was expecting something.

The one and a half barrels were absorbed quicker in to the soil than they all had expected. By the time they had started to pour the infused water on to the places where they had planted it was evident that the soil was very dry. The burst of growth to get the seeds from a dormant state to a grown seedling state had consumed much more of the moisture in the soil than any could have guessed. The soil had just been muddy only a short time earlier.

Jane roamed about pointing out the spots that still needed some water or seedlings that had grown improperly and needed to be plucked. "See this one right here, it has a double leave but no secondary leaves starting, if we leave it it will grow sideways. Now how would it get sunlight like that? We would have a bunch of half grown strawberries not fit for eating at all."

The only one that was not impressed by her ability to pick these tiny details in each barely developed seedling was Gil. With his mother constantly pointing these things out and his system's support there was no wondering why his eyesight was so good. This was its own kind of training, since it was not taking up any of his mana and could be utilized with his heightened senses from his gear Walker trained asking as many questions as possible to find those that were also growing improperly.

The oozing vines were all perfect, not a single one had grown in a strange way. Jane mentioned that vine plants are often very flexible so they would almost never grow in a bad way. The thing that had the most problems was the strawberry row. Apparently these plants were temperamental when it came to the way they grew. If they had just a little too much resistance when sprouting it changed the entire way the leaves would grow. Comparing this to the spirit lily that was now at the bottom of the training pond, Walker could not imagine how it was even possible that it could grow.

"Mom, can you show them that skill? You still need to use some skills on the weeping willow, and you save the water for it right?" Gil was looking at the tiny weeping willow sapling that Jane had been working on in between helping all of them. Was this skill that Gil had mentioned what she was waiting for?

"That skill huh? Well I haven't used it this month so I guess I can use it this time." This got Su's attention.

"Do you happen to have a skill with a time restriction?" Su had heard of some skills being limited to only a certain amount of uses in a lifetime or within a certain time period. These skills were often high level

skills or mastery skills. She had never seen one though since she had never been able to afford to pay a healer with one such skill.

"That is exactly it, my mastery skill can only be used once a month. Gil always gets so excited when I use it. You should have seen his face when I first showed it to him, he talked about it for weeks afterwards." Gil was not at all embarrassed by this though and instead seemed to be getting even more excited.

"I will get some more fertilizer over there and get the sapling ready." Gil started to rush off grabbing a shovel. "Walker get that barrel over here too we will need all the water for mom to use her skill." Su and Remey needed to help Water move the whole barrel but between them it was an easier task. "Alright pour it all out here, right on top of the fertilizer. The more mud the better." Gil had tossed five buckets of fertilizer all around the sapling. The pile was just about taller than the sapling now.

Gil's mother came over and started to evaluate the work they had done to prepare. "Alight everything is looking good. Pour out the water right here and stand back. Things will get a bit busy."

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Chapter 245 - 245. Nature Goddess

The water poured out in to the fertilizer causing a muddy black and brown mix to puddle around the sapling. The entire party followed Gil's lead and stood a fair distance back. Jane took a large breath and rolled up her sleeves a bit more, with a slight stretch she reached out to touch the sapling. The party watched and listened intently to see what would happen.

"I beseech you goddess of growth and fertility. Bless this young life with your touch and allow it the strength to become a pillar of nature." Swirls of green mana seemed to be growing out of the ground and air itself. These wisps focused in on Gil's mother and were channeled through her hand at an incredible rate. The strength of the green glow continues to increase many times over. The energetic feeling in the air was tangible, it was almost if someone had used a very high level healing spell. The aura in the cathedral was not comparable in the least.

Suddenly the glow dispersed and Jane stepped back looking a bit pale. Gil rushed up and helped her move back while keeping an eye on the little sapling. There started a slow creaking and a slight vibration

in the ground, roots started to spring up from the sapling. They were white grey and twisted in and out of the soil. The sapling itself was pushing taller and taller, more branches sprouting.

The leaves were going through many seasons growing, fading, flowering, and then going dormant over and over. The life cycles of the weeping willow were incredible to witness all at once. "Watch the roots, if they catch your foot it might twist around you!" Gil shouted a warning just as Walker saw a root get near him, he heeded Gil's voice and moved back farther watching the root dig back down in to the ground.

The now much larger weeping willow tree was growing in to a full fledged adult size before their eyes, it was already much taller than them and the trunk was almost double their waist in thickness. After about five minutes of rapid growth the speed of the growth was slowing, after another five the party were amazed to see the long drooping branches of a massive white and grey bark tree. There were tiny white buds starting to form that would soon form leaves.

"So what did you all think?" No one had the right words to reply to Jane at that moment, and seeing that she was fairly tired Gil decided he would take the job of explaining what had just happened.

"Mom's mastery skill can only be used once a month. It is called touch of the nature goddess. It can grow a plant in to full maturity in just a few minutes. The cost is of course the nutrients in the soil and a whole lot of mana." Walker thought this was one of the most beautiful skills he had ever witnessed besides the light from Alice's song.

