

New Eden 551

Chapter 551 Reaching The Second Stage

As the entire party stepped through the portal, one by one, what greeted their eyes perplexed them. Not for the oddity of it, but more for its familiarity.

The town they had been in, on the previous stage of the dungeon, with the well in its center, was back in view. But it looked bigger.

The buildings looked like they had more age to them, for those who weren't entirely new, and they had a few more floors to them.

Astaroth looked around before he decided he wanted to check on something.

"Wait here a moment," he said to the party.

Then he jumped up the side of one building, bounding to another nearby, and finally launching himself upward one last time to land on the rooftops. Looking around himself, and in the distance, his stomach dropped.

In his view, far in the distance, something he didn't want to see towered. A massive tree whose height overshadowed every other structure in its vicinity.

To his right, a ways away, a large dark grey wall, made of interlocking monoliths of stone. This was Bastion Cities' spitting image...

But something was different. The buildings, their construction, and the methods were older and cruder.

This wasn't the Bastion City he knew and had helped reform. But the strangeness of it only grew, when he couldn't see any living person, for miles around him.

Dropping back to the ground, Astaroth went straight to SharpTusk.

"What monsters did you fight in the first part of the dungeon?"

Tusk frowned at the question. Not because it was irrelevant, but because they would cross more of them now.

So why ask?

"Forest animals, mainly. Wolves, bears, wildcats, things like that. I thought it strange for a cityscape dungeon to have so much wildlife, instead of undead or infestation monsters. But I made nothing of it."

Astaroth frowned.

'There was no destruction in the town of the first part. Neither were there signs of nature taking over. This makes no sense.'

"Let us proceed with caution. I'm not sure what we'll see in this part, but I have a feeling it won't be animals."

Most of the party nodded, taking a lower stance, moving slower and making sure they didn't make more noise than necessary. Only one person frowned at the orders.

Jaxx, the Human Warrior, still butt-hurt from Violette's severe whiplash at him, for mere words, and the humiliation of biting the dust in front of so many people, was now wondering how a guild with such a cautious leader could have made it to the top of the rankings.

'Was there a deal done in the shadows where he bought Knights of the Sun?'

Jaxx had seen a part of the tournament when it had aired, but not enough to judge Astaroth's power from. On the opposite, he figured every opponent Astaroth had gone against had been weaklings.

He figured that with his skills, he would have made chump-change of the same foes, his pride not letting him think he could be weaker than any of them. His eyes trailed on the party list, wondering how the three officers had reached level fifty when most of the player base was still trudging the latter half of level forty.

'I guess I'll show him how strong I am when the fighting begins. He'll have to recognize my strength then, and promote me to an officer.'

Astaroth could feel the back of his head itching, feeling the burning gaze of Jaxx drill into his head.

'What's his problem?' he wondered.

But whatever it was, it wasn't important at this moment. Some issues were much more pressing, like finding out what this dungeon truly was.

But the party didn't have to travel far before they found their first enemies.

Turning a corner, a few streets away from the well they had come from, Astaroth came face to face with immobile people, facing away from him, and toward the massive tree in the distance.

Phoenix recognized the tree, as she pulled Astaroth back, and lightly frowned.

"Is that what I think it is?" she whispered to Astaroth.

"I'm not sure. But I think it is. But something's different. It looks smaller. The trunk isn't as thick as the one in Bastion City. Yet I have the feeling it's the same tree..."

Phoenix agreed with him. It might be smaller, but the air about it was the same.

It was like looking at a person you knew but had physically changed over the years. The feeling of recognition was there, even if it was light.

Astaroth peeked around the corner, looking at the people he had almost bumped into. All of them had light-coloured skin and pointy ears, from what he could see.

"They look like Elves. But something looks wrong. Why aren't they moving?"

SharpTusk tried peeking around the wall, discretion not being his best quality. He leaned in, trying to peek only his head, but miscalculated the weight on his back of the massive axe, and lost balance.

Astaroth's eyes widened as he saw the lumbering Orc falling forward. He tried catching him, so Tusk wouldn't crash into the ground, but in doing so, only pivoted the man's weight around, making him turn and slam his back into the corner of the building, axe first, making a cacophonous clang of metal against stone.

Astaroth winced at the noise, slowly turning his head toward the Elves, who were staring away from them. But he wasn't the only one turning his head.

Slowly, the half dozen Elves started turning their heads, reaching an angle that shouldn't be possible, and Astaroth understood why they were unmoving.

Looking at them, with eyes covered in cataracts, but burning in a vivid red colour underneath the white cover, the Elves grunted in unison.

'Shit. Undead,' Astaroth cursed to himself.

"No more sneaking it is! In formation, now!" Astaroth shouted.

He yanked on SharpTusk's arm, getting the Orc up, before making Ad Astra appear in his hand. There was no more going around with the problem.

It was fight or flight, now.

And Astaroth was a flightless bird.

Chapter 552 Undead Plague

The first zombie in the pack suddenly screeched in an ungodly manner, its voice gurgling like it was drowning in its own saliva or something. It sent shivers down the spine of a few of the players present before they reasserted their courage.

As the undead Elves started stumbling forward, picking up speed, they closed the gap between them and Astaroth's party pretty quickly.

Jaxx, from the side, gripped his twin axes in hand, grinning stupidly.

'Now is the time. I'll show him how strong I am,' he thought.

Dashing in front of the group, prepared to take on the six undead on his own, Jaxx shouted out loud, "Come at me, you undead shits!"

But as he slammed into the group of undead, hacking away with abandon, he noticed something unusual. From the inside of the group, there looked to be more than the original six.

From over the grunting of the Elves, and his axe cutting into them, he faintly heard a voice.

"Come back here, you fucking idiot! There are more than you can handle!"

The voice sounded like his sister Jeanne, so he ignored it.

"I'm fine! Mind your own fighting!"

But he quickly realized something else.

The zombies he was hacking at didn't fall. His fighting space was closing in, second by second, and soon enough, there was barely any room to move at all.

'What the fuck is going on?!' he wondered, panic creeping up in his mind.

'How can half a dozen enemies contain me like this? And why is no one coming to help me? Are they not seeing I'm getting overpowered?'

His pride blinding him, Jaxx had failed to see one crucial detail that put him in dire straights. When he and the undead had collided, something else had happened at the same time.

