

Master 661

Chapter 661 - 661. Nests

Looking around Walker began to see some grey and jagged looking egg shapes. They would easily be confused for some strange rock formations if he didn't know this was a rock horned viper nesting area.

The next shapes he made out were some points and curving formations. These were also slightly moving as if sleeping. This was clearly the rock horned vipers that were burying themselves under the sand and dust to rest or hide away. The spikes were a perfect camouflage for them so that they wouldn't be seen by prey or predators. The large spikes at one end would be the rock horn that gave them their names.

"I count at least twenty vipers and fifteen eggs. It's a small nest but the rocks look to be higher quality so I would say they have been here for some time." Zenith was recording this without any fear that her voice was too loud. When she noticed Su and Walker giving her looks she explained more. "They won't wake up so easily and even if you yelled they would just try and avoid you."

This made Midnight and Onyx less careful and they started to explore a little. They did not approach the eggs or the vipers but they were excited to see what else was around. Midnight was sniffing constantly while Onyx kept a sharp eye out. Their sibling teamwork quickly uncovered some of the yellow puff mushrooms which Walker gathered.

"This cave is much cooler than the one from before and I can feel a slight breeze." Su had been standing still trying to get a feel for things while also watching some of the rock horned vipers move now and then.

"Yes, there are some small holes in the ceiling that we think leads to the higher caves where the rock horned vipers hunt. It would be ideal for them since not many other monsters can travel down them. If a cave rat managed to then the vipers would tear it apart before it even got here." Zenith pointed to the ceiling showing the smaller holes. It was good to know that there was air flow since if there wasn't they would need to stop exploring.

"Let's go, I have most of this mapped out but it could be better to map this out after we have a breeder here to evaluate things. I have already marked the quality and size of this passage. I think it has been hollowed out by the rock horned vipers over time. The scratches along the walls match the horns and spikes on their backs. It is good because the most stable caves are where they make their homes." This was an interesting fact but made sense to them.

Su led the way down the passage giving the rock horned vipers their space. The nests were smaller than they expected making it easier to avoid them. They were just about halfway through when Midnight huffed a little.

"Brother, there is a strange rock horned viper over there. Sister says it smells like metal." Onyx and Midnight were getting Walkers' attention. They were looking at a curled up horned viper that looked slightly shinier than the others.

'Mutated rock horned viper

This rock horned viper has been alive for twenty years and was able to grow in to a unique skill. The ability to grow stronger rocks and horns is common for a rock horned viper, but to create spikes and horns with quartz crystals is extremely rare. The crystals help the rocks bond and cause the viper to have stronger horns than others. This allows it to live longer and give birth to more over time.'

"It has quartz crystals in the rocky parts of its horn and spikes. That is amazing. I bet it has much more use than the regular rock horned vipers do." Walker was sure that this was a monster that would make many of the dwarves jealous.

"You're right about that. Just having that one here makes this ten times more valuable to a breeder. Their shed rocks and skins can be used for household stoves and even some of the smaller furnaces. It will be a great find to report." Zenith was happier than could be to have this pointed out. She wouldn't have noticed it without their help and she made sure to give Midnight and Onyx her thanks.

"Then we keep moving on?" Su wanted to be sure and with a nod from Walker, she skirted the area with the mutated rock horned viper. She saw that the stones ahead of them were a bit different. "Leader, this appears to be the start of the ruins. There are some cut stones that make up the walls here."

Walker examined them and could only agree, but before he could speak he heard a loud hiss. "Brother, there are five angry looking rock horned vipers starting to fight over there." Onyx directed Walker to a group of rock horned vipers fighting over a dusty round area. They were fighting for a nest.

"This is a good show. They often fight for their nests and it is a rare chance to see it." Zenith pulled a different scroll out and started to record the scene. She knew that breeders would pay a nice bit of gold for this information.

The group watched as the vipers started to rear up and strike at each other. One of them was able to instantly shatter the horn of another causing it to retreat. The next two ambushed another and tried to wrap around it. However, this action caused all three to lose a significant amount of their spikes.

Seeing that the others were tangled, the one that had shattered the first's horn attacked the intertwined and broke away their horns too. "Looks like that's the dominant female there. They break away the horns of their competition making them less desirable for mating. It is a very intense battle but they can regrow their horns so none are actually harmed." Zenith recorded all of this until the vipers calmed down. It was a small spat but enough to bring light to the natural lives of the rock horned vipers. "Now for the ruins."

Chapter 662 - 662. Crumbling Bones

Zenith had been excited to record a little extra information on the rock horned vipers and their actions. However, it was nothing compared to her desire to explore the ruins. She had already seen them but needed to retreat as soon as she got near. The only reason she had not snuck past the golems and slimes was the fact that the slimes had targeted her equipment she wore and she knew that she would need it to do her job.

"Midnight, smell anything ahead?" Walker was a little wary of the ruins. He had the memories of the ancient ruins above ground and didn't want to end up trapped again. It was just a precaution but a wise one to take.

Midnight sniffed a few times then shook her head in disgust. Onyx convened with her for a moment and replied to Walker slowly, "Sister says she smells bones but nothing too rotten. But she says they smell a little burnt." This was worrisome since a fire in caves was a very dangerous thing.

"I hope that there isn't anything that can cause fire ahead. If so we will need to retreat and come with some golems that have water equipped." Zenith was not happy with this because it would mean even more delays in the exploration of the ruins.