The shifting seasons that had been shown to the, in wick succession had spoken volumes, trying to describe what they had seen in words would have been too little for what had actually occurred. " It was...just...wow." Gil laughed a bit at this reaction and started to help his mother toward the door of the mansion. He thought it better to leave them to take it all in themselves.

Midnight and Onyx had been interrupted from their rest and sat much farther away. They were both entranced by the massive tree that had appeared within minutes. They were studying the other plants that they had seen Gil's mother helping with wondering if they would as well burst from the ground and become massive trees too. After some time they had all gathered their thoughts.

"That was one of the coolest mastery skills ever." Remey summed up her thoughts pretty easily, this was what Walker and Su were thinking too and could only nod.

"I can not imagine what else she could grow if she could use that skill more than once a month." Walker was trying to imagine a farm springing up in to a jungle in just a few minutes using a tun of mana potions.

"Leader, Gil said the skill was called touch of the nature goddess. Does that mean she borrows the power of a goddess just to do that?" Su was curious that one day she may be able to call for a god's power as well. The real question was how did the world decide what gods would be related to what systems. If they too were bound by the world's system then was the world more powerful than a god. Or was it that they just didn't understand things correctly.

"It sounded like it, but who knows how it all works. All I know is that we have just seen something great and I can't wait until next month to see what else she decided to grow." Su knew that this was all just going to be theory anyways and dropped the thought. She would find her mastery skill when the time was right, no need to rush.

"Ugh, I am filthy! Let's go inside and get the mud off." Remey had looked down to find there was more dirt on her pants than she had ever seen. "Do you think farmers are always this dirty?"

"It looked like Gil's mother didn't have a single speck of dirt on her." Su had observed that every time Jane had knelt down not a bit of mud stuck to her overalls. It was like it was afraid to stick to her.

"Must be a skill, if I can get that skill my clothes will never get dirty." Walker was trying to brainstorm on how to gain a passive skill like that or one that the blacksmiths sometimes had that kept them clean.

"Ha! Well if you figure it out also find a way to give it to us." Su nodded supporting Remey's desire. Having such a skill would be pretty great for when they were on long journeys after all. Plus they would always look their best, and a hero should always look their best to set the right example.

With their long days work finished they all went inside, Onyx and Midnight following behind. The baths were full of plenty of dirt but they had made themselves clean again after some great effort. The dirt would not be coming out of their old clothing anytime soon though, luckily they had worn the old clothing intentionally.

They all got in to dinner and later off to bed with out any issue. Everyone had realized that the auction was the next day, they had all been waiting for it eagerly. The party slept like logs, since their bodies had

been put through an introductory course in farm labor. When he woke up Walker was not surprised to find that Gil's mother was already outside checking up on the seedlings.

Just like she had said there was no frost even though it was still a bit cold outside. The night air had brought a morning dew that coated all of the seedlings and the newly grown weeping willow. He was still having trouble grasping just how fast the sapling that was barely grown had become a full grown tree. It was really an amazing mastery skill.

He was not the only one getting up however because the second he had opened his door after staring out the window for some time at the garden, he found Su heading toward the kitchen.

"Good morning leader, care to hunt down some breakfast?"

"Of course, we need to eat early before my mother starts to cook. I know she will be preparing a lot of things for dinner tonight since we will be having guests. I wouldn't be surprised if we get dragged in to cleaning vegetables before we head to the auction." Walker and Su chatted idly about what they should wear tonight and what crazy items may be sold by those who had the ability to acquire a VIP auction ticket.

Walker was wondering just who they may see there, he really had hoped that they would see the appraiser of the Garnet family again since he had left such a positive impression last time. "I wonder if Onyx and Midnight will come? Onyx might be interested in an auction but I have no idea about Midnight." This was more a thought out loud but Su answered still.

"I believe Onyx will go no matter what. He seems to want to know everything in the world, it is definitely your influence on him." Su smiled a bit at her teasing, not that this was an insult in any way. "Midnight may not want to but I think she should come with us. What if she sees something that seems interesting, that we do not have a sense for?" Su made a pretty good point.

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Hearing that there was an increase in pots and pans clattering around in the kitchen as the two approached Walker prepared to get dragged in to food prep work. The two came to the sight of Hilda running about at an incredible speed. Vegetables would flee in terror if they could. Her knife was expertly cutting them on to various shapes for a stuffing that would fill the already dry rubbed horned rabbit on the counter.

"Mother, are you planning on roasting the entire thing today?" The horned rabbit was one of the smaller ones they had defeated but it would still take up almost the entire oven with its size.