From neighbouring streets, outside of his field of view, many more undead began pouring into the little intersection. Some of them barely decomposed, like the ones Jaxx was fighting against, some worse for wear, their flesh barely hanging onto their bones.

Skeletons, ghouls, zombies of varying shapes and sizes, some of them humanoid, others looking like beasts of burden or different canines and felines. Whatever plague had hit the city, everything had turned.

Some cawing in the distance reached Astaroth's ears, and he cursed their luck.

Already, their whole formation was a mess. The undead were slowly separating them, like they had a mind for tactics, which was unusual.

'Something is controlling them. There is no way the undead are acting so organized on their own.'

But he could hardly dash off to find the thing controlling them. To make matters worse, the undead were all several levels over them, the lowest in view being level fifty-two.

Their health pools were high, with their grades ranging from common to elite. But Astaroth knew this was only the beginning.

He dashed across the battlefield, his movement unrestrained by the rabble of monsters. Everywhere he could help, he would.

From getting a few monsters off the casters in the back to reducing the load on Meat-Shield, who was doing an admirable job at taunting everything in range, Astaroth acted like a fire extinguisher, limiting the spread of chaos.

He wanted to reach Jaxx, who was still stuck deeper in the fray, but the undead seemed to agglomerate between him and the Human, almost like they wanted him to stay away. Jaxx was getting pushed further away from the group by the second, his health already dwindling.

If this went on, the rash player would end up joining the ranks of the undead, making their job only that much harder.

At this moment, Astaroth was melded with White, banking on the added agility to stay mobile. So he still had many options left.

Focusing on his blood pact with Genie, he called the wolf to him, making her appear in a burst of light.

"Genie, help the Dwarf! Push the enemy away from our back line!"

Genie nodded her massive head before she howled to the skies.

AWOOOOOOO!

Vines burst from the ground, bringing dirt with them, as the soil and vines coiled around her gigantic form, making makeshift armour on her hide. She then jumped into the chaos of battle, making her way toward the Dwarven tank, which was getting pelted with hits, as he hunkered down behind his shield.

Seeing the wolf run toward him, Meat-Shield was about to throw a taunt skill her way, but Phoenix called out a second before he did.

"Genie! Ghouls on the roof!"

When the Dwarf saw the massive wolf pounce toward the rooftops, he understood it was an ally.

But Astaroth was just starting, and he had more allies to pull out. He summoned Morpheus, using Soul Manifestation.

It was better for him to have a constant drain, but long-lasting allies, in this type of combat of attrition.

"Morpheus, take to the sky! I need you to keep me apprised of the situation from above. You can attack, but keep your eyes peeled!"

A feeling of acceptance washed over him, as Morpheus beat his wings strongly, lifting off the ground in one swift motion.

Next came Luna, whose humanoid form quickly made way to her more impressive stag form.

"Luna, you'll be my battering ram! I want you to use that massive size of yours to plough through their ranks! Damage is less important than disturbing their formation!" he shouted to her, through the hubbub of screeching and screaming of the undead.

She didn't respond to him, but burst into action. That was all the response Astaroth needed.

Undoing his meld from White Death, Astaroth summoned him next.

"I know you would prefer action, but I need you to act as backup for the casters! If anything creeps up on them, tear it to shreds!"

White grumbled a bit in his mind before darting away, behind the group of casters.

Astaroth only had one thing left to do, and that was to meld with one of his demons. Reaching out into the ring, he pulled on the soul of a weaker demon, which he had yet to fuse with.

A short, imp-looking demon appeared before him, before snickering at the sight of the chaos around.

"Finally, you call on me, young master! Who to shoot?! Who to kill?!"

Chapter 553 Saving The Warrior

The little imp-like demon looked at Astaroth with craze-filled eyes. The demon's dark red skin teemed with small scars; thin lines, with most of them having perfect copies on the opposite of its body.

This demon was called Valac and was the lowest rank in the demon's nobility, a count. Valac was pretty weak, if compared to many of the others of his rank.

Astaroth had relative ease in bending this demon to his will when he fought all of them, as it could hardly defend itself properly. But his powers would be great in this scenario.

"Valac, I need you to focus. I am going to fuse with you. I need your powers, and this is the quickest way. Try anything funny on my soul, and I'll make sure you never see the light of day again."

Valac snickered, showing his wide mouth, filled with rows upon rows of teeth, like a shark.

"Khi khi khi khi! I would never dare do anything of the sort to the young master. My powers are yours to command!"

Reaching into the demon's chest, Astaroth found no resistance as he tugged on the soul, pulling it inside his body. Feeling the small horns poke out of his forehead, and wings the size of a bats sprout in his back, Astaroth just knew he looked ridiculous right now.

But it wasn't his focus.

Already, in his skill list, the new powers he needed had appeared.

Astaroth changed his Ad Astra to a bow, pulling the magical string on it, as an arrow appeared between his fingers.

Pulling the string next to his cheek, he whispered something into the arrow as it sat next to his mouth.

"Matter Multiplication; Thousand-Fold Creation."

Aiming the bow upward, he released the projectile, watching it arc high into the sky, before disappearing. In its stead, a thousand arrows reappeared, falling like a rain of death toward the battlefield.

Astaroth quickly sent a message to Jaxx through the party chat.

'Jaxx, defensive skills. Now!'

Jaxx, who was stuck between a group of ghouls dashing at him from the rooftops, using hit-and-run tactics, forcing him on his back foot, and a group of over-eager zombies, trying to bite at his body, was already falling prey to desperation.

When he saw the message pop in the corner of his eye, he obeyed, just glad someone was coming to his aid. He didn't have any proper defensive skills, having focused his attention on attack, but his quick thinking still made him use a skill that could work.

"Hundred Slash Axe Barrage!" he shouted.

His hands started moving on their own, much faster than his eyes could track, as his axe started slashing all around him, in a dome-like shape, batting away all the incoming attacks and dealing damage to anything that dared get close.

It came just in time as well, as a rain of arrows started dinging on the axe blades over his head, pelting the entire zone around him, striking the ghouls and zombies, killing most of them in two or three hits. But the rain didn't stop at ten or twenty arrows.

Jaxx turned his head up, horror filling his eyes, as he saw the hundreds upon hundreds of magical arrows filling the sky above him, making it almost white with buzzing energy.

'Is my skill going to last long enough to block all those?!' he wondered in panic.

In the next ten seconds, arrows hit everything in a hundred-meter diameter around Jaxx, knocking down enemies left and right, leaving nothing moving around him. His skill ended half a second before the arrow barrage, and two rogue arrows hit him in the shoulders.