"Old fire. It is safe." The fire elemental spirit drifted through the air to Walker's shoulder and spoke. It could feel the residual fire elemental mana and tell that it was nothing recent or active.

"The fire elemental spirit says it is older fire. We should be fine but if there is anything that can make fire we can retreat." Walker was thankful for the spirits' input since even he couldn't sense that the mana was older or newer. He could just feel the faint fire elemental mana and that was it.

"Then on we go!" Zeniths' shout pushed Su onward and in to the ruins. Soon the dusty floors were becoming a stone passage with some sand and dust along the sides. It was clear some of the rock horned vipers had passed through here but the strange fact was that they only seemed to travel one way. Meaning that the viper didn't come back out. This put Walker and Su on their guard while Mindowight started to use her shadow wrapping skill with Onyx hidden away in her shadow.

Walker wasn't sure what to expect but was interested in the slots on the walls. There were some that were occupied by stone coffins and others that just had parts of skeletons there. "This looks like a burial chamber. But the markings on the walls have flame patterns. I wonder what kind of burial?" Zenith wasn't certain she had seen the patterns before.

"I have a skill that translates languages in writing and here I can read some of these things." Walker wasn't going to hide this and saw that sharing the skill with Zenith brought a wide smile to her face. He didn't make her wait while he looked at the writings on the top ends of the walls.

"This is mostly unreadable but I can make out, followers of the great flame mage rest here for eternity in service." Walker could tell that this was a burial for a mage that specialized in fire. It would mean that there was most likely a fire mage somewhere deeper that had passed on and been buried here.

"Ah, we have found similar burials before for warriors and other mages. They usually have a decent amount of elemental crystals and ancient weapons buried with them. They are perfect for research purposes and for historical cataloging." Zenith was even more excited until they heard the scrape of bone on stone.

"Leader, we have a skeleton incoming." The skeleton Su had locked eyes on was one that seemed weak. It has some burnt and yellowed bones and carried a very damaged and rust sword. The skeleton also was covered in scratches most likely from battles with the rock horned vipers.

Su stood firm and made sure the attention was on her, "Get over here you waste of space." The skeleton raised the damaged sword towards her and slashed down.

Su held firm and the sword shattered on impact with the high defense earth dwelling shield. The earth elemental spirit showed a worried action as it thought its home might be damaged, yet it was incredibly happy to see the strength of the shield.

"Get the bad bones!" The earth spirit started to cheer as Su pushed it back. The downfall for the skeleton came when Midnight unveiled herself and pounced on it. The weak and burned bones crumbled under her claws.

"It's a wonder how the skeleton even stayed standing. It fell apart so easily." Walker looked at the bones which were crumbling as he watched. He couldn't even take any as materials since they were so brittle and weak.

"That's very common in these kinds of ancient ruins. They have been here for a long time and naturally came back to life after a certain time. The skeletons that come back rarely can fight the test of time. I'm sure they were zombies at one time." Zenith had seen this before and was sure that this was an older ruin since the skeletons were so weak.

A cold breeze came through the passageway blowing some of the dust in to the air. Walker was surprised that such a strong breeze came through but was shocked even more when the sounds of more skeletons moving came to their ears. "Why do I feel like beating this skeleton was just the start?" Walker was certain that this somehow was leading to even more.

"Leader, three more incoming." Su move forward and used her shield bash skill to break the ribs of the leading skeleton. It fell and crumbled away like it was nothing.

Chapter 663 - 663. Worshiping Skeletons

The other two skeletons fell victim to Midnight and Onyx. Walker didn't even have a chance to use any spells. Midnight pounced on one cutting through the weak and burned bones in a single slash. Onyx coiled and jumped at the other to bind it but found that as he did the bones broke away and the skeleton fell to pieces.

"I feel like the skeletons are not the most dangerous undead here. There are still some markings of the rock horned vipers coming here and these skeletons don't seem like they could easily beat them." Walker was sure that the skeletons would be defeated with ease against the rock horned vipers they saw.

"I wouldn't be too sure. The rock horned vipers are curious and weak when young. The newly hatched most likely came to explore and were ambushed by the skeletons." Zenith understood the rock horned vipers much better since she grew up in the caves. To any dwarf, this was a common knowledge fact. However, to Walker and Su, it was new information.

Midnight was clawing at the bones still and looked unhappy. She normally would have tried to snack on them but continued to find that they were crumbling away and weak. They wouldn't give her anything she wanted. After the evaluation that there were no snacks to be had here, she was not the happiest camper prompting Walker to take a small piece of jerky out of his inventory to share with her.

"Bigger ahead!" The other earth elemental spirit had traveled ahead to check things out. Walker was glad that it had finally started to be a little more interested now that it saw the other elemental spirits speaking. The only other one was the dark spirit which appeared content with hiding in Su's shadow.

"It looks like there is an open space up ahead. We should be able to stretch out a little if there aren't too many skeletons around." Walker pointed ahead and Zenith opened another scroll ready to sketch out what was there.

"Midnight and Onyx can hide away. There may be more to this ruin ahead." Su wanted to have Midnight ambush any skeletons ahead like last time. For her, it was a great way to relax knowing that she could distract and attack while they attacked.

The group moved forward but this time Walker prepared himself to use the twin blitz swords. He wanted to be able to slash through the skeletons if possible but also anything else that they encountered.