"Well what else should I be doing so early in the morning? I seasoned it last night so that the herbs and spices could sink in, now I will roast it with that oak that Gil's father brought back from the forest. Maybe twelve hours or so and it will be done." Walker had learned that his mother would not take any shortcuts and was willing to spend the longer amount of time to get a better product but this was getting more and more due to her experiments. "If I don't take the time then how do you expect me to have good enough food to feed the high priest. Even Remey told me she invited a master alchemist, a master!" Hilda threw her arms up with an exasperated look. These kids were really challenging her more and more by inviting these high class guests.

"Ha ha... well they are our friends but you don't need to worry about it. Everything you cook is great and I am sure they will love it." Walker wanted to take at least a little stress away from his mother since they were the cause of it.

"Yea yea sweet words will do nothing until I have served all the food I have planned. Now if you have time get over there and start washing the fruit so that I can prepare it for some desserts later. So I will need your help measuring out some flour and sugar over there." With that the two were put in to work just as Walker had expected.

They cooked and cleaned food for an hour. Hilda deemed them free to go, for their assistance they had gained some berry muffins that she had made the night before just for breakfast. The sweet cinnamon topping that she put on it was a favorite out of all the toppings she had ever made. It was especially a hit among the guards after she had sent Garret with a dozen one day to give them as a gift. The next time she had been out to order ingredients every single guard she walked by had told her how amazing they were and that they couldn't wait for her to make them again. Understandably it was now a monthly bake for them, they would all pool together some gold to buy the ingredients themselves and send them over.

With their prized muffins the pair headed towards the dining hall to see who else had made it awake. Surprisingly Gil and Remey were already up and bickering about close combat battles. "If I am right in front of someone why would I push them away? I should just use my dagger to attack them first."

"No, if you are too close they already have the upper hand, you need the space to get your dagger ready and pick out the place you will attack. By the time you have started your movement they will have already attacked you!" It looked like Gil had been taking his training seriously and decided to ask the party's main front line attack for some close combat advice. Unfortunately Gil and Remey had the tendency to butt heads a little more than talk smoothly.

Walker decided to show Gil what Remey was talking about, "Think fast!" He used his hand to poke Gil in the side. "Again" Walker moved in closer doing the same thing, Gil had no space to even move his arm to block.

"Walker, gahhhh what are you doing!?" Gil was shocked by the first attack but stuck on the second.

"See what I am saying, you can't even move your arm to block anything, how will you even draw that dagger you plan to get?" Gil had no words his theory had been proven false and he had to submit to what Remey had explained.

"So are you two excited for the auction?" Su wanted to keep Gil from starting up the argument since it looked like he had already taken a good lesson from things.

"Yes! We are going to get the best things and no one can stop us. The old man is going to buy out all the vials of pure water we put up so we will have plenty of gold to spend." Remey was practically bouncing with excitement.

"What if someone bids against him, aren't there going to be a lot of nobles or high ranking people with deep pockets? I would be surprised if we can sneak out with some of the less rare items." Gil was a little more realistic.

"To be honest I think Gil has a point, but something tells me that with the high priest we may have some more luck. I just hope that he doesn't try to bid against us too much." Walker did worry that if a large amount of light crystals or some light related gear showed up they would be out bid by the church in one move.

However there was the added bonus that since the high priest would be with them the other participants would be adverse to bidding against the whole group. It was a general practice to keep the church in good graces. There would also be the fact that nobles who had their own influence or high tier adventurers could show up. What if royalty even sent someone? How could anyone justify bidding against a royal?

"Well there is no point in worrying too much we just need to be ready to accept that there are those with more gold than us. But if we can get a few things that can help our gear it will be all the better. The greater ice imp bones and the pure water should sell very well." Midnight and Onyx had been bumming around by the fire but were attracted by the conversation, Walker was very happy to see the two of them bonding so much as of late.

"Brother, we both want to try and get something to help us get stronger too." Onyx rarely expressed to Walker that he wanted something so he would have no reason to say no.

"Just keep an eye out and if you see something let me know, I will do my best to win it." Walker let Onyx slither up on to his shoulders like usual and decided that they should all start to get ready. The auction was a special event with only VIP invites. This meant that it was much longer than the previous one they had attended. They had much more chances to socialize beforehand. This could work very well for them since the last time they are able to let the tamers know that they had the corpse spider eggs. Maybe they would run in to someone who really wanted to bid on the pure water of the greater ice imp bones.

The party split up to put on their nicest clothes. Each one of them made sure to keep their adventurers plaque, travel medal, and the insignia from the demi-human kingdom sigil and visible. These three symbols would go far in the socializing aspect of the auction to forge new connections and also keep those with higher status at bay. If they played their cards right they may gain some insight in what others were selling, it could make all the difference in them winning a good item or not.

Su and Remey had left their gear behind and wore some of the winter robes and clean clothing they had. They matched very well making the two seem like they were a distant family. They had brushed their hair and cleaned their faces giving them an extra glow about them. Walker and Gil had used similar clothing choices and matched well with the girls. If anyone looked it was clear to see the party relation. This was another very good choice since they could show off their strong binds to others.

