

## **Master 561**

Chapter 561 - 561. Intense Skill

' Guardsmen quest: Slay orcs- Completed (Ongoing)

The orcs are troubling the travelers that cross a common trade route bridge. The guards have requested adventurers come to slay them and make the route safer.

Requirements:

Slay five orcs

Additional orcs slain will be calculated by the adventurers guild.

Rewards:

15G per orc head

(1 heroic quest point for every 2 orcs)

Additional guild reward to be determined

Current orcs slain: 9

Rewards will be distributed upon party leaders quest end notification.'

Walker didn't see any reason to end the quest now. They had already completed it and was sure that they would find additional rewards. He also knew that the party were the only ones that could gain heroic points from the quest, however, he did note that the heroic points were definitely visible to anyone and not just his party.

It was the way the system had it added. It was normally there for the hero title quests and would show up differently. But here it was for a quest issued to the adventurers guild which was odd. He couldn't dwell on this long thought, because Gil and Su were already surveying the area for what may remain of the orcs.

"That attack you used was intense. I thought the sky had opened up and shot down lightning itself." Gil was still reveling in the constant sounds of the lightning even though it had harmed their ears.

"Leader, it may not have given away our location to other monsters. But it was very dangerous to test an attack like that. It also harmed us so please do not use it without warning." Su was trying to cover the safety aspect first. Yet, it was clear there was a glint of excitement in her eyes when Gil asked about the Walker had just used.

"Well, I tried to pull in a lot of the fire, water, and wind elemental mana like I have done when I made lightning before. But this time I forced it in to one spot which I have not tried. Then I realized that this would happen in a storm cloud and thought of a raging storm trapped in a bubble." Gil and Su were hanging on every word while they examined the broken fat orc. It was still intact which was a great surprise.

"I bet we could use this for something. Not many orcs should grow this much, right?" Gil interrupted as he took a harder look at just how thick the skin on the fat orc was.

"Yes, leader can store it and we can see if armor can be made from it or if it is valuable elsewhere." Su looked at Walker who stored it away in his inventory. "Leader, you were saying?"

Maybe it's better if I just read the skill from my system." Walker looked at the system notification again before reading out loud, what he had seen was:

' The skill lightning tantrum has been taken from the living storm system. The skill lightning tantrum has been learned through the users' knowledge and experimental actions involving three elemental manas.

Lightning tantrum- 20 mana cost

The wind, fire, and water elemental mana are forced to condense in to an orb of storm clouds. This storm grows and condenses until the user can not contain it any longer and must release it. The lightning will escape to deplete the energy within the condensed storm cloud. The series of lightning bolts causes significant damage to the target or the targeted area. The user may suffer from the sonic effect of the attack. The enemy can be stunned and deafened by this attack. The target may also be burned, paralyzed, and affected by ruptured due top steam escaping the body.'

This skill sounded fairly terrifying to them since it could cause damage in a multitude of ways. Even if a target survived they would be left with major issues that could put them out of commission permanently without immediate healing. "The mana cost and cast time are pretty high. But I think this is useable if we all get ear plugs and rely on Onyx."

Walker wanted to be able to use this skill on a group of orcs or enemies again., It was very strong and a safer attack than getting up close. The only solution they needed was the sound damage they would take by being too close.

"That is not the best skill to show off...maybe hold on to it for when we really need it." Gil was a little put off but he couldn't say anything against the strength of the skill itself.

"I agree." Su didn't hesitate in agreeing. "Leader, do we take the piece of stone back?" Su was pointing at the large stone.

"I think the guards can find a new one. This one is damaged." Walker tapped it with his foot and saw it start to fall to pieces. It had been slammed around too much for it to remain in one piece any longer.

"Understood. Then let's head back and let everyone know that we can proceed again." Su glanced around and saw that there were still many partial bodies of orcs and decided to return with the news alone.

"I will have this cleaned up before they get here." Walker began storing what he could and Gil tossed the unusable monster parts in to the trench he had made. After clearing what they needed to Walker used the high earth sculpting to repair the path and Gil retrieved his arrow. The darkness elemental mana had already begun to feed in to it.

"That arrow was pretty amazing. I hope you can have it ready if we meet another large group." Gil just smiled at Walker while the two headed to meet the sounds of cattle being herded.

"I heard a mighty ruckus. Don't tell me that was all you three?" Herder was the leader of the herd and saw the two first. Su had yet to tell him what had happened.

#### Chapter 562 - 562. Hidden Aces

Walker waved his hand at Herder as a greeting before speaking. "Sorry about that, I tried a new skill and it was a little too much on the ears." Walker was feeling slightly embarrassed because he was sure that the entire surrounding area had heard the chorus of thunder that came with the lightning tantrum skill.

"It really was you! I thought some divine judgment came down. I need to see this." Herder rushed forward to get to where the battle had taken place. Walker almost felt bad that he and Gil had already cleaned the area up.

"Seriously, you three go ahead and leave us to guard the herds, and merchants and the next thing we heard is lightning all around us. My ears are still ringing!" Remey was not as angry and she made it seem when it came to her staying back. She was really more than happy to be guarding the merchants. However, she was a little annoyed that she had missed such an impressive sounding skill.