When they came to the opening that the elemental earth spirit had warned them of, they were shocked by the designs. There were multiple fire elemental monsters carved in to the walls here along with multiple burial spots. The stone coffins were in the wall slots but some of them shook with skeletons inside.

In the back of the chamber was a set of aged steps that lead to a platform. There were five skeletons surrounding a large coffin that had multiple chests around it. They were standing idly while moving here and there to make motions to the coffin.

"It looked like they are worshipping the coffin. That must be the flame mage buried here," Walker connected these dots as he watched them. "One of them has a staff though. I don't think it will be as weak as the others." As if to react to his words they saw the skeletons all turn their heads to the group.

"Zenith, remain behind me. This is not the same as before." Su was on high alert as she saw the skeletons break their circle and move towards them. Four of them had no weapons and shambled slowly. But the fifth one holding the staff was even slower but appeared to have a slight bit of intelligence. When Walker saw it raise the staff he knew it was intentional.

" attack incoming. Watch out," Su lifted the shield as soon as a fire bolt came at her. This one didn't have the same explosion as Walkers, but it still causes embers to fall around the group. Zenith hurriedly wrapped up her scrolls to protect them since they could get damaged. She hid even closer behind Su so that she wouldn't be targeted.

"I am taking the lead, guard Zenith Su." Walker shouted as he dashed forward towards the skeletons. He wanted to deal with the four weak ones so that they could team up against the mage skeleton that was using against them. The good thing was that the skeleton seemed to be gathering more elemental mana and would take time to form another fire bolt.

Walker reached the skeletons and released a cross slash. It had been some time since he used the skill and he felt that it was very fitting since it carved through two of the weak skeletons. The other two were on opposite sides of him but they didn't know that Walker was also using his slash zone skill.

The skeleton behind him came in to his area and Walker slashed backward without even looking. The skull of the skeleton was split in perfect halves and the body fell to pieces. The other skeleton was suddenly crushed as Onyx shot out of the shadows to bind it.

This left Midnight sprinting at the skeleton mage ahead which was sending a fire bolt at her. Unfortunately, for it, this was a terrible match up. Midnight loved the warmth and was able to resist it completely. When the fire bolt was sent at her it hit her and didn't even leave a burn mark on her scales. The skeleton didn't have time to attack again before Midnight slammed in to it crushing it completely. The staff fell to the ground that it had wielded. The group sat in silence while they looked for more enemies.

Chapter 664 - 664. Embers

Everything seemed to be calm other than some of the stone coffins which would shake or rattle as skeletons tried to escape their burials. However, when the sound of a larger stone coffin shaking was heard everyone moved their attention to the coffin that the five skeletons had been worshiping.

"Everyone, be ready. This can't be good." Walker was sure that the coffin that the other skeletons had surrounded held the flame mage that this ruin was made for. Even more, he could feel the fire elemental mana reacting to another mage's manipulation.

"Fire! coming!" The fire spirit could feel the mana it had been absorbing robbed from it. The was strong enough to over power its' own manipulation. This meant that the passed on flame mage was not going to be an easy opponent.

When the skeletal hand broke the side of the stone coffin Walker could see blackened bones. These were not the same semi burned and brittle bones. These looked to be flame tempered and tough bones the same color as charcoal.

"Midnight, take Onyx and hide away. This will be a tough fight." Walker was sure that he would need to use some stronger skills and . His strategy would have normally been to use water against a fire affinity monster. But the air was dry and the little water they had in flasks in his inventory was not going to be enough.

Su took up a protective stance in front of Zenith who was still sketching away all the details of the map and even the designs on the wall. Walker wanted to yell for her to hide away somewhere but knew that there was nothing he could do to stop her. This was her duty after all.

When they heard the slight crackling of coals and the clatter of bones on the stones Walker turned to see that the skeleton was much more than they knew. The skeletal bones were glowing like embers. These cracks were all over the entire skeleton making Walker feel like they were looking at something from another world. The red flame eyes that had taken up residence in the eye sockets were the last straw that forced Walker to use his all around appraisal skill to hopefully discover just what this monster was.

'Ancient ember skeleton.

Once revered by the people as one close to the gods, this flame mage has left their body for the afterlife. The body has been worshipped by the undead fire mages that followed the previous flame mage for more than a thousand years. After being disturbed the fires within the bones have been lit again. The fire elemental mana is contained within the bones giving the skeletal remains the ability to conjure fire without gathering mana. The bones are incredibly valuable materials for any fire elemental item. This skeleton is weaker than the flame mage it used to be but it holds the skills of the flame mage.'

Walker was not happy to read the all around appraisal result. This ancient ember skeleton was much more powerful than he expected. He wished he had brought an ocean of water with him to put out the fires within its bones.

"Walker! It's attacking!" Su warned Walker just as a fireball formed and rushed at him. Luckily, Walker was ready and dodged to the side. However, a second fireball was already on its way. This made Walker dodge and roll from side to side.

The fireballs made scorch marks appear in the stones as they were fired constantly. Eventually, the skeleton stopped firing them off at Walker since it could not hit him. When it lifted its ember arms the largest fireball Walker had ever seen showed up.

"Walker, get behind me!" Su shouted and Walker dashed to get behind him. He knew the strength of this fire ball was a lot and that the attack would most likely get around the shield and burn Su regardless. He used his multi buff skill but with the feeling of fire elemental mana condensing he knew it would not be enough.

