

Master 71

Chapter 71 - 71. Maze

Gil snuck down the smaller hallways taking note of any differences in the floor in case of traps. These hallways didn't have any indents for bodies but did have spots for candles long since burned. He noticed some moth eaten tapestry once hung on the walls.

The hallways were not long and he came to a small room at the end. A stone altar was in the center covered in carved symbols. The walls were carvings of worship. Along with the heavens and flames underneath the ground. Upon the altar were some ancient gold coins and a book that was strangely in good condition. It appeared to be dusty but not rotten or overly damaged. Gil took note that the symbols in the altar may have had something to do with this.

He inspected the altar and the book finding a small metal thread underneath the book. Using an arrow he fixed the thread so it would not move. He'd lose an arrow but gain an unknown book that could hold many secrets.

After securing the thread he took the book and quickly retreated. In case the thread didn't hold. He reached the rest of the party in a moment "so I found you a book to read, it must be important if it had a trap on it right?" Gil was smug knowing he was to thank for something potentially important.

Walker took the book and dusted off the cover, "where was it?"

"It was on a stone altar covered in symbols and stuff. I figured it looked important right? Righhhhhht?" Gil was waiting to know what it said so pushed Walker along.

"The title is; undying faith. If it was on an altar it may be religious. When we take a break I'll read in to it. Nice job" this might be some important insight they needed to get through the catacombs but stopping now would not be wise as they had just rested.

They moved forward and soon came to a small hallway this time on the right. Gil already knew what to do and began sneaking down the hallway.

Unlike the first hallways this one curved to the left. Gil found indents for bodies and a small fountain like statue. It was a man carved from stone holding a heart in one hand and a book in another. He could see

spouts in his chest where water once flowed. Moving on he continued forward not finding anything and returning to the large hallway. Looking down he saw the party.

"Um it's a circle. I came right back out here." Seeing this they came to meet him. "Other than a creepy old fountain nothing back there just loops around. Freaking maze down here just to get us lost." Gil wasn't happy since he didn't find anything this time.

Much to the party's dismay, this process reappeared four more times as they moved forwards. There were hallways that would circle around leaving them back where they started. This was made almost as if on purpose to confuse someone. Or maybe to keep the undead down here.

"Stop" Gil said in a hushed voice. "Do you hear that?" The clattering of bones up ahead was faint but loud enough to make out.

"Skeletons" Walker recognized it instantly. "It doesn't sound like too many but we should be prepared"

The party crouched and moved quietly down the hallway. Soon three bony shapes in the shadows came in to sight. Two held larger rusty swords and one had a bow but no arrows. The bow was strange it didn't look old and rusty like the other weapons skeletons had. "there's something weird about that one with the bow, there are no arrows and the bow isn't old and worn looking." Walker whispered to them.

"I'll aim to take it out first, once I fire my arrow we rush them ok?" Gil figured if he took out the strange archer skeleton first it would be wise. Gil stood taller and draw his bow. He had a second arrow clenched between his teeth for the second shot.

The arrow freed itself from his bow. It was silent but on target. The skeleton holding the bow stumbled but didn't fall. Gil already had the second arrow drawn and following the first hit the skull of the skeleton. It still stood but was obviously dazed.

Su came out of her crouch rushing the skeletons. Remey and midnight were close behind. The two with melee weapons ran forward. The sounds of metal hitting metal were all they could hear as the two skeletons slammed their weapons on to Su's shield. However, Remey wasn't having any of it. She wound up her right fist and shattered the skull of the nearest skeleton.

The one holding the bow had recovered and had visible damage in its skull. Cracks webbed out from where the arrows were impaled. Gil let fly another arrow but the skeleton stepped back. It reached to draw its own bow leading them to witness something crazy. An arrow formed out of black smoke. This was ! "Gil dodge!" Walker shouted as Gil wasn't moving yet. The skeleton released its dark arrow narrowly missing Gil but piercing deep in to the wall behind him. Beads of sweat came off Gil's brow. Remey and Su had cornered the other skeleton knocking its weapon across the room. Midnight had used the time the skeleton with a bow was focused on Gil to sneak behind it. She jumped crushing the skull easily between her teeth. Walker made a mental note of how good she was getting at sneaking up on enemies.

A loud crack came as Su slammed her shield in to the last skeleton finishing the job.

'Two skeletons defeated

10 exp gained multiplied to 100exp

One skeletal archer defeated

9exp gained multiplied to 90exp'

Walker was puzzled, this was still a skeleton but it was specified as a skeletal archer. He knew skeletons could wield many weapons often which they held as they died. However, a skeletal archer meant the skeleton was a very powerful archer when they were alive. Walker decided to inspect the weapon left behind.

Chapter 72 - 72. Flowing Water

' soul bow

+2 matk, +2atk

A bow created through great hardship. The crafter feared the time a hunter would lack an arrow to protect themselves and used his soul to forge unto the bow itself. When mana is used as fuel the bow creates an arrow with the user's elemental affinity.'

"Hey Gil, you just got a new toy!" Walker knew this was perfect for Gil who wanted to keep his attack and all attack stats the same. He desired the ability to use magic arrows and regular arrows. This bow was almost made for him.

"Yea? What's it do? That weird skeleton used didn't it?" Gil's face slowly changed from confused to awe. "Wait you're not saying this bow made that happen are you!?" Gil was shaking waiting for confirmation.

"Exactly that you can use mana and it creates an arrow out of your elemental affinity. So this is perfect for you." Walker smiled and picked up the bow to hand to Gil.

Gil took the bow having a hard time believing it was real. "So that explains why that arrow was all dark and spooky. It was terrifying but makes sense a skeleton would have a dark element." As he said these words his voice curious at what his elemental affinity would be.