"Brother, sister and I want to see your new skill when it is safe to do so. Sister says that it hurt her ears from here." Onyx and Midnight were together as always and came to greet Walker.

"Sorry about your ears. I had no idea that would happen. I will prepare ear plugs for the next time we use it. That means we will rely on you, Onyx, for communication."

"Of course, I will help whenever I can." Onyx was eager to continue this role in the party. It made him feel that he belonged and that he was holding everyone together in his own way. He had started to forget the feeling of being weak after his growth spurt and had realized that he could fight when needed but his specialty was in supporting the party in communication.

"I went all the way ahead and only found a few pieces of orc fingers and some soft dirt. Are you sure some god didn't come down from the sky and help you with an insane skill?" Herder was having a tough time grasping the fact that Walker had actually slain the goblins with Su and Gil.

"I promise that if you stick with us for a little longer you will see something that will shock you again." Walker couldn't hold back his laughter any longer. He felt bad for Herder who was trying to understand what had happened.

"Su, do you want to take the lead with me? I am going to do the same with the luring orb until we get to the next intersection in the trail. From there we will part ways with the cattle and the merchants. We will rest there for the night though. It will take all day to get there."

"Yes, I will walk ahead of you." Su was accep[ting of this since she saw that Walker had a familiar look on his face. "What do you want to test?" She knew already that Walker was looking to try pout another al skill before they rested for the day.

"Was I that obvious?" Walker had thought he made it look like he was trying to keep everyone moving safely. But instead, it appeared Su had seen right through him.

"We will stay back here. I will also keep an eye out like before." Gil motioned for Remey, Midnight, and Onyx to spread out again. He also held an arrow at the ready since he was a little on edge after the last batch of orcs.

Su and Walker took the lead while still staying in sight of Gil. "You know how I was going to use the moldable crystal ball and a twin blitz sword along with the lightning sword play skill? I want to see if we come across a single orc so I can test out the effect of the darkness and light elemental mana in the blade of night and day skill. If it defeats the orcs faster it may be a better strategy than before."

Walker was mainly looking to conserve mana since he had used a lot and it would take a little time for it to replenish. "I understand. Will you be using any other skill you gained recently?" Su was a little worried that Walker would push himself too far. The party knew of the skill from the demonic system which he had held back from telling the rulers to avoid additional stress.

"I might try to utilize the slash zone skill but to be honest I think it will be another drain on mana that I do not need. I want to use that skill when we meet a large number of enemies." Walker was sure that the skill would be a hidden ace for him.

He had stocked up on a few skills he would not use unless absolutely necessary. Some because they would cost too much mana and others due to their danger. But this one was a skill he could use and sock

an opponent while in battle without completely incapacitating himself after. He also lacked a full understanding of how the skill fit in to his current style and didn't want to risk too much by using it constantly.

"I think that is wise. We should avoid testing too much though." Su said this because she could hear some cracking tigs from the bushes already. It was clear that the orcs in the area were still not completely cleaned up. "I believe you should release the orb you created"

Walker followed Su's advice so he could go one on one with the approaching orc and not attract another. He pulled the moldable crustal ball from his inventory and influence its shape in to that of a sword. It was a mirror image of the twin blitz sword.

The orc stepped in to the open revealing that it had also been struck with a ballista bolt in the arm. It was already weakened which helped Walker greatly.

Chapter 563 - 563. Thrown Blade

"It only has the use of one arm so I should be able to easily evade it." Walker put Su at ease before he pulled one of the twin blitz swords to fill his empty hand. The moldable crystal sword with the blade of night and day skill in one hand and a twin blitz sword in the other made him appear as a powerful al swordsman.

Su had a close eye on him but couldn't help but think to herself that he was looking the part of a powerful swordsman. It made her relax slightly and remember that she also needed to watch the surrounding area for any other orcs trying to butt in. She knew that they were driven by instinct and would not hesitate to charge at Walker or even the other orc.

Walker was feeling that he could easily take down the injured orc if he used the trench skill. But that was not what he was after. He was already faster than the orc and with an injured arm, the orc would not be able to deal heavy blows to him.

The orc lost its' desire for the luring orb and was instantly enraged that its' food had escaped. This rage was turned on Walker as it lumbered forward making growling and grunting noises. Its' first swing was slow and Walker just halted his steps to let the large hand swing past him. He knew that he could easily dodge any other attacks with this first one proving just how weak the orc was with its' injury.

He fell in to his crouched stance to start the dance of the wild rabbit while preparing to use the blade of night and day to make the first slash. However, he had the idea to use the cross slash skill instead. It had been a long time since he had used it and he wanted to see just how powerful it was with his current level.

Walker crossed the two swords and felt that the light and darkness elemental mana were reacting to him using the skill. He had not expected this but went forward with the attack anyways. When he released the crossed swords in a slashing motion there were two different thrown blades overlapping each other.

There was one that was the normal blade from the twin blitz sword thrown at the orc which cut slightly in to the thick skin but was not doing my damage. But the one that was noticeable was the thrown blade that overlapped the other.