"After this attack forget me and defeat it immediately. Midnight and you should be able to double attack it and take it down." Su knew that she was risking herself since no one would be able to heal her burns while the two attacked. Onyx had already left Midnight and started to become larger and coil around Zenith to protect her as well. There was no other option at the moment.

The large fireball became a deep red and the air was sucked towards it as the ember skeleton pushed the fireball away. There was a painful feeling of impending doom that slowed everyone's thoughts. Walker wanted to manipulate the fire elemental mana but found that it was too well controlled by the ancient ember skeleton that literally had fire elemental mana as its core.

The fire spirit had rushed away to avoid being caught up in the attacks since it could be harmed by them. It was made of fire elements mana and beings that could manipulate it stronger than the spirit itself was much more dangerous. The dark spirit was hiding away feeling useless while the other earth spirit had fused with the ground in hopes that a fireball would not hit it.

The earth spirit that had been watching Su heard her words and felt her determination. It watched as Walker prepared to attack the instant the fire ball hit and how his swords started to flash with lightning. It couldn't understand if Walker would be able to defeat the skeleton but it knew that the skeleton was powerful and would hurt those that had rescued it. There was no way it was going to let its freedom and happiness be taken away.

Without any hesitation, the elemental earth spirit returned to the earth dwelling shield and started to pull the earth elemental mana toward it. In an instant, the stones beneath their feet rumbled with mana.

Chapter 665 - 665. No Snacking!

The rumbling in the stones below and the influx of the earth elemental mana came from the earth dwelling shield. Walker could only smile since he knew this must be the new skill the shield had been activated by the earth spirit. He knew what this meant but had no time for words.

The stones and earth rose around all of them just before the massive fire ball made in pact with the earth fortress skill. The explosion and heat was felt through it and the outside layer of earth cracked and fell away leaving Su to shield the remainder of the flame. However, the earth fortress was powerful enough to disperse most of the flames and deflect them.

"Walker! Now!" Su wasn't letting any of this distract her from their goal. He rushed out at full speed with the twin blitz swords ready. He was using the lightning sword play skill to increase his agility on top of the sword's boost and the multi boost skill.

He wound up with a cross slash aimed toward the neck of the ancient ember skeleton. At the same time, Midnight unveiled herself from the shadow wrapping. She had silently been hiding out behind the ember skeleton waiting for Walker to coordinate an attack. She knew she wouldn't beat it in one slash unless Walker joined her. They all saw that the skeletons' amber infused bones were tougher than regular skeletons.

Midnight's claws hit the skeletons' spine causing Walkers' cross slash to cut the skull off and Midnight to cut the legs off. As the three pieces fell to the ground they felt the fire elemental mana released from the skeleton. It had already been preparing another attack for them.

"Mana!" The fire elemental spirit didn't let this fire elemental mana dissipate. It rushed in and began to draw the mana to it. Walker just watched as it seemed to dance in the air over them pulling the fire elemental mana in and slightly growing in size. It was astonishing to watch the spirit become more powerful in seconds.

Eventually, Midnight and Walker were able to take their eyes from the spirit and look at each other, "Nice timing. I knew you were waiting for me." Walker wanted to pat her on the head but he saw that

Midnight was about to grab the ancient ember skeletons' bones in her teeth and crunch down. "Hey! Wait, we need to save those. I have an idea for those."

Walker started to pile up the bones realizing they were still ember like. He used his all around appraisal skill to check out what they could do since he wanted to see if he would be able to sue them for making a dwelling item for the fire spirit if it wanted one.

"If they are not as good materials as I think they are, you can have them all. If they are useful I am keeping them. I will give you something else." Walker knew if he didn't say he would give Midnight something he would end up angering her. He was a little too soft and wanted to spoil her even though it was all for a good reason.

' Ember bones

The bones of an ancient ember skeleton. The bones have long absorbed fire elemental mana during life. After losing that life, the bones retained and even absorbed more fire elemental mana. This gives them an extremely high elemental affinity that causes them to remain warm and appear like coal in a fire. They are extremely weak to water elemental mana but can be used to create powerful fire resistant or fire elemental items.'

"They are great for fire elemental items. Sorry Midnight, but these will be for crafting. I will hand over some orc bones if you want them?" Walker saw Midnight shake her head. "I will toss in some elemental crystals when we get somewhere to rest." This pleased Midnight and she raised her head nodding.

"That was amazing! I never thought that we would encounter such a powerful skeleton. The others were weaker than ants. But that one...just wooww." Zenith was scribbling notes faster than Walker thought possible. She had sketched the walls and even a drawing of the skeleton before Walker and Midnight teamed up to beat it.

"I was worried you would use that skill to walk in the air and get caught by the fire ball. I am glad you and Midnight almost share one mind." Su was very glad to know that Walker and Midnight had perfectly teamed up to strike the ancient ember skeleton down in one fell swoop.

The group watched as the earth spirit materialized from the earth dwelling shield, "I was strong! I put out the fire like nothing!" Walker shared what the spirit was saying and without any hesitation, Su responded.

"Thank you very much. You were the key to an injury free victory. I was very surprised to see your skill with the shield." She wasn't lying in the least. She had not expected the fortress skill to be so dominant in the defensive skills. She had felt that she was perfectly protected in an instant. Any worries she had about the flames burning her washed away and she knew that there was nothing to worry about. The skill had even crumbled away to allow Walker to easily rush out an attack.