Midnight and Onyx had obviously taken time to polish up their scales as well since they seemed much cleaner than the previous day. Walker wondered if that was why the two were by the fireplace this

morning to dry out. Midnight was already walking around with a little more pride today alone, he couldn't imagine how she would act when there were some high class guests asking about her and swarming them with attention. That was one thing Walker was not fully prepared for, would people swarm them or would people avoid them because of Midnight? He was not sure which would be worse.

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Chapter 247 - 247. Redecorated

"Alright, let's get a move on." Walker and the others stood at the open door, the sun had risen and started to fall again leaving the evening just starting to approach. The VIP auction would take them well in to the later hours but that was not the main event, that would be the after auction socializing. The party planned to head out after the bidding and go back for dinner at the mansion with their own guests.

Midnight led the way showing off her clean shiny scales and her slightly open wings, it was very evident she was trying to make the best impressions. "Hey umm Midnight knows where we are going right?" Gil spoke up realizing that she had yet to go to the auction house and was basically wandering around on her own.

"Eh, Onyx should remember where we are headed so it should be fine. He will give her some direction in the worst case. If he doesn't then we will just show up a little less early than we planned." Walker was not all that concerned since the nobles that they were passing on the way seemed much less aggravated and much more interested in the party.

With their medals all on display and more rumors circulating their own kingdom had started to take much more interest in them. It was fairly amusing to the party that the demi-human kingdom had become so enamored with them so easily due to their actions but their own kingdom was slow. This was mostly due to how the human mind worked, their cultures were founded differently and valued slightly different things, it was to be expected. Walker could only hope that he would not have much trouble today while they were at the auction.

With some direction from Onyx Midnight managed to lead the party all the way to the Garnet family auction house. The steps held many guests that were trying to get some of the remaining tickets from those who would show up to get rid of their extras or even sell them. Some of the lucky adventurers

that got a ticket and could not afford to participate would sell them last minute to gain some much needed party funds. There were also those who could bring guests that would choose an adventurer from the crowd and bring them along. This was sometimes an invaluable experience since the adventurer would make better connections with nobles which would lead to a more profitable future.

The crowd took notice of the party almost as soon as they approached. No one tried to cause them any trouble but the looks from some of those without tickets were full of jealousy as they approached the door. They were still young adventurers even though they had made a decent name for themselves. This made them the target of some jealousy since the party looked like they were about to walk in.

"Oh, Walker. We just got here ourselves. How are you all this evening?" The high priest had come up behind them just arriving himself. He was wearing the ceremonial robes which made him truly stand out over all the others that had been waiting in the crowd.

Alice was standing next to him surprisingly not in any church garb at all. She was instead in a white dress with blue embroidered patterns along the seams. It was reminiscent of the way the light flowed when she would sing. Walker was sure that Lisa would bombard her with questions on how it was made and who made it. He was looking forward to watching his little sister try to imitate these patterns.

"Hello, high priest. It is good to see you well. Alice you look amazing, you really bring out the beauty in that dress." Walker even surprised himself with his line and decided to thank his father for putting him on the right direction. The years of listening to the guards chat idly about the women they were trying to court was going to pay off. What an unexpected bit of knowledge he had learned, he would have never thought that the art of complimenting a woman would be something he would need.

Alice was very happy with this compliment and grew fairly red faced. The high priest had a small smile watching this scene. "How are things at the cathedral? Is Walker's repair still holding up well?" Su had been concerned since the day they had last been there. If the light healing crystal was not still in tip top shape then there were many who would suffer, something she just could not allow.

"It is working perfectly, thanks to you two it is back to it's normal self. You know all my healers and nuns have been asking when you will be back to help out. They really seem to find you the best volunteer they have ever had," Su had not expected such a complement and was stumped silent due to it. Her face tinged a little red and she gave a small nod. "I hope your three can come and help out next time too, having more hands the better, well in your case maybe a claw or two." Midnight had not realized the high priest would talk to her but after receiving his attention she puffed up her chest a little. The high priest was playing right to her ego.

"Well since we are all here, let's get inside. I want to put a few words in someone's ear about what we are selling." Walker gained a devilish smile, this time he would work harder to make the prices go up when they sold their items. He also wanted to see the Garnet family elder appraise his items too. He felt that his insight was very valuable.

The amount of guards and attendants at the door had tripled compared to the last time they were there. This must have been the additional security due to the high class guests and the rarer items. The party was in awe seeing that the interior designs had also changed. Instead of the red color scheme like last time their carpets and drapes had been replaced with purples and yellows. The paintings had all been swapped out and even had price tags next to them so that those who liked them could purchase them. There were newer furnishings polished and hand carved. They did not know that the auction house went to such lengths to maintain it's high end appearance.

"Hello sirs and madams, can I please ask you for your name?" The main attendant approached, he seemed rather new and was shouldered by a security guard. They were taking their job very seriously. The guard was glancing at Midnight and was most certainly a bit put off.

