

Reincarnated With A Summoning System

- Chapter 1 - 30

Chapter 1 - 1

"Man, my head hurts. I should really stop drinking. This isn't my room, did I leave for snacks and pass out?"

He had done a great number of things he regrets while drinking, but waking up in an alley had to top the list. His head throbbed with an impending hangover and his vision was blurred. No not blurred, blocked.

"What is this? Character creation screen? Did I buy a new VR game and pass out last night? I don't even know what game this is"

The screen showed eight different options for him, and eight more in female form, grayed out and inaccessible.

"What, I can't even play as the cute characters? How will I beg starting funds? Fine, I'll play the start properly."

Scrolling to the end, he found the random character generator.

[Spin for a chance to get an advanced class without waiting for level 100 to upgrade]

"What's with that notification? Some sort of new player tooltip? Who needs that? It's just a gacha spin, right?"

[Random Character Creation Selected. Choice Is Irreversible]

"Wait, what? Back up. Cancel. Crap, am I going to have to play this as some random character until I can buy a new copy?"

Character locking had recently become the new thing in the VR games he loves. In order to prevent power gaming and encourage class development, once you create your character it is the only one you have until you buy a new copy of the game.

[Class Selection Complete. Welcome Puppet Master]

"Puppet Master? What is this? Oh, it's a summoner class. Gets Golems, can use [Hunter] and [Shaman] skill books. Skill books? Oh, non innate skills are gained from books found at vendors or dropped at low rate by targets. So what DO I get to start."

[Skill Tree]

Summon Lesser Golem lv 1

"Well, that's a bit brutal. One skill to start the game? I should get some breakfast though. Where is the menu? Exit. Logout. Why isn't that working? Maybe I can only log out after I finish character creation?"

[Please Choose Character Name]

"Name, I'm terrible at names, but I want something grand and Epic sounding."

PussySlayer6969

[Name unavailable]

"Damn. Alright, what's next? Oh Random Name Generator. Wait, I'm not falling for that again, you no second chances character creation system."

Looking at the tattered brown robes, tied at the waist with a rope, that the Puppet Master class was pictured in as starting equipment reminded him of a certain character from an old game.

"Cain"

[Name Accepted. Character Creation Completed]

"Can't believe that wasn't taken. Good luck to me. But now, breakfast. How do I log out?"

Cain searched for a long while, but found no menu that included an exit or log out function.

"I've got inventory, character screen, skill screen, class talents, oh there's a heads up display option. Very nice."

When he selected the display, two small bars appeared in the bottom of his vision, one red, one blue.

"No, don't like the bars, is there another option? Globes. Yeah the globes look better. Now to move them to the edges where they're not in the way. Perfect. I'd set up quick potions too, but this stingy game didn't even give me any."

While changing the display, he noticed a few loose coins on the ground, he searched the area but found nothing else. What a rude way to give starting money, but whatever.

Coin is coin. That's when Cain looked up from his find, into the window of the shop beside him and finally noticed his character appearance.

"Why's it my face and not the default? I never use my own face. Oh well, at least it didn't give me back my weak body, seems like this class is fairly strong, at least physically."

The sun went down as Cain was pondering the character creation fiasco, so he decided to find a place to rest, eventually settling upon an all night Cafe.

"I've got 5 coppers. I hope they don't kick me out, restaurants are brutal in some games"

The Cafe did in fact let him sleep in the corner, taking pity on him after he bought a cup of coffee and a sandwich for a copper.

He woke up to a friendly face looking at him, waiting for a response. Maybe he slept here too long?

"You're a new transfer, right? Have you figured it out yet?" The friendly brunette asked him.

"Transfer? Uh, yeah I guess. I just created my character. Figured what out?"

"I'll tell you in a moment. How did you do? The transfers always show up in the same spot, different times of day, so the locals like to throw coins at them until they wake up."

"5 whole coppers. But figured what out?"

"5 copper? Most leave that much on the ground. Tough crowd last night. What you're meant to figure out, is that we can't leave. Nobody knows if this is a game or if we've been transferred to a world and given a system. But only transfers get the interface."

Cain began to panic at this news, he had indeed realized he couldn't leave, but was waiting to figure out how to submit a ticket to the Game Masters to fix it.

"I thought my character was bugged. I was going to submit a ticket this morning when I found out how."

The brunette gets a good laugh at his expense, looking over his character.

"I don't recognize those starting robes, but I've only been here two weeks. My name is Misha, I'm a cleric, currently at level 11. If I'd known how hardcore this was going to be I would have rolled something else."

"Hardcore, How so?" Cain asks, curious as to what exactly he got himself into during a night of heavy drinking.

"There is no respawn, if you die, you're gone. Nobody ever returns on a fresh account."
Misha shrugs

"It's brutal leveling as a Healer, I have no attack skills, books for clerics are almost impossible to buy and the drop rate is virtually zero in these early starting areas. So I needed a group to do anything, but the base character regeneration covers the damage in the first dungeon for most warriors, so they don't need a Healer until after level 10"

She finally stops to take a breath and Cain thinks of how bad it is starting out as a Healer even in games where you can power level.

"Hey, what's the last thing you remember before being here? Do you remember the name of the game?"

Misha shakes her head. "Games like this don't even exist where I'm from. This is like a whole virtual world with perfect graphics. The last thing I was doing was walking home from school. So if it's a game, I was definitely brought to it and didn't just log in myself."

"I haven't introduced myself have I? Cain, Puppet Master level 1." Cain mumbles, his mind trying to grasp what's really going on.

"Puppet Master? Oh, that's an advanced class! You must have used the random generator, right? It's like a one percent chance to get one of the advanced classes, almost everyone gets warrior or Mage if they used it"

"So the world is drowning in DPS classes then?" Cain laughs, but Misha frowns.

"High level healers are worshipped like heroes according to the news we get here in this village. There are so many warriors and mages that people almost forget the other classes exist until they need one."

Cain shudders at the thought. A world filled with nothing but dps warriors and mages was a recurring nightmare of his. No mechanics skills, no healing, nothing but straight damage output mindsets.

"There's a fair number of tanks, warriors can do the job if they get a shield skill, though they're not as good as the few who random rolled Paladin to start with. Other than the paladins, clerics are the only real healers until level 50, when shamans can learn a healing totem."

A quick double check of his character screen shows Cain can use Shaman skills, so eventually he will get a healing totem too.

Hopefully.

"Is the healing totem any good?" he asks.

"It's not bad for the group, but it's not enough to keep a tank alive unless they're really over geared, or a paladin who self heals on hit."

Just then a group of three enters, standing in the doorway and Misha stands up to go.

"Nice to meet you Cain. Have breakfast on me, and the newbie dungeon is at the end of the street, turn left out the door. That's my party there." She flips a silver coin on the table as she leaves.

Being stuck in a game nobody leaves doesn't sound half bad to Cain.. He was a high school dropout with a drinking problem, living off disability due to his poor health, so it's not like he had much to lose except a few faithful friends he didn't talk to enough.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 2 - 2

After breakfast, again a sandwich and coffee to save what coin he could for when he finds a potion vendor, Cain heads to the starting dungeon as Misha called it.

There's a short lineup outside, and a few people in line cast glances at his starter robes before looking away. Maybe they think he's the monk class, A melee fighter he saw in the basic options?

"Hey rookie? Got a weapon yet?" The leader of a group leaving the dungeon asks and Cain shakes his head.

"Here. Wooden Bat, it's a copper at the weapon shop, but they won't buy them back. I just like using them for the thud." The man laughs after handing over the bat and walks away.

Most are going alone, his three person group is an oddity. Then Cain sees them line up again and realizes what's going on. Power level. When he gets to the front of the line the attendant stops him, looking at a timer that counts down from one minute. At zero he pushed Cain through without a word.

"That was odd. Maybe there's a wait so you don't end up in someone else's instance?" The total lack of explanation of what's going on would be a nightmare for a new player, but Cain had enough experience in VR games to be used to the baud mechanics.

"Now, to bring out the Golems.

[Summon Lesser Golem]

They're two small clay Golems with wooden knives. Not the most impressive, but maybe they're tough, Cain hoped.

Turning the corner brings him to his first group of enemies in this game world. A grey wolf and 4 angry looking feral cats. Not the most impressive, but armed with a baseball bat and no gear, they might be dangerous.

The two small Golems seem to have a vendetta against the cats, immediately charging them and reminding Cain he never set any actions for them. But the default follow and aggressive isn't too bad for now.

The wolf ignores the snarling and hissing fight between cats and Golems to charge at Cain, lunging with its teeth towards the startled gamers neck.

"First one catches me off guard every time" Cain mutters, swinging the bat to knock the wolf aside. The life bar turns green to yellow, indicating wounded, but it seems he doesn't have the experience, or maybe the needed skill, to accurately detect their life remaining.

A second hit catches the wolf in the side and it collapses to the ground, his inventory gaining one wolf claw. seconds later he gains two small pelts, and notices his Golems are looking a bit rough, but have taken down two feral cats.

Cain runs over to help and they finish the encounter, gaining one more pelt drop. The Golems are quickly returning to perfect shape, so Cain moves on to the next pack, a pair of wolves. This proves easier, the Golems distracting them gives Cain a chance to club them down with the bat, gaining three claws and a piece of wolf meat.

"I hope this can be sold" Cain says to himself "But it feels like a game, someone in town should buy them, right?"

Another pack down and a notification pops up in front of his eyes, almost startling him off his feet

[Level 2]

Sweet, a level up after only 3 packs. At least the early levels aren't too hard.

Busting through cats and wolves isn't Cains favorite sort of dungeon, but before long he stands in front of a boss. A dire wolf almost as big as he is. The Dire Wolf doesn't seem to care about his Golems, shrugging off their attacks and snaking at Cain who is doing his best to get a solid hit in.

It takes all of twenty minutes to down the boss, and he's left looking at a shining white book on the ground. Picking it up shows the description

[Book of Poisoned Arrow] usable by ranger, hunter and rogue

A book? This were supposed to be super rare according to Misha, and he got one his first run.

[Level 3] [Dungeon Clear]

The notifications popped up in front of his eyes. If it took her two weeks to get to level 11, Misha must have had a very bad time in this dungeon.

"Before going in again, I need to buy a bow. The skill says it creates the arrows, but I need to have a bow equipped. I hope this loot sells for enough."

The total for the collected items came to 5 silver, more than enough for the 1 silver cheapest decent bow in the weaponsmith. Cain clips through the combat options in his menu, finding he can individually set commands for his Golems if he wants. The most important option he's looking for is grayed out though.

[Hit Box Targeting] requires [Advanced Targeting] or [Auto Targeting] skill to activate.

"Fine, I'll go over to the Hall and see what they have for skills. Give me something to work towards.

In their records, [Advanced Targeting], a rank B skill, was put up for auction once before. Final selling price was 15,000 gold pieces.

"Well that's a bit unrealistic for me. What do we have available. [Ice Arrow] rank D skill, may freeze enemies on contact. 50 gold. That still might take a while, but a control skill is a mainstay for any ranged class. I'll work towards that" Cain tells himself, making the shopkeeper chuckle at his antics.

After buying 10 beginner healing potions for a silver coin Cain decides to head off to another round in the Dungeon. The potions don't heal much, and can only be used until level 10, but they make him feel much more secure.

"So that's why nobody needs a Healer at the low levels. If they get a couple silver to start they can get a decent weapon and a stack of potions to get them through."

The live was a lot shorter this time, not many newbies ran the dungeon all day. Both because of injuries and to prevent exhaustion. The feral cats caused heavy damage to anyone without quick reflexes.

"This wolf is too hard to hit" Cain sighed, switching to his bat when the beast got too close for arrows. He was spending so much time aiming that he wasn't even losing mana and still hasn't hit the wolf at all.

But his archery skills were getting better. He watched many streaming videos on the topic out of boredom and was starting to understand the technique better with every word he faced. By the final boss he could even reliably hit the ones standing still to fight the Golems.

But what to do about the boss? It charged right at him last time, so the best plan Cain can come up with is to just shoot straight ahead and hope it works. When he enters the boss room though, the boss has its back turned, giving him a perfect opportunity for a second shot.

Cain aims carefully and looses his Poisoned Arrow directly into the Dire Wolf's flank. Quickly he readies a second firing straight ahead. The boss doesn't dodge quickly enough and takes a second hit before the Golems are on it. Switching to the club, Cain fends off its attacks, waving the health bar steadily fade to red with the poison and the Golems alone.

"No need to risk my own neck. That method worked quite well, I'll have to take some time and practice my archery.. But first, I really need to sell all this and find somewhere better than the cafe to sleep."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 3 - 3

Selling everything is quick and easy, there's a shop by the dungeon that will buy everything you bring out and sells beginner potions as well.

Finding a place to sleep proves a bit more difficult. Hotel space is very limited, only the expensive ones remain. But at 6 silver a night with meals it is hard on the budget.

"That's half what I made today. Perhaps I can find somewhere cheaper?" Cain ponders out loud and one of the pedestrians points him towards a sign on a nearby wall

'Private rooms for rent long term. Furnished. 5 silver a month, privy and hearth.'

Cain has the silver, and for a whole month? That's not a bad deal, so he heads towards the street indicated on the poster, finding a run down apartment building that looks like an abandoned motel 6 from his old world. This world doesn't paint much, preferring

stone if they can afford a fancy exterior, or simple dark brown stain if they can't. So no faded yellow paint, but it still has that abandoned roadside motel feeling.

This building has heavily flaked brown stain on it, that clearly was poorly applied to begin with. But it's got rooms, and that's the most important part right now.

As he approaches he sees a food market at the end of the street, so that's one convenience. Maybe these places won't be too bad?

The manager takes him to an open unit. A single room roughly three meters by five. Part of this space is taken up by a small room that includes a flush toilet and a sink with a hand pump. So no running water, manual refill to flush. Further along that side is a long stone bench with an old wooden chair, and a fireplace taking up the middle of the wall.

They weren't joking about hearth. The cooking facility seems to be the fireplace, with a pot hung over the opening and a stand with a wok off to the side. Primitive, by Cain's estimation, but effective enough, he's cooked over a camp fire before, he can do it again until he can afford better.

There were magic fired stoves that look like his grandma's wood stove visible in many of the street vendors, and the restaurant had a modern looking grill that might also be magic. Not all hope for a decent life is lost.

Cain gives the man his silver and the old manager points out back "There's firewood there, I brought in the first batch, you can fetch the rest" he says before leaving Cain with the key to his new apartment.

"It's got a bed with decent blankets, a couch, a table of sorts and a chair. At least it covers the essentials. If nothing else it'll motivate me to do better in life" he sighs.

And motivate him it does. the bed is hard as a rock, so he ends up sleeping on the old couch instead. Maybe he can find a good futon in the shops today? He always did prefer a futon on the floor to a bed, better position for VR gaming all night without risk of falling.

Waking up early to light the fire, a technique he still remembered from his grandma's stove, he headed over to the market while the pan heated.

A jar of tea, oil, peanut butter, a dozen eggs, rice, some vegetables and a big bag of dried Ramen style noodles. All for under ten copper. Food is cheap here Cain decided. After adding a small fish from a returning fisherman and some freshly baked buns he was set for the day.

Peanut butter sandwiches and deluxe Ramen during the day, with eggs and rice, hopefully with that fish for breakfast. The only things he actually knew how to cook.

Come to think of it, he was going to have to either eat out or learn to cook, as his limited skills didn't exactly lead to a buff and energetic physique in his last life.

The fish proves edible even with his limited skills and he packs up a bunch of peanut butter buns into his storage for snacks. A water skin is found in the cupboard by the plates and bowls, well worn but holding on, so it gets filled and comes along too.

"Poor adventurer mode engage" Cain tells himself as he heads out the door.

"If I can do two dungeons today I can get a good meal at that diner to celebrate." He decides, about to get into line when he sees a short sword for sale at the trade in shop. Examining it shows it does way more damage than his bat did, so after a bit of haggling and the last of his coin, he's ready to face the day with a weapon upgrade.

Both runs prove much easier, plus fast enough he can get a third run in and Cain returns to the vendor exhausted at the end of the day.

"Hard work costing the dungeon. Good work son, total is 17 silver 19 copper." Twenty five copper to a silver, a strange number Cain decided, but who was he to set coin values?

The lantern burning in front of the Cafe was like a hot light to him at this point, the extra Run having long since depleted both his food storage and his energy.

"I'll take the Dinner special with coffee please" he calls to the waitress before he could even find a table.

"We've got bandages if you need them" she smiles at him, bringing over his coffee.

"No, I should be fine, I'm down to just scratches at this point." He smiles back and she scurries off to go get his food.

Cain looks up at the board on the wall to see what he ordered for dinner. 'Dinner Special Meatloaf and Mashed Potato' the sign reads what appears to be the the perpetual special, with smudges and repairs showing that has been the special for a long while now.

Four copper with free refills on the coffee is definitely worth it, Cain decides, seeing the mound of food presented to him.

"Time to check my status" Cain grumbles, shoveling food into his mouth.

[Name] Cain

[Level] 7

[Class] Puppet Master

[Race] Human

Skills

[Summon Lesser Golem]

[Poison Arrow]

"It's not much, but I'm getting there." Cain thinks to himself.

A group of warriors and a Mage are talking about the second dungeon, while smoking on the street outside the Cafe, so Cain listens in. They say the drops in the second dungeon go for up to a silver each, giving up to a hundred total silver a run. That sounds almost too good to be true, so Cain makes a plan to get some form of armor to replace these starter robes and hit level 10 as quickly as he can.

After all, if a few warriors and a Mage can do it, so can he. He's got Golems after all.. But Cain doesn't know that their tank is a paladin and not a warrior, as Cain doesn't know enough about the available class armors to tell the difference.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 4 - 4

Cain decides that extra supplies would really be a good thing today, so he picks up two good, large water skins from the market in the morning, along with another fish and some fruit to add to his lunch.

"Just a few more days and I'll be into the big money from the second dungeon" he sighs as he packs his daytime meals into his inventory.

Walking a new route to the dungeon to learn more of the city, he finds that the Cafe offers bagged lunches for the same 4 copper as the dinner special. 'I'll do that tomorrow, better food to keep me going' he decides.

Today's first dungeon really seems to drag and Cain realizes that three days in a row is the most he's worked or even gone to school since he became a teenager. He blamed his poor health, but the drinking was what really kept him from holding a job.

But he did get through it, and another after a lunch break in the grass by the dungeon entrance, a popular spot for dungeon crawlers to congregate for a meal.

"I'm level 8 now, almost to 9. Tomorrow should get me to 10, when I'll be able to enter the second dungeon. Then the big money" The people around him chuckle at his optimism, knowing far more about the second dungeon than he does.

Cain looks through the passive traits portion of his character sheet as he eats, something he rarely does, as they don't change or really affect most gameplay in his experience. Humans get a small accuracy buff with blades, there's a bunch of everyday skills at low levels. Wait, the cooking passive is one that has a ranking, so it can actually level up. Oh, at high levels it will give extra dexterity. Forget it, not worth the effort for 2 [DEX].

Cain hasn't really paid attention to his character sheet since getting here. The level up notification didn't mention anything, so it seemed irrelevant. But today, he notices possibly the most important point of all.

[Stats] +40

[STR] 5

[DEX] 5

[CON] 10

[INT] 5

[HP] 40

[MP] 50

[AC] 0

"What is that plus forty?" Cain wonders "Don't tell me stats aren't class locked in this game?"

He clicks on the number and gets a notification [Molded Like Clay] Class Passive Allows Stats To Be Reallocated.

Quickly, back to the passive tab. There are two there under class passive. [Molded Like Clay] and another [Strength In Numbers] which gives him and his party a 20 percent increase in experience gained for every party member within 50 meters, including constructs.