The thrown blade that originated from the blade of night and day was a swirl of darkness and light elemental mana. When it made contact with the orc the damage was the same as the other but immediately a black decay started to rot away at the skin of the orc. There was also a faint light that made the orc appear to grow paler and paler.

Walker knew this was the decay effect of the darkness elemental mana and the mana bleeding effect of the light elemental mana. The two had been released within the cross slash skill showing that the blade of night and day had much more utility than he had expected.

'The user has used a fusion skill cross elemental slash from the elemental saber system. The skills light thrown blade, dark thrown blade, and cross elemental slash have been learned.'

Walker skimmed the notification and found that the light and dark thrown blades were exactly as he expected. They were thrown blades that sent a blade of the specified elemental mana at the target to do damage. Furthermore, the cross elemental slash was a skill that allowed multiple thrown blades to be used at once. It was a fusion skill he had not intended to learn.

He let his excitement take over and he used the elemental cross slash twice more marking the orc with more decaying and mana bleeding slashes. Even though he had not cut in to it and done major harm the orc was experiencing significant damage. It was bleeding its mana out faster than it could get to Walker and attack while it could feel its' skin becoming weaker and even breaking away in certain spots.

Walker dodged its now frantic attacks while he prepared to use the darkness thrown blade by itself. He made a similar motion as cross slash but with one sword. The blade slashed down and the darkness thrown blade flew from him. This landed with more force on the orc causing it to stumble slightly while also causing the decaying effect to rapidly increase.

Walker took note that the single elemental thrown blade had a greater effect due to their focused nature. The cross elemental slash was less due to the fact that it was balancing two elements that split the mana needed to boost the power of the attack.

Su was watching Walker used skills she had not seen him use before in multiples. She was amazed that he had started to improve at an insane rate in front of her. It gave her the feeling that she was falling behind and needed to improve more.

Walker's attacks stretched on for a few moments more before the orc collapse and lost the remainder of its life. Walker stood in front of the rapidly decaying body and wiped the sweat from his forehead. "Leader, those were more new skills," Su stated this as a way to get him to tell her what they were.

"Yes, But it looks like they are not the best to use on a monster." Walker pointed at the orc body that was decaying away. It had lost all the natural mana within it and was not staying together. The decay made it all the worse since the skin was also rotting away. "I think this body will need to stay here since it is useless to try and sell." Walker used the trench skill to bury the decaying body for safety before he returned his gaze to Su.

#### Chapter 564 - 564. Thrown Blade Strategy

Walker knew that Su was already analyzing the skills and trying to see how they would fit within their partys' team work and strategy. "The thrown blades will be invaluable against large opponents. You can hide behind my shields and attack without leaving my protection." This was the most important part of the skills she had seen Walke use.

"I agree, it will be a good strategy to save mana and also dedal constant attacks while Remey and Midnight get in to position and Gil is preparing another arrow." Walker also saw hope it would keep the focus of an opponent while his party prepared their own attacks.

"There will also be the benefit of the light thrown blade bleeding away mana. That will hugely weaken a monster." Walker wanted to focus on using the light thrown blade over the darkness thrown blade. It was mostly the aversion to the decaying effect that he had seen plague the forest.

"It looks like it was making that injured orc much weaker. I didn't see it use anything other than its fists. No charging attacks or grabs. I wonder if that was due to the mana draining away?" Su had already seen the pattern that was different from the other orcs she had watched tear each other apart.

"That makes sense. I think it will make a huge difference in the future. The only problem is that I am pretty sure that it won't always work. Especially on a light affinity monster or one that has skills to absorb mana." Walker was thinking this due to the fact that there were skills that helped absorb mana faster such as Gils' and the sin demon of greed skill.

"That is why you can use other attacks." Su was flat when she said this knowing that Walker was worrying over nothing. When she saw him nod his head she returned to her walking pace and waited for Walker to resummon the luring orb.

The two traveled ahead on the path without much attention. Every so often Walker released the luring orb so that the attracted birds would fly off and he could resummon it safely. Having the birds was nice to attract nearby orcs to the sounds they made, but too many had become a nuisance.

They managed to proceed down the path for hours without seeing another orc. Walker was sure there were more in other directions but for the time being, it seemed that there were none that would pose a threat anywhere near. This was perfect as they reached the split in the trail. The split in the trade route had a large open area due to the high volume of traders and travelers that would pass through and rest here.

"We will stay here for the night. It should also give us the time to say goodbye and part from Herder and the shepherd." Walker wanted to make sure he said a proper farewell since he had enjoyed seeing a new way to use the frost whip along with meet another system user he had not before.

Walker claimed a spot near the perimeter of the wide space so that the party could easily patrol at night. It also gave them the ability to leave in the early morning without disturbing anyone. "You seemed to take that orc down in an interesting way." Gil was the first to arrive before Midnight, Remey, and Onyx made their way to the camp Walker and Su were building.

"I thought you would have something to say about it. I know you can see from pretty far away." Walker knew that Gil would say something as soon as he made it to the resting place.

"Of course I would. Hearing all the new skills you get is kind of a ritual now. If I miss it I feel kind of left out." Walker and Gil laughed over this before they received a glare from Su who wanted help setting up some tents. The two did not hesitate to jump in to the camp set up as the herd was rounded up in to a resting space.