"We are the omnipotent party and we are bringing two guests with us." Walker took the lead to make sure everything went smoothly.

"Perfect, you have been upgraded to a balcony seating for the auction by one of our family elders for your assistance to the auction house and the family. Thank you for accepting our previous quest with the adventurers guild. High priest it is an honor to see you again, may you have good luck tonight and enjoy the atmosphere." The man had become much more polite and open the second he had read their name on the list. Walker was pleased to hear that they had been upgraded to a better seating and was interested to see what this seating would look like.

"Thank you very much." Walker and the high priest both spoke at the same time making it a little awkward but in a good way. The two of them led the way while the others followed, Midnight was right on Walkers heel as then went through the door. She seemed fairly enamored with the nice appearance, she even wiped her feet on the mat at the front of the door before entering. Walker wondered where she had learned this etiquette.

Walking along the hall they came to a familiar face waiting at a counter before the open hall. "Hello again, and welcome back to the Garnet family auction house. Are you looking to sell more items this time?" She clearly had remembered the corpse spider eggs that the party had sold the last time,

however this was not a surprise since her job relied on her having a keen memory of guests and what they sold.

"Yes, we have brought a large amount of items. Do you have a place we can put them down? We do not want to disturb the flow of guests here." Walker had thrown the woman off just a little but she was quick to point to a room branching off from the main hall.

Walker and the high priest were the only two that left the group. Walker had expected him to stay but looking at his eyes he knew that the high priest who had rarely ever left the kingdom was curious to what an adventurer had brought back.

"Well back again, hahaha you even brought one of my friends along."

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Chapter 248 - 248. To Make Waves

The Garnet family elder was sitting on a stool behind the counter, the room the two had just walked in to was the storage area for the items that the elder was appraising before the auction. They could see the woman who had just directed them at the other side of the counter. "You have something a little large do you? I hope it is something that will challenge my appraisal skill." A sly smile spread on his face. He had been waiting for something interesting to come through the door and make the night worth his time.

"I can't say it is as good as the wine we found at the ancient ruins but we happened to cross paths with two tough monsters while in the plains." Walker pulled the bones of the greater ice imp and let them rest on the floor, the nearly complete skeleton immediately got the two older men's attention.

"So these are the monsters you have been battling out on your journey?" The high priest had never seen a creature like this. "With such a big opponent you all must work harder than I expected, I am impressed."

"No, if we saw a lot of these it would be pretty tough, this is what is left of a greater ice imp. We had some trouble with it and we can't really use the bones for anything. But we thought they may sell well here since there are lots of other uses for them. Most of the snow imps in the plains are much smaller than this and easier to deal with." The Garnet family elder was already shifting through monocles trying to get an appropriate appraisal. "By the way, today we will be trusting you to sell our items at the proper

price so we won't be haggling with you." This made the elder smile even more, if this boy was going to offer such trust and respect he would make sure they got what they were worth.

"These do indeed form a greater ice imp. Looks to be about seventy five years old and has not been through too many tough battles. It's lucky you found it in the plains, normally we only see items from one when they are much older, this one was young and naive." he shook his head knowing that if it had lived for another twenty or so years the value of the bones would have been almost double due to the amount of elemental mana built up within them. "Do you have anything else for me? Maybe something that could make waves in the auction tonight?"

The high priest had expected this to be the only item but when Walker started to pull out crates that clicked with glass he was thrown in to another wave of curiosity. "I have two hundred vials of pure water from a snow golem. We ran in to one that really liked to fight..." Walker trailed off remembering the near death experience in the plains. "Anyways yes we are looking to sell them all, maybe in batches of fifty since many alchemists will buy a large amount."

"Yes, fifty is doable, let me take a look to check the purity. I do trust the items you bring but after the last time you were here I have tightened my reins on the flow of products we auction."

"That sounds very professional, I hope that things have been very fruitful in that endeavor." Walker knew that it was him who had caused this change by calling the now imprisoned representative of the church out on bringing a cursed item to the auction. The high priest did not even flinch at hearing this. He had done his due diligence to remove the culprit and believed that the church was not clear of the responsibility.

"Hmm, clear, very strong, did you take this while still frozen then cap this? It is very pure there has been almost no impurity leaching in to it. It has been a few years since we have had pure water come through our auction house. This is a nice amount and should do well in our potion market. The next auction we have may have a good amount of stronger potions."

"Yes we bring it to an alchemist that my party member knows and he helped us bottle it all up. We sold some to him directly and he will even be attending today to try and purchase more. I believe that this may bring the waves you are looking for." Walker smiled knowing that the information on this pure water was definitely not kept secret. There was definitely a way that the information got out to other alchemists.

"That would explain why we have had a few alchemists and herbalists that would rarely use their VIP tickets. I have wondered why a few masters have even attended. This will make you all a decent amount of gold. Upgrading your seats to a balcony was the right choice. So it was this elder that had upgraded their seating.