So this isn't actually a different feel dps class. He luckily rolled a hidden support class. That will help him find companions later, when he needs a group.

But when will he get more Golems? Oh, level 10. Excellent. But first, what to do with those status points?

[Summon Lesser Golem] gets stronger with his strength and tougher with his constitution Stats, so he decides to split them evenly.

[Stats]

[STR] 25

[DEX] 5

[CON] 30

[INT] 5

[HP] 120

[MP] 50

[AC] 0

"There, that's much better. The Golems should be stronger and I can take way more hits" Cain is quite proud of himself, figuring out the problem with his character in only two days. Not that any other character class would have had that problem.

It's time to get back though, with only a level and a bit to go, maybe he can get there today and go straight to the second dungeon tomorrow after upgrading gear?

As he's about to enter, he sees the well dressed man who was doing power levels yesterday.

"Excuse me, do you have an open space? You're doing power leveling right?" Cain asks

"5 silver a run, I get loot and you supply the buffs, if your class can." The man smiles. 5 silver is as much as the party gets in a run. So he'll make triple that, while the others pay.

"Sure, I'll buy in for 2 runs" Cain says, eager to pay the price is it means he can get to level 10 tonight in time to upgrade his gear.

Sure enough, Cain has to run to keep up with the party. The other carry is a rogue, with high dexterity he's got an equally high movement speed. But the run takes only fifteen minutes.

"Hey, what is this buff [Stronger In Numbers]?" The group leader asks.

"Wow, 100 percent more experience gained? I'm almost to level 11 just from that run" The rogue announces.

Cain is sure it dropped during part of the run, his slower moving Golems getting too far behind, but no matter.

"It's my class skill" Cain tells them. "20 percent per group member with no listed cap"

"Now that's handy. But you may want to set that one to hidden in the future. If unsavory groups find out about it they'll make your life hell unless you grind with them all day every day."

"Yeah, even I don't want to let you go, and we're just grinding the first dungeon. Imagine how good this would be if they tied you up and dragged you through something much tougher to level their Guild members?" The rogue adds.

That could really suck, so Cain quickly goes to the menu, finding out he can hide or disable the passive. Hide is the obvious choice today, he is not quite to level 10 yet.

"So, second run guys? Then I've got to go get some armor for tomorrow." Cain asks.

"Here, a refund for the buff", the group leader says handing him back his silver. "In thanks for the help leveling up my guild mate. I'd gladly invite you, but we're member capped until we get the Guild level up."

"No, I should thank you. I didn't think I'd have time to get another run in today. My Golems deal most of my damage, and they can barely keep up with your movement speed." Cain laughs at the sight of his stumpy little Golems struggling to keep up.

The second run is as fast as the first, bringing him smoothly to level 10, the minimum entry level for the second dungeon. Mission accomplished, he waves goodbye to the Guild group and runs straight for the armorer, even putting his new skill points into dexterity for the increased run speed.

There is a wide variety of items to choose from, but with his limited budget, he can't go too overboard. No wonder others take longer and have more money at low levels though, his skill has been pushing him far faster than most.

He settles on a chain vest, plus a new shirt with Leather pants and boots, using up most of his available funds, but bringing him much more security. No matter, he assures himself, he'll make it back tomorrow.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 5 - 5

With his new gear, Cain is getting quite confident in his chances of making big money today in the second dungeon. He didn't really want to share the loot with anyone, so he plans to try the first run alone. After all, at level 10 he got a third golem from his [Summon Lesser Golem] spell.

With the upgrade the mana cost increased and it takes most of his mana to activate now, but that's alright, they're tough. He won't have to refresh them often. When he arrives at the lineup though, other groups are clearly laughing at him.

"I don't know what's so funny" Cain mumbles as the gate guard waves him through with a smirk. He summons his Golems and waits the ten seconds for his mana to recover. Now he's ready to face the dungeon.

The first pull is three goblins, easy. He sends his Golems in to attack and the little green monsters are quickly occupied, easy targets for his arrows. The goblins drop in only a few hits and he moves on, finding a dire wolf with two goblins.

The fight has just started when the wolf howls, pulling in groups from both sides of Cain, trapping him and forcing him to fight in melee. The Dire Wolves are big, and he needs breathing room, so he tries calling his Golems back, only to find them trapped too.

That's when things start going wrong. A hit to the side knocks him over, forcing him back, firing poison arrows at the Dire Wolves. But they don't charge him, they turn on the Golems. All 3 are down quickly with the attacks to the back. Leaving Cain all alone and without the mana to Summon them right away.

"Potion, get my health back and buy time" he thinks retreating.

[Only Available Under Level 10] oh, no. The newbie potions don't work anymore. He's below half health, but he's got almost enough mana to bring the Golems back. He just can't fire any arrows until then.

He's retreated almost to the entrance when he can finally bring back the Golems. They stage a valiant effort, dropping all but one Dire Wolf and a few goblins before being

destroyed. A notification informs him of a blue quality weapon drop and Cain decides it's best to live to fight another day, jumping back out the portal and knocking over the incoming group to uproarious laughter.

"Get anything good rookie?" The warrior under him asks with a smile and Cain nods.

"New Sword" he grimaces, and a large man in shining armor puts a hand on his shoulder, healing him.

"You can enter at level 10, but the Wolves are level 20, the goblins 15." The paladin laughs. "Now that you know, go have breakfast and find a group if you want to hunt here."

That advice sounds good, so Cain stumbles towards the Cafe in humiliation. Experience drops off hard at level 10 in the first dungeon, but he can't do the second alone. What will he do? Get stuck grinding and languish in the rookie area?

His Meatloaf is almost done when the Healer from the other day comes in with her party.

"I know we need more crowd control for that last pull" Misha says to her tank "But that's not something I can do. I'm squishy with not a lot of HP. I can't hold them and I'm not fast enough to make them chase me."

This is a good chance for Cain. He knows their Healer, so maybe they'll take him on, despite them all being over level 20 except Misha.

"Did you guys need one more? I can Summon 3 Golems that can hold monsters, at least most of them." Cain asks the party sitting down the row from him.

"Didn't you just get wiped in there?" The shorter Mage asks.

"Well, yeah, but that was alone. With a group to increase the damage they can take the beating." What he didn't mention is that another 4 people will also add another 80 percent experience, making this trip very worthwhile.

"Tell you what, you can be our off tank to the first boss. If it works you can finish with us, if not we'll kick you. That work?"

"Yeah, that's fine" Cain shrugs, certain he will be fine with this extra help.

Once everyone has eaten they head back to the dungeon, ready to face danger once again. The first few packs are easy, warriors get shield bash at level 10, which stuns monsters for a few seconds, preventing the Wolves from calling for help.

Everything is smooth to the first boss, a huge Hobgoblin, with two Goblin commander sidekicks.

"Take the two commanders while we down the boss. Without their assistance we've got this." the tank Joop42 by his name tag says. For a moment Cain gives thanks his first name selection didn't work.

There's something off about the mages though, they've only used flame strike the entire dungeon. Nothing else.

Cain commands his Golems to grab one commander while he himself gets the other, drawing both back towards the edge of the room while the Tank draws the boss back and the mages start their flame strike barrage.

A perfect pull. It takes nearly five minutes for the others to down the boss, and Cain has almost finished with the commanders. His poison arrow does 1 percent of the targets life every second, plus its initial strike, and it has depleted both commanders after he finally got the second one to attack the Golems.

For her part, Misha was perfect on the healing. She only has two spells, a big heal and a single target heal over time effect. The slow regeneration was enough to keep the Golems alive, only recasting them once after a tag team special by the commanders brought them very low.

[Level Up] [Level 11]

[Level Up] [Level 13]

Cain and Misha both got notices at the same time when the last monster fell. Misha was startled, from experience she knew it should have taken her almost this whole dungeon to level up, but she made it at boss 1 of 3. She gives Cain a questioning look, but he shakes his head and looks at the others Not now, she understands.

"You've got the skills rookie, even if you are under leveled." the tank congratulates him.

"Thanks. In here I'll Level up in a hurry, it's all over my Level, so it gives extra.." Cain explains and the others get ready to head for the second boss.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 6 - 6

After the first boss the packs get larger. The 5 points put into INT really helped though, doubling Cain's mana pool and giving him some leeway to fire arrows and still Summon the Golems if they're destroyed or the party is ambushed and they can't get back on time.

Cain's archery is getting better too. Arrows are hitting home more often than not, and Cain no longer has the constant fear of hitting an ally, his aim has become better than that.

The second boss is a single giant wolf. Straight forward fight, "Just kill it" says the tank. This is Cain's time to shine. Hitting this boss is like shooting at a barn, impossible to miss. With the warrior taking all the damage, there's no need to save mana for the Golems, so Cain fires poison arrows as fast as he can, stacking up poison effects on the boss and rapidly draining its health.

One of the mages receives a mana regeneration necklace in his inventory, whooping in excitement. All things increased mana are a mage's best friend in this world. Cain got a few tradable goods worth over a silver each, but no gear upgrades. In fact, he's not even sure what the drop rate on them is.

The game system that the transfers get has a lot of unanswerable questions, from the loot to the actual function. Even the dungeons themselves are a mystery to the residents of this world.

After the second boss, the spacing of the packs changes, forcing parties to pull multiple groups at once.

"Cain takes left I'll take right" The tank says, sneaking along the wall. This series of pulls proves to be more challenging than expected, the large number of monsters overwhelming the ability of the single target flame strike only mages to quickly kill.

Cain wanted to take care of it with arrows, but backing away caused the groups to turn on the ranged members, so he had to stay up close with the sword, killing what he could without a sword based damage skill.

The final boss is a test of teamwork. Small puddles form in the ground and you need to break the film on the top of them before they can solidify into slimes. So either someone runs around clearing them, or everyone gets the ones nearest them and the group stands in a circle around the room while killing the Goblin shaman boss.

The Golems are more than happy to attack all the puddles, so the group just calls for assistance and Cain sends a golem to the new puddle while firing arrows at the shaman. It's a loud and complex process, but effective.

The boss drops and the party receives an announcement [Member Cain Has Received D Rank Skill Book Light Foot] well, that's annoying, announcing the good loot.

It's not bad though, increases base movement by 30 percent.

"Wow, you actually got a skill book. I've never seen one drop before" Misha says in awe.

"Only usable by hunters and rangers" one of the mages adds "Is it even useful to you?"

"Yeah, my class can use both Hunter and Shaman Class books" Cain smiles. A movement skill will really help with some of these pulls, and the first boss.

"Congratulations man. Let's go get dinner to celebrate". With that they head back out of the dungeon to sell their drops and find a suitable spot to eat.

18 silver and change. This dungeon really does pay better than the other, even in a group. It's too exhausting to want to run multiple times a day, at least with their group, but it's still not bad.

Both him and Misha had leveled up again after the last boss, plus that new skill. Being in a group is the way to go, now if only he could have more summons. According to the [Summon Lesser Golem] tooltip, next upgrade would be 4 small Golems at level 20, but he wasn't sure when he would get greater Golems or anything else.

Relations within this group were strained at best. Both mages insisted in only leveling up flame strike every level, so they could max it out and get explosion at level 30. It honestly made them pretty useless, as their mana capacity suffered without points into cost reduction, they put all the spell skill ability points their class offered into a single spell, nothing into mana regeneration, no multi target abilities, nothing.

Flame strike took over half their mana, so it couldn't be quickly cast again, every 5 seconds they would cast a flame strike, just keeping up with available mana.

Before Cain arrived they had many problems with the warrior being unable to keep mobs off the group. They'd invested into his gear heavily, but it was only recently he'd started getting better, after the pressure on him eased. He was not an aggressive person, the role of tank didn't suit his combat style.

But with Cain only level 12 at the end of the run, he still couldn't take up the duty fully himself, he needed a bigger, tougher golem.

They gathered as usual for the next two days though, and with some luck on the second day, things were starting to look up. A shield dropped that increased the chance monsters would attack the wearer by twenty percent. Perfect for their timid tank.

Then at the end of the day, he went from level 29 to 30, his second level up in three days. The mages were still two levels behind him, and everyone could see they were frustrated waiting for level 30 to get the spell they truly wanted. After level 30 they

promised they'd start taking the first rank of other spells every level and increasing their utility.

But they'd have the massive damage of [Explosion], which was in the second tier of their spellbook, something most mages didn't unlock until much later in their travels, often after level 80 if they balanced their abilities for different targets.

They were all tired by the start of the fifth day. But Misha reached level 20 in the early pulls of the dungeon and brightened everyone's mood. Level 20 added a slow casting very large heal to her instant heal and heal over time abilities. Unlike mages who got to put points into spells every level, Priestess just took what they got and had to like it.

Then Cain reached level 20 and things really changed in the dynamic. Along with a fourth small golem, he gained the [Summon Greater Golem] spell, which created a slightly larger than human sized clay golem that had a stomp ability, interrupting enemy abilities. It could stop the Wolves from howling for reinforcements.

The first boss went down with ease, Cain now free to shoot arrows while the Golems held the commanders, so after the fight Cain took a moment to check his stats before they continued.

[Name] Cain

[Level] 20

[Class] Puppet Master

[Race] Human

[Skills]

[Summon Lesser Golem] lv3

[Summon Greater Golem] lv1

[Poison Arrow] lv2

[Stats]

[STR] 45

[DEX] 15

[CON] 40

[INT] 25

[HP] 160

[MP] 125

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 7 - 7

With the extra Golems, especially the greater Golem that was doing a wonderful job as main tank, with the warrior taking up the secondary position, the increased pack sizes between the first and second boss proved not to be an issue today. The greater golem easily held the Wolves, while the warrior took up the goblins.

It felt odd to Cain, calling him warrior or tank, but it was clear he somewhat regrets his character name, so everyone quietly stopped using it.

The Golems matched his level, and with the extra points he had put into strength since he started the second dungeon their damage output was pretty respectable. Close to being higher than both mages or together, due to their strange build choices.

His poison arrow ability has also reached the second level, increasing the base damage but not the poison. Cain is hoping the poison damage as a percentage of health per second goes up, but that might be too much to ask of a Rank D skill.

The Greater Golem tanked the second boss, its interrupt ability drawing enough aggression from the boss Wolf that the warriors attacks, having switched to a large two handed sword, didn't draw it away. Without the need to absorb hits, he proved to be a capable damage dealer and Cain's worries about this group started to fade.

"Can we try double golem pulls?" Tank, also known as Joop42 asks after the second boss. "Little guys right, big one left?"

"I don't know if the little guys will hold the pack though" Cain shrugs. "If we all focus the left group first, we might be able to do it that way. But be prepared to rescue us from the right pack, Tank"

It works for a few seconds, but the little Golems aren't seen as a big enough threat and the packs quickly merge, leaving Tank and the big golem to sort things out. It's not a bad pulling strategy though, as if things go wrong and you get a patrol, everyone is still back in position, not over extended and able to be surrounded.

So, the tactic is changed to have the small ones pull, then quickly retreat, leading the packs to the desired positions. Done this way, the initial damage while all the monsters are up and uninjured is greatly reduced.

Everyone's mind is on the final boss when a notification pops up upon the final death of the last pull.

Player Misha has received [Protective Aura] Rank A aura ability book. Reduces all damage taken by party members within 20 meters by 20 percent. Usable by all classes.

"Turn that book over so the party can roll on it" Joop42 demands.

"The agreement was you keep what you get, right? She got it." Cain counters, but everyone starts talking over him.

"She's barely high enough level to be here, and she can heal. We all need it more than she does." One of the mages shouts.

"Yeah, and mages with A rank party buffs can get into any guild they want. I'd never have to run with a random group again. Now turn it over or pay the price" the other adds.

Cain can see where this is going, so he's ready when the notification comes in.

[Player Misha has been removed from Party]

He acts as quickly as he can to save the friendly Healer.

[Player Cain has left the Party]

[Player Misha has accepted Cain's Party Invitation]

[Only one party may be inside an instance, removing all players in 30 seconds.]

Both mages are casting flame strike, so Cain has the greater golem interrupt them, buying 5 seconds while their mana recovers. Tank charges at her, hoping for a quick kill which will give him her tradable inventory on last strike.

"Use the book" Cain calls, turning the Golems on his former party members and firing poison arrows into the mages.

The big golem has the Tank held up for now, and the small ones are harassing the mages, but the advantage won't last long if those two get flame strike off.

The mages health is dropping fast though.

"Flee!" The tank calls and runs for the exit, the mages right behind him.

"They'll be a big problem in the future" Misha sighs.

"Maybe not. They're Red Flagged right now, because they initiated the attack while in a party and that portal exits into the middle of town. If anyone cares, they can kill them on sight or imprison them as criminals for the reward."

"But what do we do now?" Misha worries, wringing her hands. "There's still a boss to clear, and if we don't finish it will remain up for 7 days."

"I say we finish" Cain says with determination. "I do more damage than those idiot mages, and the poison effect works really well on bosses. The big golem can hold the boss and I'll poison it while the rest kill the puddles."

"Also, there's an option to hide your buffs from party members. Turn it on, just in case. They'll still get the buff, but they won't immediately see it and know you've got a high rank skill."

"Yeah, after this it might be best. Skill books bring out the worst in people."

The fight immediately turns messy. The Greater golem has the boss shaman without any issue, but it takes all four lesser Golems to take care of the adds, as Cain isn't noticing the puddles fast enough. Cain ends up dragging them all over the room, Misha constantly running away, trying not to get noticed and squished. Cain gets sporadic poison arrows in and within 5 minutes the main boss is dead and the greater golem takes over the second group, bringing things back under control.

After that it's a smooth fight. Misha can finally recover a bit of her almost depleted mana supply and Cain can properly stack poison buffs when they don't have soft targets taking so much damage.

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

"Wow", Misha says, looking at the experience rewards. "There's a huge bonus for surviving 3 player desertions during a boss fight. Maybe because nothing else was left alive?"

That's great, 2 more levels each puts us strongly into the levels nobody would question grouping with here. Most groups demand members be at least a level higher than the targets they're killing.

Cain puts his new stat points into CON for extra survivability and the two head for the exit, ready for anything.. After all, their former party members may still be right by the exit, or hiding in a nearby alley.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 8 - 8

Cain exits first, sword at the ready, but Golems away. Use of combat skills is prohibited in the city. The others aren't there, the only person around is the man who helped power level him in the first dungeon.

"Rough day was it?" The man chuckles. Don't worry, it's safe to come out. The Start From Zero Guild cleared everything up, but you and your friend might be a little famous for a while." He laughs.

Cain motions back that it's safe for Misha to exit and turns back to talk to the friendly adventurer. "So what happened?"

"They were caught instantly by a Start From Zero Guild member when they exited. He called in his guild to subdue them. Their policy is to take everything, gear, inventory and even coin, they loot criminals dry and then turn them in for reward, making them start all over without even a place to stay. They're a big guild, you'll find them almost everywhere." The guy chuckles at the memory.

"The Joop42 guy tried to say you attacked them and stole a Grade A aura book from them, but all three were Red Flagged as the aggressors. But that means a lot of people know one of you got a spell book today, even if they don't believe it was Grade A" Cain curses under his breath and Misha sighs softly.

"Well, maybe we can keep clearing it just the two of us?" Misha suggests "That way we don't need to worry about getting turned on in the dungeon again?"

"Why don't we sit and talk? I've got a suggestion, if you two are game?" The big man suggests, pointing towards an empty coffee shop.

Grabbing coffees and snacks, they all had to a back corner both, well away from the doors. "I'm Cixelcid, but you can call me Cid." He smiles, knowing he got taken in by the gamer tag trap.