The earth elemental spirit danced around her happy to receive the praise. Walker could only smile since he knew that Su was reading the system notification.

"Unique Hero quest- Strong as a fortress- completed

The party leader has assisted the dwarf elder in spirit forging a proper earth dwelling shield. The elemental earth spirit involved is overjoyed to have a home and chance to travel the world. The earth spirit has a high respect for the party leader. Gain the same trust.

Requirements:

Gain the trust of the earth elemental spirit that calls the earth dwelling spirit home.

Rewards:

Elemental earth affinity'

Chapter 666 - 666. Demonic Insights

While the party was off pursuing their quests the demon lands were in a stir.

"My lord, My slimes within the deep caves of the dwarf city have been eliminated. However, the mission was a success. I have dealt a great blow to their production of golems along with created lord slimes for our own army." The demon that was on his knee in front of a large crimson throne looked as if he was part demon and partially slime.

"Ha! Slimes are weak. I can eat those in a second. Some envy demon title holder is nothing compared to me. I could eat your pathetic slime breeding experiments and no one would ever remember them." The brutal yet pig like voice of a round and misshapen demon came from the corner of the room.

This demon left nothing to be desired when thinking of a gluttony demon title holder. Its body was all fat and rolls. The horns were nearly sunken in due to the body being misshapen and the only definable feature was a massive maw on its' stomach. It was a large mass of fat.

"Weak? Ha, weak says the ball of flab that thinks it can solve all the problems in the world by eating. It would be better to send me to just exterminate the dwarves and elves. I am naturally the best suited for any mission. My very pride is on the line so you know I can not lose." The demon that spoke was the perfect description of a demon. Two perfectly even horns curling around his head. Perfectly pointed and groomed claws. Two pristine black and red swords. It was like looking at a perfect mirror image.

The sound of snoring coming from the back of the room increased for a moment causing everyone to freeze in the room. They all had their eyes towards the spot where a mass slept covered in furs. There was a slight sense of dread until the mass shifted slightly before resuming the soft peaceful snoring.

"I will smack the next idiot that even thinks of waking up sloth. The last time he threw a tantrum bigger than the damn demonized forest. I swear. Just thinking about it." The demon speaking was the tallest and most muscular. He stomped his feet in annoyance while smoke drifted from his body. The fire elemental mana coming from him severely heated the room.

"I will take that. I needed more fire elemental mana." The small and sickly looking albino demon that sat in the middle of the room held a hand out. The fire elemental mana drew towards them and absorbed in to their hand. In just a moment the temperature had become cold and empty of mana. However, the albino demon became slightly red and looked healthier. "That was better. Now it is part of my collection. Wrath, you always know how to treat me with your presents."

This made the demon known as Wrath angrier but it didn't have the energy to stomp anymore on the ground. "Boys boys boys. How simple you all are. Arguing and chatting in front of our lord like you are at some party. We were called here to discuss my growing army of imps and succubus's." The female demon that walked through and took the front of the hall kneeled before the red throne with a flirtatious smile.

Her figure was alluring and the whip of her tail from side to side was hypnotizing. It was easily said that even those who hated demons to their very core could fall in love at first sight with this female demon. "Please Greed, don't try and take my charm away. I can only let you have it for a moment before I need to take it all back." The female demon stood and toyed with Greed who looked happy to have another with him.

"Always the same. You sin demons are much better than filthy humans and worthless undead. I can expect what you will do and deal with it." The voice that spoke came from the demon sitting in the shadow covered red throne. None could see the demon lord properly, but they could feel the strength and power emanating from every word.

"We have set up those small kingdoms to fall easily. The dragons are sure to avoid conflict and the allies we have in the ocean have those merfolk tied up. Envy, I expect that mimic slime you have spent the last twenty years on will be ready for the upcoming battle. If it is not, you know what will happen."

"Yes my lord. I am teaching it to copy me now but will have it copy sloth when it is finished training." The worry in envy's voice was clear but that only made the demon lord grumble slightly.

"Good, you all know the war strategy we will be using, but we will need to cause additional chaos before we take action." The demon lord gazed with piercing red eyes across the demons. "Pride, take your hand picked army and cause trouble. I expect there to be a significant amount of damage done before you return here. I want that human city to feel the first attack."

The look pride held while he was given these words made him stand even taller. The perfectly fitting black and red armor showed off his strength along with the spotless boots he wore to match. "I will take them with me immediately. There will be no one left. I will follow the strategy to the letter. Those humans will have no access to trading or food on my watch."

"Send the food to me. I will eat it and expand my mana pool again. The humans won't be needing the grains or cattle since they will starve to death." The gluttony demon laughed in joy knowing there was a bountiful feast that would be sent to him. With the departure of Pride, the demons were issued further orders to prepare their own forces for battle.

Chapter 667 - 667. Clearing The Way

Back in the caves just after Su had read her quest completion she felt a change in her body. It was like something blocked had been opened for her. The earth elemental mana that was lingering around them due to the shield and elemental spirits skills, was now hugging to her. "I can feel it. The earth mana. I can feel it all around me now." That was well beyond what Walker had expected.

He had thought that Su wouldn't notice much of a change and wouldn't be able to sense the earth elemental mana at all. However, she was describing the movement of the mana which was attracted to her due to the earth affinity she gained from the quest.