"You all did very well today. I was about to deal with that last orc but your dragon party member was quicker than anything. Before I knew it the orc was on fire and fallen to the ground." Herder hopped off the white bill and laughed while offering Midnight a slice of dried jerky he had been snacking on while setting up the herd for rest.

"Wait, you guys had another orc attack you?" Walker had not even realized it. He was worried that they had struggled without Su there to defend them.

"It couldn't even be thought of as a threat. There were two ballista bolts in one leg and the other looked like it wasn't even attached to the body properly. I have no idea how it didn't die." Remey had also seen the encounter and felt pity for the orc.

Walker relaxed after hearing this. He had also looked Midnight over and seen that there were no visible injuries so to speak of. He knew that she was capable of defending herself but he would always worry.

"Are you up for another horned rabbit roast?" Walker made sure to offer this to Herder since it would be the last night they would be on the same path.

"If I ever say no to food I have been taken by a body snatching spirit," Herder sat down as the white bull walked around the herd to patrol it.

The shepherd walked up and also sat down after settling the sheep. Onyx was quick to slither over and start up a conversation. The shepherd was overjoyed to have a conversation partner and was not holding back at all it seemed. Walker couldn't help but be amazed at how well Onyx always made friends with someone when they went somewhere. It was a surprising skill to have. It made him feel even worse for having to leave them to another path.

#### Chapter 565 - 565. Rocky Path

The group followed the same pattern as the previous night, however, there was one difference that surprised everyone. "In the morning we will be off early. So it has been nice getting to know the both of you." Walker had been worried that leaving them would come off poorly but knew it was inevitable.

The shepherd dug around in his satchel looking for something while the party looked on in curiosity. After a short moment, two leather-bound notebooks came out. One was old and matched the one he had shown the pages from before. The other was newer and smelled of ink.

The shepherd handed the notebook to Walker and Onyx translated his message, "This is for you so that you can bond with any sheep you pass." Walker had opened the second journal to find that all the sheep had been copied down. The information of feeding them and their predators was also added.

"This is amazing, are you really sure you want to share this with us?" Walker felt that this was too much. These writings were from the shepherds' hard work of years and years of herding sheep. It felt unfair to just take them without giving something in return.

Onyx translated again, "I believe you will be able to use the information wisely. I also wish to repay the effort you put in. I did not need to worry about my sheep's well-being with your party on the job." Walker felt pride hearing this and came forward to shake the shepherds' hand. It was the least he could do to show his respect for this gift.

"Ah, in that case, take one of my coins. It seems like it is only wood, but if you bring it to any adventurers guild branch they can contact me with herding requests. I'm not sure you can use it but it would be nice to see you all again." Herder flipped a wooden coin toward Walker. The coin was carved from basic wood but had the symbol of a man on a bull upon it.

"Thank you! We will make sure that if we come across any who need a herder or if we need one ourselves we will request you." The rest of the party became much more lively after Walker had taken the lead and everyone was sure to say their piece on farewells and thanks.

The remainder of the night went as usual. They rotated their watch and rested well until the sun was about to break the horizon. They managed to wake before many of the merchants and clean up camp. Walker left a small amount of wood next to where they made a fire for the next traveler who came there. This was his last act before they all stored the camping gear and set out on a new day.

Each of them looked back sad to lose their company but it was inevitable. They were going north toward the mountains where the dwarves tunneled and the others were headed more to the east. However, they were able to rest easy knowing that they had methods to contact or remind them of their new found friends.

"I wonder if we will need to use that coin." Walker was wondering this while they walked.

"I am sure we will. We meet many people that require many things." Su felt it was a matter of time before they ran in to someone with the need for a herder.

"I am just surprised the shepherd shared his knowledge with us. Although, he seemed really happy to talk to Onyx." Gil gave Onyx a thumbs up for the job well done.

"It was nothing, he had many stories that I was able to listen to and enjoy." Onyx had heard many of the shepherds' travel stories and was still dwelling on them while he rested on Midnight's back.

"I didn't get to see Herder use his style again so we need to contact him soon." Remey was frustrated to see the unfinished block in her alchemical brawlers field guide skill. She wanted to find a reason to meet Herder again as soon as possible to remedy this fact.

"I am sure we will get to see him again. But aren't you going to have this problem with many of the systems we see in passing?" Walker thought she was being a little ambitious if she thought she would have every style she saw recorded fully from every system the party came across.

"No, I can't let it get away from me now. The more I fully learn the better I can pass things on to everyone and the better we can strategize." Remey had a look of determination on her face and Walker couldn't bring himself to say anything opposite to what she believed and let her be.

"Leader, the path is opening up here." Su had noticed the change in the path they were traveling. The area had become less grassy and bushy over the few hours of the morning after they set out from the resting point.

"According to the maps, we should be hitting the rocky terrain that leads up to the mountains. The patch will be rough but we are much closer now." Walker looked ahead to see the mountains which seemed to grow with each step. They always appeared small in the distance but now loomed above them with a presence of mightiness.

"It's crazy to think there are dwarves under the ground. Rock elves hidden away somewhere. And ancient dragon villages up there. Who knows what else." Gil was thinking about all the mysteries to him and the party that resided in this area. None of them had ever been to the mountains or even this far north at all. They were all treading new ground together as a party and would be learning many more new things.