"Misha and Cain" Misha responds helpfully making him laugh at their very normal names.

"Have you told her about your aura?" Cain shakes his head and motions for him to continue.

"Well, Cain here has an EXP buff granted by his class, I was with him when he first grouped and found out it existed. Now, if your party members are to be believed, Misha got the damage reduction aura?"

"So that's why we leveled up so fast" Misha says to herself, nodding that she got the aura.

"I'd like to take you both on a few runs with my guild mates. You met the rogue, Stubby and then there's a Succubus species Sorceress named Lickity. Both are crafters by preference, but the higher end crafting abilities are level locked, so I'm going to power level them to 20, and it would be great if you could help."

"I don't see why not. You helped me when you found out my ability, and didn't try to be a douchebag." Cain smiles.

"Excellent. Just, um, try not to speak about Lickity's outfit. You two might not know, as you're fairly new here and haven't tried on much, but the transfers are cursed to only use class specific items"

"Yeah, I tried wearing pants and a hoodie and I physically couldn't put them on" Misha says. "Something stopped me"

"Good, you understand then. A Succubus species clothing options are all leather and lace, pretty scandalous. The Sorceress class gets a bit more clothing than most, but she's sensitive about it and makes herself the least revealing options."

Cain can only imagine what she might be suffering, most game systems have Succubus as a borderline R18 option. And she has to live with only those clothing options.

"So she's a tailor? I've got a bunch of materials to make an upgraded robe, but couldn't find one in town" Misha is getting excited.

"We can talk to her, I'm sure she'll help out between runs." Cid assures her "Myself I picked what everyone calls the blood tank. The vampire race gets 3 percent of their damage back as healing, and I picked berserker class, which can also get healing on damage, at a random chance on hit. It's a DPS class without defensive skills, but if you luck out and get a book or two you can do it well."

"You picked a Surprisingly sensible combination" Cain laughs. "Who does that in the situation we were in?"

"It's my favorite combination. Self healing dps class. Plus, I was drunk and thought I'd bought a new game"

Cain is almost in tears at this point "That's exactly what happened to me. But I thought random character creation was a Gatcha spin and then couldn't turn back"

"Is that why you're so big?" Misha asks curious. "The berserker class?"

"Yup, not every species can take the class, but the ones that can they're always huge. This is nearly minimum size for a vampire berserker, as vampire race increases your height."

"At least it didn't make you drink only blood or burn in the sunlight" Cain chuckles.

"I get a debuff in direct sunlight" Cid shrugs, "But there's no blood requirement, thankfully"

"So you're good to meet the group in the morning?" Cid asks and they both shake his hand. "Great, see you here just after first light. With luck we can do two in a day, I'm level 34 now, and my damage is high"

"Sounds good. I'm up to 4 little Golems and a big one now that I've made level 20"

"The Sorceress gets a crow, it's not much use, just scouts around, but it counts as a construct, so it should activate your ability"

"Care to explain this ability?" Misha asks once Cid is gone, so Cain turns off hidden and lets her see the buff notification.

"20 percent for every party member and construct? That's insane. At the higher levels you'll have a small army, and they'll all buff you."

"Not just me. Everyone in the party. This seems to be the speed run companion class." Cain smiles, looking forward to tomorrow.. 220 percent bonus experience is going to rock.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 9 - 9

Everyone is right on time, well fed with coffee in hand when the sun comes up, ready to face the dungeon.

"Introductions are in order" Cixelcid says "Stubbs and Lickity, meet Misha and Cain" they all shake hands politely and Lickity blushes when her tail wraps around Cain's arm.

"Sorry, it has a mind of its own. I'm still mastering subconscious control of it." She frowns, looking at her tail.

"That's quite alright, think of it as a two handed handshake" Cain smiles back, not sure why she's so embarrassed. Maybe it's just her personality. But the outfit she has on is amazing, a black leather and red lace basque with matching boyshorts and tight black leather chaps, showing off her underwear, topped off with a short vest cut too small to be closed, sporting a wide, feathered collar and some sort of amulets dangling from her arms.

Good thing Cid warned him about mentioning the outfit, she looks amazing.

"Do you want to pull or should I?" Cain asks Cid instead. "The big golem is pretty quick, and isn't bad at holding a pack's attention."

"I'll pull. I've got a charge skill as a berserker that increases damage for a while" Cid answers "But feel free to take extra packs if we're clearing too quickly."

A fast clear to the first boss is an understatement. Lickity the Sorceress does a ridiculous amount of damage, often killing monsters in a single strike. So, to compensate, Cain sends Golems ahead to pull packs, allowing the group to clear at an almost walking pace.

"How's your mana?" Cain asks "You were throwing around those black energy attacks like nothing the whole way here."

"Those are a Sorceress Classes base attacks, they don't use much mana. I've put points into mana regeneration and one amulet also increases the rate, so I never run out doing that." That's, frankly amazing. She's only level 8, well 9 now, but she is far and away the highest multi target damage in the group, beating out even Cid the berserker who is almost 30 levels higher.

"Keep it quiet, but she got a legendary amulet crafting recipe" Cid smiles. "Both are actually the same amulet dual wielded, and they increase damage of her primary attack."

"I can't use the secondary effects until level 20 though. After that they'll make it hit more times and have a bleeding effect" okay, that's making Cain a bit jealous, but as he couldn't use them anyhow, it doesn't matter.

"Good to know things like that can drop here too" Cain laughs. "Gives us something to look forward to"

Cain looks over the available information on gear, finding 6 quality levels. Grey is trash, white is normal, green is superior, blue is magical, purple is epic and gold is legendary

or artifact. All separated by the color of their item name when someone with an interface looks at them.

Blue items are supposed to drop at least once a run here, Cid says. So with a group this varied, they should be able to use most of the drops. At just that's his plan, get everyone some gear before the leveling is done.

Cain's Golems will take the commanders, while everyone downs the boss. The big golem starts everything out, grabbing all three with a stomp before Cain orders it to the back of the room. The small Golems follow and Cid rapidly attacks the boss, dragging its attention back to him.

As efficient as usual, the boss and his subordinates are soon no more.

The first boss drops nothing of consequence, so they're on to the next, Cid's rapid axe strikes and Lickity's arcs of black energy making short work of the larger packs.

The Dire Wolf boss is down in well under a minute, surprising everyone. Plus it drops a pair of blue quality daggers, an upgrade for the rogue.

"Just pull from the middle of the room", Cid laughs at the usually problematic double pulls that follow.

"This group is awesome, we should do this way more than once" Lickity agrees. "I'll send you both friends requests in case we meet up in the future."

[Friend Request From Lickity]

Neither Cain nor Misha even knew such a thing existed. But now that they see it, there's even an option to message friends, like sending a message from your phone. This is a huge discovery, a total life changing moment for them, but there's monsters to kill.

Cain sends the small Golems to take point. With two semi ranged members, it's best if the little ones pull, as you can easily shoot over them to hit your target. Cid and the big golem are sent to the sides to attack from there, leaving the middle clear.

Before long they're at the last boss. The small Golems are commanded to take the puddles when they appear, their numbers making it an easy task as everyone shouts appearances near them. A big change from Cain missing their assistance and letting them spawn more monsters to fight.

Not just one but two blue items drop, and everyone levels up from the dungeon completion bonus, if not the boss.

"This is crazy, I'm level 12 now. That's 4 times in one dungeon." Lickity giggles, making her chest bounce and Cain have to look away a moment.

"Well, what did we get for drops?" Cid asks.

"I got a blue quality ring. Healing done increased and some INT, that's for Misha" Stubbs says, handing it over.

"And I got a new robe" Misha says, equipping it straight from inventory, the way it just appears and replaces her old outfit startling Cain. "Blue quality, adds INT and mana regeneration"

"Good Job Misha" everyone congratulates her and Cid waves them towards the exit.

"At this rate, we'll try to get another before lunch, and two in the afternoon. Usually a group is slowed either by bosses, pulling, or the need to defend softer members. With the poison from two members though and the Golems blocking the vulnerable, bosses die quickly and nobody is at risk of being two shot" Cixelcid explains.

"Wait, you mean to tell me Misha, you can't take two hits from those monsters!" Cain gasps.

"Neither Can I" says Lickity.

"I can take three, barely" says Stubbs.

"What about you? Cid asks "A lot of the advanced classes have hidden modifiers"

"Well, if I get a few seconds to regenerate in between hits, I should be able to take eight if none are a crit." Cain shrugs "I thought everyone would be closer to that. You guys are way braver than I gave you credit for."

"You're on a warrior level modifier or better then, and you've got a lot of HP for your level." Cid says thinking.. "Since you can use Hunter armor, you can be pretty tough, they're one of the more heavily armored classes."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 10 - 10

Talking with the group, Cain found out that a standard class got 3 points per level, allocated by their class settings. Stubbs was bemoaning the fact he didn't get more CON, as he wanted to take a more active role in longer fights instead of only being at his best in short assassinations and surprise attacks.

But with low CON and resultant low HP, coupled with the fact he took way more damage than a warrior in equal gear, it simply wasn't possible for him at this point. He is eagerly awaiting the time when he can get to level 100 and gain an advanced class. There's a bit of chance involved, as it depends on the skills you've already learned, but each secondary path leads to one of two or three advanced classes.

For example, Most warriors who take the cleric path will get the Paladin class as their advanced class. But some with a lot of offensive combat skills will get the Crusader Class instead.

Nobody has heard of the Puppet Master class before, so the consensus is that it's one of the hidden classes only available by luck through the random character creation system. Cain wonders if it might be a reward for taking the risk, or if maybe they're third progression classes. There's no evidence either way, news of anyone over level 100 is rare here, they don't even know when the next progression might be, or if it exists.

By that time they were back at the front of the line, ready for a second run. They drove through with determination, dropping the last boss just before noon, with a single blue quality set of boots for Stubbs as their notable gains.

Leaving so soon again was causing rumors among the crowds. Cixelcid was fairly well known for selling trips through dungeons, but wasn't this too fast?

Two of the group were clearly being carried, but they'd returned twice before most groups returned from their daily attempt. They decided to make lunch a quick affair, the attention bothering Lickity, so they headed back to the dungeon.

The lineup waves them through with a flurry of whispers, mostly about how fast the lower levels were advancing. As they got to the front, a quest appeared in their interfaces.

[Iron Man, Goblin Slayer] triple experience for successful dungeon clears in under one hour. Expires in 6 hours.

"One hour a clear? The last one took over two. Is that even possible?" Misha asks as they all stop to accept the quest.

"Possible or not, this is going to happen" Cid laughs. "I hope you're ready for what's ahead"

Everyone else laughs at his enthusiasm, but Misha looks ready to cry. The lineup heard her question and they're all chanting 'Iron Man'. It seems the quest gives you not only a load of experience but also a title that gives a bonus to drop rates.

"Stay clustered inside the small Golems circle. Cain, save all your mana to refresh them. We're pulling everything to just outside the first boss room, me and the big golem" Cixelcid declares.

"I'll keep them up as a barricade, so you and the golem go full defense while Lickity and Stubbs spam area attacks?" Cain asks. Stubbs has a little used attack called caltrops, but with that many monsters it will be a massive amount of damage.

"This is stupid, you're all insane, we're going to die" Misha yells as Cain carries her down the hall. Without a movement skill she couldn't keep up with the pull rate. They reach a natural choke point many groups use, just before the boss and stop, the four little Golems blocking the whole way.

"As soon as they get into range, get started" Cain huffs, setting Misha down.

Stubbs sets caltrops in advance, as the two are closer to the walls and the horde fills the cavern. Lickity climbs a short ledge so she can attack down into the crowd, and begins launching attacks. The caltrops are slowing the pack, making them easy to hit, not that it's possible to miss when they're so packed together.

Misha quickly heals up the tanks and they get set in front of the small Golems, ready for the first wave. The black arcs of the Sorceress attacks are decimating the enemy ranks, and the line of caltrops has them advancing at a crawl. Once the first wave gets to the greater golem and Cid, the small Golems charge, driving back anything that tries to flank.

"Save mana for the tanks, I'll refresh the little ones when they die." Cain calls, seeing Misha's mana start to drop. Cixelcid is alternating between sweeping attacks and a stomp that gives him a huge bump in his life bar. Four percent of damage is a lot with fifty targets in range.

"Ten percent mana" Misha calls at one point and Cid retreats, letting the small Golems take the worst of the damage, Cain refreshing them every ten seconds or so until his mana is low and Cid moves back to the front to deal full damage again.

The battle lasts under two minutes, with a ten minute pull, but everyone is out of resources and energy when it's done. Taking a long draw from their water pouches, Cain and Cid turn to the boss.

"We've got this" the whole party thinks at once.

[Massacre Bonus x87] bonus experience applied at end of instance

Nice.

The boss is down in half a minute, everyone dumping mana, knowing it will have time to regenerate while they run. The small Golems encircle the group, providing their defense and they run a third of the distance to the next boss and regroup in a small round room. The door is the perfect point to slow access, but not so much they will be wasting time.

This fight is much easier with the smaller numbers, so as they dwindle, the small Golems are sent out to pull 4 different packs to the other door, keeping the volume up. When those are getting weak, again the little Golems go running for targets.

"That should be two thirds" Cid announces when those are all defeated. "We'll pull the rest to the room before the boss." It's not as good of a spot, but pulling them all here would take too long.

[Massacre Bonus x53] bonus experience applied at end of instance

The group runs past the remaining monsters, 6 groups in total, so both tanks and the little Golems each take a pack. The return time is all pretty close, so the monsters come in one big wave, to be met with caltrops and arcs of black energy.

As expected, the second boss also proves no challenge. The second boss is supposed to be a damage race, but with the poison attacks burning it so quickly Cain and Misha have never experienced the enrage effect.

They're now 23 minutes into their hour long timer to achieve the bonus, way ahead of schedule, so they try a new tactic. They pull four groups and leapfrog, keeping the party in close combat and killing at all times, the small Golems staying with Cid, the big one with Cain and the damage dealers fighting forward as fast as they can.

They get to the final boss and wait on the notification.

[Massacre Bonus x113] bonus experience applied at end of instance

They go into the last fight in high spirits, looking forward to the extra bonus they didn't know you could earn by killing so fast.

The group is ecstatic when the final boss drops with the timer reading 38 minutes.

[Massacre Bonus x253 Applied]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Quest: Iron Man Completed]

[3x Experience Earned]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Title Earned: Blessed By Death]

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 11 - 11

"The timer stopped, but there's another, just over 5 hours" Misha sighs. "You're going to do this to me again aren't you?"

Cid and Cain laugh "To everyone. Three times experience as a bonus. You know you want it."

Everyone checks their gear and mentally prepares to face that insane level of speed run again.

Cain quickly checks his stats

[Name] Cain

[Level] 27

[Class] Puppet Master

[Race] Human

Skills

[Summon Lesser Golem] lv3

[Summon Greater Golem] lv1

[Poison Arrow] lv2

[Stats] +25

[STR] 45

[DEX] 15

[CON] 50

[INT] 25

[HP] 200

[MP] 125

That's a lot of stat points. But they can wait for now, he'll use them when they're needed.

"Sort your loot later, we're on the clock." Cid calls in a commanding voice, ushering everyone out to the exit.

"Look at the titles, the Titles!" someone in the lineup calls and waves them to the front. "Going for the full experience?"

"Better believe it." Cixelcid laughs. "At this rate I'll cap out at 40 by the end of the day."

"Cap out?" Lickity asks.

"20 levels above boss level, dungeons stop giving experience for the whole party" he sighs "Once I hit 40 our mission for the day is over. 3 times zero is still zero."

[Massacre Bonus x253 Applied]

[Level Up]

[Quest: Iron Man Competed]

[3x Experience Earned]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Summon Greater Golem] has reached level 2

[Player Cixelcid Has Received Legendary Item]

[Gore Kin Axes] have dropped.

This things are insane, 50 percent damage as a bleed to everything within 10 meters? The party is going to slaughter the next run.

[Massacre Bonus x253 Applied]

[Level Up]

[Quest: Iron Man Competed]

[3x Experience Earned]

[Level Up]

[Player Misha Has Received Epic Item]

[Player Cain Has Received Legendary Item]

[Holy Oaken Staff] has dropped

[Skilled Creation Amulet] has dropped

"An epic and a legendary in one run? And what is that amulet?"

Cain tries a moment and links the description in party chat.

[Skilled Creation Amulet] Puppet Master and Necromancer exclusive. Increases construct damage by 300 percent.

"That is, how do I put this? Broken." Cid laughs. "That big of a buff over so many will murder this dungeon at your level"

"Guys, I know it might seem anti climactic, but I got three new crafting patterns" Lickity smiles.

"I got 2 so far, one of them an epic leather armor set" Stubbs adds.

"One more time, I will be 40 afterwards" Cid grits his teeth and drags himself to his feet.

[Massacre Bonus x261 Applied]

[Level Up]

[Quest: Iron Man Competed]

[3x Experience Earned]

[Level Up]

[Party Member Ineligible] some experience lost

[Player Lickity Has Received Epic Item]

[Silk Bath Robe] has dropped

Lickity has tears in her eyes and a smile on her face after equipping said robe.

"It closes. It really closes." She cries in happiness, finally receiving a decently modest piece of clothing. It's short, and shows a lot of cleavage, but she is right, it closes.

Misha isn't sure if she should congratulate the Succubus, or point out that the robe is just as sexy as the chaps and jacket it replaced, her underwear still visible every time she moves.

"Give her the little Victory" Cixelcid whispers in the healers ear.

"Now that we're all dressed to impress, how about we go grab some Meatloaf specials from the Cafe? Eat and relax while we sort out our loot for the day. It'll give us a chance to exchange items the others can use." Cain suggests.

The beginning of the exchange proves to be easy. There's chain pants and boots, which go to Cain. A cloth cloak which only Misha needs, plus a lot of leather items for Stubbs. It's when they get to accessories that it gets difficult. There's a pair of green rings everyone but Cixelcid wants one of, that reduce ability cost by 5 percent. Plus a blue necklace that increases first strike damage by 20 percent that both Stubbs and Lickity seem ready to fight over.

"How about this? Whoever gets the necklace is out on the rings. I'll bow out on the rings too, casting cost isn't such a big thing for me as it is for others." Cain suggests

"Fine, how are we settling this?" Stubbs asks.

"Rock, paper scissors of course." Lickity laughs, like it's obvious. Maybe it was, she crushed Stubbs 3 in a row. Necklace now firmly around her neck, which immediately changes its appearance to a solid silver ring with a heart shaped loop dangling from the front, Lickity does a little happy dance in her chair.

"One last item, just found it buried in my materials" Cixelcid says, pulling out a green and grey, knee length brigandine coat. "Hunter can use this, so it's yours Cain"

"Thanks man, with new boots, pants and now a coat I'm like a whole new person." Cain laughs.

While looking over his changes and deciding where to put points, Cain finds that he can now give his pair of large Golems shields. Cutting damage done and taken both by 20 percent. But with the new necklace, that's still a huge amount more than he was doing yesterday.

"Hey, my Greater Golems got a tank form at level 30, they can now form a shield. It drops their damage, but reduces damage taken by 20 percent." Cain informs the group who all gasp.

"That puts their damage taken below Cid's. It's like having 2 fully geared tanks with you all the time." Misha cheers hugging his arm.

"Wait, I think I have a thing for you" Lickity informs them, staring off into space as she checks her inventory. "Never mind, don't have the materials."

"That's a shame, but I think I'm doing pretty well, I just need a new bow" Cain shrugs.

"Then you need to head to the next town down the road. There's an ice dungeon there that sometimes drops an epic level Ice bow. It's a level 25 dungeon, so not too far under your power level, and the chance to freeze targets would be huge for you." Cixelcid smiles.