Jaxx watched the damage numbers go up in his vision, his face draining of its blood.

-2,765 *-2,765*

Considering his twenty-one percent of damage reduction from both his armour and his constitution score, the numbers baffled Jaxx.

His health dropped by more than half, from those two attacks alone, and his mind finally comprehended the difference in power.

'What kind of skill was that?!' he wondered.

In his mind, this attack couldn't be a normal one. It had to be one of Astaroth's most powerful skills.

If he knew it was only a spell that multiplied an existing attack, meaning the damage was all Astaroth, and not amplified, his mind would probably shut down from shock.

While Jaxx was stuck in a stupor, a ghoul that had survived the onslaught saw an opportunity and jumped at it. Jaxx didn't register the incoming threat until it was upon him.

The ghoul's raised arm, prepped to strike as it barrelled toward him, whistled through the air. The noise caught Jaxx's attention as the attack was already streaking down toward his face.

'Fuck!' he cursed.

But something crashed into the ghoul's side, taking it away right before the attack could connect. Jaxx watched, slack-jawed, as a stag the size of a double-decker bus slammed into the enemy.

"What the fuck is happening..." Jaxx muttered.

Astaroth ran next to him, seeing the two arrows in the Human.

"Are you alright?"

"Huh?"

"I said are you alright?"

Jaxx looked at Astaroth, whose skin was now in a dark shade of burgundy, with two small horns, and almost mistook him for an enemy. But an enemy wouldn't talk to him, or ask if he was alright, so he assumed it was an ally.

"Uh... Yeah. I'm fine."

"Then get your ass up and get back to fighting, you moron. The battle is far from over."

After admonishing him, Astaroth bolted away, slamming into another group of enemies. The battle wasn't over, after all.

Jaxx reeled from the insult, unsure what was going on. But when he got to his feet and looked around, he quickly understood that the battle was back under control and that his part was the only fuck up in it.

His sister was giving him the stink eye from afar, obviously disappointed in his actions.

Jaxx understood his stunt might have landed him and her in a terrible situation and felt bad. But he would have to face the consequences once they were safe.

Chapter 554 Showing Them Why

Jaxx hurriedly rejoined with the rest of the party, allowing them to form a somewhat loose circle formation. Phoenix took control of their formation, as Astaroth wandered off, as per his usual, and the battle became a lot easier for them.

After forming their loose circle, Phoenix ordered everyone to march forward. They had to get to a more open space, where they wouldn't have to worry about enemies falling on their heads from above.

Morpheus, who was still surveying the area from overhead, communicated to Astaroth an area where they could achieve this. So he relayed the message.

"Three streets to the north! There is a mostly destroyed market, with wide open space!"

Phoenix nodded her head, directing their formation in that direction, like a well-trained marching band. Only, there was no music, aside from the cries of battle and pain.

Their pace wasn't the quickest one, given they had to focus on fighting more than walking, but with Astaroth clearing many of the monsters in front of them, they made haste.

It took the group of twelve players, plus the summons, ten minutes to travel the three blocks of distance. In that period, Astaroth observed the Human fighter with a piercing gaze.

The man's actions disappointed him, as they could have cost them more than just a lost player. But he knew now wasn't the time to drop the hammer on him.

Jaxx's only saving grace, right now, was the Cleric's outstanding healing. The woman wasn't much of a combatant, contrary to Silent Light, who wore heavy armour and wielded a weapon.

Jeanne d'Arc spun around, wielding only with a long metal rod, on which Astaroth could faintly see twin snakes engraved along the shaft.

'A nice caduceus, all things considered,' he thought to himself.

She might not be a combatant, but she fulfilled her role in the party well. Contrary to Silent Light, who only healed when the party members reached under fifty percent of their health, Jeanne could keep everyone well topped off.

And even while doing so, her mana reserves were barely dwindling.

From this observation, Astaroth deduced Silent had picked a more battle healer role, and Jeanne d'Arc was a pure healer. From this alone, Astaroth knew she couldn't fight anything on her own.

Silent Light at least had some autonomy on the battlefield, which came in handy. But, then again, Silent was still a pure healer, if only a bit more versatile.

Astaroth watched as even from a hundred meters ahead of the group, heals came in on him when he took hits. The woman also kept tabs on his summons, healing them when needed, which impressed him.

Once the party settled in the center of the destroyed market, with half-broken carts and chunks of the nearby buildings on the surrounding ground, Phoenix nodded her head.

Twirling her hands, Phoenix conjured a ring of fire around the group, which she then expanded rapidly, the fire blazing in an almost white tint, as it incinerated every obstacle in its way, clearing

the rubble away. When the ring extinguished, not a single obstacle blocked the party's view any longer.

"We can hold here, Astaroth! Do your thing!"

Astaroth grinned madly in response.

"With pleasure!" he shouted back.

Astaroth suddenly lifted off the rooftop he had been on, seemingly stepping on the air itself, reaching the same height as Morpheus in an instant. From there, he pulsed out a wave of mana, almost visible so it was thick, and focused on his magic sense.

As the wave crashed through everything in a five-hundred-meter radius from him, everything with a mana signature appeared in Astaroth's mind. And this showed him what he was looking for.

"Found you, you undead shit."

Astaroth shared the location of his findings mentally to all his summons, and moments after, the party was left to fend for itself, as Genie, Luna, White, and Morpheus suddenly bolted toward the East.

Jaxx almost panicked, as gaps appeared in their formation, where Genie and White had been moments ago.

"Wait! Why is he pulling away from us?! We need those wolves!" he cried out.

Whack!

Jeanne's metal rod smacked on the top of his head, a small damage number appearing. But Jaxx couldn't turn around to scold his sister, as he was busy beating back a ghoul.

"Just focus on yourself, you imbecile! Do you want us to look even worse in the guild's eyes?! What the hell is wrong with you?!" Jeanne shouted from behind him.

Phoenix was already looking at Jaxx with disappointment. If they weren't in the middle of combat, she would have booted him out of the group already, for being so weak-willed.

"We don't need them," Phoenix said, from the air above them, her body erupting in flame.

"I had us come here so us officers can show you new people why we held on under siege. Violette. We're up!"

Jaxx knew Paragons had beat the odds in the siege of Bastion City. But he thought it was because of a lack of coordination between the sieging guilds.