"We'll aim at the wall there and test it just don't hit an archway!" Walker Su and Remey were looking at him expectantly. Midnight had decided it was time to snack on some of the skeletal archer's bones and did not pay attention.

Gil lifted the bow, the second he sent his mana in to it green swirls seemed to appear out of nowhere. This green swirl of pulled the air towards his fingers as he pulled the string. Soon a green arrow with a top that rotated like a tornado appeared on the bow. Everyone but Gil was slack jawed. Gil however was feeling the wind as it was part of his body. He breathed out and released the arrow.

Their breaths were taken away, the arrow reached the wall in a blink of an eye. The rotation drilled a hole through the wall as if cleanly cut. The shocking part was there was no sound! A large breeze that took the air from them but no sound!

Gil let the bow fall to his side, he breathed deeply, "I won't be able to use that many times but, wow." He couldn't believe what he'd just done. This was something he'd only dreamed of, to fire a magic arrow.

"You literally just took our breath away jerk! Pfft guess you'll be all full of hot air now" Remey laughed at her jokes. Gil had definitely shown a wind elemental affinity and a powerful one at that. An archer needed to be attuned to the wind to truly know where their arrows would land but this was another level completely.

While they all gushed over Gil's new weapon not a single one noticed the water beginning to flow from the hole Gil's arrow had created.

"Hey umm guys where did this puddle come from" Remey had realized they were all standing in a growing puddle. Midnight had backed away from the water unwilling to touch it a slight growl in her throat.

"Leader midnight doesn't seem to like this water at all." Su was worried they were standing in this puddle and she didn't see anything wrong.

"I'll check it out let's see what my skill says" Walker used his all around appraisal skill immediately

'Rotting leach

Small undead creatures that live in toxic conditions. Often found in bodies of stagnant water filled with corpses. Once it infects a host it spreads poisons throughout the hosts body slowly feeding in its very life.'

"Everyone out of the puddle now! There are leeches in the water!" Walker jumped to the dry stones. Seeing this everyone else followed. Upon paying more attention they all saw small purple colored worm like things trying to swim in the water. Noticing one near her Remey stomped on it with her foot crushing it.

The flow of the water was Increasing and as such so was the puddle. "We need to move and get away from this stuff now." Walker made the call to move ahead faster. He knew that these leaches could be trouble in the long term. "We need to stay away from water, I'm not sure leaders' flames can kill them when they swim in the water." Su was definitely afraid of these things, they were slimy poisonous worms. Her mother had once tried a regular leech as a healing technique. Unfortunately, the healer that was there had spilled a jar full of leaches in the room and one had scrawled on to Su giving her an irrational fear.

Her face was absolute terror causing the others to hesitate. They rarely had seen Su lose her calm demeanor and give way to fear. "Then let's move we can push forward just stay alert." Worried about Su walker decided to push everyone forward away from this unexpected situation.

The flow of water was almost gushing now, there must be an extreme amount of water behind the wall.

Cccrrrraackkk!

The sound of the wall beginning to crack echoed through the catacombs. "Run!" Remey yelled and the party started sprinting forward. They passed many side hallways rushing to find a door to close behind them. It dealt like an eternity of running as they heard more and more cracking noises. They could see a small narrow stairway leading up at the end of the hall. Five skeletons were standing around near the walls.

"Ignore the skeletons we need to get up higher, just knock them away!" Walker's plan was to push the skeletons away and climb the stairs. If any followed Su would bash them with her shield. "Su you follow behind Remey front in case there's another enemy up top!"

They ran with all their might not worrying about alerting the skeletons. The skeletons turned and left the sides of the walls to come towards the party. The nearest was kicked back by Remey as she got to the stair well. "Mana blast!" Walker forced two away with his spell as Gil and midnight went up the stairs. The other skeletons were pushed back by Su as Walker and her began climbing.

The sound of a crumbling wall and gushing water was all they could hear, even the skeletons paused their movements. The water was coming.

Chapter 73 - 73. Lost

They ran hopping two stairs at a time trying to get up. The water could be heard flowing up the stairs and no one knew how high it would go. A skeleton was on their heels but Su used their height advantage being higher on the stairs to crack its skull before running harder.

"Walker we've got a room up here." Gil's voice echoed down the stairs along with a grunt from Remey who seemed to be fighting.

As Walker saw the room he noticed Remey fighting a half rotted half skeleton zombie. It must be very old to have made it to this state. Before anyone even helped Remey had already crushed its head with a strong punch. "Pfft I can handle myself." Remey was out of breath but still had the energy to brag.

Su stepped in to the room backwards watching as the water slowed to only three steps from them. "It's safe to say that we can not return that way." The look of horror on her face was evident. A death by drowning and leaches was not anyone's preference.

Seeing that the water had stopped and there was no immediate danger the party collapsed to the ground. They could finally catch their breath and relax. "Ok so maybe having you test out your new bow was a bad idea." Walker looked at Gil who smiled sheepishly.

"Better to test it out and run like a fool then fail later" Su responded while stretching her legs.

"We passed a lot of hallways I hope we going the right way." Remey had seen many possible turns but stayed straight forward afraid to lose the others while running.

Finally looking around them walker noticed the room's round shape. The stairs they had come from let way to a domed ceiling. Three hallways branched from this all seeming to slope upward and to the left as if in a spiral.