"Are you all headed there too? You've leveled out of this town, and the ones you came back to level to 20 are almost at 30 now." Misha asks.

"No, we'll be going to the main guild branch in the big city. There's an undead dungeon there you might like once you find that bow"

"Before we go, Misha, what spell did you get access to at level 30?" Cid asks.

"The long duration Heal Over Time. I used the base version so much here that it maxed out at level 5."

"Big improvement?" Lickity asks.

"Only twice the healing per tick, for three times the cost, but it lasts 30 seconds instead of 5.. It should be a really big help."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 12 - 12

The decision on where to put points gave Cain a great deal of trouble that night, but eventually he decided to put a few each into INT and DEX, bringing up his movement

speed and gaining a bit more mana. Then he put 20 points each into STR and CON, bringing up both his and his Golems damage and survivability.

Name] Cain

[Level] 34

[Class] Puppet Master

[Race] Human

[Stats]

[STR] 65

[DEX] 30

[CON] 70

[INT] 30

[HP] 280

[MP] 150

"Yes, that's about perfectly balanced" Cain decides.

With the skilled creation amulet, the Golems should do quite a lot of damage now, but keeping their stats ahead of the monsters they were going to be facing was important.

Misha has agreed to go with him to the next town, to farm the dungeon there. But neither of them will know anyone in the town, and they've both had the same bad experience grouping with random people. It's left them a bit paranoid, and they've decided to simply run together, as they know they can trust each other.

"So what should we do when we get there? Find a hotel?" Misha asks when they meet up in the morning. "We've got money, but it feels wasteful, Cid says the hotels in other towns are even more expensive than here."

"Why not rent an apartment. I got a crummy, tiny place here, but we can get somewhere nicer for the month we are there way cheaper than a hotel." Cain suggests.

"That's a great idea, a small apartment can't cost too much. Plus We spend all our time together, so it doesn't really make sense to be in different places overnight."

The two head out early, deciding to walk the distance instead of paying for a carriage ride. They have never been in the wilderness of this world, as the city guards won't let transfers leave the town they all arrive in until they reach level 25 for their own safety.

"It reminds me of home" Misha smiles. "All the trees look different, but the smell of forest after the rain is the same."

The walk is a much needed relaxation after the intense fighting of the previous day. Regular traffic down the road kept the monsters away and a recent rainfall kept the dust down on the dirt pathway.

Cain got excited when he heard talk of a herd of wild pigs in the area, but they couldn't find any sign of them before they reached the city. Wild pig would have made a much better lunch than the dry travel rations they packed for the journey.

"Entry fee is coin or goods worth 1 silver each" a tired sounding guard greeted them at the town gates.

Both handed over their coin without an issue, Cain asking "Might you know if there are apartments to rent near the dungeon? We expect to be here a month and would prefer not to rent at the inn that long"

"There's a tenement building just down the road from the dungeon, next to the weaponsmith and the Cafe."

"Thank you" Misha flipped him a copper for the information and the duo headed out to find somewhere to stay.

The first noted location they passed was the Cafe, eerily identical to the one in the town they just left. Cleaner, and more recently renovated, but identical in layout and design. Even the special was the same. Meatloaf.

"Perhaps it's a chain of some sort? Like Denny's or Waffle House?" Cain asked and Misha looked appalled.

"Please don't mention those places again. I once worked at both and would much rather forget."

Cain laughs at the distraught look on her face, but nodded "Deal. It's not like we'll ever have to see one again anyhow."

The three story grey stone apartment building looks to be in decent shape at first glance. The front grass is trimmed, no garbage is about and the owner has placed a sign out front that says they've got both 2 bedroom furnished units and 5 bedroom furnished townhouses available in town. 50 and 110 silver a month respectively.

"Who would need 5 bedrooms? Are families here that big?" Cain wonders and Misha pokes him in the head.

"Think man, think. What's the maximum party size for the dungeon? 5 people. That's why they made so many 5 room rentals."

Oh, yeah. That totally makes sense now.

The old adventurer who owns the place is more than happy to show them to an apartment. "Would you two like a regular unit or the honeymoon suite? It's got a big hot spring tub in it and upgraded furniture."

Cain can see Misha's eyes light up at Hot Spring Tub, but the blush to her cheeks says the thought of being together in a honeymoon suite might be too much for her to handle.

"Does it still have a second bedroom? With crafting and such we're not always on the same schedule you see."

The landlord smiles in misunderstanding, taking the young man at his word. "That it does son, and the unit is soundproofed from the neighbors, no need to worry about thin walls here."

That sounds like a better place than Cain ever lived in. "Lead the way good sir"

The beds are both good sized, with silk sheets in a soft pink color. There is a good wood stove in the kitchen, with all the essentials available and soft rugs on the hardwood floors.

The Hot Spring sits in a sauna like room, with wooden walls and benches around the outside. A luxury that makes Cain certain no other option will be acceptable to Misha. Even after the tour she keeps looking back at that room.

They quickly sign the paperwork and pay a month's rent, before going out to see the rest of the area.

The weaponsmith has a pretty wide selection, and offers repair services. Cain's old bow is barely serviceable, and they say they can have it ready for morning, but he decides to look around first. It's a plain thing from the starting dungeon area's vendor, it shouldn't be hard to upgrade. He finds a decent looking green quality compound bow that adds more damage than his old one, and drops 10 silver on the upgrade.

"I feel much better now. This one has twice the range, and adds a lot of initial impact damage to my poison arrow skill." Cain smiles.

"It will do just fine until we can hopefully get the epic upgrade" Misha agrees with a chuckle. "It's going to be so weird doing dungeon runs with only one other human, but a full party fighting"

"Tell me about it. Two tanks, four melee warriors, plus an archer and a Healer, we're a bigger team than most full parties."

"If only they could be cuter" Misha pouts. "Like puppies or big cats instead of those ugly little clay Golems"

Cain decides to search his skill descriptions, to see if there's anything he missed. After all, a clay golem should have multiple shapes, right? The big ones got a tank form at level 30 after all. Still a big clay golem, but it was a change in form.

[Summon Lesser Golem] lv3

Summons 4 clay Golems. Damage and HP based on casters STR and CON.

[Next Level]

[Summon Lesser Golem] lv4

Requires level 40

Summons 5 Clay Golems in 1 of 3 shapes.

Damage and HP based on casters STR and CON

"Level 40 I can make them look cooler" Cain says, linking the description in friends chat.. Such a useful function this system provides, you can show your friends or party members any of your skill or item descriptions.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 13 - 13

As Cixelcid promised, this dungeon is indeed Ice themed. Cain and Misha are standing at the entrance, marveling at being able to see their breath after leading the summer air outside.

The interior of the dungeon is a giant ice cave, icicles hanging from the roof and growing from the floor, random holes in the ice leading to the dens of the dungeons residents. It's all blue and white and beautiful. But perhaps they only think that because they haven't seen the monsters yet.

The first pull brings them to what the dungeon calls Yeti, four of them to be exact. The plan is to alternate poison arrows to bring them down at a reasonable pace, while the shield Golems keep them off the human party members.

The shield Golems charge, starting the fight with a solid shield bash, moving two health bars from green to bright yellow, meaning that one slam took between a third and a half of this giant monster's health. The small Golems follow close behind, stabbing with their little knives and punching the huge, white furred monsters. Cain has only fired a few arrows, now noticeably dropping the monsters health on hit thanks to his new bow, when the first pair go down.

The other two appear to be below half already, due to the efforts of the lesser Golems, and they're fading fast. The fight is over without Misha having to cast a single spell. In fact, the tanks are barely damaged.

Now a bit more confident, seeing the capability of the new and improved Golems, the duo pushes forward. Ice snakes, that look like the ice, but are actually warm to the touch, harpies and yeti meet them at every turn.

There seems to be no logical route through this place, it's all winding caverns and monster patrols. There seems to be no boss, but they do come across two packs of elite Yeti that give the durability of the shield Golems a severe test. Their giant fists shake the ground with every hit, causing cracks to form in the icy floor.

Two hours in, they find a tunnel that leads down to a lower floor and follow it through. The contents appear to be more of the same, but with some huge borrowing worms that like to attack out of the floor with little warning. If they come up under you, Cain is quite sure they could swallow a person whole.

Another hour of Monster chasing and they've built up quite the assortment of loot, this new title seems to be no joke, or maybe it's just the nature of this dungeon.

[Cain has received a Grade D ability book]

[Book of Multi Shot] has dropped

[Multi Shot] fires three arrows at the same target. Compatible with known skill [Poison Arrow] Usable by Hunter, Ranger

"Hey, multi shot only uses 5mp, that's half what poison arrow costs. Now I'll be able to constantly shoot without buying physical arrows or running out of MP. " Cain gloats, looking over the book description.

"Your Golems will still do 90 percent of your damage except on bosses though." Misha teases him.

"Details, details. I'll feel much more useful if I'm doing something other than watching the Golems have fun or ordering them around."

Multi shot Poisoned Arrow turns out to be deadly against elite targets, the increased amount of poison burning their health away in no time at all.

It also makes fighting harpies a lot easier. They can't get too high above you inside these caverns, but they're hard to hit from the ground. Firing multiple arrows into their wings gets them to land pretty quickly though. Not that it's any safer, the long claws are savage, but at least you can fight them when they're on the ground.

Cain and Misha break for lunch, scanning over the hand drawn map of places they've been, looking for something they missed. Misha is sure they're just hopelessly lost, but Cain insists there's something more, something important.

"There, see there in the exact middle of this floor? A perfect circle with no caverns passing through it. I am sure it's a hidden room. We just need to find the entrance."

The place is feeling quite cold and lonely before Misha accidentally activates the hidden door, hitting her staff against it in an effort to find traction in the icy tunnel they're exploring. A short hallway leads to a perfectly round room, as Cain surmised. One of grey stone, not ice like the rest of the dungeon.

But it's not the room that draws their attention, it's the giant Ice Dragon in the middle.

"I don't suppose that's what might drop the bow you wanted is it? Because if not I'll gladly leave it be." Misha whispers.

"Unfortunately, I think it is. I'll have the Greater Golems go to the far side of the room, so they can fight it facing away from us, you can heal that far from here, right?"

Misha nods "Let me put the long lasting heal on them before they go. We don't know how much damage this thing will do to them."

The Golems successfully sneak across the room before the Dragon notices them and stands up with a roar. It's far larger than it looked all curled up, almost as long as the room is large, Misha will need to hug the wall to be safe from the angry swings of its tail.

The shield Golems are not having a good day. Cain had to call off Misha's active healing, leaving only the slow heals active, as it was burning through her mana too fast. Instead, every minute or so, Cain replaces them and she puts timed heals on them, plus sporadic larger heals to keep the one taking the most damage alive.

Their interrupt ability has kept the boss from using its breath, except for once, and most of its bigger spells, but Cain has had to physically block for Misha a few times, taking larger ice strikes with him much more durable body. After all, he's wearing Brigandine, she's wearing a dress with a wool cloak.

It also seems to be resistant to poison. The debuff is visible in his system interface, but it should have been long dead from the effects by now.

Finally the beast drops, bringing sighs of relief and a system notification.

[Player Misha has received a quest]

[Quest: The Legendary Tailor] has been accepted.

[Player Misha Has Received Legendary Recipe]

[Plans: Ice Dragon Robes] has dropped

[Player Cain Has Received Epic Item]

[Wing Of Frost] has dropped

"What's that quest? It gave you as legendary recipe?" Cain mumbles as he looks over the quest notification. Only Misha can get the reward, but both of them are on the quest. Gather all materials from inside Icy Caverns and talk to a hidden tailor in town to learn [Plans: Ice Dragon Robes] and skill [Tailoring] lv20

That's not too bad, they've gotten most of the items already, and the quest says they all come from inside this dungeon. Plus, the recipe has no prior tailoring skill required, it grants [Tailoring] to whoever uses it.

Cain looks at his epic drop, wondering what he managed to get. [Wing Of Frost] bow, required level 30. Requires Hunter, Ranger. Cold damage +60, Chance to [Freeze] on hit.

"Look, I got my bow, we can move on now" he laughs.

"Yes, move on to the Hot Springs. I am positively frozen over here." Misha agrees, leading the way back to their apartment.

"You can head in first, I'll check over my inventory." Cain offers, seeing how even after the short walk back, Misha is still shivering.

"Would you like to join me instead?" Misha offers with a mischievous grin.. Why yes, he definitely would.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 14 - 14

Morning saw Cain and Misha in remarkably high spirits, a fact that wasn't lost of the landlord when they greeted him. Nor was it lost on the waitress at the Cafe, a good friend of the landlord, when they ordered breakfast.

"Something good happen last night?" The waitress asked with a smirk, bringing their meals.

"We got a quest from the Ice Caverns that rewards a legendary crafting recipe!" Misha exclaimed, very stoked to get going and find the last of the needed materials.

This was not what the waitress was expecting her to be excited about after their first night in the honeymoon suite, but with the glowing, happy look in her face, it was clear that she was truly very happy about it.

All that was left was a rare drop harpy heart and a Mysterious Snake eye. Two drops out of the eight total. So she had very high hopes of getting them within a few days, then relaxing to do some quests and getting out of the Ice Caverns.

The local Mission Hall has all sorts of good stuff posted up, they find out on their way to the dungeon. Even a mission in the wilderness that rewards a cure poison spell book to any cleric compatible class that completes it. Staying in this town should prove easy with rewards like that.

Coming so early, knowing they would have to look everywhere for the drops, meant that there was no line when they arrived at the Ice Caverns, a small blessing, because Misha was so excited she was bouncing.

Level 20 [Tailoring] was not impossible to get, but it wasn't easy. But a legendary recipe certainly was. Each recipe has a minimum skill level to make, but the item level scales with the creator. So if you're using things you made, you can simply make them over when they become obsolete and get higher level gear. This Robe plan would all but

ensure Misha has the very best clothes available at her level. As long as she can find the materials to make another.

"First up, snake eye. I think they were all here in the first floor, but I don't know if it will be another hidden encounter, or random chance."

Unfortunately, the dungeon layouts randomize on every entrance, so their map from yesterday is useless. Their limited experience does give them an idea what to expect from the caverns though, and what places might be monster hiding spots.

The eye they need ends up coming from one of the randomly spawned elite packs. Just 3 slightly tougher than normal snakes. But that gives the pair a good idea what to expect. Good stuff drops from elite mobs.

Chatting with the locals informed them that this dungeon isn't best known for the elite bow that Cain wanted to come here for. Rather its best known for its wide variety of green and blue quality cosmetic crafting recipes. Everything from seasonal outfits to casual clothing and the rare bit of actual armor.

Lickity was a well known local underground celebrity. She spent almost two years gathering materials here and trading for cosmetic crafting plans trying to put together an outfit she deemed acceptable. Rumor said she got multiple legendary plans in her attempts, but as she did so little killing, she only ever gained skill experience and not levels. Those that knew her were quite happy to know she had finally made it past level 25 and could visit freely, without having to sneak over the town walls to avoid the guards.

For some odd reason, not a single elite harpy pack spawned today, and they found no hidden nest that might give them the final drop. Perhaps not every needed group spawns every time? Misha really hoped that it wouldn't take too long.

[Player Misha Has Received Epic Item]

[Plan: Halloween Naughty Nun] has dropped

"What the? Is that what I think it is?" Cain stutters.

"Um, yes, I think it is. The description says it's short black and latex. It's worth 3 gold too, we did well today."

"Wait, you're going to sell it? But you'll be a level 20 tailor soon. You should keep it, after all, it won't be long until Halloween." Cain pleads, his ulterior motives clear.

"Let's keep hunting." Misha shakes her head, then smiles to herself at the thought of his reaction to that outfit.

"Another epic drop today, and two blue weapons we can't use. Not bad, the weapons went for 20 silver each." Misha informs Cain, tallying up their daily earnings after getting out of the hot springs tub.

"At this rate we will be pretty well set by the time we find that Harpy heart. Just let me know if you want to spend a day questing in the sunshine. That cure poison quest is still up, and I think you should take it. That's a valuable skill." Cain insisted, lounging on the couch and letting his hair dry in the hot summer air.

"So tomorrow then? The Tailoring quest doesn't have a deadline." Misha nods, handing him his share of today's takeout dinner. The notion of having a good stove was great, but it feels like they're getting to the hottest part of summer, even the nights barely cool down. Indoor cooking was immediately vetoed.

Misha is looking at her bed in trepidation. The silk looks so comfortable, but it's so hot in here. Cain, on the other hand has prepared for this situation. There is a slow moving magical fan in the room, and Cain grabbed a bunch of ice blocks from the caverns to his inventory. Drop them into a tray so they don't melt onto the floor and let the fan blow the cool air around. Much more tolerable nights sleep.

Just before daylight they were at the Mission Hall, collecting the Cure Poison quest. The Adventurers there told them it's a fool's errand. Their consensus is that you need to know Cure Poison to go get the Cure Poison skill book.. Cain buys a half dozen lesser cure potions, just in case the Golems aren't enough to keep them from being attacked, and they head out towards the location indicated in the quest description.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 15 - 15

"These maps are terrible" Cain complains. "I'm not even sure I'm holding it the right way up at this point"

"It should be just over that rise, if we read the map right." Misha shrugs "Time to get ready."

Cain brings out his Golems, sending the shield bearing greater Golems out in the lead and surrounding the two of them with the lesser Golems. The top of the rise brings a distinct change in scenery, the trees turn blackened and cobwebs are everywhere, giving the woods a very creepy vibe.

"Looks like that's the spot. The spell book is supposed to drop from an elite spider queen, and we get the quest reward for the pincers."

They move forward at a crawl, on the lookout for whatever bad all these webs. It's not long before their caution pays off, an incoming web attack being thwarted by the lesser Golems before a half dozen black spiders charge towards them.

Cain replaces the small Golems, who were all trapped anyhow and begins firing arrows into the fast moving arachnids, a task that's proving harder than expected. The lesser Golems size is proving a benefit here though, as it makes it much easier to hit the small spiders in short range. The greater Golems have resorted to trying to crush them with feet and the bottom of their shields.

Once they've been caught by the Golems, they become much easier to hit and the group is cleared in just a few more seconds.

The elite spider for the quest is supposed to live in the valley at the very center of these woods, so onwards they press, every few minutes being attacked by small spiders.

Things don't really get better when larger ones replace the little web throwers. These have Poisoned pincers and are doing quite a lot of damage to the Golems. No wonder everyone said you needed cure poison to get cure poison. They're much easier to hit though, Cain's arrows hitting home over and over.

Unfortunately, they're immune to poison, which doesn't bode well for the upcoming elite fight. One breaks through the ranks, headed for Misha and Cain draws his sword to intercept. The spider's fighting technique is quite skilful, a combination of its heavy front legs and sharp mandible putting Cain on the defensive for a while before a crushing blow from a greater golem to its back ends the beast.

"Aren't these things going to be mad when we kill their queen?" Misha asks worried. Those pincers did not look like something she'd care to experience again.

"If they're like real spiders they'll scatter and we will get a bit of time to flee once the elite is down. If we make good time, we should get out of the valley before they stop panicking." Cain tries to assure her, but who knows how these monsters are going to react.

They're nearing the center of the valley now, and the spiders are getting less frequent, replaced by more webs and large cocoons.

"I think something is moving in there" Misha whispers and Cain frowns.

"Let's not disturb those for now, try to get to the boss monster without making a scene." Cain whispers back. If those are the spiders targets they could be anything from monsters to other adventurers though. "Wait, doesn't that seem human sized though?"