#### Chapter 566 - 566. Strange Rocks

"Alright, before we venture farther in to the rocky area, a few things to look out for." Walker wanted to brief the party on the dangers in this area that they would face while traveling. He had some knowledge of what monsters inhabited the area and how to avoid or fight them. But more importantly, he wanted to share the dangers each possessed so they all acted appropriately when they came across them.

"The diamond fang snake is fairly rare. But its' fangs can pierce armor easily. This means being poisoned by its' venom when it bites is guaranteed unless we are protected from it like Su." This was the least threatening monster for them but Walker still spoke of it. Just because it was rare didn't mean they wouldn't face it.

"The rubble goats are another monster we will see but can easily avoid. They are territorial but will prefer to let an enemy pass by than fight unless you stare it down. Then it will charge head fist at you and try to break you. They test the horns on boulders breaking them to rubble, hence the name, rubble goats."

This monster was much more common but a minor worry since they usually preferred not to fight. The last monster was more troublesome. It was less common but still posed a threat.

"The bone beak vultures are a huge pain. They are known for picking up rockets to drop on prey until they are defeated and can feed on them. They fly very high and are hard to defeat. Not to mention they will follow prey night and day circling them until they are beaten."

"Those do not sound like the nicest monster out there." Gil was worried that the bone beak vulture would fly too high for his normal arrows and require him to use a lot of mana. He also worried that they would still be too high in the sky.

"Actually, you will probably be the best counter to them. You have wind elemental arrows that could topple them from the sky." Walker made this point causing Gil's face to light up.

"I am glad to hear that. I would have trouble looking up and blocking stones constantly." Su felt a relief off of her shoulders as well from this. She had not wanted to attempt to block and watch the ground while also blocking and watching the sky.

"We might encounter a few other monsters but none that should pose a threat or are common enough to worry about. I just hope that we can traverse the rocks well." Walker was already starting to think he should have gotten extra pairs of sturdy boots for everyone. The rocks were rough and sometimes jagged along the path they were taking and could cause a decent amount of damage to their shoes.

"Leader, you have materials to repair our shoes, correct?" Su thought she recalled Lisa forcing some sewing and repair materials for clothing and shoes before they left.

"Yes! She did. I can try to repair any damage when we rest next. Hopefully, the skills will show up easily." Walker would need some leather working skills and the sewing skills he had seen his sister use, but it would be worth it for this part of their journey and well in to the future.

"Walker covered monsters so I will cover herbs!" Remey took over and was already looking around with a piercing gaze. "If you see a red moss that looks fluffy let me know. Don't touch it because it is very poisonous but it can be used for other things."

Remey looked around a little more, "If you see a large patch of tiny green grass with purple flowers the size of droplets then we can try to pick them without rushing the flowers, I'm not sure who named it purple drops but whoever did made it easy to identify. It is a high class mana potion ingredient but very hard to pick and protect in transport. Unless you have a Walker with you."

Remey was all smiles saying this because she knew that Walker could use his inventory to store the purple drops herb away safely. It had been proved multiple times that it was a safe way to transport even delicate things and it made her much more confident in the fact that she could take some home for potions.

"Unfortunately both herbs are only able to grow out in nature. The red moss dries up with the sun and it shouldn't be brought home because it released poisonous pollen that's safe outside but not inside. And the Purple drops are too delicate. If it is taken from the natural mana it will die right away. It also doesn't produce seeds and grows directly from the roots. Meaning that the patches we find are most likely many years old."

"Three monsters to watch out for in particular and two herbs. I got it. I will keep an eye out." Gil was glad to have all the information since it would make things much easier for him while he was keeping an eye out in general. He would gladly point these things out while they traveled.

Midnight released a loud snort from behind them followed by a slight hiss as she pulled back from something. "What's wrong?" Walker was immediately on alert since this was not a reaction that he was used to from Midnight.

"Sister says there is something that smells bad and hurts to sniff," Onyx replied instantly while Walker examined Midnight who was shaking her nose in annoyance. He used a healing spell on her just in case which appeared to relieve the annoyance.

"What bothered you?" Walker looked at the area she had been sniffing and found some strange patterns on the rocks. "It almost looks like these rocks were, melting?"

Chapter 567 - 567. Acid Slime Signs

"What is it?" Su came over and gained the same confused look that Walker had. "It smells sour almost?" Su was sniffing the air slightly and finding that it was a sour burning smell that was coming from the area.

"Walker, look at the base of the rocks right there. Do you see what I see?" Gil was looking at the base of rocks where the ground met the edge and had discovered small yellow droplets.

"Let me use my all around appraisal, although I have an idea of what it is." Walker had hopes that he would be wrong on his theory.

'Acidic slime residue

The remains of an acidic yellow slime that has fed on the natural ores within a rock. Their body is made of an acid that is perfect for melting and burning stone and valuable natural ores.'

"It's yellow acidic slime residue." Walker felt the air leave his lungs as he said this. He had hoped that they wouldn't find much in the way of evidence for these things.