While resting walker pulled the book Gil had found glancing through the pages not seeing much of interest. This was all scripture for an ancient religion. "This undying faith seems to worship a god that grants immortality. I don't see it named anywhere in this book though." Walker's forehead crunched and he looked harder trying to pry more information. "The rituals and such in here aren't necessarily evil but a lot of blood letting and animal sacrifices. This last section speaks of a way to fuse the souls with others to gain the blessing of the god. Naturally the blessing is immortality. What kind of people lived here to believe something so brutal?" Walker couldn't contain his curiosity, if these people truly fused their souls with one another how could a body contain them?

"So basically these people did some pretty gruesome things, no wonder this place is filled with undead" Remeys blunt comment brought the realization to them.

"What if it was because of the things they worshiped and did the city ended up like this? What if they tried to get immortality from their god and ended up creating all these undead and ruins?" Gil had just hit the nail on The head.

'Chain quest link has been completed

Optional: discover the history of the ancient ruins

Rewards:

400 exp multiples to 4000exp.'

"Ha! Yes I'm right." Gil jumped up in victory.

"So due to their worship and attempts to fuse their souls they created the undead. I wonder if we can find any specifics, I bet that spire in the center isn't just for show right? It's probably swamped with the undead for a reason too." Walker drew the connection. If any super important religious ritual would take place wouldn't it be at the most important looking place?

"Leader if that's the case should we venture there? Or try to avoid it? I'd hate to fight so many undead or even stronger ones but that seal could only be on something important right? Maybe it's a key back outside from the tower?" Su wondered if the deal was so immensely important to the ancient ruins but walker dashed her hopes.

"As far as I know no one has ever entered the spire but this talisman is most likely for another door. From the writings here if the tower was religious it was most likely open to those who lived here for worship." Walker based his hunch on how many religious buildings worked in their city along with the hope that they could find a treasure in a sealed door. He may have been slightly biased.

Looking up from his pensive state Walker decided that scouting a bit in to the three hallways would be wise. "Gil you take the right path I'll take the left then we will return and check the middle." The left and right path seemed to turn a bit more than the center so Walker was thinking it was longer and went farther up.

Gil stood up, now that they had rested he was ready. He proceeded forward walking on the slopes curving halfway. The walls were smooth but every few feet carvings were evident. As he walked he felt he'd traveled a distance upward but the end was near. He came to a dead end, another alter say In front of him. However, no books or scrolls were present. There was an ancient religious amulet and some coins. This was a complete bust! Gil grabbed the items and headed back in a huff having wasted time.

Walker had headed down the left hallways and come to similar conclusion. However his dead end housed an ancient suit of armor which Walker examined with his skill.

'Undying faith ceremonial armor

Carved from bloody stone this armor was believed to assist in the connection with the gods.'

This stone red armor was carved with many symbols and patterns. Its shoulders held spikes and the helm a skeletal carved face. The bracers and boots were carved to look like the heads of snakes. This would have been a terrifying sight to see if walker did not know it was ceremonial only and lacked battle prowess.

Walker quickly stored away the Armor knowing it could help their test grade if they ever escaped the catacombs. The walk back to the domed chamber seemed faster than his slow sneak upwards.

Chapter 74 - 74. Surprises

Gil and Walker came back to the room at the exact same time. The two exchanged a look and put arms around each others shoulder pushing each other to and fro. This was a bro moment. Both found it comical that they completed their scouting at the same time.

"Ehhmm ladies if your now done flirting..." Remey saw an opportunity to get a good jab in and took it whole heartedly. However the huge smiles and odd postures of the two made Gil and walker freeze.

"Soo what's are you guys hiding behind your backs?" Gil noticed Remey and Su using her shield to block them from seeing behind them.

"Remey I think it's time." Su looked at Remey and Remey nodded back.

In unison the pair said "we present the all new Midnight!!!!" From behind them Midnight jumped out. However the stunning part of all this was two small wings down the length of her back. These wings looked to be made of bones. Pure white skeletal bones with a think black membrane between them making up the wings. The adult scales around where they were attached had white lines through the mainly black translucent parts.

Gil and walker were dumbfounded "how! When! What happened!" They were only gone at most an hour or two to scout.

"As soon as you two left midnight kept rubbing on the walls and trying to scratch her back. She had a lot of loose scales so we helped her and before we knew it we saw her wings poking out!" Su and Remeys were absolutely giddy. "We were very worried at first but remembered what you had said."

Remeys smile was infectious "we were the first to see midnights new wings!" The two seemed to have bonded with midnight through this.

Meanwhile midnight was prancing side to side showing off her wings. It was obvious she couldn't use them yet as she needed to develop the muscles. Her pride as a dragon swelled now that she had her wings.

"Have you guys ever heard of a skeletal dragon before?" Walker's question caught them off guard. "I saw it in the book I read while looking for information on dragons. They often consume bones in their life and have extremely high defenses. They have wings very similar to midnights. If I were to place a bet I would say midnights father was a skeletal dragon and she inherited those wings from her father's blood. And they look like they have mixed with her mothers black scales. Between a skeletal dragon and a dark flame dragon she would probably be the tougher of the two now because she got the defense of qualities of one and the other.

The party was enthralled by Midnight's wings. Normally after seeing so many skeletons seeing something bone like would put them down but this changed their whole perspective. "Wait does that mean she will lose all he black scales?" Remeys seemed dejected that midnight may grow out of he pure black scales to pale white ones.

"I'm not sure it seemed like those ones by her wings are a mix. So in theory she's just getting stronger scales and highlighted colors. I think it looks pretty cool." After Walker's last sentence midnight puffed he chest up more. She was really enjoying this attention.

"So Gil while we're resting again what did you find?" Walker didn't think the armor was worth sharing since it wasn't valuable.

"It was a dead end only another altar with those religious amulet and a few coins. It was a waste." Gil shook his head and looked hopefully at the last hallway.