Maybe I should try cutting it free, see what we can find." Misha nods her agreement, staff at the ready

There's five total that are wriggling right now, making both think this might be a trapped party come to do the quest. So Cain carefully cuts loose the smallest of the cocoons first, freeing a bedraggled and injured female Elven mage.

"If you're done with women throwing themselves at you, go open the others" Misha laughs softly, casting a heal over time effect on the small woman now clinging to Cain's leg. Moving proves impractical, so the small golems are sent to free the others, revealing three warriors and a shaman.

All receive healing, their closing wounds dislodging spider eggs that are quickly crushed underfoot.

"Everyone accounted for and all from the same group?" Cain asks and they nod, looking relieved to have been freed from their nightmare.

"I'm not sure if my party is still up for it", the shaman says "but we're here to do the cure poison quest. We seem to have come in the wrong way, from the south, and gotten trapped by web throwers."

"They're all over the east side too." Misha informs him. "We used the Golems to block and then just summoned them back when too many got trapped."

According to the map, one of those two directions should have been a clear path. But so much for that.

"We're almost at the center of the valley, care to finish the quest with us?" Cain asks, more than happy to get reinforcements.

"It's better than trying to flee empty handed," their tank shrugs. "There's going to be spiders either way."

The expanded group creeps forward, looking for any sign of the elite spider queen, eventually finding her in a nest of webbing atop a pile of skulls.

"That's not ominous at all." the Elven mage quips sarcastically. "Do we try fire first or arrows to lure it down from there?"

"Kill it with fire." the rest answer in unison.

And fire certainly brings it down, but the surrounding webbing proves to be highly flammable. The whole area is on fire, burning strings falling from the trees and sticking to the groups, Misha casting long duration heals on everyone to get them through.

They can hear the spiders running away, the sound of bodies crashing through the forest slowly fading as the greater Golems engage the huge spider queen and the warriors move around behind it for better access.

Cain has decided it's best to keep the little Golems on defense, in case anything comes for the ranged members, a tactic that proves beyond wise when a number of the burning cocoons burst, dislodging wounded and angry monsters all over the area.

Two are busy with a boar monster they rescued the shaman from, the grateful man setting down a defensive totem soon after, bathing the area in mana for them to use. The shaman mostly uses a lightning attack to hit the spider, and with that totem out they're doing fairly well.

[Poison Arrow] also leaves no poison debuff on the spider queen, so Cain is throwing out multi shots as fast as he can, the totem keeping his mana full.

"That's some serious casting cost reduction you have there golem man." the shaman cheers. "Not many can spam multi shot."

"It's only 10 mana a use, your totem grants 5 a second, I get 5 a second." Cain shrugs, firing another volley into the giant spider. Its health bar has moved from orange to red now, and it's missing two legs. This fight will soon be over.

"Only 10? It should be 20. I wonder if your class gets it cheaper, like the ranger does? They use archery abilities at half cost." The mage ponders out loud, sending an exploding fireball into a group of small monsters just freed from cocoons.

Whatever the answer, it's done is job and the monsters are almost cleared out. Anything that didn't escape burned.

[Level Up]

[Misha Has Received Grade B Spellbook]

[Greater Cure Poison] has dropped

[Greater Cure Poison]? She must have got the rare drop from the boss.

The queen is finally dead and the requirement for the quest item shows filled, so Misha must have gotten it as well.

"Okay, we got our quest item. Now North, straight back to town. It's pretty well burnt now, so we should be able to get out before anything returns." All seven, plus the Golems, are at a full sprint until they're clear of the burned woods and into the open ground near the town.

"You know, that was much shorter than the way in. Those maps are terrible." The shaman laughs.

"We owe you our lives. If you need anything just contact us." The mage adds.

[Incoming Friend Request From Mythryll]

[Friend Request Accepted]

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 16 - 16

Cain and Misha decide to take the next day off, see the sights and relax. Between power leveling and the nightmare spider forest it's been a long week.

The town has a huge selection of armor and clothing, mostly cloth and leather. Cain finds a casual outfit he can wear around town, Jeans and a button up shirt made of metallic threads that count as a very light chain armor. It's a much better look than the heavy chain pants, though the actual armor rating is terrible.

Misha on the other hand is in paradise. Being a cloth wearer, almost all the armored clothing items are available for her use, the chain items Cain needed are found only at a few specialty stores. She reigns herself in though, not wanting to spend too much. Buying a couple casual looking armored outfits and one special item for later.

[Pure Black Lingerie] obtained

Clothing shopping finished they see the sights of the town and find a comfortable spot in the park to settle down for a while, enjoying lunch from the street vendors.

We need more days like this. Grinding is good, but sometimes you just need to relax. " Cain sighs.

"But we will need to grind eventually. That last drop item is all we need and then we can get out of here for somewhere the dungeons are less cold." Misha laughs.

"A day off every week? Or maybe every third day off? If we're doing this well everywhere we go, working two and taking one off sounds like a pretty good life."

"Can you imagine asking your boss for that in the last world? 6 on 1 off was my usual, and they made me feel like that was a luxury." Misha laughs.

Cain thinks back over his deadbeat former life, resolving to do better in this one. No more drinking himself insensible, certainly not to the point he ruined his health. No more laying about for months on end until he totally ran out of groceries.

He was off to a good start though. He has a job of sorts. A good place to live. Even what he could call a girlfriend, though they've not agreed to anything so formal. Given the option, he was definitely not going back.

After a day of relaxation they decided to head to the dungeon to farm for the last drop from the harpies. They got up a bit late, getting caught up in line, a rarity for the pair of early risers.

"Hey guys. I see you're down a few people, looking for any more party members?" a lyrical voice asks them. "Oh, hey it's you!"

"Mythryll? What are you doing here looking for a party? Weren't you with a full group just 2 days ago?"

"The party broke up. The warriors kept pulling too many mobs, almost getting me and the shaman killed a bunch of times and it turned into a huge fight yesterday. The others all left town already, but I heard there's a Frost Staff mages can get from this dungeon."

"I know the feeling, I was sure this maniac and a vampire tank were going to get me killed any number of times the day we went for the Iron Man titles." Misha laughs.

"You have the Iron Man titles? That's awesome. The drop rate increase is supposed to make it easy easier to get good gear, and with two in the same party you must get all the loot."

"Except the one drop you really need" Misha laughs "How about it Cain? Can we add a party member? We could use a good mage."

[Party Invite Sent]

[Mythryll Has Joined The Party]

Mythryll was only level 26, no wonder she was having trouble and almost dying. Being almost 10 levels ahead of her, they both were higher level than the monsters and didn't suffer the additional damage that low levels do.

"I've got a Treant if we need an extra tank." Mythryll says "They never let me use it though. Elves get a bonus to nature magic, so I went almost all nature spells with a bit of fire at the start."

"Sure, the more the merrier in my opinion" Cain laughs. Turn down extra experience because it might take attention away from his Golems? Not his style.

Once they entered, Cain summoned his Golems and Mythryll summoned her Treant. It was a fairly adorable thing, a bit more than her diminutive height and bushy.

[New Form Learned: Summon Greater Golem Treant]

What is this now? He can learn new forms for his summons just by being around other people's? That is awesome.

"Hey, let me try something first before we pull" Cain says and selects Treant instead of Shield in his Greater Golem form menu. They disappear and he quickly summons them back, appearing as 3 meter tall, thick trunked trees with arm like side branches and vines with sharp thorns.

Misha and Mythryll just gape in shock. "When did you learn that?" Misha asks.

"Just now. I got the notification a new form was available when she summoned hers. It's the first player created Summon I've been around, and it looks like The Greater Golems can copy its form."

"But bigger. That must be level 2 or 3 of the spell right?" The little mage asks.

"Yeah, so yours is the level 1 Treant Summon? Perfect, let's go do a pull and see how it goes."

The treants do a huge amount of damage with his Skilled Creation Amulet, and the vines wrap up enemies slowing attacks, but they still take a lot of damage in return.

"Well, that was fun, but for now, I'll change them back to shield bearers. We don't want to anger our Healer." Cain smiles.

"Sorry Misha." Mythryll giggles "But it was fun while it lasted. Our own little forest in the ice."

With both fire and nature magic, plus a small army of summons, their trip through the dungeon goes very smoothly. Still no luck getting the drop from the elite harpy though. Maybe it's hidden somewhere? They spend a couple hours searching everywhere and finally find what they're looking for. A Harpy corpse in a Yeti den.

[Quest Item Obtained]

"Now, should we go look for that Frost Staff? I think me and Cain both know where we're going to find it."

"Yeah, let's go poke the dragon." Cain laughs.

It takes them a while to find the entrance to the cave, but checking their hand drawn map, they find an empty circle just like the first time.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 17 - 17

Mythryll is more than happy to follow Cain's instructions to keep to the wall, close to Misha where he could block incoming ice attacks for them. Being even less geared and lower level than the Healer made them all extra cautious. Misha had taken heavy damage from some of the Ice attacks the first time they were here, and nobody wanted the kindly mage to get killed.

They've got the technique down now though, and Mythryll has not just 1 but 2 different cancel effects, an interrupt and a short silence. With the extra control, very little even comes their way except tail swipes that they mostly dodge.

[Mythryll Has Obtained Epic Item]

[Frost Mages Salvation] has dropped

[Misha Has Obtained Epic Item]

[Halloween Witch Costume] has dropped

Like Cain's bow, the staff has a chance to freeze on hit, but it also casts an Ice Armor around the mage wielding it, refreshed with every spell cast. It's not a large amount of damage absorbed, but a self refreshing shield for a Mage is nothing to scoff at.

"Alright ladies, let's go turn in this quest." Cain makes a grand onwards type gesture with his bow and the girls laugh.

Finding the hidden tailor to turn in the quest takes them until nearly nightfall, but in the end they manage to get the reward, and Misha becomes a level 20 Tailor with a legendary recipe in her repertoire.

"Guys, I reached level 30 from that quest reward. What kind of crazy growth rate is this? I made 4 levels in a day!" Mythryll gushes.

"Hey, my guardian tree can teach level 2 now, I've got the points and it just unlocked when I leveled up."

"I'm in a bit of a hurry to craft this, see you both later!" Misha calls, running off towards the apartment.

"Forget the level up, can I watch?" Mythryll laughs "I really want to see what a legendary robe looks like."

"I don't see any good reason why not." Cain laughs. "Follow me, we rented right near the entrance to the dungeon. Congratulations on your levels by the way. Grinding with us is faster than usual, secret technique, don't tell anyone."

Mythryll laughs softly while they run at his talk of secret techniques, but stops in shock at the apartment when they walk in.

"This is beautiful, how long have you been here to decorate?" she asks and Misha giggles. Looking over the recipe in her interface.

"It's the honeymoon suite. You'll have to join us in the hot springs later, nothing gets the cold out of your bones better after a long day in the dungeon." Misha informs her in a serious voice.

"But first..."

[Legendary Item Created: Ice Dragon Robes] Cleric, Mage only. Binds to player on use. Additional Cold Resistance. Additional armor. Reduces Casting Cost by 15 percent.

"That is, insane. I mean, yeah. Insane. So much casting cost reduction." Mythryll sighs.

"What did it take to make?"

Misha links the materials and Mythryll's eyes light up. She lays a pile of stuff on the ground and kneels with her best pleading look.

"Please, oh please, Mighty tailor, might you make me a robe so glorious?"

And it is glorious. It appears on Misha like a long, form fitting coat. White dragon scales with white fur trimming, the bottom hem is split up the back for easy movement. The scales shine and sway as she moves, giving a feeling of elegance. It's got a wide mantle at the shoulders, lined underneath with white fur, giving a unique look beyond its dragon scales, and matching well with the cleric robes in this world.

Misha smiles and makes another for the Elven Mage. When worn by Mythryll, the item becomes a ball gown in a very fairy like style. It's slinky like a sequined dress, cut low, with a figure hugging waist and a slit up the side clear to the hip. It's got long silk

sleeves, split from the elbow down, with ties that can be undone to allow the arms free movement and a white lace back and trim instead of fur.

"You look, stunning." Misha sighs. "Cleric gear is all very stuffy, but this seems to hold the perfect temperature. That, on the other hand, looks like you belong in a fantasy movie, or at a high society ball."

"I was expecting wizards robes, not this. This is possibly the most beautiful thing I will ever own. And it's armor, the sort of armor you want to be wearing all the time." Mythryll sounds dreamy, like she's been waiting on this moment for a long time.

"Wait, I have the perfect accessory for that. Maybe. We'll see how it looks on you." Cain says.

[Yeti Fur Cloak] has been traded

It's a pure white, fur trimmed silk cloak. At least when Misha wears it. On Mythryll it becomes a fur trimmed white lace collar with a golden lock and a sheer white silk cloak that attaches at the front and back leaving her shoulders bare other than the sleeves of the dress.

Mythryll pushes it back over her upper arms and giggles. "It's warm like a fur cloak or a good winter coat, but it looks like this." she twirls, then flips the cloak up over her shoulders to make it hang more like a cape.

"I know they call Elves the magical forest fairies, but this is just unfair" Misha pouts.

"Thank you so much for making it for me though." Mythryll hugs the downtrodden Healer around the waist.

"It's hot springs time. Are you joining us?" Misha asks the excited Elf.

"I mean, this is a honeymoon suite, and you guys are, well you know." she stammers flustered.

"We're not actually. More like party members with benefits. Since your party broke up, do you even have a place to stay? Might as well stay here since you're with us now. And that means hot springs. There's plenty of places to sleep. " Misha nods her head, certain of her logic.

Cain heads out to get evening snacks while the girls bathe first, Misha laughing and pinching Mythryll's rosy cheeks, having fully enjoyed teasing the mage.. They're out by the time he returns, chatting about their experiences and getting to know each other for over an hour before Cain falls asleep on the couch, exhausted from the day.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 18 - 18

It is decided that the team has all had enough of the cold. Fortunately for them, there is a less popular second dungeon in the vicinity. A post apocalyptic city ruin full of demons.

"There has to be a reason people would rather freeze, right?" Cain asks, looking at the nearly abandoned entrance to the dungeon.

"I mean likely. But as long as it's not freezing, I'm game to try it at least once." Mythryll laughs.

Stepping inside it seems to be a fairly normal dungeon. The expected packs of demons, with wandering patrols. It doesn't smell funny and the lighting is good. Maybe the whole thing is just that it doesn't drop the crafting plans that the other dungeon is known for?

It's not long before they realize what the problem with this dungeon is. All the demons have a chance to give [Marked by Shadow] a 10 second buff that reduces STR and CON by 5 points. Too many stacks will kill you, if the hit that applied the last one somehow didn't.

The Golems are falling at a pretty steady rate, so Cain starts just replacing them when they get too many stacks. With the two treants from Mythryll's upgraded nature magic spell the group is in good shape, well defended from the demons by a wall of Golems.

"Large targets in the distance, looks like some form of demonic gargoyle in that building. Definitely an elite". Cain says softly, as not to draw too much attention. Not that a group this large accompanied by giant trees can sneak anywhere, but best not to make the situation any worse.

Some of the pulls in this dungeon were considerably difficult on Cain, as a warm blooded man. The demons rarely wore much clothing, straps of leather or a strategically grown bit of scaly skin being the only separation between their fashion and an R18 fetishist show. Jiggly demon boobs everywhere were quite distracting really.

Not all of them though. Some were misshapen monsters with limbs where they shouldn't be, extra appendages or grotesque, pustules and boils. The 6 shambling monsters before the elite pack proved to be one of those.

"Stay back, these ones burst acid" Misha frowned, casting a heal on the Golems. "I'm starting to understand why everyone prefers to get cold. Plus these are like 10 levels higher than the other dungeon."

The advantage they had in the Ice Caverns, of being higher level than the monsters was reversed here. While they did a significant amount of damage, the Golems also took a significant amount more from these demons, and it was giving Misha a workout.

"There we go. Area is clear, you can move on to the elites" Mythryll informs them, crawling back through a gap in the broken wall. Being much smaller, she was often using the rubble to scout a bit ahead. Without that, the group would have walked into any number of surprises, and not of the good kind.

The drops in here are worth a fair bit of coin though, enough to make all the hassle worth it.

"Alright, 4 elite Demonic Constructs they're called. Focus down from left to right, they have big claws that seem like they might kill the tanks faster than the debuff stacks will." Cain directs and sends his Golems forward into battle.

He was right. One turns on a lesser golem at the start and crushes it in just two strikes. Misha and Mythryll wouldn't take a second hit from that thing either, it's just plain brutal. They're also durable, and if it wasn't for the Mage using [Restraining Vines] and the freeze chance of their weapons the group would have been in a lot of trouble.

"Low on mana" Mythryll huffs, leaning with her hand on her knees, gasping with exertion. "That mana use really takes it out of a girl." Her smile is forced, but she's still smiling. A good sign, Cain decides. Maybe she'll stick around, it's good to have her in the group.

The Golems rumble in victory as the last monster drops.

[New Form Learned: Summon Greater Golem: Elite Demonic Construct]

[Mythryll Has Received Grade A Spell Book]

[Book of Shadow Bolt] has dropped.

[Shadow Bolt] Requires cleric. Does 40 shadow damage to a single target.

"Hey Misha, I got a spell book for you. An actual bona fide attack spell for clerics." Mythryll cheers.

"No more standing around feeling awkward when the pulls are too easy" Cain laughs.

Misha takes and immediately learns the spell, her smile threatening to split her face in half.

"You guys have no idea how happy this makes me. I've waited so long to get an ability that can do some damage." She cries and Mythryll pulls her into a hug.

"Congratulations. I know it's tough being a Healer. You've got this." the mage whispers softly, until the cleric calms down. She's way better at that comforting thing, Cain decides, thinking of good ways to entice her to stay with the group.

"Didn't I see you for a new Golem form?" Misha asks once she recovers her composure a bit.

"Yeah, want me to give it a try on the next pull?" Cain smiles.

The new form is nearly identical to the monsters it was gained from. Huge, winged gargoyles with long claws. They're durable, like the tank form, but take more damage. Not as much as the tree form though. Where they truly shine is in damage. The claws shred the snake monsters of the next group, leading behind a [Cripple] debuff that increases damage taken.

This quickly becomes their preferred form for this dungeon, the curse stacks making the reduced damage taken by the tank form irrelevant and the speed at which your group clears much more important.

The dungeon proves much too large to fully clear, so eventually they just call it a day, knowing it will reset in the morning.

"Did we get anything good?" Misha asks, having lost track of all the random things that dropped during that extended day.

"Lot of crafting materials, a new ring with added shadow damage on attack and a few clothing options. No plans though." Mythryll shrugs.

"About the same, but I got these really cool black leather and chain pants and some boots with spikes on them. Not sure how they'll look on my class though." Cain adds.

"I got 4 leather crafting plans, but nothing I could wear. One is epic though, so it might come in handy later. oh, and the materials and a [White Demon Bikini]." Misha says.

"Fashion show?" Cain laughs.

"You're up first." Mythryll calls out and Cain equips the pants and boots he just got. They're very tight at the top, but stretchy, with a spiked leather belt. The Boots have a 3 inch platform sole, spikes and straps all over and tuck the pant legs inside. As he forgot to equip a shirt, that's all he's wearing.

"Very nice. Male stripper meets punk rock singer. The dangling chain mail really completes the look." Mythryll cheers.

"You should wear that more often." Misha agrees "But we need to find you a shirt on our next run."

"You're up" The mage cheers "Pick an item at random and we can see how it all looks"

"Let's start with the epic item [White Demon Bikini] then." It's a well covering white bikini, with a pentagram front design and strappy pentagram pattern hips. Revealing, but on the suitable for swimwear side of sexy.

"If we're doing swimwear, I think I've got something." Cain laughs, linking [Black Plum Smugglers] a green quality item before equipping them.