"Good, I want to try a few things with it for potions and herbs. If we had found an entire slime it would be better. But this slime may have some use compared to those purple ones." Remey was already motioning for Walker to get a vial from his inventory.

"I know it is dangerous and bad that the yellow slimes are already out here but they may prove useful if we can capture some." Walker stopped looking at Remey like she was crazy. He would much rather see something good come from the yellow slimes which would be unlike the purple slimes which only brought the decay that harmed the forest.

"I might be able to use the acidic qualities in the slimes' body to break down certain herbs and use them better." Remey was already planning out the tests she would do. It was not uncommon to use certain slime body species as potion ingredients or to nullify certain properties in herbs.

"If it is useful that will be great, but will you really be able to test things if you have so little?" Gil was doubtful that the small yellow droplets that Remey was gathering off the ground in to the vial would be useful at all.

"Just a small amount can give me enough information. If I get ahold of some steel seed palm nuts I can see if it will dissolve the toughy outer shell and make it easier to extract the seeds oils. All I need is a few drops to coat the seed and tests it instead of the normal process where someone has to smash the seen and get minimal oils from it." Remey was swift with her response making Walker start to think as well.

"I did not know such things were a problem to be solved. The world of alchemy is very complicated." Su was opening her eyes to new possibilities she had not considered before. She had always just assumed the herbs would either be dried or used whole. The process of removing shells and creating oils was foreign to her.

"In any case, this is a sign that from here on out we will need to worry about yellow slimes with acidic bodies. Su, I think your shield can withstand the attacks because of the materials it is made out of and I think Midnight will be fine with her dragon scales. But everyone else will need to be on high alert for acid attacks."

Walker made sure to focus everyone on this danger. If someone were to get harmed by acid he knew that healing would not be the perfect solution. He would need to remove the acid with water and then heal it. This much he had learned while reading about a snake type monster in the swamp lands with acidic venom spray attacks.

"I will be staying as far as I need from them. I wish I could say my arrows will be too since I am sure they can dissolve those...but I still need to attack." This was something Gil had been worrying over. He knew that this would drain a lot of his arrows since even a drop of the slime bodies could ruin the balance and make the arrows useless. Let alone ruin the ability to store elemental mana.

"If we don't encounter them here we may in the dwarf cities' underground. They may sell something that could defend against these effects but it is a long shot." Walker wished they had more time to prepare, but they had already waited too long to come this far.

Having warned everyone and spoken on their strategy the group started to move forward again. They needed to make up more ground but were sure that they would not make it all the way to the city today. It would take them another day of nonstop traveling at the rapid pace they had been setting.

"You know, I feel like we have been moving a lot faster lately." Walker was looking at the map in his head that he had memorized with the mental archive skill and realized they had traveled a great distance in such a short time.

"It's our agility and health points. They are much higher now and allow us to move faster. I have been taking note of just how fast we move as we have been going. The orcs all looked so slow but I am sure if we faced them earlier we would struggle." Su had been comparing herself to the way she was before the elf city and after. She had noticed the many small changes in their daily life that none of them had mentioned.

"You know, I did notice that lifting the camping gear and walking so much was not making me as tired or stressed." Gil started to think on this too and so did everyone else as they continued their walk along the rocky path.

#### Chapter 568 - 568. Falling Stones

The rocks were getting larger and making travel even harder for the party. The only one that appeared to be having a simple time of it was Midnight who was using the time to attempt some flying practice.

Walker had been keeping an eye on her as she climbed the taller rocks then jumped from one to the next while trying to flap her wings or hold them out to glide. She still fell fairly quickly but it was not the same with her wings folded. She had made a lot of progress in strengthening them to this point.

Not wanting to be left out Onyx had let himself grow slightly and was reaching the top of rocks then trying to coil up and spring forward. This was the same motion he would use if he were to ever bite someone but in this instance, it worked well as a movement technique.

Walker found that since there were so many forms of earth around him that the earth elemental mana had grown much denser. This meant that he had been able to easily keep watch of everything around him and also grasp some additional understanding of the earth as a whole.

He could feel the ever slow moving rocks pushing upwards to the surface to create a mountain while there were others that pulled apart causing small streams to form and one day ravines. It was all part of the way nature flowed but was a great learning opportunity.

"Everyone down." Gil had spotted something in the distance and ordered everyone to crouch behind a larger rock that was jutting out of the ground. He pointed in to the sky some distance away toward some large birds circling the sky. In total there were three.

The three birds had curved bone white beaks, Bald heads, and wide black feathered wings. The long talons they had looked powerful enough to crush stone. " There are three of them and every once in a while one will swoop down and grab at something on the ground." Gil was watching this happen as he spoke.

"They must have found a target to go after. Should we go and see what they are after?" Remey was the first to ask this question. She had seen Gil freeze up and point at the distance.

Walker turned and looked at Midnight, "Can you scout up ahead and hide in the shadows of the rocks to see if that is a human under attack? If it is we will head forward to rescue." Walker knew that Midnight could hide the same as Onyx when it came to this, but she had more experience when coming to this. He also knew that Gil might end up giving himself away and become a target as well.