"Same here mine lead to some ceremonial armor but nothing else." Walker was worried the third path would be the same and they would be trapped.

"Well no point in sitting here I'm going to scout the last one. Wish me luck." Everyone gave Gil a nod and a wave as he jumped to action.

This hallway was much like the others but it slowly became wider the higher Gil went. The roof of this hallway also mirrored the domed theme of the prior room. After an hour of walking the incline had become steeper but Gil could care less about that. He had just found something interesting.

Directly in front of him was a wall of bones. It would be unusual anywhere but here however the way it was placed made him think there was more to it. Upon investigating it wasn't a complete dead end, Gil could feel a slight drift coming from the cracks between bones. The bones were arranged perfectly with three skulls in the center. There seemed to be nothing concrete holding them together. Gil gave the wall a solid kick and instead of breaking through was met with an unyielding force. This was not just a wall. With this information, he was ready to let the party know. Using the party chat function he told them everything was clear and that he had a puzzle for them.

Walker wasn't sure what kind of puzzle Gil was referring too so he doubled his efforts along with the others to get up to him. Upon seeing the bone wall blocking their path Gil stood there like a fool pointing. "No idea how to break this, good luck" Gil laughed and sat down to watch Walker work.

Walker went about the same methods as Gil, noticing a draft from between bones, that nothing seemed to hold it all together, and let a solid kick at it.

"Pfft that's not a real hit let me do it." Remey wound up and with a shout unleashed a powerful punch. Her knuckles grinding on the bones. However not a single dent was made. Her face contorted in pain almost as if she'd struck the toughest dragon scales. "What in the holy heavens are these things made of? It didn't even scratch!" She was astounded that her punch was perfectly resisted. However as Remey had punched at the wall a strange thought was occurring to Walker.

Chapter 75 - 75. Unsealed

Walker reached out his hand and attempted to let mana flow in to the bone wall. The wall then shone with a myriad of complicated patterns. Walker's hunch had paid off. Seeing that there was a rectangular spot where the patterns were not complete in between the skulls of the wall he knew exactly what belonged there.

"Ya know Gil if you're going to find a puzzle you should probably find one without a key." Walker smirked pulling out the ancient talisman and placing it between the skulls.

The skulls eyes glowed for a moment and all the bones fell to the ground in to dust immediately. The wall was gone letting way to an open hallway. However there was a drastic difference in the quality of the walls and walkways itself. The walls symbols weren't faded at all last where the bone wall had been. The stone floor was clean and free of dust. This put everyone on edge fearing they had entered somewhere they shouldn't be.

As they walked it was noticeably brighter allowing Walker to hold the abyssal serpent egg to gain a bit more light. There were no echoes or bones or scratching up ahead and he was put at ease. Any hints of traps were not there in this hallway. They noticed that the path was slowly becoming stairs until they were completely walking upwards on a large spiral stair case. They had to stop many times to rest as the more seemed to be unending stairs.

Soon they could hear a tap tap tap repeating over and over. It's was often a habit impatient people picked up as they waited for something. This cause Su to tense up as she lead the way. The others prepared themselves for what may lie ahead.

They reached the cusp of the stairs, a strange glow was coming from the room up top. The party shared looks preparing themselves to see what awaited them. Would they be able to survive? Was this an exit? Will there be another trap? What if it's a dead end? This questions and more rang in their heads.

They mustered their courage all stepped out from the stair way. They were caught in awe immediately.

The stone walls were engraved with gold. Depictions of creatures growing from infancy to adulthood to death were depicted everywhere. The gold glow from many crystals made the room feel as if it was full of power. There were racks of armors and weapons. Chests of perfectly polished ancient and recent gold coins. Jewels glimmered from jewelry. Elegant tapestries showed brilliant colors and scenes of those praying. Towards the back of the room the tap tap tap sound stopped.

An old voice seemingly filled with power and dread echoed, "two hundred thirty three years four month and seven days since I received a visitor. Yet not one but five have come to pay respects." A skin crawling laughter reverberated through the room.

This voice was coming from a cloaked figure sitting atop a pearl white throne. The throne itself stood out not because of its color but the fact that it was carved from pure bone. "Now speak your names so I may know who has come asking of me." The voice was demanding and sweat quickly grew on their foreheads. This was not someone they could escape from.

Walker didn't want to cause the death of everyone so stepped up to take the brunt of the attention. "I am walker, this is my party Su, Remey, Gil, and midnight. We are adventurers who came to the ancient ruins for a test and happened to come to the place you see us now." Walker watched the cloaked person closely.

At first the party had thought this person to be living however they saw a black skeletal hand from the sleeve of the cloak. Walker quickly used his skill to check and see any possibility of escape. This could all be an illusion to escape right?

' ancient liche king

The skills of this monster are not comparable to an undead liche. This is an almost immortal undead creature. One body does not limit it along with other abilities to create and guide huge numbers of undead. Often created through many years of self experimentation or unholy s.'

Walker gulped back more fear seeing this. "Ah so you young one are their leader. And you have such a useful ability to see what I currently am." More laughter filled the room. The hood fell from the monsters head revealing a black skull with many black lines and symbols etched in to it. The eye sockets were filled with a white flame.

"In life they called me the king of the undying faith, now I am the immortal king. My god saw my efforts and rewarded me greatly. However as the time has passed it seems those outside here have become weak. Rarely do I see anyone who can make it here let alone the catacombs themselves. My experiments always prove too powerful." The king shook his head. Disappointment from its voice. "Sooo the question is why are you here, you said a test but those who find me are looking for more. The last to visit was a pathetic demon necromancer. Wanted knowledge to create an undead army, such a small mind."

Walker was unsure how to answer but before he did his system caught his eye.