He looked at the little girl behind him, who only smirked arrogantly at him, before stepping out of the circle formation.

A bubble of water appeared around her, lifting from the ground, with her at its center, before she vanished entirely inside the water. The next second, Jaxx's eyes, along with the entire party's eyes, went wide.

The water bubble ballooned in size, doubling, tripling, and then quadrupling in volume before changing shape.

The large glob of water grew appendages, and two spheres of black matter appeared on it.

Phoenix almost clapped proudly, as she watched Violette transform in this large water elemental, much more smoothly than previously.

Phoenix didn't want to let the little girl steal all the spotlight, so she went into her next gear, her flames growing hotter until they shifted from orange to bright blue.

"Time to let loose! As for you guys, try to survive and don't get in our way!"

After saying this to the group under her, Phoenix became a blue comet as she flew through the enemy ranks, turning anything she touched to cinders.

Violette also started her carnage, as waves of water engulfed another part of the battlefield, leaving little enemies unscathed. She even washed over groups of enemies, taking them within her watery body, and slowly drowning them inside herself.

The remaining nine players didn't know how to react.

'Monsters...' is what crossed all of their minds.

Chapter 555 Dark Coliseum

Flying off to the East, Astaroth had locked his senses on a powerful mana signature. Its obsidian black colour told him that whatever this was, it wielded solely dark magic.

Reaching a few hundred meters to the East, Astaroth landed before what looked like a huge coliseum. The mana signature was inside this structure, which had the top veiled in impassable darkness, which kept him from seeing inside.

He preferred the front door, not wanting to risk a surprise attack as he entered through the veil. Morpheus stayed flying overhead, while Luna shrank back to her small humanoid form, as Genie and White flanked them both.

"Let's be cautious here. There is no way whatever is controlling all those undead doesn't know we are here. He wants to meet us if he lets us in without a fight. That makes him that much more dangerous."

Luna nodded her small head, an enormous smile on her lips, while Genie and White prowled forward, their stance a bit lowered, ready to pounce.

The main door of this building was an enormous wooden door, slightly ajar, with nothing barring them forward. Astaroth pushed it in, revealing a dark, damp interior, which reeked of undeath.

'Khalor would love it here,' Astaroth thought, trying to lighten the tension building inside his mind.

On the other side of the world, in a room with only candlelight keeping it from absolute darkness, Khalor sneezed.

"Acha! Urgh... Someone is talking about me. I bet it's that stupid butterfly, again..."

Astaroth kept pushing forward. The stone floor soon became covered in a viscous substance, which stuck under Astaroth's boots.

He wasn't sure what it was, given the light in here was nonexistent.

Even after conjuring a minor flare of fire, which he controlled to float above himself, Astaroth could barely see a few meters in front of himself. It was like something was dimming the light, keeping it from lighting his way forward.

This only put Astaroth on edge even more. He was not afraid of darkness, but a darkness that swallowed the light had a certain effect on anyone's psyche.

After walking straight for a few minutes, his pace incredibly slow, he and his companions reached an opening in the corridor they travelled through. The opening, though, was rather ominous.

Rather than calling it an opening, Astaroth looked at it more like a frontier, which was separated by a mist of pure black mana. He couldn't see on the other side, even after sending the flare through.

As soon as it passed through the mist, he felt the mana snuff out like the fire suddenly had nothing left to burn.

"This is it, then. I know our allies can handle themselves, but I think we should hurry and deal with whatever is on the other side of this."

He was mostly talking to himself, but Luna still responded to him.

"We got this, Papa."

White and Genie simply huffed in excitement.

The pair of wolves dreaded the thought of having to bite and chew through undead, putrid flesh, but they would still fight. They would never forsake their master for the sanctity of their palate.

Astaroth braced his mind before stepping through the black mist. For a moment, he felt like he was pushing into a thick liquid.

The harder he pushed, the more resistance it gave.

But when he relaxed, the dark mist almost parted way around him, allowing him to walk through unimpeded. Once he crossed about a meter thick of this mist, he came through the other side, in a large open area, in an oval shape.

He was at one of the far ends of the oval, and on the opposite side of this open area, he could see a mound of bodies, which formed a troubling sight. A throne.

On the throne, the enemy he now had to fight to stop the unending tides of undead outside this building, assaulting his allies.

But he couldn't move forward any further. A few feet away from him, a wall of zombies, skeletons, rotting dogs, ghosts, and many other kinds of undead were staring at him.

Craning his neck, Astaroth couldn't see the end of this group, guessing it only ended at the mound of bodies at the opposite end of the coliseum.

A deep voice suddenly echoed around him.

"A living person... How long has it been since I last saw someone of your kind? What do you want, future cadaver?"

From the throne across the coliseum, Astaroth could feel a set of eyes had landed on him, eyes peering past his fleshy exterior, almost unravelling the truth of his very soul. But his soul power beat back the incursion, with no effort, like an annoying mosquito.

"A deep probe without asking for permission first? How rude of you." Astaroth said, trying to sound disappointed.

But he felt a bit unnerved, deep inside. Something about this whole setup felt weird.

The voice echoed again, this time sounding curious.

"Hmm. Enough power to push back my scanning. Curious little mortal. But your tone belies your emotions. Have you come to join my army of death? Or are you perhaps here, entertaining the thought of slaying me?"

Astaroth watched as the undead before him suddenly started quivering in excitement. He could guess they craved a fight.

"That depends on your answer to this question, creature of the dead. Are you the boss of this part of the dungeon?"

The air around Astaroth vibrated slightly, as the mana inside it, which was saturated in deathly energy, reacted to a silent command.

The voice echoed once more.

"I do not know what you mean by dungeon, mortal. But I am indeed the boss in these parts."

Astaroth grinned. This was the only answer he needed.

"Then I am here to slay you," he replied.

A slow, almost sarcastic laugh, so it was devoid of emotion, echoed in the entire dome of darkness.

"Hah. Hah. Hah. Hah. What a bold claim, coming from a shell awaiting my commands. Then come, mortal. Reach my throne, and we will see if you have the power to send me to death's embrace!"

As soon as this thing finished saying those words, another wave of vibration passed through the mana, and the undead all started howling, hungry for battle.

And chaos ensued.

Chapter 556 Destroyed Marketplace

From outside the darkness of the coliseum, Phoenix and Violette were winding down from their Aether-fuelled rampage, and about to rejoin the group of players on the ground. Said group, which was currently looking at the aftermath of the duo, slack-jawed and at a loss for words.