They might be swimwear, but they're also underwear, as they didn't replace his pants, and he forgot to unequip them.

Deciding against modesty, as she's in a bikini anyhow, Misha steps forward and pulls the front of his pants to look down.

"Yep, definitely plum smugglers." She laughs, seeing the tight, black spandex.

"OK, first up, let's try the [Strappy Demonic One Piece] that sounds like a swim suit." Mythryll says.

Oh, it's strappy all right. And that's all it is. It's a black leather body harness that covers exactly zero of the essential bits a swimsuit should cover. Not having looked at herself yet, Mythryll does a twirl.

"So how is it?" she asks, then looks down and freezes in horror.

"I for one like it very much." Cain whistles.

"I second that. Good choice." Misha cheers, clapping her hands.

Mythryll immediately puts her robes back on and frowns. "Stupid demons."

"Let's try this next [Blue Party Dress]" Misha announces to break the tension. It's a flirty, short blue sleeveless dress. Very suitable for a summer day.

"How is that an equippable armor?" Cain laughs "Everyone was complaining it is impossible to find normal clothes and you get a sundress?"

"It's green quality armor. Grants 1 percent casting speed. Not great, but it is armor. Maybe they just can't find it because nobody does the dungeon it drops in?" Misha shrugs.

"This one has got to be better." Mythryll sighs and links [Red Racing Swimsuit]

Crossing her fingers she equips it and checks her cleavage line before she unequips her robe. It's a very normal red one piece swim suit, with a grey stripe up the sides.

"Yes, winner! Now we've all got suits to go swimming" Misha cheers, but Cain thinks he'd rather find some swim trunks instead.. This swimsuit rides up in strange places.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 19 - 19

The three never did find a swimming pool, but a soak in the room's hot spring tub has become an evening ritual. Coming from the hot water makes the warm night air feel just that little bit more tolerable.

They've now collected enough clothing to create their own department store, at least that's how it feels to Cain. Misha has received over a dozen new recipes this week, all clothing, and almost all very provocative or unique looking.

Cain finished up his morning routine and waited for the girls to finish whatever discussion they're having this morning.

"Morning ladies. Are we ready for breakfast?" he greets them when they appear, food already placed out on the table.

"Yes, thanks. We were just discussing balancing stats on equipment, trying to find the perfect outfit for dungeon runs. Sometimes the best stats are just plain uncomfortable to wear all day." Misha shrugs and Cain remembers the plum smugglers. She's definitely got a point, they would be far from comfortable to fight in all day. Mythryll still seems to be squirming in discomfort, though.

'I guess not all stats are worth sacrificing.' Cain mentally shrugs.

They've been averaging 2 epic items a day, with a single legendary drop for the week, a corset that granted 5 mana Regen a second and increased armor. Cain suspects that's the item that Mythryll simply couldn't give up wearing today.

She's been focusing on ice skills since she noticed that the [Ice Dragon Robes] give a hidden bonus to cold damage, and if she gets another level today she will be able to learn the [Blizzard] spell. But the spell is very mana intensive to cast, so she's been trying to balance mana Regen with the reduced casting cost on her robes.

The one thing their group has really been lacking is an area attack ability. They can handle many targets with the constructs, but nothing they have is truly area damage except one low level [Entanglement] spell which is mostly for control, with only a little damage as a bonus.

Misha and Cain are even more excited for the upcoming days hunting, as they're very close to achieving level 40.

They also learned a valuable bit about advanced leveling, a traveling merchant having brought a newspaper with an article about how a portal becomes available to fast travel to another continent at the second class change. 200 levels after the first class change at level 100.

This news gave the group renewed motivation to get stronger, seeing that there was so much more than just these little towns they've been in since arriving.

"I will pull this Succubus pack back here and the patrol should miss us." Mythryll whispers, looking back to the group. A small ice spike hits their leader and they all come running around the building, enraged.

As soon as they're out of sight of the road, the larger Golems surge forward, trapping them for the battle. It's a routine they've mastered well over the course of the week. Mythryll has slightly greater accurate range than Cain's bow, so she will fire at a group and let them chase her back to where Cain has an ambush set up. The number of patrols in these ruins is disturbingly high, and before they started pulling things out of sight they were routinely interrupted during battle.

"Yes, level 36" Mythryll cheers when the last Succubus dies. "That's enough points to get rank 1 of [Blizzard]."

"A few more packs and we should be at level 40 too." Misha smiles, looking forward to whatever abilities she's going to get.

[Cain Has Received Epic Item]

[Brigandine Incubus Jacket] has dropped.

"Incubus jacket?" Misha wonders out loud. "Why don't you put that on and let's see what it looks like."

It's a simple black biker jacket with spikes on the shoulders and metal plating on the inside. The stats are great though, being the next best thing to a full plate armor, plus it increases attack speed for him and his constructs by 10 percent.

"Looking good." Mythryll whistles. "Find you a band shirt and you're all set."

"Nono, with the chain over leather design of the Pants, he needs a [Black Mesh Tank Top]." Misha laughs trading it over.

"I look like I belong in an 80s metal video." Cain sighs but notices Mythryll biting her lower lip. So that's her type? Interesting.

Increasing his STR stat has been increasing and toning the muscle mass of his body, not just the physical ability. So since he's been adding a lot of it, his formerly lithe physique has gotten a well ripped appearance. He's got a 6 pack for the first time ever. Adding CON added bulk, so the balance of the two is important if he cares about appearance.

"Elites on patrol." Misha points out, snapping the two from their reverie.

The big winged Blood Mongers are one of Cain's favorites to fight. They're straight brutality, and slow hitting. The stacks of the debuff don't build up too fast and they're not heavily armored, preferring to fight bare chested.

The Golems are sent forward to intercept, the big demonic constructs immediately tearing into the enemy. Mythryll's [Guardian Tree] is at level 2, no longer cute and bushy like at level 1 it's large and has strong Vines like when Cain duplicated the appearance with his Greater Golems. She didn't get a second one though, that seems to be unique to the Puppet Master Class.

Mythryll casts her newly acquired [Blizzard] and a binding haze of snow appears. The sharp edges of the magical snowflakes tearing at the skin of the demons, draining their health at an impressive rate.

[Level Up]

[Misha Has Received Grade C Spell Book]

[Book of Remove Curse] has dropped

[Mythryll Has Received Grade A Spell Book]

[Book of Demonic Transformation] has dropped.

[Summon Lesser Golem] has reached rank 3

[Please Choose A New Form]

"A new form? What are my options." Cain mutters to himself.

[Tiny Treant] [Little Demon] [Boar] [Wolf] [Clay Golem]

Cain asks the girls if they want to try out the new forms for his lesser Golems before the next pull. The response is immediate and unanimous

"Puppies!"

They're not puppies, but full grown wolves the size of a German Shepherd. The girls don't care. They're fluffy, friendly and not nearly as ugly as the little clay Golems.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 20 - 20

The [Remove Curse] book that Misha got is pretty self explanatory, but none of them could decide what [Demonic Transformation] might actually look like.

[Demonic Transformation] Grade A

Transform Caster into a demonic form. Armed with [Demon Sword] Dark Damage +60. Grants additional AC. Grants [Demonic Flame] Ability [20MP] per use.

"With the way this dungeon spawns monsters, I'm not sure I want to try this spell in public the first time." Mythryll insists.

"We're not public, we're your party. If anyone's going to see it, we will." Misha points out. "Unless you're going to ignore a Rank A ability that most mages would kill for. In fact, my former party actually tried to kill me when a Rank A book dropped."

Her Arcane Armor is always up, but thankfully didn't often get a workout since the day she got it.

"Fine, but if I lose my dignity, you both must take responsibility." Mythryll giggles, making the others laugh.

"Deal. Now let's see what sort of demon you become."

Much to Mythryll's good fortune, the change doesn't unequip her outfit. It does turn it from white to a sleek black, but it's otherwise unchanged. Her pale, slightly green Elven skin turns a bright white, and her hair turns a deep dark red, with Flaming orange streaks.

The most notable change isn't the skin or hair though. If anyone was asked, the answer would be either the polished black horns running from her temples upwards and curling

behind her ears or the leathery white wings on her back. Folded, Cain barely noticed them, but as soon as she moves they open instinctively to help her balance.

With a thought a sword of black flames materializes in her hands and she cackles in glee.

"This is awesome! I've got enough AC to be a tank and my [HP] tripled when I transformed."

"What's the cool down on that spell?" Misha asks. Most high end skills can't be active forever after all.

"15 minutes up every 30" Mythryll says after a moment. "But I should be able to use all my spells while it's up."

"If you can, we will have to work more cool down reduction into your gear." Misha suggests. "Wings are a much better option than being a squishy mage."

"How about we try out your [Demonic Flame] Before the spell wears off?" Cain suggests.

The group creeps down the road a ways, finding a pack of human sized Troll looking demons. Mythryll sneaks forward as well as she can, not used to the new wings. With a snap of her fingers, the required activating gesture for Demonic Fire, the area around the group is engulfed in fire.

None escape the flames, burning to death on the spot.

"5 minutes on cool down." Mythryll tells the others, smiling.

"Very nice, I think that might do more damage than [Blizzard] and it's the same length cool down." Cain commends her performance.

"That A rank spell feels like it should be S rank. I wonder if it's just the downtime that made the system reduce its rank?" Misha asks impressed.

"Maybe. I've got a lot of spell damage increase too." Mythryll shrugs. "But let's get some more demons killed while I'm like this."

The decision is to use [Blizzard] to pull the next group, then have the Golems charge in, as the spell doesn't damage allies. This time the spell has black flakes mixed in with the binding white, giving Cain an idea what's causing the increased damage.

"Mythryll, does your staff still count as equipped?"

"Yeah, but I can't actually use it with the sword in my hand." She shrugs.

"Both it and the sword add elemental damage to your spells. That's why you're hitting so hard in this form." The idea appeals to Cain, stacking bonuses to make his Golems overpowered. His bow only adds to his attacks, not to non attack spells, so it doesn't help the Golems.

"That's good to know and all, but we shouldn't have picked puppies." Misha sounds sad, so Cain focuses on where she's looking seeing one of the Lesser Golems had been taking damage. The sight of the injured wolf is clearly distressing the Healer.

"Should I switch them to tiny demons or something? Maybe Treants?"

"No, I will be fine, thanks." Misha grits her teeth, so Cain swaps the wolves option for demons and resummons them.

They're 5 gray, winged gargoyles with sharp claws and fangs. They look like little Lions with wings on their backs and no tails.

"Okay, that is better. I thought they might be hideous, but these aren't ugly at all."

They can't fly, but they jump even better than the Wolves, using their wings to propel them upwards. The damage done and taken seems unchanged though.

They kill at a truly impressive rate for the next 10 minutes until Mythryll's [Demonic Transformation] wears off, then they return to their usual pace.

[Cain Has Received Epic Item]

[Elementalist Ring] has dropped.

"Ooh, extra damage to conjurations" Mythryll cheers. "I would want that for my Treant and Vines, but you know."

Is this an ask and you shall receive moment? Cain wondered. Flat damage added items will need to be replaced eventually with increased levels, but they can be very powerful. In his case, with 7 summons a flat added damage is a lot in total.

The group clears until near dark and returns to the Diner for the Meatloaf special. There's just something about that big plate of meat and potatoes that helps you relax at the end of the day.

"We've got a week left in our honeymoon suite rental, how about we take a few days off then head to the city Cixelcid and Lickity mentioned? We've gotten a lot of good stuff from this dungeon, but it's almost time to move on." Misha suggests.

"We got a load of materials and recipes, maybe we could spend some time creating new stuff? What we don't want we can sell for traveling money."

"And get a great place like this again next time. It makes all the hard work feel worth it.." Cain sighs looking at the Hot Spring fed tub.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 21 - 21

Now Cain is absolutely certain they have enough clothing to start a store. In fact, they had to buy backpacks because the creations would no longer fit in Misha's inventory.

The locals assured them that plain clothes style armor for transfers was in short supply everywhere, as the plans were exceedingly rare drops. Not for Misha apparently, but they were planning to bring all the good stuff, items that created at blue or better from plans with random quality, plus all the items from epic plans, with them.

At half an hour or more creation time for some of the items, they were nowhere near out of materials, but 6 hours a day of crafting and fashion shows left them enough time to see the city, relax, stroll the woods and just generally live their best lives for the week.

Finally, the last day of their monthly rental comes and it is time to move on to the city. They pack up their bags and say goodbye to the landlord before heading for the gates. Again, they decide not to rent a carriage and instead intend to walk all day, enjoying the sounds and scents of the road.

This stretch is in much better condition, being a stone paved road and not just a dirt track. Just as the sun is reaching midday Cain detects the distinctive scent of a lake.

"I smell fresh water. How about a picnic by the lake?" He asks and Misha cheers. The water ends up being no more than 20 meters from the road, just behind some trees. A blanket is set out and the packed lunches from the Cafe come out, enjoying the sunshine and watching the birds on the lake.

"We should get going." Mythryll sighs "The guards said the city gates close at dusk and we don't want to get locked out."

They fall in with a merchant Caravan when they reach the road, giving them a never ending stream of conversation for the rest of the afternoon. The merchants are a colorful bunch, with a wealth of knowledge. They make a 3 month journey each way buying and selling whatever is available, in a season long loop home for winter.

"Halt in the name of the Red Bandana bandits. Turn over all your trade goods and nobody needs to die!" a voice comes from in front of the Caravan.

"5 men, all between levels 25 and 30. All red flagged as murderers." A tall guard tells Cain, drawing his sword. The merchants only have two guards at level 26, so they're no match for this robbery, but they're going to try.

"Don't kill the Cleric, we'll have it sign a vendor contract afterwards." The leader yells at his men. It? These must be idiots that believe the world is just a game, and they've mistaken Misha as a rich NPC.

"Kindly kill them would you Darling?" Misha drawls, playing the part she's been mistaken for.

The leader laughs. "Everyone knows the caravans are under level 30 and poorly armed. Don't make this hard on yourself."

Cain equips his bow and summons his Golems into the bandit party at the same instant Mythryll Transforms into her demon form. The leader doesn't even have time to react before a Poisoned Arrow Multi Shot is incoming. He manages to parry the first but the others slam into his chest. Screams come from his party members and 5 more bandits come running from the woods.

Cain turns the Lesser Golems on them, with a 15 level disadvantage the bandits are hard pressed to deal with the four legged gargoyles. Mythryll uses her demonic flame on the main pack and charges at a bandit, intent on getting into melee combat, perhaps the first she's ever intentionally done so. A Shadow Bolt from Misha drops another while the rest fall to arrows and gargoyles.

"Let's go find their camp. I hate bandits." Mythryll demands, pointing to where the reinforcements came from. Cain sends the Golems that way and Mythryll summons her Treant, leaving it to protect the merchants.

The bandit camp is a sad thing, a few dozen ragged tents and fifteen or so orange flagged transfers, all under level 30.

"If you party with a criminal it flags you for 48 hours. That's how they force suckers into their guild, then they're orange forever. If the guild leader is red flagged, all members stay orange, and you can't quit a guild while a criminal, you need to be kicked." Mythryll explains in a low voice.

"That's just cruel. But what do we do?" Misha asks.

"We killed the guild master, I'm pretty sure, so let's try to take them prisoner. Their flags will expire in prison and they'll leave free." Cain suggests. The girls think a second then nod agreement.

"Let's do this."

"Red Bandana Guild, your raiding team is all dead. Surrender yourselves or face the same fate."

"Crap, they're over Level 40, we're screwed." someone calls and tries to flee. A Poisoned Arrow takes him down and the Lesser Golems are on him in seconds.

"Anyone else? Or are you coming peacefully?"

The merchants have cuffs that prevent equipping weapons or casting spells, and the remaining bandits are quickly secured.

"Did you have to be so brutal to them?" One asks, looking at the remains of the battle.

"They attacked us. But don't worry, it was quick." Mythryll informs them, still in her demonic form.

With the delays, and reluctant prisoners the Caravan barely makes the city before the gates lock for the night. In fact, they would have missed the closing, but the duty Sargeant saw the orange flagged crowd being guarded by Golems on the horizon and held the gates in curiosity.

"Are these the notorious Red Bandana Bandits?" he asks as the group gets close.

"What's left, we killed the others." Misha smiles at him.

"Well, well. Good job. I'll write you a quest completion and you can claim it in the morning." He waves everyone through and locks the gates behind them.

"You'll be wanting a good hotel for the night, right? Down to the city Square, then a block left.." He waves an abrupt goodbye and follows his men escorting the prisoners away.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 22 - 22

The hotel the guard pointed them towards is a giant stone building, far larger than any building they'd seen so far in this world. The interior is luxurious but tasteful and the night attendant greets them before they reach the counter.

"Welcome travelers, to the Golden Loon Inn. I was notified of your arrival and have a room prepared, unfortunately we only had one room remaining for the evening, will that be acceptable?"

"That should be fine sir." Misha answers. "We've grown comfortable in each other's company, and will be seeking longer term arrangements tomorrow, as we intend to stay in town a month at least."

A month per town minimum is what they all decided on, to give ample time to relax and not feel as if they were being rushed through life. Misha worked too much and Mythryll was a student with a heavy workload, so this change is exactly what they needed out of a second life. The two on, one off schedule is also staying, as it has been working out well both for relaxation and time to repair and upgrade equipment.

The attendant leads them up to the far corner of the hotel, a spot that should be above the storage rooms and not part of the regular pattern of rooms.

"The silver suite was our last available room. I do hope you enjoy." He bows and exits as the party walks in.

This room is glorious. The name silver suite seems to have come from the silver ornaments decorating the room. The walls are a mixture of shades of grey marble, polished to a high shine. Deep carpets in grays, creams and tans cover the hardwood floors, with white leather couches and a polished Teak bar stands in the corner.

The first door off to the side leads to a bedroom, the oversized bed beyond any king size from their memories and surrounded by thick curtains, currently drawn back. A white dressing table with a large padded bench and a mirror surrounded in magic fuelled lights adorns the far wall.

Cain ducks into the last room, finding it is actually two rooms. A water closet for the toilet and a huge hot tub, currently swirling away and steaming.

"Ladies" Cain smiles, interrupting their discussion in the bedroom "We have a hot tub. Even bigger than the last one."

They squeak in joy, dragging Cain by his hands back into the bathroom and towards the tub, changing into their swimsuits as they go. Mythryll did eventually find a bikini she likes, like Misha's pentagram patterned one, but in red. Cain also found trunks, plain black, but comfortable for relaxing in a hot tub.

There's a line of products along the wall and Mythryll this to investigate. "Shampoo, Body wash, conditioner, detangler, bubble bath."

There's no shower in here, so it seems the tub is the bathing option of choice. An executive decision is made that this will be a bubble bath, also known as Misha happily grabbed the bottle and dumped an ample amount into the tub.

The bubbles rise high above the water, almost covering everyone's heads.

"Oops, too much. But now we can wash in privacy, no need to wait." she hands out loofahs and passes around the body wash, fully intending to get properly clean and not just soak in the hot tub. 'Why not' Cain thinks, everything is covered in bubbles anyhow.

The three share the giant bed that night, waking up refreshed and ready to see the sights of the city. All with the same thought in mind "This is the life".

"We should see if we can find Lickity again." Misha suggests. "I want to see what the [Ice Dragon Robes] look like on her."

Mythryll holds up a finger, signaling to wait "But first, we must know how much this room will be for a month."

"That would be 5 Gold coins, with the long term discount Miss, including morning and evening meals for three." The daytime attendant looks a bit perplexed, perhaps because of the amount. But selling so many crafted armors greatly enhanced the groups wealth, so they're willing to splurge.