' chain mission link complete:

Optional: find the sealed door

Reward:

300exp multiples to 3000exp.

Quest updated:

Optional: listen to the story of the last hero the immortal king met.

Reward:

The immortal kings insight

Gift from immortal king

Optional:

Take the kings test and pass

Reward:

????'

The chain quest had been updated the two optional quests had been revealed but still did not seem optional at all. One reward was still unknown to them but this was not what Walker had been caught on. The immortal king this ancient lich king had met another hero!

Chapter 76 - 76. Story Time

"I mentioned before we came here to take a test this is to rank up to a higher tier adventurer party. However we also came here because the monsters here can be defeated in groups making us stronger. We have goals and dreams to pursue so we must become stronger." The answer was fairly cliché but Walker felt it was right for the moment.

The immortal king cocked his head to the side "I've met one other who tried to do the same...hmmm since you all have come to see me I will gift you with some history." Immortal king brought its hand to its jaw and the patterns on its bones glowed slightly.

"In its prime this great city was magnificent, the people such as I strived for the immortal god's attention. We followed strict religious beliefs and life was harmonious. Often the outside rabble would be brought in to gain a chance to join us or be used as part of our learning. Most higher ups would experiment with , if we could learn more we could garner the gods attention and gain its blessings. To become an immortal is the Pinnacle of life. You understand the undying faith is one that strives to stand above death. Look at this body before you it's looking dead yet the souls within me brim with power and life." Immortal king laughed as he praised himself.

"One such rabble was brought in, a child with a mother. Something happened to the father but that's not important. Without names they were subject 912 and 913. The overseer made many notes that the mother 912 would fake courage in front of 913 while the testing occurred. For rabble such as them it was impressive. The system she possessed was one of a healer so she was perfect for discovering certain intricacies of life power. Sadly 913 had yet to show his system so all that was left was to let it watch and hope it unlocked something useful. This went on for many a month until one day the mother fell from life and became a low level undead. Didn't retain her soul or consciousness a complete failure." Immortal king shook his head still remembering reading the reports of a promising experiment failure.

"That instant the boy 913 unlocked its system. The overseer didn't even have a chance to react as 913 acted above a normal expected level one's power and escaped. This led to the overseer losing his position and a search for the missing subject. Unfortunately there was no evidence found. But that was not the end of it." The flow of the patterns seemed to radiate a bit almost as if the anger from years past was fresh.

"Some time later rumors of someone with a hero system trying to obtain the hero title spread. This naturally enticed our great undying cities hunters because a rare specimen as such would give them a

life of ease when captured and turned if for a reward. The disgusting part was this hero was said to reside with the vampire trash! Those royal vampires hated the results of our experiments and religion. They thought themselves high and mighty for worshipping that god of blood. To think they were conditionally immortal as long as they fed on blood. Pathetic. What a half assed form of immortality, an insult to the great god of immortality." Waves of shadow and anger came from immortal king, it truly hated vampires to its very core.

"Our great city waged many a war against them to no end. We would never convince them of the pure immortality gained through the soul. I digress. This hero gained popularity over the years. Slaying our hunters and showing up to battles against the vampires. Soon we found ourselves in turmoil. No new subjects, along with unrest pushed us to full blown war. The vampires lead their strongest to our city and tried to take our undying life from us. We were able to cut the numbers down significantly but needed to resort to our last untested trump card. We fused all of our souls in to one body. My body" immortal king grasped at his throne with his free hand making the party wonder if it would shatter under its grip.

"The city was designed for this purpose, we would commit the greatest act, to fuse our souls and accept the blessing of the immortal god. The soul spire in the center of the city would attract the souls pulled from their mortal bodies and begin the fusion in to one body. However, since testing was not complete it left us all trapped and bound in the spire. Each of us our souls bound together became one, we had left mortal death behind and gained immortal life as a soul bound to bones. Our mortal bodies became playthings for us, skeletons, zombies, ghosts, and so forth. Our experiments through the years became different...." trailing off it had realized it was getting in a tangent and returned to the main story.

"The vampire royalty was faced with our undead army and was forced to retreat. They had almost completely lost their species in this battle alone. Sadly we couldn't follow them to destroy the few remaining. But since they went to slumber and lick their wounds for a few hundred years it was not a loss." The immortal king paused a moment then continued. "Once the two sides had fallen in to ruin a young man walked down our streets. It was subject 913. He held a curved sword made by the vampires and slew undead left and right. Upon reaching the spire he had one demand, the undead that was his mother. Naturally we did not allow this but we were uncomfortable we were one now not many and lacked control of the powers from our souls. 913 slashed at us causing a few souls to be freed and fade away but he realized there would be no end. We told him we would use him as our prime experimental subject causing him to become enraged. To control him we forced the undead mother 912 to come. The reaction was not as good as we'd hoped 913 stated that he, Cosmos, had returned to rescue her. It appeared 913 was very broken in the mind. Seeing no proper response pushed 913 farther causing him to slay 912's undead body." The party was stunned immortal king was telling them the one and only person they heard about now to be a hero had lost his mind and slain his own mother. Would they be able to do the same if their family had lost their soul leaving behind a monster? Would they be able to remain sane?