The marketplace they had been standing in the center of was a wreck.

It was like a volcano had blown up, burning the place to the ground, only to be washed away by a tsunami, and burned again in a never-ending cycle of absolute destruction.

Even SharpTusk, who had been told of the magical prowess of the two officers around a cold pint in the bars of Bastion City, could hardly believe his eyes right now.

"Whoever told me how these women had fought was wholly mistaken. He understated their power. Phoenix and Violette are not powerful mages. They are walking Armageddons..."

Meat-Shield, who had heard of this before, too, from the few players who had been present in the siege of Bastion City, nodded his head in shock. The recounting he had heard as well couldn't do justice to the destruction Phoenix and Violette had just unleashed.

There were few undead remaining after what just happened, and those that still moved were still advancing on them, no fear present in their eyes. But what little of them remained could hardly be a threat to the group of players.

Phoenix landed in the middle of the circle formation, her flames flickering out as sweat formed on her forehead, evaporating before it could drip. The steam coming off of her was thick, and her panting and red face made it obvious she had gone over her limitations.

Violette stretched her watery form into the circle as well, first enveloping Phoenix's steaming body before changing back into herself. The water that wrapped around Phoenix boiled almost instantly, before cooling her down as Violette took back form.

Phoenix looked at the little girl, who was shaky on her legs.

"Thanks, sweetie. I needed that."

Violette nodded her head, looking dazed. It was easy to see she was also on the verge of collapsing.

Violette had used almost her entire mana pool to keep herself in water form, and her regen was now working overtime, just to fill back up, before she lost consciousness from mana deprivation.

Jeanne d'Arc whispered a soft incantation and a soft breeze washed over the two of them, making their minds clear out a bit.

Looking at her mana bar, Phoenix saw that her mana regeneration had doubled in speed, and she could already feel the weakness washing away from her mind and body.

She gazed at Jeanne, smiling softly.

"That's a useful skill to have. How often can you use it?"

Jeanne smiled back wryly.

"I'm sorry. I only have two charges of that per day. That was it."

Phoenix shook her head slightly.

"Don't worry about it, then. I asked just to know."

Around them, the battle was still ongoing, albeit at a much slower pace. Undead monsters were still coming from the side streets, their pace only slowed, not stopped.

She didn't know how many of them remained, but she had a feeling the end of this wave was nowhere near.

The cawing in the distance was also getting louder by the second, meaning whatever birds were making this noise, were getting near.

"Brace for aerial assault! Casters! Eyes to the sky!"

Phoenix may be tired and lacking mana to cast any powerful spells right now, but her commanding ability remained unaffected. She knew splitting the party's focus in two like this was subpar, but the melee players could hardly do anything about birds coming at them.

It was the casters' job to deal with those foes.

Only Jeanne d'Arc kept her eyes level, as she couldn't attack, anyway. At best, she could give a good whacking to anything that came close, to buy some time, but no more.

Twinxie, Peaceful Grove and Violette raised their gaze upward, just as the skies darkened. Above the marketplace, a flock of mixed birds started clotting out the sun as they circled the area, cawing madly.

Phoenix's face paled a bit.

'This is too much... I think we went atomic too soon...' she thought, realizing her mistake.

But a surge of mana from behind her grabbed her attention. Turning her head toward Peaceful Grove, Phoenix finally understood why the druid woman had been keeping her spells small.

The woman was chanting softly to herself, her eyes closed, hands clasped around her staff, as the amber head on top of it shone in golden rays.

After chanting for a few seconds, Peaceful Grove opened her eyes, coated in golden hues, and muttered, "Wrath of the Forest: Insect Swarm."

Phoenix could hear a faint buzzing sound, which was growing louder by the second, the air itself shaking slightly. From the south, a vision that marked her forever appeared.

A dark wave was coasting over the walls of this city, no end to it in sight, flying over the buildings and filling the streets as it made its way toward them. The closer it got, the more Phoenix shivered in disgust.

A wave of millions upon millions of flying bugs was swarming together. Wasps, bees, flying ants, locusts, and so many more bugs with wings, all grouped together, answering the druid's call to fight.

If any religious person were to see this, they would think god had struck again, to punish the wicked. The wave of buzzing insects crashed into the humongous flock of birds, the cawing intensifying.

Phoenix didn't know if she should shoot fire up there to help, or if she should focus back down on the ground threat. But the druid looked at her.

"I can call in over ten million insects at once. They'll deal with the flying threats. Leave this to me."

Her calm tone, face still devoid of emotion, disturbed Phoenix a bit. But she wouldn't take refuse help, even if it came from such repugnant things as bugs.

"Alright then. Casters, back up the front line! We're moving out!"

Phoenix guessed it was best to move toward where Astaroth had gone if they could. He might need help later, and it was their job to help him.

'Let's just hope he's okay.'

Astaroth's icon had gone grey for a while, not long after he bolted off to the East. His health was unmoving, and so was his mana, and this worried her.

There was no way Astaroth was fighting and not losing any health or mana. So he had to be in a zone that cut contact.

She only hoped they got to him and found him alive. If he were to turn to an undead, they were as good as done here.

Or if he died and got kicked out of the dungeon, there was no guarantee he could go back in, leaving them alone to face a foe that killed him.

Phoenix kept her worries to herself, hiding her emotions as best she could, and pushed the group Eastward.

'Please be safe...'

Chapter 557 Reaching Deep Inside

Meanwhile, in the dark dome of a coliseum, Astaroth was facing down the largest part of the undead horde.

Left, right, up, and even down in the ground, undead monsters were coming at him from every angle. It forced Astaroth into using his mana senses to the fullest, just to stay aware of every undead in his vicinity.

Since he wanted his companions to stay safe as well, he also shared the sensorial feedback into the mental link he shared with each one of them. The only one who could do nothing right now was Morpheus.

The bat had been trying with all his might to go through the dark fog canopy. But even when he tried to phase through it gently, it remained a hard surface.

Astaroth could feel Morpheus' displeasure through their connection and was trying to come up with a way to remedy the situation. But his mind was already being stretched thin with all the fighting and information sharing, and he could barely think straight.

Having already switched the Ad Astra into whip-sword shape to keep enemies at a distance, Astaroth was slashing out in large arcs, hitting multiple foes with every swing of his weapon.

But it felt like a losing battle.

'Something needs to change, and soon...' he thought.