She snorted and snuck off toward where the three bone beak vultures were circling. "Leader, should we intervene if it is not a human?" Su was wondering if they should protect another animal or monster from these three monsters or if they should let nature continue its course.

"Depends on what it is. If it is a normal animal we can put it to a vote. If it is another monster we can leave them to fight. It won't be worth the danger of fighting a monster on the ground and in the air." Walker didn't wish to see them take any unnecessary injuries on their way to the dwarven city.

"They are bigger than I thought they would be. And their feathers might be perfect for arrows." Gil was contemplating hunting the three vultures for this reason. He wanted to keep his arrow materials high in case he did battle the yellow acidic slimes soon. The more arrows he had the better.

"We shouldn't hunt them just for your arrows. It won't be worth the risk to us." Su shot down this idea instantly. If it happened that the party could rescue someone then Su had no problem with Gil taking the feathers. But attacking them just for that reason when they were not in need was foolish.

"I think we should avoid them. I don't want to deal with monsters I can't do much about. I have never tried making explosive potions or any poisonous ones like Trish. Those would be my only attacks against them If I even had them." Remey also chimed in stating that she wouldn't want to fight them if possible. At the end of the day, it was only Gil and Walker who would be able to damage them,. Midnight and Onyx could try but they would have a very tough time of it.

It was clever that the party would be better off avoiding them, Walker was about to speak on this fact when Midnight returned. Onyx spoke up on her behalf to report the scouting, "Sister says that they are attacking a horned rabbit."

"What is one doing out here?" Gil was curious why one left the fields and would be in all these rocks.

"Sister says that every time the vultures drop a rock it lands near the horned rabbit and not on it." Onyx relayed this making everyone think the same thing.

"The vultures are guiding it. I would assume the nest is that way and this is easier for them." Su was the one to state their theory out loud. "It would seem the bone beak vultures are smarter than we believed." This was a worrisome development.

"Then we are not fighting them. We will proceed slowly and stay out of sight until they are away. Just stay behind rocks and avoid standing up fully." Walker gave the orders and led the way as the party p[ushed on. Their movements crouched and much slower since they dared not draw any attention from the predators of the sky.

## Chapter 569 - 569. Holes In Stone

The party's speedy travel had taken a hit since they needed to avoid the gaze of the vultures in the distance. Walker had not expected to see them in such a short period of time after walking the rocky areas.

They were about to make a dash from one large boulder to another when Remey froze up, "What's wrong? Is there another vulture?" Walker didn't see any reason for them to stop moving.

"I want that little dried weed there. It looks worthless, but inside the stems there are seeds. They will grow in to a bell bush. It is very valuable to alchemists who need to maintain mana control while they use skills." Remey was looking like a small round bush in the open area that was dried up and withered away.

"Is it really that important? The vultures might see us." Gil couldn't find value in something that was dried up and nearly falling to pieces.

"It is a dried bell bush. The flowers that bloom, are shaped like bells and have a pollen that when eaten assists in mana control. It calms the nerves and will make it much easier to create high quality potions. Actually, Walker could use it to train more easily too."

Remey knew that Walker might jump at this but she saw that he was considering the pros and cons carefully. It was a risky move to rush out and grab it while the vultures were still in the air. But it was also tempting since they would grow an herb that could make them all stronger and safer over time. Walker and his along with Remey and her potions could both do this.

"Brother, I should be able to get it safely. Just trust me." Onyx spoke up which surprised them. He rarely committed himself like this and they were all inclined to let him attempt this.

"If you are sure then give it a try. We will run to the other hiding spot so follow us when you can." Walker counted out the run and everyone dashed unseen to the next boulder. Onyx did not. He instead melted in to the shadows around the boulders and the party watched as he slightly rose from them to drag the bush from the shadows with his mouth.

The bush easily snapped and disappeared in to the shadows and soon reappeared next to Walker. "That was perfect. Onyx you are the best!" Remey was praising Onyx heavily for getting the bell bush for her.

She was already snapping the base branches open to pull out tiny oval seeds that would grow in to bell bushes.

"How did you even know that was a bell bush?"

Walker was curious how Remey had identified it when she hadn't even mentioned it to the party before hand.

"They usually aren't found this time of year. They actually grow in the winter because they like the water elemental mana and the cold. They should all be broken down and the seeds in hibernation, but this one is still there." Remey pulled a branch of the small bush and showed Walker. "The pattern of growth is made so the bell flowers don't touch other parts of the plant, so I can see how they fit there and there."

"You were able to see what plant it was just from that?" Gil was equally impressed that Remey had such sharp eyes. He was beginning to wonder if he was only good at spotting monsters while Remey had a huge knack for plants even without the alchemical side of her system. This was mostly her upbringing around the old master alchemist though.

"I think those vultures landed." Su had been the one watching them at the moment and saw all three of the vultures swoop down at once.

"Then we can move faster as long as we watch what is going on. We will remember the area their nest might be." Walker wasn't going to blindly head toward a nest of vultures if he could avoid it.

The party resumed its travel speed and found that the first had given way to mostly pebbles on the ground. Besides the boulders that jutted from the ground, there was no dirt anywhere but the high earth elemental mana would still allow Walker to use the high earth sculpting.