"Did you find the sleeping accommodations satisfactory?" The man asks with an inquiring tone. "We do have other rooms with more beds coming available."

"Do they have such glorious tubs?" Misha asks and the man shakes his head.

"No miss, only the silver and gold suite do. Other rooms have a shower."

"Then we'll stay in the silver suite." Misha determines, placing the coins on the counter.

Essentials, at least in Misha's mind, secured, they head out to see the city. It's a grand place, far more stone buildings and cleaner streets than the village and town. There are also higher level crafted goods for sale, it's a good thing that Misha is over level 40, or her own goods might have suffered the price reduction for low level creators.

That in mind, she wonders where Lickity might be, so she asks a nearby clothing merchant. "Do you perhaps know of a tailor named Lickity, or her friend Cixelcid?"

"Oh, Cid. Yes, he's quite popular with the ladies. They'll be at the market over in the guild quarter this time of day." The merchant lady smiles dreamily. Cain hands her a copper for her trouble and they start walking in the direction of the guild run vendors.

They find Cixelcid on the way, buying liquor from a local brewer. "Greetings young friends" he laughs. "You've finally made it here!"

At this point he frowns, looking at Cain. "I don't remember you being so large."

"Funny story that." Cain laughs "I get to allocate some stat points every level. The more my strength increases, the larger I've gotten. My height stopped here at about 190cm a while ago, but every increase gives me a better physique. My Golems do damage based on my strength, so I've been focusing it."

"No complaints here." Mythryll giggles making Misha smile. "It's much more relaxing to shop with a big strong man around."

Cixelcid bursts into laughter. "What brings you to this side of town? Looking for an adventuring guild?"

"Actually, no. I got a Tailoring skill quest and some amazing clothing plans that I would like Lickity to try on. Free epic wardrobe items if she puts on a fashion show." Misha jokes.

"You think you're kidding, but I'll make her do it. I swear I will. She's still wearing that bath robe everywhere." Cixelcid insists.

The unfortunate Lickity has sold out her days goods and is quickly captured by her guild mate near a bubble tea stand. "Don't argue, we've got good things for you, for just a small price."

She giggles as he slings her over his shoulder before moving to cover her modesty in the very short bath robe.

"Where are you staying? Our rooms are both quite small." Cid comments.

"No worries, we've got the Silver suite at the Golden Loon." Mythryll cheers, happy that for once the chance of wardrobe malfunctions isn't going to be because of her. Everything looks normal on Misha, but when the Elf tries, many of the demonic named items are positively scandalous.

"The Golden Loon? That's not an easy place to get into. Who referred you?" Cid whistles.

"The guard captain. We brought in a bunch of bandits right at gates closed and he sent us over there. The silver suite is the only room left they said, and we've booked it for the month."

Cixelcid laughs at their enthusiastic response to spending a huge sum of money on comfort. Most transfers save every cent they can for better gear and advanced potions, these three spent it on the biggest in suite magical hot tub in town.

"Not at all worried about gear?" Lickity asks.

"How much grinding have you done since getting the Iron Man quest completed?" Cain asks and the Succubus shakes her head.

"Well the drop rate is insane. Multiple epic items daily, Tailoring recipes, we've even gotten multiple skill books this past month." Mythryll sighs. "And that's with just the two of them increasing the drop rate."

"Now about that fashion show.." Misha smiles, looking at the entrance to their hotel.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 23 - 23

"First up is the item we came here to bring you. [Ice Dragon Robes] a legendary recipe gained from a Tailoring quest."

Misha hands over the item and Lickity freezes in panic. "This binds when equipped. If I wear it, I can't give it back."

"We came here specifically to give it to you. See the outfits the girls have on? Both are the [Ice Dragon Robes] with accessories." Cain explains.

"Thank you so much then. Even if it's something embarrassing, I will still wear it sometimes." Lickity promises.

On her it's mostly translucent white silk, opaque where it needs to be for modesty, strategically placed Dragon scales making a beautiful twin White Dragon pattern down her sides to below the knees. It's floor length, strapless and backless, the plunging neckline ending below her belly button and the back showing a hint of rear cleavage, as it closes just below her tail. The laws of physics demand this outfit must be impossible, but it fits like it has been stitched to her body in places at the edges.

"That's vaguely similar to Mythryll's gown." Cain muses out loud, producing a [Yeti Fur Cloak] like the Elf is wearing. "Try adding this."

On the Succubus, it is not a fur trimmed silk choker with a gossamer cloak attached front and back. Instead it is a seamless white leather collar, with a heart shaped silver padlock hung at the front and lace trimming. It does have a cloak though. Attaching at two points on the back of the collar and just brushing the Succubus' tail, instead of being near floor length.

"Well, what do you think?" Misha asks and Cixelcid discretely adjusts himself in his trousers.

"It's perfect, it covers everything! It's a real dress, and a real cloak, now all it needs is shoes."

Mythryll produces a set of [White Demonic Low Boots] and Lickity immediately puts them on. They're cute lace trimmed white ankle boots, not too out of place with the dress, but not perfect.

"What about [White Succubus Thigh Highs]" Misha suggests. They're white lace stockings with high heeled white leather shoes and a platform sole. They look great, if impossible to walk in. The Succubus is used to such treatment though, swaying around the room in the outrageous heels.

"Well that's one outfit sorted, let's go for more."

Few turn out as intended. Though there's a blue sundress cut high enough to show hints of her bottom cheeks, even while standing still, that Cid insists she must keep, as well as one men's shirt that seems to only have two buttons in the middle and hangs down to mid thigh.

"That one. It's perfect night wear." Cain insists and Cid gives him a thumbs up.

"Care to explain?" Mythryll asks confused at their reaction.

"It's a guy thing. It's hard to explain, but no man doesn't like seeing that outfit in the morning." Cixelcid laughs.

Finally they're down to items Mythryll refused to try and swimwear.

"First up. As you're a Succubus, let's go for the [Succubus Business Suit]" Misha cheers, getting to the fun part of the day and Lickity sighs, knowing this is what Cixelcid meant by a price for the clothing.

It's a form fitting Black Latex suit with leather cuffs and collar that contain sturdy metal rings and attached heeled boots.

"Um, well, everything's covered?" Misha tries stifling her giggle and Lickity looks herself over.

"Yes, I am not nearly naked. But somehow, I think this might be worse to wear in public than that little blue dress." The Succubus laughs, changing back to her white outfit and firmly handing it back. Misha discretely trades it and the matching [Succubus Business Hat] to Cixelcid.

A few more unsuitable options later, it's time for swimwear. There's a [Black Pentagram Bikini] that seems to look the same no matter who wears it, so that Lickity keeps. The racing swimsuits all turn transparent or have strategic holes in them, so those are out. There's a [Blue School Swimsuit] that comes out completely normal, so that is added to the collection and Misha declares they've gone through everything likely to end well for the Succubus.

"Wait, there's one left." Mythryll says with an evil smile, producing the [Strappy Demonic One Piece].

Once everyone is dressed for dinner, Cid still sporting a small hand print on his face, the group heads down to try the famous restaurant downstairs.

"Worth every cent." Cixelcid declares, stomach now full, before heading to the pub with Cain for the evening while the ladies have a girls night in.

Cain stumbles back to the room just before dawn and collapses on the couch, spent and not wanting to wake anyone by trying to get in bed. He wakes groggy when the afternoon sunshine hits his face, cursing at the onslaught of pain. Where's Misha with a healing spell when he needs her?

Still in bed, as he discovered a few minutes later when she emerges with red eyes and tousled hair.

"Wine is evil." She mutters before casting an area healing spell followed by greater cure poison and curing everyone's hangover.

Mythryll runs out of the bedroom, followed by an elegantly dressed Lickity and gives Misha a big hug "Thank you so much. I really needed that, I was too afraid to open the curtains and let the light in."

"Lickity, what can you tell us about the major dungeon here?" Cain asks, deciding to get straight to business after paging hotel staff to bring up breakfast. The hostess is there in seconds, taking their orders with a smile before leaving without a sound.

"It's an undead dungeon. Mostly skeletons and zombies with a few lich and ghost type monsters. It's another one without dedicated boss locations, instead you'll find wandering boss Level monsters at random. The primary drops are undead related, so there might be something good for Cain's Summoning. The few who rolled Necromancer from the random character creation love this place, and your class is a little similar."

That's all good news. As long as the trade in materials are worth decent coin that is. They spent a lot of Misha's money on this suite.

"Also, Cid sent me a message a few minutes ago that there's a [Book of Turn Undead] at the Hall, so we should head over there first thing if Misha wants it."

"Let's go. Cain, carry the Succubus if she can't keep up." Misha yells running for the door.. Even if it's situational, she's not playing about getting a second damage skill.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 24 - 24

The run to the Hall is a short one, everyone getting out of the way of the seemingly crazed Healer running through the streets. She's laughing hysterically and not even trying to dodge pedestrians, instead running in the midst direct possible line towards the Hall. What is it she found out, the crowd wonders. Did she finish a quest with a particularly good reward? They do give out some good ones at the Hall now and then.

"Do you still have it? Is it here?" Misha pants at the shop keeper.

"Relax miss, it's still here. 4 gold coins for the Rank D version of Turn Undead." The shop keeper laughs, knowing exactly what the panicked Healer is looking for.

Misha slaps coin on the counter and whoops in glee, before noticing that everyone is staring at her.

"Sorry, I really wanted that spell."

Cain comes in seconds later, carrying the Succubus with the mage running along beside them. "Did you get it?" he asks and the whole store bursts into laughter.

"Yeah, she got it. Since Paladins can already use it without learning it from a book, Turn Undead often sits a day or two." One of the workers informs him.

"Anything we can get you? What classes books can you use?" The worker asks him with an appraising eye.

"I can use Hunter and Shaman, specializing in constructs." Cain tells him.

"Well aren't you in luck? We've got one Book you can use, a Rank C reinforce constructs passive for Shamans. It's been here for ages, so we'll give it to you for Rank

D pricing, how about that?" That sounds more than fair to everyone present. Almost favoritism level, if they didn't know how rare construct users are under level 100.

"Done." Cain smiles, putting down the coins and waiting while they get the book.

[Reinforce Construct] Passive. Reduces construct damage taken by 10 percent. Increases construct [HP] by 30 percent.

Now that's exactly the sort of skill he needed. Not having a list of secondary abilities to add points to and chose from like other classes can be a pain sometimes. Sure, the good stuff comes mostly from books for everyone, but even simple things like reduced casting cost abilities are unavailable to his class.

Even Misha looks happy he got it, but then it makes way more difference to her life than his. She's the one tasked with keeping them alive. They don't have anything for Mythryll unfortunately, the glut of mages ensuring their books are sold in minutes, if not seconds.

"Sorry guys, but I should run. I've got to get some Tailoring done, I got a few custom orders yesterday." Lickity tells them sadly.

"Feel free to visit anytime. We're always happy to see you." Misha tells her with a hug.

"Should we check the dungeon now, try out your new ability?" Cain asks Misha.

"That would be great. I've got too much built up energy to not use it on something."

The Undead Dungeon stinks. Literally. The whole place reeks of Death and Rot. But they're here to make money, the bath at home can fix the smell.

"Why did the first pull have to be juicy zombies? Mythryll sighs, smashing then with a Vine Whip spell.

"At least they're not doing much damage." Misha is excited for a good chance to try her Turn Undead. It is supposed to chase away and damage Undead within 20 meters, but the Golems and Vines are destroying these ones too fast to get a good sense of how it will work.

"There's about 30 skeletons over there you can try it on." Mythryll points with her staff and the group turns to engage them, sending only the Greater Golems at first, so the skeletons don't get bogged down in bodies.

The spell works fantastically, doing quite a bit of damage, stunning the ones that get hit soon afterwards and causing every skeleton not actively being hit to run away. This causes an unexpected side effect, though they likely should have expected it. Once the spell wears off, they return with friends, any Undead that were near them when the spell ended gets dragged along.

"I'll herd them into a circle, then you use Blizzard and clear out the herd." It's a working tactic, the skeletons aren't smart and neither are the zombies, they're easily rounded up and packed tight for Blizzard to shred them.

They all wish they had a little more Area damage, but they'll need to wait a few more levels to upgrade unless someone gets a skill book for it.

They soon find their first Elite, a boss level Lich Lord. His paralyze spells prove to be an annoyance, constantly hitting Misha and not targeting anyone else, but they do keep most of his big damage abilities like drain life and necrosis under control.

[Summon Greater Golem Form Gained: Lich Lord]

[Level Up]

"Sweet, you guys made level 43!" Mythryll cheers, having just made 37 herself. Everyone takes a moment to check their status and spend points as needed.

[Name] Cain

[Level] 43

[Class] Puppet Master

[Race] Human

[Skills]

[Summon Lesser Golem] lv4

[Summon Greater Golem] lv2

[Poison Arrow] lv3

[Light Foot] lv2

[Reinforce Construct] Passive

[Stats] +5

[STR] 90

[DEX] 45

[CON] 70

[INT] 30

[HP] 280

[MP] 150

Cain wasn't sure exactly where to put his newly gained points, and decided to hold off for a while, using them when he finds a deficiency in his build. But at level 40, getting 5 points a level instead of 3 like the basic classes do, he's way ahead in Stats to begin with. He's heard some of the advanced classes also get more than 3 per level, but everyone is pretty quiet about their actual status outside of their close friends.

The clear was going incredibly smoothly, the large numbers of replaceable constructs making up for the disadvantage most groups faced that led to them getting swarmed and overrun. If it wasn't for the smell, this dungeon would be great.

Looking over the new form he'd gotten for Greater Golems, he saw that the Lich Lord form could use necrosis, a form of damaging and debilitating aura, but that would cost the group their tanks. Maybe he'd find a use for it later? The Demon form was doing a great job with its long claws and high attack speed.

The run ends with only a single epic drop:

[Clean Socks] grants 5 percent movement speed.

Hey, an upgrade is an upgrade, right? Even if your new socks came from a zombie.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 25 - 25

The big city is in an uproar today. There is a special dungeon in town that only opens once a week, and it's opening today. It will be open from noon today until noon tomorrow before it locks and resets for the week, but you can only enter it one time. If you leave and try to return it will kick you out.

It also requires a minimum of ten in a party to enter, any less and the entry portal is like walking into a wall. A maximum of 25 is permitted, but it only spreads the drops out over more people. At least according to the warriors at the next table during breakfast. They've come here with their guild just to give it a try. The items that drop in here are supposed to have a much higher than usual chance of dropping at legendary and epic quality, as well as ability books.

Now, that sounds particularly good to the three of them, given their success at getting epic items on a regular day, so the decision is made to go check out the town square near the entrance where those without a big enough group gather.

The atmosphere in the square feels like a festival. Hawkers shouting the roles they need, 'Healer, Healer' sounding a bit like pigeons looking for feed.

Food carts, plus equipment, weapon and potion vendors have set up all around the perimeter, and the group all waves when they see Lickity selling her wares. Misha has been put in charge of finding them a group, as her role is definitely the most in demand, with many groups eyeing her hungrily as they walk through the square. It makes Cain and Mythryll feel a bit like they're her bodyguards.

They wave as they find Lickity hawking her wares and grab some peanut brittle for the walk. No sense being hungry in a festival, right?

Finally, one group does catch her eye, a Guild in matching color cloaks looking for a Healer plus 2. All of them are nearly level 60, which should make life much easier. They've got a very well geared warrior tank Misha thinks looks easy to heal and sensible, so she brings everyone over to say hello. They've made a sign "Healer Requested"

"Morning Miss." Their group leader smiles.

"Hi, I'm Misha, level 43 cleric, with [Greater Cure Poison] and [Remove Curse]. With me are a nature type Support mage and a versatile Summoner class." She greets him back, getting right to the point.

"That sounds acceptable, let's move somewhere quieter." He answers, moving to a sitting area away from the main gathering of adventurers.

"We've got the three you see here, plus another Tank, a Healer and two Mages." The other tank, our Guild Master is almost to level 60, they went to help him grind at the undead dungeon this morning and should be back within an hour once he levels up.

"You've got a Healer, but you're looking for a Healer?" Misha asks confused.

"Yeah, don't trust anyone who says one Healer is fine. Unless you've got Paladins or a Vampire Tank that's really geared, you need a second Healer just for the tanks or you risk losing damage members to keep them alive." their warrior tank says.

"That's also why control members matter. A bunch of the monsters in there cast area spells, so the more you can stop that, the easier it is on the healers." The party leader adds.

"What can you do for summons? Something like the Warlocks Imps, or different?" he asks turning to Cain.

A warlock can Summon two small imps that cast demon fire. If they focus on building them up they can do quite a lot of damage on their own, or so the group has heard, having never seen one in person.

"I can call on seven total at a time. Two Greater summons that can be Tanks, damage or minor control roles and 5 small summons that are damage dealers." Cain responds with a bit of pride.

"Tank type summons? Can you call them here, so we can see what you mean? It's a non attack ability area, you won't get in trouble."

Cain switches the form of his [Summon Greater Golem] back to tank and calls them out. The huge, shield bearing Golems are attracting attention and impressed whistles from the groups currently looking for members and passersby. He removes them after the group has had a moment to examine them.

"If they're as tough as they look, that is quite the skill. Replaceable tanks would make any Healer happy in a tight spot." Their mage nods, impressed.

The group leader was right, the rest of the guild is back within the hour, but there's only three of them and they don't look happy.

"What happened boss? Where did Healbot go?" Poor guy named his character Healbot, not knowing it would be his name for life. All three take a moment to give a prayer of sympathy for the poorly named cleric.

"Farkin loser rage quit the guild, because of a stupid drop item. It's not even that valuable, but we agreed that legendary drops would go to the guild's base fund." he Guild Master tells him, clearly upset.

The two Mages behind him don't look mad at the Healer, they look mad at the Guild Master.

"You sold off a legendary necklace recipe that adds 20 percent healing in exchange for a cute outfit for your girlfriend." One points out.

"I said I'll pay it back into the guild fund, and I will. What's the big deal? You know what, forget this. I'm not in the mood. Let's go home."

He stomps away and everyone stares at him. He didn't even get to find out they'd filled the group, except for the Healer he chased off.

"Wow, that was exciting. I should have brought popcorn." Mythryll says softly and the leader of the recruitment party laughs.

"We'll likely be looking for a non guild group by this time next week the way things are going. That girl is bad news, bleeding him dry and he won't see sense." he sighs.

"Add me as a friend and we can catch each other next week." Cain tells him. "Without the guild leader preferably."

They all laugh and start to disperse. "Oh, if you wanted that recipe, your friend Lickity will have it. She's the best fashion vendor in town, so that will be where he sold it."

That's when Cain realized the group had deliberately set themselves so they could see the scantily clad Lickity's cart all day.. True Gentlemen of Culture.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 26 - 26

Now without a group, the party was left at a loss. Should they find another group to go with? None of them seemed as well balanced as the first one Misha picked, being either heavy on mages or warriors with little to no support. Almost all were looking for a Healer, which gave them a variety of options, just no good ones.

Instead they decided to look for Lickity first and see what she wanted for that necklace recipe. They found her flirting with customers while Stubbs worked hard at something in the back of the cart.

"Hey Lickity! We came to play!" Mythryll laughs when the Succubus notices them.

"Perfect timing. If you've got the materials I just bought a recipe for Stubbs that makes a legendary necklace." Lickity laughs.

"Funny thing that, we just met the guy who sold it to you. His party broke up, so we couldn't do the big dungeon with them." Cain sighs.

"I hear Cixelcid is going to take every decent Guild member along with him this week, they might have spaces, since our Guild is level 1 and capped at 20 members." Stubbs calls from the back.