"Thank you very much for that, we are all excited to see what the balcony seating is like." Walker headed out the door he had come in realizing that the high priest was lagging behind. "Anything wrong?"

"Ah yes I was wondering how these would affect a healing potion. I just may put some bids in on those. I have heard that pure water can take out some poisons using some healing skill, it could be very valuable for the adventures that have braved the swamps and come home injured." The high priest always had thoughts of helping others, this raised Walker's opinions of him greatly.

The two moved onward finding the rest of the party and Alice still waiting for them. "Sorry for the wait we just left the items with the elder, we are ready to head in." The woman moved a rope to allow them entry. The Main hall was decorated much like the entry way was, lavish purple and yellow fabric hung from the walls. The appetizers being carried around smelled of strong herbs and looked like they had been taken right from the most detailed paintings. They themselves were pieces of art. The most eye-catching part was that there were suits of armor that were lined up along the walls, amongst other things like weapons and shields as well. These were all auction items put out on display so that the VIP guests could check out what was going to be sold.

Naturally the last minute items added and the other more unique items for auction were not on display here. Things like materials and monster parts were not the most suitable for display anyways.

The amount of guests was fairly small but they were all well dressed and some had some defining traits. There was a small group all wearing matching pendants with flames carved on them. They looked to be an adventuring party that was very interested in some red themed armor. At the back of the room there were a few familiar faces, Markus Raven was with a few other nobles that Walker could recognize from the castle. He must have been here in the stead of royalty, it was to be expected that they would want to have eyes out for unique items. Having sighted Walker and Onyx he was not the happiest but he knew he could not perfectly avoid them seeing that their fame was rising.

"Leader I am going to look at those shields over there, maybe I will see some ideas I really like." Su did not even wait to hear what anyone else said, she was already off to study a white shield with green details on it. She was the party defender so not a single one of them could judge her for being so interested. They would all be the same if they saw something they liked.

"If Su is going off to look at shields I am taking Alice to find some good food, last time it was the best." Alice could not even say a word to protest and Remey took full advantage. The high priest could only laugh as she was dragged away. Walker almost followed them, but he knew that it would be better to let the two have their own fun.

"Well since it is only us now why don't we make our rounds, there are a few nobles from the castle I should greet. It would look good for you two as well to join me." The high priest was looking at Markus Raven and as much as Walker did not want to test those waters he had no reason to say no. Getting up his own courage he nodded and started to walk over with the high priest.

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Chapter 249 - 249.Wrong

"High priest, how fortunate we are to see you here. I am surprised that you have brought some young adventurers with you this time." Markus had assumed that these were guests of the high priest when they had all entered.

"Actually it is the opposite, today I am the guest. These young ones made an offer to bring me along and I just could not refuse. What can I say I am easily tempted." He laughed a bit showing his charisma.

Markus was caught with surprise; he had not ever expected them to have a ticket to this auction at such a young age, it was even rare for a nobles child to have one for themselves. "It has been a little while since we last saw each other, treasurer Raven. You are looking well, I hope that the wine you bought last time proved desirable. We had a little trouble getting it out of the ancient ruins."

"You found that!" Markus was caught with even more surprise, he hadn't heard that their party were the ones who had sold it. He was a little annoyed he had padded their pockets when he bought it but also thankful since when he gave it to the king he had received raving reviews.

"Well I suppose i need to thank you for that then, it did in fact serve me well. I used it as a gift for his majesty." Markus was having a bit of trouble admitting it since their first encounter was a bit rough around the edges. It was even tougher since he could see Midnight from across the room enjoying the appetizers with the other party members.

Gil took the chance to chime in with his own thoughts, "So you must be here to represent the castle today? It must be a lot of work for you." He wanted to build some relations with the castle so that things could be easier in the future, Walker agreed that it was necessary and did not push it away.

"Oh no tonight I am here myself with a few friends. We really enjoy the auctions because we have found some very interesting things. I personally love to find unique art. I have a collection of historical pieces from the founding of our kingdom. One day I hope to open my own museum after retiring from treasure." Markus had run off on his own tangent, none of them expected him to have such a strong cultural goal in his life. Their opinion improved greatly after hearing this.

"If we manage to come across anything in the future we will keep that in mind. We may one day go back to the ancient ruins and find some things that you find interesting as well." Walker put a bit more politeness in to this since he was finding that Markus may not be as bad as he expected. It was also very impressive how well he was doing in the presence of Onyx on his shoulders. He was fearful of snakes but it looked like he had been working on this fear since it had been exposed to the entire court. He was a very hard working noble.

"I actually have a set of historical items I have been collecting from the adventures that go to the ancient ruins. I have collected almost every single piece of the set but still lack one last piece." He seemed rather annoyed at this, making everyone curious.