"Zenith, that wall over there by those stairs seem to be strange. Have you sketched them yet?" Walker purposefully distracted Zenith so that he could have a secret word with Su.

"Ah, no. I need to sketch faster so I can explain the dimensions properly!" Zenith rushed to get a closer look fully invested in the intricately carved walls.

"I am wondering. Since you already have a dark elemental affinity and gained an earth affinity, do you think you could get all affinities? Midnight has the ability to eat every mana crystal and you are a draconic guardian. Your system is based on the dragon you are close to right?" Walker had this theory developing and was almost certain that is why Su had the earth elemental affinity as a reward.

"I feel like I should have had this affinity all along. It is like discovering I can move my finger more than I thought I could." Su agreed completely with Walker's idea. She could feel the earth elemental mana around her and even the earth elemental spirit rushing around her.

"I understand a little more what it is like for you to always sense the elements now. It is wonderful." Su was letting herself relax much more than usual. It was an enlightening moment for her as she had a whole new feeling and affinity.

"Like me! You are like me!" The two earth elemental spirits said this in chorus while moving around Su's feet. The darkness elemental spirit popped its' head out of Su's shadow to nod at her showing its understanding before it pulled back in to the shadows to hide again.

"You will make me a home with those bones?" The fire elemental spirit finally stopped flitting here and there to absorb the fire elemental mana. Having finally ceased its' movement, it was looking intently at Walker who it had already stored away the embering skeleton bones.

"I can make you a dwelling item or weapon but you will need to help. It will be made to fit you. You could also join me on my adventures if you'd like?". Walker wanted the fire elemental spirit to choose him over other things so that he would have the quest requirement fulfilled but he wouldn't force it.

"I want a home! No higher spirits!" The fire elemental spirit instantly against the idea that it wouldn't be able to reside in the home that was made just for it. It had seen how the dwelling earth shield worked and was jealous. That was all it took for it to be convinced that it needed a dwelling of its own. There was no way it would want to join Walker in his quest to make a staff.

"Then that's what we will do. I will speak to the elder and see if he can make a dwelling item for you. We can chat about what kind later." Walker just smiled a little sad he didn't get the fire spirit he needed for the quest but knew that was just how it was.

"Hey! You might need to take the lead here!" Zenith had bypassed the offerings and chests next to the stone coffin since she knew they could be examined for their contents after. Instead, she was right by the stairs that seemed to lead up further.

"If that was the start and not the actual flame mage skeleton we might need to get the others." Walker could still feel that there was more fire elemental mana around and that there might be more mage skeletons ahead.

"There are traps in the walls of the stairs. Do you see the elemental mana crystals and the runes carved in to the walls? I have seen them before. They will make fire come out of the mana crystals when someone walks by them. The only way to disable them is to alter the runes which could make them explode or to remove the mana and break the crystals." Zenith lacked the ability to remove the mana and was not risking an explosion in a cave. Especially an old cave.

"I should be able to do something about that. Hey, do you want the mana from the crystals too?" Walker could make the crystals bleed their mana using his manipulation skill but he wasn't sure if the fire elemental spirit would want it since it had taken the other fire elemental mana that the ember skeleton dispersed.

"I will take it!" The spirit was even more excited to get more mana and replenish what it had lost over the many years of being stuck in the cage within the treasury.

"Then here I go." Walker saw the first of six fire elemental crystals in the wall and tried to sense the mana. He could feel a small amount left that had not naturally bled away over the many years. "Oh, this is going to be easy. I'm not sure it could even make fire anymore since it is so weak." He pulled on the mana and the crystal cracked to release the fire elemental mana all at once. The crystal was too old.

The spirit greedily took control of the fire elemental mana and Walker cleared the path of traps. Midnight looked at the broken crystals wantingly. However, Su patted her on the head and kept her company while they waited for Walker to finish. "And that's that. Think there is more above us?" The path was clear of traps.

Chapter 668 - 668. Second Room

Walker was not going to leave the mana crystal shards behind. They were valuable materials to make mana gems that would be perfect for the dwelling items that were going to be forged in the near future. Zenith followed behind as Su moved to take the lead. She was still sketching out the rune designs that she was not completely familiar with. "These are similar to other traps I have seen. I thought they were the same but they might be a little older. I wonder why there are so many though. Usually, the upward stairs should lead to the surface.'

"Maybe there used to be another path. This wall here is mostly fallen rock." Su had a hand against the wall and realized that even though the wall was hidden in shadows that it was different.

"I see. So those traps protected the tomb of the flame mage. Then we have more to see up here." This was a pleasant surprise since most ruins that she had explored were just a burial chamber and maybe a small room with writings or pictures directly attached that detailed their life. "I hope that we discover some documents too." Zenith almost ran forward but Su had stopped on the upward stone steps yet again.

'This step has less dust around it. I think it has air moving around it." Walker decided that with Su's input it was best to give the all around appraisal skill a shot to see what was what.

'False step

Basic trap set by many trappers. The step will fall away to a pit underneath after a certain weight is put on it.'

"That is a trap and we will not be stepping on it. We do not need to deal with whatever is down in the pit below." There were nods all around. Midnight gracefully lept over and Onyx found a home on Walker's shoulder to avoid it safely. "You know, you could have just slipped in to my shadow like the dark spirit is doing with Su." Walker scratched Onyx's head knowing full well it was just because Onyx loved to sit on Walkers' shoulders and wouldn't admit it.