Chapter 77 - 77. Fall Of A Hero

"With this moment of weakness instead of following whatever quest he ignored it. He fought the very system the world gave him. His failure to rescue the one person he cared about cause 913 to become something else. It was fascinating. I watched intently as I saw cracks appear over the very soul of 913. To go against the world was very frowned upon, to say the least but to try and destroy your own system? Idiotic. 913 shouted and flailed about saying things that there was no point in having the hero system. That the world had played a cruel joke. 913 rambled for almost an hour before turning his blade on himself attempting to destroy the part of him the system resides in. Naturally there was a consequence. I witnessed true darkness and evil envelope him. This rabble that had once been of human blood gave up its very form of existence. The system 913 had broken and cast aside changed. When this evil aura and smoke faded what was left was a man bearing a tail and two horns. Sharp red claws on his hands and a sword permanently dyed in his own blood. The system which bore the name heroic system was now the fallen's system. The world and the system had cursed him but this did not stop 913. This subject 913 cosmos looked at us, at our very souls and said we were pathetic. He left that moment, we couldn't even follow his movement. We tried to send the swarm of undead after him but found he had sealed the city. Our army could not leave." The room trembled as it said these last words.

"These years we've had the undead gather our artifacts I've sent out talismans that will open the doors that lead here. Placed my experiments in certain areas. My entertainment has been slow. The more time passed the more treasure hunters, adventurers, knowledge sealers came but they never figured out the puzzles and keys I left to get to me. Sometimes I had them killed if they were weak, others I made my undead interrogate for information. 913 cosmos had left and joined the demons, stories of his ruthlessness scarred the humans and elves causing a massive war across the land. The hero wannabe had become a great evil instead. How amusing isn't it? I know not what happened to 913 now but I do not care. Lately I've been more interested in my experiments trying to fuse undead with living monsters to see if they can become a perfect immortal body so I can leave this place." Immortal king seemed to relax as he'd shared a rudimentary story of how things had reached this state.

This was a terrifying story for the party, they may not have plans to go against the system or the world but knowing there were major consequences would strike fear in to the bravest. They also had the title of hero therefore they worried that they could accidentally go against it and cause the same disaster as Cosmos.

"Sir, if I may ask. What happened to Cosmos after?" Remey was curious and was the first to break from her own thoughts.

"Ah finally another speaks, you look to be a fighter on the front lines. Those knuckles of yours give you away little one. To your question, I would say he's alive with the demons. His body and system may be cursed and I'm sure he suffers from many things. I doubt the world and system would allow him to

escape from it so soon." An evil laugh escaped immortal king knowing the one who pushed and prodded to this existence was suffering brought it solace.

"Hmm it's been long since I've had guests. I'm interested in all of you and your systems but if I heed that I'll forget my experiments. There's been a slight snag combining ancient bones and living flesh. So should I kill you or release you?" The presence in the room became dangerous at this question.

Walker was thinking about what the immortal king was experimenting on and feared for the unlucky creatures that became its subjects. This sparked an idea, they'd fought something that fit the lines of what it was experimenting in. "Sir if you allow us to live and leave I am inclined to give you a gift. I know you have knowledge of corpse spiders, specifically females. There was a skeletal spider we killed that was very strange you may think interesting." Walker pulled the skeletal spider from his inventory making sure to keep a leg for proof for the guild in case they needed it. This skeletal spider had skeleton bones as its armor but they didn't burn when engulfed by the evil consuming flames. It had somehow started to become one with the bones themselves.

Walker placed the skeletal spider in front of the immortal king "I used a spell that burned and consumed undead on it but it only partially burned it. The bones seem to be part of it now. This didn't happen to the male corpse spiders. I hope this helps." Walker stepped back allowing the immortal king to fully grasp the creature.

Immortal king waved a hand and almost like on a string the skeletal spider rose in the air. Black threads seemed to probe the body. "Hmmm....interesting....young maybe third generation....you said the corpse spiders didn't show this?" After talking to itself the immortal king posed a question.

"Yes only the skeletal spider." Walker answers quickly not wanting to take away any focus from the spider.

"Interesting it was from another clutch then. Must have traveled to breed. This is sufficient then. I'll be keeping this spider. You are wise to use it as collateral. If I'd taken your bodies you'd most likely just be fodder for another undead golem since you destroyed one I made a few years ago." They were stunned, it was watching them even then! This was worrisome.

Chapter 78 - 78. Gifts

The skeletal spider was engulfed by darkness disappearing. "I'll allow you to live and as a good host I'll allow each of you to take or ask one thing. Think of it as a gift for bringing me a few things to think on for the next years." The words sounded in good faith but they knew there could be hidden dangers.

Gil stepped forward knowing they would need to make the best of this to gain benefits for the party but also for their kingdom as well. "Sir part of our test to advance our party is to defeat monsters here, gather knowledge, and treasures. Our kingdom knows little of the history of these ruins and I hope to ask for some history and religious books to bring back with us if possible." The others were impressed by Gil's smart request. He had immediately thought of something to help improve not just the party but the kingdom. The hero title was showing.

The immortal king waved his hand and a pile of five books rose from a spot of darkness on the floor. "You are wise to ask this of me, I have many copies of all history and religious texts. I'll allow you to take these and spread the word of the immortal god." Immortal king was impressed. These texts had long been collected by him and were not accessible by the normal people who came treasure hunting.

"Thank you very much sir." Gil motioned to Walker who stored the books away promptly. Still caught up on how well Gil had used his question the party was unable to stop Midnight from walking forward.

She let out a few growls and huffs which somehow the immortal king seemed to understand. "Ha ha ha ha arrogant like any other dragon. You may be a weak and small one but I can see why you'd want that. You hold skeletal and a dark dragon bloodline in perfect mixture. I shall not give you one of my bones however, it would cause your very soul to be enveloped and your body to die. But I will create something for you that serves what you desire. You may watch as you will only see something like this once."

The rest of the party was immensely confused. Did Midnight just ask to eat part of the ancient undead lich? Immortal king could have killed them all if he took offense to that. However their faces became even more astounded as immortal king pulled off piece of its throne and started infusing the purest darkness to it. This small bead took form with stripes and engravings of pearly bone white and extreme darkness. This bead radiated profound understanding of darkness and death.