"Well what piece is left? Is it a painting or some older books?" The high priest was also intrigued by this, he had known that Markus was an avid historical collector but hearing that he was even willing to ask the young adventurers he wanted to know more. The rumors of the first trip to the castle spread easily to the higher ranking individuals like the high priest so seeing Markus take this all in stride impressed him.

"Well I found a unique set of silverware, I know it sounds rather strange but it was crafted by a blacksmith who had amazing skills to keep them from deteriorating ever. The last piece if it shares the name of the rest would be; pristine butter knife." Walker and Gil were speechless, what were the odds. "It was crafted by one that lived in the ancient ruins and most likely passed down their knowledge somehow to other blacksmiths. Some who have studied forging theory found that a great many techniques are the base of our kingdom's crafting" Markus seemed so proud of this knowledge. The prior image of the man was being crushed in to dust in Walker and Gil's minds. The man may have caused them some trouble but it would look like that was not the whole of his character.

"If I were to tell you we knew where the last piece of the set was, what would you say?" Walker said these words slowly bracing himself for any possible repeat of their first meeting. However he prepared himself for nothing.

Markus's eyes bulged, " don't tell me you know where it is? Do you? If you do I will put all of our past aside and purchase it. Don't tell me it's up for auction tonight!" Gil and Walker wanted to laugh, they had assumed this noble would always be against them but now that they knew that they had more to them than what they had seen so far they were much less uncomfortable. "Well? Is it?"

Markus had become a bit too open and realized this pulling back. "I am sorry, we are a bit caught off guard. With our first meeting we thought you completely hated us, especially my little sister Midnight."

"Well I may only be the treasurer for the kingdom but I know that the castle does not even allow tamers to bring in their tamed beasts. At the time I was disheveled due to the blatant disregard for the rules, it was only later that I was told the details of why your err, sister was there." Markus looked apologetic but still did not apologize, he would never apologize for worrying about the safety of the kingdom. "I did react very strongly though, but seeing you coming to talk to me I can share my own thoughts properly. Thank you for your input the other day on the demon issue, we look forward to the unique solutions your party may present." Markus had shifted in to full noble mode, this was years of training using his eloquent words and solid poker face. "Well back to our prior discussion, the item we were speaking about, is it up for auction?"

Walker was trying to wrap his head around this progression, how had he been so wrong about this noble, yes he knew that there were some that really did not like their party but this apparently was not one at all. Feeling a bit embarrassed Walker took out the shiny pristine butter knife from his inventory. "This is the last piece you have been looking for right?"

Markus almost hit the floor, "Yes! Hahahah yes it is, finally the complete set. What can I give you for it?" This was such an unexpected turn of events, Walker had never thought he would sell this item and had kept it for the simple fact that having silverware was always a useful thing. He would have gone his whole life just eating with it none the wiser of its historical value.

"Well to be honest, if we keep it we would just use it for its intended purpose. So if you really want it you can have it, just help us out in the future sometime, we are still learning the ropes when it comes to how the castle works." Walker handed the pristine butter knife over to Markus who delicately cradled it in his hands.

He was looking at it like he had just been handed the most delicate piece in all the world. He pulled out a small leather case from a pocket in his coat and slipped the knife within. He made sure it was secure then placed it back within the folds of his jacket. "I will indeed remember this, I may have overreacted in the past but if you and your party are ever in need, I will have open ears." Markus stood a bit taller, he considered leaving the auction at that moment to go put the last piece with the others of the set but stopped himself. "I will be heading over that way to look at the art, but I do think you may find some value in a rumor I heard." Markus leaned in to the three a little closer, "There should be some high mana crystals up for auction tonight. They are rare but one in particular has a dual element, it should be very useful to someone who has the ability to use multiple elements." With that Markus walked off his two guests rejoining him.

"Well that was sure an interesting encounter, I think I misjudged him." Walker could only nod in agreement with Gil.

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Chapter 250 - 250. Dual Elements

The high priest had been mostly silent through this entire event, he knew that the party had not hit it off well with Markus Raven and he personally had pulled a few strings to make sure that Markus would attend this VIP auction. The high priest put in a lot of work after he had been invited and wanted to make sure his adoptive daughter would have the chance to properly spend time with her friends. If it was up to him he would make sure the party did not leave the kingdom again so they would not face any dangers outside the walls, unfortunately he knew that that was impossible. He could only dote on his Alice so much as a father.

"I have never heard of dual elemental crystals, I wonder what they can do." Walker was more speaking out loud than starting a conversation.

"Well once the auction house sold a fair amount of dual elemental crystals from a volcanic area, earth and fire mana I believe. They sold for five thousand gold each, a very useful item for the fire and earth made team that was in attendance." The high priest held a smug look knowing that he rarely had the opportunity to show off knowledge like this. He may be years older than those who brought him to the auction this time but he could share his gained knowledge.

"That sounds pretty cool, so if I went to a forest I may find an earth and water elemental crystal? It sounds like it can be a rare chance based on what natural mana exists there." Gil was excited to try and find some of his own. They would be a huge bounty for the party.