"Leader, we are at the top. It needs your input." Su had reached the top of a small square room. There was nothing to note of the room but for the walls and ceilings. They were carved walls in much better condition than the others of the ruins.

"Oh my, bless the caves and their presents. Do you know what this is!?" Zenith was extremely energized when his eyes rested on the walls. Seeing that Walker and Su were lost along with Midnight and Onyx just ignoring her and glancing around she felt compelled to explain.

These are walls that hold information important enough that the most complicated earth rune we have even found was used. These are runes that can last millennia without fading away." Zenith started to attempt to sketch the runes but found that every time she did they would be slightly off. "They are the hardest to replicate without the proper system. I can only ask for a master rune mage to come here if we can recruit one for work." The dwarves had hired rune mages who were known to travel the world. Unfortunately, they rarely passed through and they were very rare.

"That's a little sad. I guess you will just need to settle for me using my skill to translate and read you what's written on the walls." Walker was glad he could be useful. He felt that he wouldn't be able to do much with the runes since he lacked knowledge in general about them. However, he could easily read and let Zenith record what was written.

Seeing Zeniths' eyes almost glowing with joy Walker started to pull out some snacks for Midnight and a few promised elemental mana crystals. He also made sure that there were light elemental crystals from Onyx to wrap around. "Leader, I am going to rest in the corner with the earth spirits." Su wanted to get better acquainted with her partner in the last battle and make sure she and the spirit were on the same page.

"Sounds good. This might take some time anyways, so it's better to get some rest." Walker was happy to see the earth spirit and Su starting to bond more than just in the last battle. He was sure that the two would be getting along in the future.

"I think this is the start here. There is a mark of a flame here with another on the opposite wall spelling the end." Zenith had located the start of the words on the wall. The strange shapes that made up the writings were translated in to words that Walker could understand by his skill. He soon realized that this wasn't just writings but a full story.

"It says in the first line, beware, those who curse the world will have their curse fall upon themselves." The ominous feeling only increased as Walker scanned the wall. Zenith had a brand new scroll out to write it all down as he spoke.

"Keep going. I will write it word for word." The excitement that Zenith had did not take away from the ominous tone Walker had in the least. He wasn't sure exactly what would be written but since it began with a warning about the world he felt he was about to learn something dangerous.

"Life may be hard and pull one's heart to the ends. Never betray the world and curse the gifts it has given. The world can see your soul and dreams. The gift is the ideal it gives you to shape those dreams and guide you to your happiness." This sounded a lot better, yet, Walker lost the relaxed feeling in the next sentences on the walls.

Chapter 669 - 669. Hate Filled Heart

"It looks like it switches to a story after that warning." Walker could see the words had changed to someone writing an instance they had had and wanted to warn others about.

"I need to know what they are warning us from. I know curses, but what curses?" Zenith was already trying to draw conclusions and find out what was really being explained.

Walker didn't leave her waiting and continued on, "I write this in memory of a great brother. I hope the world took pity on him and released his soul from torture."

"I was blessed with the Great flame mage system. It was a magnificent day for my family. was highly valued and fire even more so since it could help the village get through the winter. I would even have the chance to have a master teach me."

This all seemed normal to Walker until he read the next lines, "My brother did all he might to unlock the gift the world gave him, and when he did there was another celebration. He gained the swordsman system. It was simple, but he was excited to explore the new avenue. He spoke constantly of the tricks he learned from the world's gift and how he would impress the love of his life with it."

"The months passed and we grew in fame. Yet, when the storm came, the monstrous eels from the lake nearby came from the water and through the mud to hunt. This was normally easy for the village to deal with but the storm went for days and we lost more men and women every day. I rarely had mana and my brothers' sword was soaked in the blue blood they held within their bodies."

Walker began to realize this may be a horror story written. The flame mage had a rough life in the earlier days.

"The children with their gifts were required to fight as well and that meant the girl my brother loved. This was a massive worry for him and a worry well founded. The same night an eel latched on to her and injected a mana eating poison. The girl perished before morning then, the rain stopped and the eels rushed to the water again for safety."

"In my brothers' grief, he forgot our mothers' words and cursed the gift he had received. He cursed the world. The world heard him and felt the pain of rejection."

"Our mother had warned us not to curse the world. It would issue the world's curse and change the one cursing it in to the thing they were disgusted by most. For some that could be a slug. Others it could be a monster. It was whatever was within their hearts at the time."

"The dark and toxic cloud of light enveloped my brother and when it left him there was something else. The skin was slimy and the hands webbed. The teeth were needles and there were fins on the arms and back. Not to mention the blue blood running through its veins."

After calming himself, my brother spoke in a different voice. He cursed the world and was rewarded with the world's cursed title. The system he had was gone. The gift was non existent. The world had turned him in to a mix of what he was disgusted and hated with what he was. His hate filled heart caused him to travel the village in rage and defeated any who stood before him. Drove of eels followed him everywhere."

"Many years passed me by as I worked up the courage to hunt him. I needed to make the wrongs his rage brought right. It was too long for me to accept that his curse had warped his body to the same as his mind was. I took up my hard trained al power and earned the respect of five villages by defeating my very brother."