He could feel the rigidity of the stone compared to the softer earth but also that this was one reason why the earth elemental mana was higher. The stone was more dense and had more of it stored within due to this. His realizations were coming very easily in this area too and he had a feeling that if he spent time meditating on it later he would be able to reach a better understanding.

"Walker, you know that steel skinned worm skin we once got from the auction? Do they happen to live in rocky areas?" Remey asked this simple question confusing Walker but he answered nonetheless.

"I think they live deep underground. Usually in mines and the mountains. Why?" Walker had just asked why but when he focused himself he could see the disturbances in the ground and a few holes in the stones around them.

"Well, because Remey and I can't figure out what made holes in the stone like that. And it looks kind of like a worms digging hole but way bigger..." Gil and Remey had noticed this and were put off so they consulted each other first with their ideas.

"They wouldn't be this close to the surface though. They are steel skinned worms because they eat large portions of rocks and ores to develop their defenses." Walker couldn't understand why the worms would have moved to the surface.

"I have a theory one what they may be up here." Su had rounded a boulder and discovered a very good reason for them to leave the depths.

Chapter 570 - 570. Fire Or Ice?

Su was laying sight on a smaller steel skinned worm that had at some point crawled its way to the surface. However, it had not survived its injuries long. "It has some of the yellow slime bodies on it and it appears that it did not counter that well."

The party moved towards one of the holes made by the worms and found one that had mostly come out of the ground. It was significantly small than the long skin they had purchased in the auction. Yet, it was still many times larger than any normal earth worm.

"Walker, you should store it away. It might be damaged but I am sure there's still a use for it." Gil was thinking that the pieces of damaged steel worm skin can be used for repairs or just sold in general.

"Good idea. We can make use of it. It does worry me that the slime sare obviously the reason for the steel skinned worms coming up to the surface where they would never normally be." Walker tapped the worm body to store it away but found that it was still there. "It didn't store away..."

His quizzical look started to let way for understanding as he could see some parts of the worm moving as if something inside was moving. "This might be gross, but what would happen if a steel skinned worm which is blind accidentally ate an acidic slime along with the rocks and ores?"

His question put everyone on guard. They could hear the slight sizzling sound of something within the steel skinned worms body and also saw the strange motion of the body. None of them needed to answer Walkers' question. They already knew the answer.

Before any of them could move to attack The skin of the worm started to become thinner and thinner until a smaller yellow slime melted its way through. It was followed by two more that were trying to encompass the entire steel skinned worm.

"Everyone back! We need to stick to ranged attacks." Walker shouted this but Remey and Su were already retreating since they had spoken about this possible danger.

"What do you think will work on them? Fire? Or should we try water elemental attacks to freeze them?" Gil wasn't sure what elemental arrow would be the best to attack. He knew that Wind could cause acid to fly in the air and harm the others while earth would just temporarily stop them. These slimes were enemies of the earth in the sense that they ate away at the ores within so he knew that trapping them or stabbing them with an earth spike wouldn't be as effective.

"You try one of those fire wither spike arrows. We will retreat far enough to stay away from the attack." Walker knew this was risky, but since there was no dry grass or trees they were able to take a shot at burning the slimes.

"Sorry Remey, but these things should burn away." Gil said a quick apology to Remey since he was not sure he would avoid defeating all the slimes with this arrow. The wither spike fire elemental arrow was a larger area attack after all.

The retreat was smooth since the slime had not noticed the party due to their fixation on the steel skinned worm they were eating. Walker knew that the body most likely had a lot of ore within it and that was what they were after. Not to mention it had absorbed the ore for its entire lifetime.

"Ready," Gil gave the warning before releasing the fire elemental wither spike arrow. It threw off heat as he used his mana to activate it and let it fly through the air.

Gil had aimed for the center of the steel skinned worm so that he could burn the entire thing. This proved to be the right move because as soon as the arrow made contact it burst in to a ball of flames.

Walker watched this and saw that the yellow slimes were contorting in to strange shapes as they realized the danger they were in along with the slow disappearance of their food. He took the chance to send off three fire bolt spells to make them burn more.

The fire bolts were right on target and hit the slimes and steel worm with three loud bangs. "They are still moving in the flames. They seem agitated." Su was making sure she had the shields ready for the worst case scenario of an acid spray attack.

However, instead of an acid spray attack, the three slimes burst out of the flames and were moving as fast as their bodies could roll at the party. They had lost the ores they wanted to eat inside the worm due to the burning fire and could feel the metal of the party's armors and weapons.

"Gil, use the water elemental arrow now!" Walker yelled and Gil fired the arrow he had prepared. The two were a perfect team since they were already prepared without needing to say anything before hand.

The water elemental wither spike arrow made contact with the leading slime which seemed to be fusing with the other two while they moved toward the party. The arrow immediately started to break down in the acid of the yellow slime's body but this only hastened the release of the water elemental mana.

The mana that gathered brought with it the moisture in the air and in a few seconds a series of ice crystals had sprouted from where the arrow pierced. Without the arrow being intact properly it was more of a large ice crystal that spiked out and pierced the slimes acidic body in multiple places at the same time. The loud sounds of sizzling acid were the only thing the party heard while holding their breath for the result.