Luna, who was still in her humanoid form, was darting around the battlefield, punching, kicking, and even body slamming into the undead enemies. On her face, an enormous smile persisted.

Astaroth could easily guess from whom she had inherited a little battle frenzy when she reformed. He wanted to feel bad about it, but deep inside, it only made him proud.

Astaroth had unmelded with Valac, since the demon count's powers were useless to him in melee combat. But he was holding back from melding with another demon, for now.

He still wasn't sure what type of powers the enemy on the other end of this battlefield wielded, aside from controlling the undead in swathes.

He had briefly thought about recalling Morpheus inside him, to re-summon him on this side of the darkness veil, but this would require him to focus on Morpheus' essence. Focus, which he could barely allow himself right now.

And although Astaroth and his companions were killing undead left and right, he didn't feel like the swarm was getting any smaller.

He quickly understood why, when he glanced into the horde for a single moment.

Luna kicked an enemy away from her, a skeleton who practically shattered on impact with her leg, and landed in pieces inside the horde. But Astaroth saw it reform into a perfectly fine skeleton moments later, as if nothing had happened.

The boss was bringing them back as fast as he took them down.

This battle, which Astaroth had thought a battle of quality versus quantity, had just shifted to a battle of attrition. One that he could hardly win with the current conditions.

'Think Astaroth! Think!' he shouted in his mind.

If he couldn't find a way to permanently slay the enemies, or at the very least slow down their return, this battle would end only in his death. Stamina was not an issue for undead creatures.

But for him and his companions, it was rapidly becoming a problem. He could feel the exhaustion creeping up on Genie, who had an actual body.

For the moment, Luna and White were still fine, given the former's high energy levels, and the latter's semi-ethereal body. But how long would that last?

As his mind went through many scenarios, desperation slowly crept up inside him.

'I guess I'm still not strong enough... Would Khalor fare better? I bet he would, with his legacy skills and large army...'

Dark thoughts started clouding his mind, making his focus slip. As it did, Astaroth failed to see a zombie claw its way into the ground, and moments later, it popped up under Genie, taking a slash of its dirty claws on Genie's unprotected belly.

Genie whimpered in pain before stomping the zombie's skull with her hind leg. But the wound on her stomach started oozing in purplish colour, and Astaroth snapped out of his dark thoughts.

Scanning Genie, Astaroth grit his teeth.

Genie

Level: 50

Grade: Elite

HP: 47,666/81,750

Status: Festering Wounds (-1% HP/sec) (28 sec)

His heart skipped a beat. At this pace, Genie would die in a matter of minutes.

He had no way of healing her, and with that effect on her, she would lose so much health over the next twenty-eight seconds that she would teeter on death's doors already.

His desperation grew.

'I can not let her die. I must not!'

His mind went into overdrive, thinking as hard as he could, trying to find a solution. But every idea he came up with drew blank as he played the scenario in his head.

His focus slipped even further, and White took a few good hits as well, from enemies he didn't see creep up on him.

'Master! Get a hold of yourself!' White shouted in Astaroth's head.

But Astaroth didn't hear him. He was stuck in his head, trying to find a solution to his predicament.

Astaroth refused to lose Genie. She was dear to him, and he simply refused to suffer loss again.

Through his will to win, and keep everyone alive, Astaroth soul echoed. He didn't notice it, but, across the continent, someone did.

Feeling his fear and determination mixing into her own soul, Nemus closed her eyes and focused on Astaroth's mind. Doing this, she quickly apprised herself of the situation through Astaroth's senses.

She felt his soul cry out for help to hers, and she willingly answered.

Nemus' mind melted into Astaroth, where she reached a golden cage in which a large white orb floated. This was the same cage Solomon had tried prying open, which had released her from her prison.

She couldn't act against it, since it would alert Gaius to her presence, but there was something she could do.

Focusing on her powers, long since gone unused, she compelled the soul awake from its forced slumber. Feeling it shiver in response, she gave it a command.

"Your body needs your power. I cannot free you, but I can show you how. Follow my instructions, and free some of your power. Aid him before he scars what little of a soul he has now."

She sent images into the orb, showing it how to weaken its cage from the inside. The trapped soul started swelling.

As it did, it pushed against the golden cage, making it creak and whine, until a single bar snapped. Through that temporary gap, a surge of white light burst out.

Outside of this mind space, Astaroth's body reacted.

Chapter 558 Reaching The Coliseum

Outside the coliseum, Phoenix was trying to lead the party toward Astaroth's last known location. But the undead horde kept pushing them into side streets, with their numbers suddenly increasing in some places, and reducing in others.

Phoenix quickly understood that whatever was controlling them, didn't want them to rejoin Astaroth, and it perplexed her. She had already forgotten which building on her map Astaroth had gone into, and could no longer find her way to him.

As things were currently, she didn't know where they were anymore, and things looked bad. The horde of undead had steadily gone back to its former numbers, and ghouls were already battering them from above again.

The party fought back as hard as they could, but the damage was piling up, as Jeanne's mana pool was dwindling. Phoenix knew she and Violette couldn't channel their full powers again for a good while, and their options kept shrinking.

Looking up, the insect swarm that had been slaughtering the undead birds was slowly dying out, some birds occasionally slipping through their ranks and diving at the party. Things were looking grim.

But as she was looking upward, a sudden flash in the distance to her left caught her attention.

A bright white golden beacon of light rose from somewhere in the city, reaching the sky. And something else came with it.

On the party list, Astaroth's name lit up again. But something was weird about it.

His health bar flashed between green and gold, the numbers under it glitching between their usual, and question marks.

"What the fuck is happening over there?!" Jaxx shouted, noticing the beacon of light.

But as he said that, the beacon disappeared again, Astaroth's name greying out once more.

Phoenix's face steeled.

"I'm not sure, but that is where we need to go! Push through the undead! Use all you got! Let's go!"

Although most of them were already tired, seeing Phoenix suddenly get a burst of renewal made them want to prove they could, too. Even Jaxx, who was regretting every part of joining this excursion, decided he was going to see it through.

"RRAAGGHH!!!!" he shouted out.

His little war cry had no effect on his power levels, but he resolved himself to push above and beyond, at least to redeem some pride for himself.

The party started charging through the undead horde, the damage they took doubling from previously. Jeanne was getting paler by the second, her mana reserves almost empty, when a surge of energy took her.