Immortal king spent a few minutes studying it before placing it in front of midnight "you would do best to have your little leader hold that for now, if you all make it from here it will put you to sleep for many a day." A slight chuckle was heard as it stated the if they make it from here. The feelings of dread washed over them again. Midnight delicately picked up the bead and dropped it in Walker's palm. It was small and held no weight but there still was a feeling of heaviness. Walker used his all around appraisal skill to see what it was.

'Condensed understanding

The forces of death and darkness have been condensed in to a single source. This item is uniquely created by those with a masterful understanding of the source component. This item can be used in various ways to increase understanding and to change the potency of a creature's blood.'

Walker had never heard of condensing ones understanding of something. If a master of a particular element did this would the results be the same? This lead to many other questions but since he had no knowledge nor had heard any rumors of such an item he had the feeling it was extremely valuable. What truly caught his eye was the potential to increase how potent a bloodline was. This meant midnight could become a more pure dragon than a normal mixed blood dragon. As such she could become much much more powerful.

"I'm sure you're surprised to see that" immortal king didn't have facial expressions but walker could tell it was smirking. " I made something similar for that demonic necromancer when he came a few hundred years ago, however he only wanted knowledge not true understanding. That brat cheated his way out of here using his master skills" immortal king tapped away at the throne with its hand in frustration. They all made note not to mention the necromancer no matter how curious they were.

Remey was the next to step forward, "there's not much I can think of to ask. I'm not as witty as the others but I'm smart enough to know I have many waiting for me to return. I also know that after this I'll be going to many more dangerous places. You sir said I was a front line fighter and we were very correct. I often leave the safety of our guardian. Our leader has a sister that can stitch and design things. My hopes are that you have a fabric as strong as armor so I could move faster but also be protected. This would help me a lot and make sure my party won't lose its main damage dealer to one attack."

Remey may have thought she wasn't as smart as the others and humbly said such. Yet she was very wrong. What she's asked for was something only someone thinking ahead with strong battle instincts would ask. She used her knowledge of walkers sisters system to her advantage. Along with this she also asked for the fabric specifically. This meant that not only something for her could be made. It could benefit everyone in the party not just her!

Immortal king cocked its skull to the side thinking. "Hmm you are most interesting. I did not expect you to ask for a material. You say you don't believe yourself smart but your words betray themselves." Immortal king pointed a finger at a closed chest to his left. "Go open that and choose a color"

Chapter 79 - 79. Still Gifts

Remey walked towards a wooden chest immortal king had pointed to. It was fairly large and had a heavy lid. Remey opened it revealing many colors of shimmering fabric.

"Those are made arcane silk worm thread. I received them many years ago. The silk repels of all kinds and is as tough as steel. I used to wear robes made of such fabric. However, it became useless to me as I now have the ability to create cloaks made to boost my abilities greatly. I'm glad to get rid of some, having useless things is quite a pain." Immortal king was remembering before fusing with all the souls. Every grand priest of higher was given robes of this silk so they could perform their acts in battle safely.

Remey pulled a large roll of red and white striped arcane silk worn silk. "I would like to choose this one if that's acceptable." Remey held up the silk.

"Hmm yes it will match" immortal king nodded and Remey brought the fabric to Walker to store away. Su was the next to move forward.

"Ahh finically the defender steps forward, I'd believed you to be mute." Immortal king laughed heartily at its joke.

"Great sir I've thought about this and I know it is very selfish, but if you have any knowledge on unique spells to heal a person's weak constitution could you please give them to our leader? Not only can we use it to help others but it would mean curing my mother's illness." Su wanted to think of something else something better but she couldn't put aside a chance that this being which had lived for hundreds of years had an answer.

"Hmm challenging aren't you...why not bring that mother here and I'll make her undying?" Immortal king mocked her trying to put her on edge or potentially burst at anger as some guardians often do.

"Thank you for that kind offer however that is not what she or I would desire." Su gracefully declined not even phased by its words.

Immortal king grumbled as its mind games were unsuccessful. It now didn't feel amused and grabbed a scroll from the darkness tossing it to Walker. "That has 912's master healing spell sealed. It's one use. Heal her mother or whatever I care not. Now tell me your request so I can send you out." Walker caught the scroll and put it away. The worry after hearing immortal king's words increased. Su gave Walker an apologetic look knowing she had aggravated it.

Walker prepared himself, he'd been trying to think of a specific thing but instead decided to take a gamble. "Sir I hope to ask for one thing only you can give. I see the great power and belief you hold and know asking for something specific to be unwise. So I beseech you to give something you see fit in your eyes." This gamble was shocking. Everyone else was out in a state of even higher stress than before. Why had walker made this gamble!?

Silence reigned in the room, immortal kings tapping had stopped instantly upon Walker's words. He could feel immortal kings' look penetrating him. "Yes yes, an interesting suggestion. You are not lured by the shiny things here are you not? Well I've watched you through the eyes of other undead and I can not decided your system. It's very unique I'm sure." Small pools of darkness appeared around immortal king as it stuck its hands in and out seemingly searching.

"Hmm no no....maybe...ah too good....oh the memories...." immortal king mumbled to itself item after item until a small palm sized bag was pulled out. This drawstring bag was a light blue with golden cords. "You told me to choose child and choose I have. Before the war our city was vibrant as blessed by the immortal god itself. However those vile vampires broke buildings, slaughtered people, and even brought true death to every plant within our city. You see the weeds and ruin outside this room." Notes of anger were apparent in its voice. Immortal king was viewing the great sights of the city before the attacks and soul fusion. They may not have been the most benevolent people however their city was a stunning sight showcasing life in many forms. "Take this, it holds many extinct plant seeds. I may lack taste but When I can leave this spire I desire to consume vile blood fruit once again. To see the weeping willows branches sway. To feel the prick of oozing vines!" The energy in the room was ever expanding as immortal king thought of more and more it had lost and wished to reclaim.