"I nearly cursed the world as well that day. But I remembered the words. I mourned him and found that his soul was missing. I regret I was unable to do anything in my life after that. I saved villages and helped others. Yet, I felt nothing. I was empty and eventually found myself at the end of my life. I had my story written here to teach those who visit my burial chamber looking for answers."

"Never curse the world. The consequences are great and the fall out even worse. Stand strong in the face of the worst. Time may test all. Losing everything is not worth becoming something you hate the most."

Walker looked at the end. "Su, does this sound familiar to a story about a certain demon?" Su had become focused after hearing that the world cursed people. She remembered the immortal kings' story about the boy and mother his people experimented on and how he had cursed the world only to be turned in to a demon and forced to have the fallen hero system.

"Yes. We should take a copy of this as well." Su knew that they may need it for their research in to the demons. Cosmos had cursed the world and ended up something he didn't like in the last. Immortal king may not have been demons but it was clear to Walker that Cosmos had thought of the researchers as demons and he was turned in to one as a result.

"This is by no means good to know. There isn't anything about undoing it so it is most likely permanent. We need more information. Is there another ruin like this?" Walker thought that the other ruins might have similar stories if the dwarves had found any.

"No, the ruins never had a wall like these. They were weaker and needed reinforcement. This is unique." Zenith was still entranced by the art, that was the carvings in the room.

Chapter 670 - 670. Undead Reasons

Walker looked slightly dejected that there was not more but thought of this as valuable information. Cursing the world was never done and none of them could think of a time when it had actually happened. To the best of their memories, they had never heard of the world cursing someone in this way. It was a curse lost to time.

"Let me adjust my question a little bit. Have you ever found anything on the world's curse before?" Walker watched as Zenith reacted. He wanted to try to see if she would be hiding anything since this could be a very big secret that any kingdom may hide from their people. It was a dangerous notion that the systems they unlocked could be rejected for something else.

"No. Not that I have found." Zenith didn't appear to be nervous or hiding anything which put Walker at ease. "But, we have found pictures on walls and had some of the code breakers decipher scrolls that spoke of people becoming monsters after bad occurrences in their life."

"That sounds a lot like the worlds' curse then..." Walker was sure that it was the world's curse or at the very least related. "I think this was a very good ruin to find. But I think that is all there is for the reading-ah, there's something small on the ceiling." Walker glanced up to see a phrase.

"What is it? What is it?" Zenith was again filled with energy since it was an additional surprise.

"To any who wander to my crypt. I hope you find me in rest. I will have dies with great regrets and my body may attempt to rise and fill them. If such a thing occurs my staff and robes are sealed away in the foot of my coffin. Please take them as a thank you for putting me back to slumber. Anything within my crypt may be payment to this end."

"He knew he was going to rise up. His regrets made him rise. Leader, that is very valuable information. Many of the cemeteries are blessed yet some undead still manage to crawl from the earth. If they have strong regrets that could be what surpasses the blessings." Su had heard at the church that the undead would always rise in the cemeteries even without outside influences. However, it was all too common for those that perished in accidents or while young to rise. This made for a complicated burial and watch of the gravesite.

"Brother, are you interested in the staff and robes? They must be fire elemental and very powerful since this is a crypt for a great flame mage." Onyx had also started to pay more attention while absorbing the light elemental mana from the mana crystals that Walker had given him.

"Of course I am. I would be lying if I wasn't interested. They could be the best staff and robes I have ever found. But the problem is that I am looking for materials for an all elemental staff. Not just a single fore elemental staff and robes." This was bittersweet for him but he was excited none the less.

"Then we should go check them out. I am interested too. If you do not like them and sell them to the high forge to research they would go for a very good price." Zenith spoke matter of factly.

"I'm surprised you wouldn't want to take them as a finding for this exploration." It was a sensible thought since the dwarves had found the ruins.

"Since I'm the one in charge of it I can care less. I can't use it and I don't know of any fire dwarf fire mage in the city let alone ever. So, enjoy them. But if there are any ores or scrolls I want them. There are more

than just a staff and robes in those chests unless the other two are empty. And before you ask, yes, I have found ruins with empty chests because it was a false burial to throw off grave robbers." Zenith looked more annoyed than anything explaining that there were false ruins around that were used to hide others. It sounded like a major problem for a map maker like her.

Walker pulled out a piece of jerky from his inventory and started to snack while he watched Zenith finish the sketches with proportionate dimensions and even attempted rune copies. The rest of their group soon finished up their rests and snacks before the eager Zenith pushed for them to return to the burial chamber.

"I have opened stone chests like this before and they are always full of things that rotted away. But look! There are the same runes as the walls so everything inside should be the same as the day it was put in here. These chests alone can make or break a merchant's business." The slightly evil look on Zenith's face didn't go unnoticed by them, yet they chose not to dwell on it too much.

Zenith started by measuring and sketching the detail of the stone chests. They were sealed with a few runes but she easily cut through them releasing a small burst of air that had been trapped within the stone chests. "Now we can see what we have here."

Zenith pulled out a bunch of books from the first chest. "Those look to be journals. They are all listed with various monsters and how to defeat them." Su had taken one and skimmed through it. Strangely they were readable for her.

"They are also enchanted with . Even I can read them without an issue. Very valuable for sure. I will need to give these to the archivists and researchers." Walker didn't fight her on this. He knew that he would most likely be able to get a copy. "Next chest then!"