"From what I know it is very possible, but they need to be lucky to absorb a balanced amount of mana from both natural sources. That is what makes them rare. They are also harder to sue since they require a very specific system. The pair of mages that purchase the previous dual elemental crystals often fused spells with each other so they used the crystals to create a unique staff that they both could channel mana in to." The high priest held a finger to his chin, " They were known as the earth cracking duo before they retired."

"Wait, you have met those two! My parents only told me stories about them, they were the first two to fuse earth and fire in the kingdom, that was years ago." Gil had been read many stories by his parents, these kind of tales were very popular with the children in the fields who would rarely go in to the city when they were younger.

"Years ago? I swear it is almost like yesterday. When I met the two they could barely use any spells, their fathers brought them to an auction and they begged for the crystals. Ah how fun that auction was, the two fathers didn't even realize they were bidding against each other until the end when their children ran to share the news of the crystals they had just won." The high priest laughed to himself, he could only reminisce on these auctions now that he was reminded of his younger years. "I was not even a high priest at the time, I was just learning to become an entry level priest. My mentor took me here to show me the way auctions worked, how fun it was." the high priest wandered off following an attendant carrying beverages. The two were left a little in awe, what stories could the high priest share with them if he sat down and just started to talk.

"One day we are going to get him to tell us all about the people he has met."

"Definitely." Gil and Walker made their own deal, this would serve as a good way to get Gil to the cathedral to volunteer, not that he knew the high priest had stories about some of his favorite childhood stories, it would be much easier convincing him. The only other person that would need convincing was Remey but with a glance Walker knew it would be much easier.

Alice had been dragged to food with Remey but now that her and Remey were eating the smile on her face was very large. Remey was rambling on about something, Walker could only guess she had started to talk about the orphanage because she was showing more energy than usual. Walker had long noticed that she only showed a certain kind of smile and energy when talking about her own family. Midnight was also calmly sitting and enjoying the conversation, she seemed to like spending time in this setting where so many people were giving her attention. She also seemed to like that Alice would often snag an extra appetizer to pass down to her. Alice had unwittingly earned Midnight's respect.

"Want to go see what Su is checking out? She seems to have found something cool." Gil pointed towards a set of armor that was outlined with a lot of different carvings.

The two made their way across the room to see that she had been reading a piece of paper that described the crafting method and benefits of the armor. "What did you find Su?" Walker had become more interested the closer he got. The armor was a fairly basic design but had runes and other patterns carved on to it. From what he could see the metal also had a glow of natural elemental mana, it was absorbing them from the atmosphere around it. This may have been slight but it was a pretty impressive feat.

"This armor was forged by the dwarves then somehow managed to get carved and detailed by the elves. This is a very rare set of armor. It is only made of silver and Iron so it is not as strong. But since it was made by the dwarves they added some reinforcing techniques so I doubt it can't stand up to even the hardest hits." Su double checked the paper next to the armor. "Then these carvings allow it to absorb a small amount of mana from around it, this is really good to block any attacks from elemental . For any defender using body enhancing skills this can make them much tougher. I believe someone like the armies ice shield defender could make the best use of armor like this."

"Ice shield defender? I have never heard of someone like that." Walker and Gil were equally lost.

"I did some research on other defenders so I could make my shields better when I ask the blacksmith. There is a man that uses water and defensive armor to create ice shields and ice armor. He is considered one of the best young defenders in the entire army. A lot of people expect him to become a general one day." Su had been researching a lot when everyone was not paying attention. The fact that she was even looking in to the army for inspiration was impressive.

"So he would be able to use this armor to take in more of the water elemental mana he needed to create shields and armor." Walker came to his own conclusion, "This armor would give him a huge advantage, he could block attacks well above his own level. Maybe while we are in the deeper sun hollow forest we should look to learn more about runes from any elves we come in to contact with."

"I believe that to be a wise decision leader, but now I think we should go over and have a snack like them before we get to dinner. None of us ate lunch...I just realized we got too excited." Su was right and Walker and Gil suddenly came to the same realization feeling their empty stomachs crying out to them.

The three joined up with Remey who gave them the rundown on what they should and should not try. They all ended up with small plates of only the best appetizers suggested by Remey. Even Midnight was

nodding her head in support of the suggestions, how had the three come to these consensuses they had no idea, but were they spot on.

Walker was about to ask Alice what she like the best out of the appetizers when he noticed her gaze was fixed on a small bracelet in the corner of the large room. "Want to go check that out? We can see what it has to offer." Walker looked towards the bracelet too, Alice shook her head. "Brother, Alice does not want to get something she doesn't need. She thinks the gold is better spent elsewhere."

"Onyx, I'm an idiot! You can talk for Alice since she don't use mana to speak if you talk to her in her mind." Walker had not realized just how foolish he had been, he had the perfect little brother here to help him out to talk for Alice and the idea had completely gone over his head.

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