Looking next to her, she noticed the little fey girl, Twinxie, who had her hand on her back. One of her eyes was now different from the other, shining a bright emerald green, in contrast to the pale blue of the other.

From the party list, Jeanne could see Twinxie's mana bar go down, as her own went up.

'A mana transfer spell? That exists?' Jeanne wondered.

But she wouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth. Her healing magic burst out again, topping everyone one up in health as they charged forward.

Twinxie was using her pixie's abilities to transfer her life force to another person. It was well known in New Eden that pixies stole the life force of lost travellers to feed themselves.

But they could use this in other ways, like this one. But Twinxie knew there was only so much she could do.

She wanted to keep a bit of her mana, to use one last ability, before she was useless for a while.

Taking her hand away from Jeanne's back, after almost filling up the healer's mana bar, she opened up her book. The pages flipped on their own, reaching the one she was envisioning.

A gust of wind erupted from the page now open, and a small tornado picked up around the party.

Phoenix looked at the little girl, impressed. But her pale skin told her this wouldn't last long.

"Move! Move! Move!" Phoenix barked, like a drill sergeant.

The conjured tornado lasted only for thirty seconds, but the effects were plenty. In those thirty seconds, the party reached the face of the large coliseum from which the light beacon had come from.

The undead horde had circled them, the winds too strong for them to reach the players while it lasted. They were now guarding the entrance.

This only reaffirmed Phoenix's thoughts, that this was where they needed to be. She grinned at the undead stacking before the large archway.

"I might not have my full power. But I can clear this obstacle, no problem," she declared.

Raising one hand above her head, Phoenix started pouring all her mana into one fireball, the players around her watching with horror as it ballooned above them. In a matter of seconds, the fireball was like a miniature sun.

The heat under it was quickly becoming unbearable, to the point Violette had to shield them from it with her water magic. The undead tried charging them to interrupt her magic.

But they couldn't make it closer than a few meters away from the front liners. Any step closer, and they instantly caught fire.

Violette hastily conjured a water barrier above their heads, pouring Phoenix huffed, her mana reserves almost empty once again.

"Flame Cataclysm; Erupting Star."

After saying those words, the miniature sun above her flared once more, before contracting into a fist-sized ball. Then it blew up.

Violette hastily conjured a water barrier above their heads, pouring an insane amount of mana into it, as it turned to vapour and reformed in a loop.

When the eruption finally died down, no undead remained around them, in a hundred-meter diameter. The steps to the coliseum-looking building were clear of threats.

But things looked dire.

Both Violette and Phoenix had virtually dried up their mana reserves. Twinxie wasn't far from the same state, as was Peaceful Grove, the druid.

Jeanne had about half her mana bar gone and was physically tired from all the running. The front liners weren't too bad, in comparison, aside from some light cuts and tired traits.

But they knew the fight was far from over.

Chapter 559 Unknown Power

Inside the coliseum, as Phoenix and the other party members were rushing there, Astaroth stood still, looking at his hands.

His body glowed in a bright white light, with after-glow of golden. Astaroth could feel a surge of power inside him, but he didn't know where from.

Next to his name, on his status screen, a question mark appeared, and he couldn't open it to get more details.

But he could feel the power was not permanent, so he needed to make the most of it.

When he erupted, the surge of energy had pierced the black veil enclosing the area, and Morpheus used the gaping hole it created to fly inside before it closed up again. As soon as the bat got close to its master, the white glow spread to him, as it had to all the others, including Genie.

Her wound on the stomach had healed, and the effect was gone from her status.

Looking around himself, Astaroth noticed the undead had stopped attacking him, hiding their faces from the light he exuded. This made him grin.

At the other end of the coliseum, the undead master of all these monsters shrivelled up slightly. Khalor would have recognized this entity as a lich, one of Death's most powerful escapees.

It squinted at the light, now pervasive in his domain of darkness, frowning at the boy emanating it.

'What is someone like him doing here, on the material plane... I must not let him leave here alive, or death will come knocking...'

Opening his mouth, the lich let out a husky shrill. A command to all its minions, to kill the intruder basking in divine glow.

The undead closest to him started pushing forward, forcing the ones in front of them to do the same, and soon enough, this caused a chain reaction. Like dominoes tumbling forward, the undead pushed each other until they forced the front ranks to march.

But Astaroth wasn't standing idle, either.

Dashing forward, he smacked his fist into a skeleton's face, blowing it cleanly off the spine. When the undead dropped to the ground, it didn't rise.

Grinning even wider, Astaroth gave a command of his own.

"Kill them all!"

A concert of howling and screeching echoed in the coliseum, echoing on the dark barriers in place. Luna tried howling as well, in her tiny Ash Elf form, before transforming into her hulking stag figure, towering over everything present.

She opened her mouth, a white glow accumulating in her throat, before unleashing a Moonbeam the size of a freight train, reaching a distance of a hundred meters, simply vaporizing anything in its way.

"Yes, girl! Y'all better keep up!" Astaroth shouted, sending his other companions into a frenzy.

No one wanted to be left behind, even if they knew Luna was a monster in her own right. Genie forced her magic into action, using her armoured form a second time for the day, against its usual cooldown.

White couldn't do something like that, but he wasn't without tricks. Focusing on his mana, his body suddenly shimmered slightly, becoming translucent. Starting a mad dash forward, he pushed through the undead waves, circling back to his original position.

Nothing died in his wake, but every undead he clipped was suddenly stuck in place, unable to move a muscle or bone. This was a new skill he had gained not too long ago, called Mind Freeze.

Astaroth had wondered what it did until now. But it was quite a useful skill.

Charging into battle himself, Ad Astra switched to a greatsword, Astaroth was spinning around his blade, akin to a human-sized blender, and everything he hit fell to the ground, inanimate. After a few moments, seeing as they didn't rise, he gleefully laughed.

'Now I can make leeway into this army!' he thought.

Morpheus fought for aerial supremacy, against some kind of winged abomination, as well as zombie Birds, while Luna, Genie, and White plowed through the ground forces. It was a massacre.

Whatever glow was covering them right now was boosting their power, by at least double by Astaroth's estimates. He didn't even feel the need to meld with a demon from the ring.

Not that he thought he would be able to. Something about the glow on his skin dripped in divinity, and he doubted the demonic essence mixture would bode well.

He imagined it would either disappear, or his skin would blister from his temporary power.