Walker hesitated hearing some of the names it said and worried it would bring misfortune to the world. However he had asked and would now need to receive. He could only rely on his skill later to choose wisely along with work with Gils mother to gain skills to grow them properly.

He reached out his hand to receive the pouch "child we expect you to plant these so that we can view them again. This is not for you but a gift for us."

'Quest: the return of life

As a hero, there are many things asked of you. Sometimes one must slay evil creatures and others retrieve a cat from a tree.

Requirement:

Plant and foster four plant species thought to be extinct back to life.

Rewards:

1000exp

A visit'

Walker's jaw dropped upon seeing this happen. They just received a quest from a gift from someone seen as evil? The things the people did in the ancient city were ghastly and cruel however they were still part of how the world worked. Without evil there was no good. This may not be a bad thing to pursue however, what did the system mean by a visit? Would immortal king be escaping to see the plants or would something else be visiting? Before walker could continue in his train of thought he was interrupted.

Chapter 80 - 80. Test

"That look on your face says something happened." The immortal king held the bag dangling above Walker's open palm. "Tell me or I retract this gift." This was not something walker could bypass if he did not speak the truth he had a feeling his life would end.

"We just received a quest, one specifically to bring back these extinct plant species." Walker put on a better poker face and awaited the response.

"How could you receive a quest that would normally be for someone with a planting or botany system? Explain more carefully." Immortal king seemed more aggravated not having a specific answer. It seemed his curious it's was too strong to allow simple answers. Walker would have to give him more.

Hesitating a moment knowing it could anger immortal king walker mentally prepared himself. "We gained the title of hero while completing a quest. It was a hidden quest and we can't promise it would work for just anyone. Now we get quests related to a hero. It also helps that my unique system lets me gain any skill that's not a mastery skill. So I find the quests we receive to be of variety." Walker was waiting for it to explode in rage and kill them but instead he felt the bag land in his palm.

"Ah so the hero title is it? You're a lucky brat then." Immortal kin leaned back as if pondering this.

"Excuse me sir actually all five of us received the title." Walker clarified so that he wouldn't be called a liar. It could spell death if he seemed to lie.

"What?" Immortal king was stuck, had he really just said they all received it. Wait no all five? That little dragon as well? A monster a hero? Immortal king was an ancient undead lich who had existed for nearly five hundred years. It had never heard of five let alone a monster achieving the same title! He knew that any physical experimentation would not yield proper evidence of why a monster gained a title let alone a hero title.

"Sir I know this seems impossible, many have questioned us but it just is this way. I know you may be caught thinking of midnight as a monster but if a hero is to be a hero would they really care why kind of being you are? Even evil in its purest form needs good and possesses some itself." Walker's words were profound. These were things he had contemplated for hours each day wondering why Midnight a monster could be a hero. Thinking of what made them different but that was the thing, there was no difference. They were living and now even looking at an undead who had done great evil in its time. Walker could see why the quest was given. This ancient undead lich calling itself immortal king cared for the plants it knew in life that faded away. There was if it a speck of some good.

" what you said now may be the very reason 913 fell from the heroic system and never gained the true hero title." Immortal king was thinking for a moment, was it really wise to let them leave? With that in mind his next move was made up, he would test them the same as that irritating necromancer.

"I've made a decision, for you to be able to leave you must pass my test. I shall send you to the entrance of the spire. You may open the door and walk out. Simple is it not? If you get from there to the borders of the city you will be free, if not you'll be dead. Easy to remember isn't it?" Immortal king not only decided to test them this way because it knew the dangers outside. It also chose this because the necromancer had escaped using its mastery skills and it wanted a form of revenge by seeing its test succeed in defeating others. There was a sure chance that at least three of the five would perish.

The party knew this was not a simple test but a deadly trap. They had started out on the outer area of the ruins and ended up in its center. The center had the thickest swarms of undead. Zombies and skeletons were to be uncountable were other strong undead monsters were mixed in as well. The party knew they couldn't take down multiple undead golems so what would they do if they encountered multiple or even stronger monsters all at once.

"Sir can we have a few moments to prepare and plan?" Walker did not immediately start laying out a plan with the party in fear that it could anger immortal king to act without its permission.

"Hmm you may have ten minutes no more no less, I allowed that bratty necromancer the same but he was unwise and denied it. I do not expect you to be the same." The hidden threat was evident in the strength of immortal kings words.

"Thank you sir." Walker gathered with the rest of the party. Fearful looks were all they had but walker had begun to think. " you guys remember the castle? The skill I used to scare everyone? I can use that then throw evil consuming flames in to the swarms. After that Su can take the lead plowing through anything in our way. We can't stop to finish anything. If we get in to a tough spot gil should be ready to use his new bow to open a hole for us. Remey and midnight you're to take each side of Su and keep anything from grabbing her. Together with Gil, I will watch our backs." Walker's plan was simple and efficient. Knowing that they might encounter something too strong to fight he chose a plan revolving around running with as little interference as possible.

Everyone was serious as this was one of the most nerve racking plan yet. The past days they'd felt as if their hearts could burst from their chests any minute. However this moment the fruits of their training and focus were showing. They may be fearful but they did not shake. They may be worried but they did not hesitate. They prepared themselves and looked at each other once more. It was time.