From inside the ring's domain, Solomon could feel the surge in divine energy, and for a second, he thought Astaroth was under attack by a minor god. But when he tapped into his powers to observe the ring's surroundings, he only saw death and glowing monsters.

Confused by this, he went back into the ring, minding his business.

On the outside of the dungeon, the shimmering entrance to it had already closed. No one would know a dungeon was ever there, even if they passed right in front of it.

But one bystander was silently observing from its position in a nearby tree.

As it slowly licked itself clean, as if it were any ordinary cat, the multicoloured pelt feline occasionally turned its head toward the base of the tree. It was watching a dozen of golden threads as they disappeared inside the tree trunk of the large tree, waiting for something.

When one thread began glowing much brighter than the others, the cat became curious, jumping from tree to tree, reaching one where it passed into the branches. It pawed at it, feeling a tingling in its cushions every time it touched.

The feline even nibbled on it a bit, realizing this was what had brought it here. This was the thread that wasn't weaving like it should.

The feline could feel another thread on the web, that was entirely out of place, but this one's call was stronger. Whoever it belonged to was causing the entire web of time to change, and it needed to meet them.

Deciding to take a nap, right there, in a monster-infested zone, the feline awaited the exit of its proprietor. No monster was stupid enough to bother it, the aura it released strong enough to make them shiver in fear.

Not a moment later, it was already fast asleep, purring softly as the sun delicately passed through the bough of the tree, bathing it lightly in its glow.

Chapter 560 Chronos Showing A Few Tricks

Reaching the dark veil on the inside of the coliseum, Phoenix's group quickly figured out how they could cross it. Once they were through, though, they were met with horror.

Lying across the ground, dismembered, disembowelled, turned to ashes, and in many other states, hundreds upon thousands of undead.

Phoenix looked further ahead, and noticed further ahead, a wall of undead pushing against each other, trying to reach an enormous mound of bodies, hundreds of meters away.

They didn't even turn to look at them, oblivious to the newcomers. Whatever had their attention, it had it well.

And Phoenix knew what that was.

"What the fuck caused this?" Jaxx asked, his face livid.

"What else, you think?" his sister replied, pointing at something further away.

Raising his eyes a bit, Jaxx spotted a flying bat, covered in slight cuts, almost imperceptible in the dark area, if not for the light flicker of light shining on its body.

Morpheus also spotted the party, relaying this information in his master's mind.

A message popped in the party chat, dinging in everyone's ears.

'About time you made it. A little help, please? Whatever boost I got earlier, it's dying out.'

Astaroth had already realized his temporary boost was fading when his body's glow started flickering away. With this, he noticed that some of the undead he culled in the latter part of his advance stayed on the ground for about a minute before reforming.

At this rate, he would go back into the previous stalemate, and it wouldn't be good. But his team's arrival gave him hope.

Maybe with their help, they could reach the boss quickly enough that they wouldn't have to back away. He also hoped this boss wouldn't detonate itself when it began losing the fight.

He was certain Luna wasn't back at full power, or at least enough to block such a blast for the second time in one day.

Phoenix assessed the situation and judged it was better for the ranged players to stay back here, in this open space. From here, if the undead on the ground started moving again, she would see it and could react.

But she sent Jaxx, Meat-Shield, SharpTusk and Galtion to the front. Food goblin would perform hit-and-run strikes, since most of his usefulness didn't work on the undead, their meat long gone bad.

In the casters, she and Violette were down to quarter power, at most, while Peaceful Grove and Twinxie were drained dry.

Jeanne d'Arc was still halfway in her mana bar, which was great, considering the healing they had needed to reach here.

Chronos, although he had been scarcely useful before, was still almost at full power. But it remained to be seen whether he was useful any further.

He had saved the melee players' skins a few times, with his slows and hastes. But that was the extent of what he had shown until now.

In short bursts of combat, Phoenix could see the potential uses. But in a drawn-out, warlike scenario, like this one? It was much harder to call it useful.

But something disturbed Phoenix about the guy.

His lack of emotional feedback.

Chronos had the emotional responses of a rock, and his smiles or reactions were all but genuine. If she didn't think he was holding a facade, she would assume he had emotional dysregulation.

As she was thinking this, Chronos broke her thought pattern, as he smirked.

This broke her preconceptions and brought worry to her heart.

Chronos raised both his hands, palms toward the enemies, before he balled them into fists. As he did, something changed.

In his vision, Chronos was now holding hundreds of golden strings, and withing his two hands, and sending his mana into them, stopping their flow, if only temporarily.

Astaroth noticed it instantly, when the enemies charging at him suddenly lurched to a stop, like their bodies had locked in place. He grinned, before transforming into a whirlwind, his weapon changing into two finger guns connected at his chest.

"Wind Blade; Cyclone of Blades!" he shouted.

In an instant, a hundred small wind blades exploded out of his position, severing heads and limbs, smashing chests, and slaying a hundred undead in one fell swoop.

Chronos felt the threads connected to those monsters snap under his fingers as they passed away. But they didn't disappear.

On the ground, closer to the mob of zombies and skeletons, he could see some undead monsters on the ground, with golden threads dulled out of their glow, but the threads were still active above them, wavering freely.

When Chronos looked further into the room, he saw the lich, from which hundreds of threads of golden left, with some of them dulled. He understood the lich was the one holding the fate of the monsters in his grasp.

The threads he was holding started burning the interior of his hands, the power becoming too much to hold, and he let them go. Immediately after, the undead that had stopped resumed their actions, taking Astaroth a bit by surprise.

But the time it bought him was enough to clear a lot of enemies. By rapid count, he estimated there were about two hundred undead left between him and the lich boss.

It may not be a small amount, but it was much less than at the beginning, and he felt confident he could make it. That was the moment his glow flickered out completely.

'God damn it!' he cursed inwardly.

It was the worst time for this to happen. Now his troubles had gone up a notch again.

Fortunately, the rest of his allies suddenly making their move reduced the pressure on him. He felt the undead behind him turn their attention off of him, and he smiled lightly.

'About fifty fewer problems. Only a hundred and fifty left.'

Phoenix felt the mana usage of Chronos and saw the subtle changes on the battlefield as he acted. She couldn't see what he did, her mana senses being limited to feeling, more than seeing.

But she knew he had done something extraordinary, regardless. And he didn't seem to be done by how she watched him move his hands, like he was plucking invisible strings.

Even the lich at the end of the area frowned.

'What is a follower of time doing here? I thought they were all long dead...'