"And hi guys! If you've got these 6 materials, I can make that necklace. No extra charge, friends and family discount."

They've got everything but a Moon stone, so Mythryll runs off to the shops to find one while Misha chats and Cain goes looking for Cixelcid.

"Cid, buddy old pal. Wait up a minute!" Cain calls out when he sees him.

"I'm not lending you any more money until you return the blow up doll!" Cixelcid yells back, causing laughter in the crowd.

"I heard from a little bird you might have a few spots for tonight's run. Our group fell through when the Tank sold a Healer jewelry plan to Lickity to buy clothes for his girlfriend." Cain explains when he gets close.

"Yeah, we've got 3 left for you guys. Fifteen of our own are going, plus 7 we find around town. With you lot it makes 25. The maximum for a run. Don't worry, everyone understands that the loot might be sparse with so many."

"It might not. We have been making out like bandits. If Lickity and Stubbs are in, having 5 copies of the increased drop rate passive active should more than make up the difference." Cain tells him, letting him in on their good fortune.

"They are. Hopefully it's worth it, we've never brought so many before." Cid shrugs.

When they get back to the stall, Mythryll has already returned and Stubbs has made the necklace, so Misha is bouncing around hugging everyone in excitement.

"Well I'm glad to see you too." Cixelcid greets her. "Since you're all in for the run, it's time to pack up the stall and get going."

The party is very well built. They've got Cixelcid plus a Paladin tank, 2 Rogues and a level 53 shaman, plus two more clerics already.

"Gravy run." The shaman says after a round of Introductions "We've got self healing tanks, lots of healers, control specialists and whatever the class called Puppet Master does."

"Multiple summons. I'll have either 2 additional tanks, control specialists or heavy DPS summons plus 5 smaller DPS gargoyles."

"Make them DPS, if you've got the option. But when did the little guys become gargoyles?" Cixelcid asks.

"In the Demon dungeon, they gained the form from an elite gargoyle pack. At level 40 I could make them wolves or pigs, but the pigs are ugly and the Wolves getting hurt bothers the others. Gargoyles are way better."

"That's quite the class." The shaman smiles.

"One of the hidden advanced classes." the second rogue agrees. "They're always good."

'They have no idea' Cain thinks to himself. With over 30 members, including summons, the increased experience is going to be insane. It's a shame this place is only open once a week.

Cixelcid is explaining the boss fights and likely problems they'll face, making sure everyone is ready to go. He loves being prepared, and with so many being people he hasn't worked with before, it's extra essential.

When he finishes, the Dwarven Paladin comes over to introduce himself. "Welcome, I'm Red Beard, the Guild master. I hate public speaking, so Cid does it for me. I prefer to organize crafting events and materials gathering. I've heard a lot about you guys though, he says you're a fun bunch to run with and good luck on the drop rates."

Mythryll laughs "You have no idea. I've seen multiple epic drops plus a legendary come from the same run with them."

"You've gotten multiple legendary items?" he asks curious.

"The robes they wear, plus the ring on the Healer, the corset the Mage wears, a few others I am wearing. Yeah, we've done pretty well." Cain smiles.

"Everyone ready? Good, let's go." Cixelcid calls.

Cain summons his Golems when they enter and the shaman gives him a happy pat on the back.

"It's a good day I tell you, a good day. Look at them, they're adorable!" she stares at the Lesser Golems. "If only there was a way I could keep one as a pet. You can call me Char, I know we will be friends if you pick pets so cute."

Misha laughs at the odd woman. Even taller than she herself is, and very slender, the armor she's wearing is an odd mix of tribal style hides and chain mail. The visual effect is confusing, but she seems to be an easy person to get along with, and she's one of the random group members picked up by Cixelcid for the day.

If she's any good, Misha decides she might try to add her to the party, bringing them to four members. Having a full party is a good thing in her opinion, it helps bring variety and utility to the tactics.

Just before the first pull, she creates a small totem about knee high and hangs it over her shoulder like a purse using a scrap of leather.

"They create on the ground you see, but there is nothing stopping me from picking it up and bringing it along, so I do." The shaman giggles as everyone realizes the healing totem is active.

See, Misha thinks.. That's the sort of creativity every group needs.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 27 - 27

The dungeon is full of Ice Giants. Make that Ice Giants and Giant White Wolves. According to the experienced adventurers it changes every week when it opens, so you never know what it is until someone returns.

The bosses are always the same though. Ice Giant, Wendingo, Demon and Dragon. What changes is which bosses followers fill the dungeon.

Cixelcid and Red Beard each pull a Giant to the side and the damage dealers start going at it. Poison Arrow proves very effective in this dungeon. Even if it's reduced, it's still a lot. Looking around, the only other poison he sees is Stubbs, possibly the other rogue too, but it didn't look like it. Poison isn't one of their class abilities, it's a skill Stubbs got from a book.

The two giants are almost down when a patrol of wolves stumbles upon them. Cain turns the Golems at them, grabbing their attention and slowing them down. One the first of the giants drops, Cixelcid moves to tank the wolves, freeing up the Greater Golems to go all out on damage.

"They take way less damage than I expected" One of the clerics says.

"Maybe it's the healing totem making it feel like they're taking less? But it didn't seem to be much different than what the tanks take." the other cleric wonders.

The second Giant falls and Red Beard moves to help with the wolves. Cixelcid is no longer trying to actively grab them all, and two fall back on the Golems.

"Don't worry about it, they pull monsters very well and don't take too much damage, just let them be." Cain suggests and Cixelcid lets them fight it out with the wolves.

Alternating targets and using multi shot with Poisoned Arrow proves to be the best tactic. It gets poison attacks up everywhere and the targets drop more evenly, so area attacks from their other damage dealers aren't wasted.

The tanks said they'd call when a target needed to die first and everyone is trusting their judgement. Cain is going through much more mana than usual, thanks to the multi shot, but the way monsters are dying, so is everyone. They take a quick break after the wolves to get a bit of mana back before moving on, grabbing a pack of three and letting the Greater Golems take the third.

The melee attackers are fighting from behind them, and Cain is worried that they'll simply turn around and squish someone, but they seem quite intent on killing the targets in front of them. Red Beard has used his Designated Aggressor skill on the 4 of them, the tanks and Golems, to increase their chance of being targeted.

[Cain Has Received Epic Item]

[Ice Giant Ring] has dropped

It's not a ring at all, but a bracelet that adds Cold damage to all attacks and creations attacks. Good stuff for him.

The notification is faded, as Cixelcid has set loot to private. It prevents jealousy from derailing the run before it finishes and lets players keep important items secret.

A few pulls later, they're at the first boss. The Ice Giant King. He throws ice spears, casts Blizzard, Stomps around and just basically makes a mess of any group formation.

For the Blizzard, which can't be interrupted, they all agree to gather at the shaman, so the clerics can cast area heals and everyone will be in totem range. Normally one tank stays out and just eats damage to keep the boss away from the group, but today the Golems will do that and Cain will just Summon them back if they die. He switches them to their shield bearer mode and starts the pull on Cixelcid's signal.

They charge and one immediately stomps, interrupting his first set of Ice spikes.

"They can interrupt? Have I ever told you how much I love you?" Red Beard jokes and the healers all laugh. The Paladin has an interrupt in the form of shield slam, but it only works once every minute. Not nearly often enough for a casting intensive boss like this.

The rotation is set. the Golems, then Red Beard then Cixelcid will interrupt casting, and hopefully get everything that can be interrupted. Mythryll forgets to mention that her Treant can too, but but it's fine, she will use it if they come up short.

They've just gotten settled into a rhythm when the Ice Giant King blinds everyone with a Blizzard and they run towards the sound of the Shaman's voice. The area heals are having no trouble keeping them all alive, and Misha's enhanced Heal over Time effects coupled with buffs from her gear are keeping the Greater Golems alive. Not in great shape, but in no immediate danger of dying.

The Blizzard clears and Cixelcid returns to taking control of the boss with a taunt while Cain casts a fresh set of Golems, his small ones having stayed at the boss and been destroyed by the Blizzard. They're back in action in seconds and a couple Poisoned Arrow Multi Shots get the debuff stacked back up on the boss.

He's down to half now, quicker than Cain expected, when a set of Ice Spikes resists being stopped, slipping through their interrupts and causes wide spread damage. Nobody is in danger of dying, but Cain thinks of all the groups that tried to do this with one Healer. What sort of torture must that be?

They've got three, creating area healing spells, for ranged and melee fighters, and it's just comfortable when coupled with the healing totem. The shaman is a Caster type, preferring to use Chained Lightning attacks to defeat enemies instead of going in to melee and enchanting her weapon. It's visually stunning, the flashing lights and all, and effective, leaving huge scorch marks on her targets.

Soon after, the boss drops just as he begins another Blizzard.

[Level Up]

"Good job everyone. Take a few minutes to catch your breath before we move on." Red Beard congratulates them.

"That experience is incredible! I leveled up already." Someone shouts and Cixelcid smiles at Cain.

[We're at what, 600 percent bonus?] he sends in friends chat.

[About that, yeah. There's a few extra summons along with mine] Cain sends back.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 28 - 28

The group makes its first true mistake on the second pull after the boss. A fireball launched at a dying wolf sails over its head and hits an Ice Giant, sending him and his three friends running their way.

Red Beard moves to intercept, casting a spell Misha identifies as Sanctified Ground, a spell she will get at level 50. It creates a glowing circle of golden light, damaging and trapping monsters that enter. Since they find that they can't go past, they all turn on the Dwarven Paladin as intended, pounding him with heavy blows as the healers struggle to keep up with all the extra incoming damage.

"Focus down the first pack, let Red Beard hold the second until we're done. The faster the better." Cixelcid calls to the group.

Trying to keep this many people organized in combat is no small feat, dozens of different attacks and spells rain forth every second in the concerted effort to clear the first group and rescue the likeable Dwarven Tank.

When there is only one wounded wolf left Cain tells it to the group "Switch targets. I'll finish this with the Golems, you rescue Red Beard." The Dwarf is looking pretty ragged from the exertion of holding the group for that long, stepping back to catch a breather and take a drink as soon as Cixelcid arrives.

Various abilities have kept them from turning on the group, but they're highly resistant to stuns, so the Tank has had to suffer the full force of their beating since they arrived.

The last wolf soon drops under the efforts of poison and Golems, leaving Cain free to send his followers to help with the giants. Red Beard is back in the fight and things are back on track after the rocky start to the pull.

The giants are slowly brought down, as the group burned through much of their mana rushing to kill the wolves, using more damaging but more mana intensive spells and abilities.

"Well, as fun as that was, let's not do it again." Cixelcid says sternly looking at a shame faced young mage. "Take 10, eat, rest, whatever you need while everyone's mana recovers."

Char, the Shaman, has one of the Lesser Golems cuddled like a huge kitten in her lap, stroking its head while she chats with Mythryll. The two have become good friends quite quickly, and Cain suspects their party should have booked a bigger room. It's fine though, she's been in town a while, the party can just gather in the mornings like the

pickup groups with random members do, should she decide to group with them regularly.

Cain notices she's got two totems right now. The healing totem over her shoulder as always, and a glowing blue one in front of her that disappears every 30 seconds.

Char notices his interested look and smiles "Mana Regeneration Totem. As you can see, they don't last long, but with everyone out, it's best we don't waste fifteen minutes waiting for them to recover."

The rest of the pulls through to the second boss Wendingo are routine, and now they're ready to face the huge mixture of skeleton and beast. He's got an enrage effect, he gets stronger every 5 seconds. You have to destroy him before he kills the tanks. Simple enough in theory, but they've discovered that the difficulty of the huge dungeon scales up with additional members, so it's going to be a hard battle.

Char promises to keep mana totems up, and one of the Rangers has a short, once daily full group damage buff he will use once the fight gets going.

Cain switches his Greater Golems from tanks to their never seen Lich Lord form and everyone gasps, startled.

"A class specific recipe from the undead dungeon. You know that debilitating curse area attack they cast? Well the Golems can use it, as well as ranged magical damage. I'm hoping that it might offset some of the enrage effect and give the healers a chance to breathe."

The boss has an aura effect that slowly damages everyone in the room, and its attacks curse the Tanks. Regular curse removal and area heals are therefore essential to the fight, as well as the ability to kill the thing before the enrage kills everyone.

After psyching themselves up, they're ready to go. Cixelcid roars a taunt and charges, turning the huge boss to face away from the group. The black circles of the Lich Lord's curse soon follow, given a golden outer ring by the Paladin's [Sanctified Ground] and the area healing spells.

It seems to be working, the effects of the curse keeping the power creep to a minimum. Cain is pouring Poisoned Multi Shots one after another into the boss, whose health is visibly fading. Just as one curse fades, Cain orders the other one cast, worried that a lapse will allow the curse stacks to reset and the enrage to hit full force.

The Lich Lord forms do cast black energy arcs that look like the base form of the Sorceress attacks that Lickity uses, but they look smaller and weaker, despite the level advantage. They're certainly not a top damage dealer like the Demon form.

[Level Up]

Wendingo dies with an eerie howl and the group celebrates, clapping Cain on the back and applauding his ability to stop the enrage.

Many good things seem to have dropped, everyone is in a better mood. Or maybe it is the level up most of them just got. Cain decides it will be more fun to check his inventory at the end of the run, so he leaves it unchecked for now and instead goes over his status screen.

[Name] Cain

[Level] 45

[Class] Puppet Master

[Race] Human

[Skills]

[Summon Lesser Golem] lv4

[Summon Greater Golem] lv2

[Poison Arrow] lv4

[Light Foot] lv4

[Reinforce Construct] Passive

[Stats] +15

[STR] 90

[DEX] 45

[CON] 70

[INT] 30

[HP] 280

[MP] 150

"Level Up again? Is this a thing we're doing now, just leveling up every boss?" Char asks, doing a happy dance.

"I hope so, I just got Level 40.." Mythryll cheers back, dancing with her.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 29 - 29

"Does this dungeon really have to be so long?" Mythryll asks as they reach the third boss, a huge, bloated demon with a collection of small demons around him.

"How else would we get a level every boss?" Char jokes, resting a friendly arm over the little Elf's shoulder.

They look to Cain very much like mother and daughter, relaxing like that, despite their dramatically different appearances. Char just has that neighborhood mom sort of vibe to her, a young version of that friendly lady that makes sure everyone's kids are doing alright when she sees them and always has the best Halloween treats.

"Listen up everyone. This demon is tricky, he poisons the area around him at regular intervals, so we need to know who has [Cure Poison] " All the healers plus Char put up their hands.

"Do you have it as the spell or the totem?" Cixelcid asks Char.

"The totem. I've focused on getting them all, so I can be useful all the time."

Cain smiles at her reaction, she really is the neighborhood mom. Maybe that's exactly what she was before she ended up here? Mythryll was a student, though he didn't know how old, and Misha was a waitress for at least a few years, so the age of people who come here doesn't have to match their characters.

"What all totems do you have?" Cain asks while the leaders think up a strategy.

"Healing, mana, Cure Poison, hex and stone skin so far. I need to make level 50 to get any more." She answers, waiting on the battle plan.

"Hex is like that cripple debuff your Lich Golems cast, but it doesn't stack. Stone Skin increases armor for allies, but both cost a lot of mana. With the lightning attacks I don't have a lot to spare most of the time."

"Alright troops, here is the plan. All the ranged group around the Cure Poison totem. We will pull the boss so the melee at his back are in totem range, but face him away, so his

sweeping attacks don't hit everyone. That means we will need regular cures, but everyone else should be protected." Cixelcid instructs them.

"The golems are on miniature demon duty. They don't do much damage, but they can curse on hit. So it's best if the Golems get them, as they can be replaced. If the curse spreads to the others it will be bad, so try to pull them away from the main fight." Cain nods, that he can do, no problem.

"At half health, he will create a group of large insects, If the Golems can get them it would be best, if not we will take them with the boss."

This is a truly nasty boss. Cain wonders just how many groups have died here, trying to get it down, and how many were forced to give up.

It's decided that the Golems will start, as they don't have any abilities to easily pull the small demons away from the boss. In tank form, they easily pick everything up, moving to a side of the room while Red Beard Taunts the boss and drags it in a circle until it's perfectly positioned to his liking. The small demons are actually dying more easily than expected. They're likely to be down before the main boss reaches half. The first of them is down now.

[Cain Has Received An Ability Book]

[Book of Exploding Arrow] has dropped.

Perfect, that is exactly what he needed. An area attack to help him damage all the monsters his Golems were capable of gathering.

Cain learns it immediately and switches his attack method. Like Poison Arrow, it only costs him 10 mana, so he can use it a lot. It's also compatible with [Multi Shot] sending 3 Exploding Arrows at the same target. But that uses a full fifth of his mana, which takes him 6 seconds to regain, so it's a very slow attack method, as he needs to save mana in case the Golems start dying. Best to stick with single explosions.

The last few small demons die just before the boss reaches half health and Cain takes a second to survey the rest of the fight, having let himself get lost in the battle with the little demons. The [Cure Poison] totem is a life saver, up for 30 seconds at a time, and creating a big enough effect to get everyone except the tanks, without too much crowding.

The melee fighters definitely aren't making big swinging attacks though, it's all about the thrusts.

The healers are all around three quarters mana, and the mana totem is up, so no worries there. With the imbalance of mages, the damage side of things is looking good too.

And now the second wave of adds are up, pushing up through the floor on the far side of the room. Cain sends all his Golems over and they're quickly picked up before they can get near the rest of the group.

"Good job Cain. Keep them well away, they hit really hard and Poison, so they might kill the Tank Golems." Red Beard huffs as he chips away at the putrid flesh of the boss.

The healing crew is excellent today though. Not only do the golem tanks not die, nobody gets below half health the entire fight.

[Level Up]

"Look at this, I got a book." Char whispers.

[Book of Summon Insects] Rank C, usable by shaman.

"Congratulations, you got a Summon skill." Cain smiles, looking at his screen.

[New Form Learned: Lesser Golem Plague Demons]

[New Form Learned: Greater Golem Nox Bees]

"If you want it, find me something good to trade. You specialize in summons, I like cute things and kittens." That explains her love of the little winged lion looking gargoyles.

Cain looks over the drops he's gotten in the past month. One in particular catching his eye as being useful to Char.

"How about this?" Cain asks.

[Vest of the Guardian Spirit] Legendary chain vest. Adds 2 minutes to totem Summon times. Reduces totem cost by 50 percent.

"That is too good not to be cute. Let me see." It is a short, double skull bone bikini chest plate with a natural brown leather vest over the top, tied shut below the chest. Dangling chain mail over the shoulders and down the back adds some appearance of armor and hanging white fur pelts adorn the bottom when she wears it. It fits in great with her chain over leather, fur trimmed skirt.

"This is good. Not so much cute, but very good. I like it, you've got a deal." Char trades over the book and Cain quickly learns it, finding that he can Summon either Two [Giant Beetles] or ten [Poison Wasps]. They last until they die, but even the giant beetles have less health than his lesser Golems.

Squishy little Poison Wasps it is.

Nobody seems happy to see them though, except Cixelcid, and he's probably thinking of the experience buff. After level 50 he's higher level than all the bosses now, despite their strength, so his experience gain has slowed. Ten more summons will fix that.

"Hey Char, I've got a cloak you might like." Cain says, noticing she's not wearing one. He produces a Yeti Fur Cloak and she laughs, dragging it over her shoulders where it becomes an actual miniaturized Yeti Fur, sized to fit her, not entirely white, but a mix of white and brown, like a rabbit in the spring. The top forms a hood, the legs removed and the cloak ending above her knees, but the arms draped over her shoulders and dangling down to below her chest, claws still attached.

"Haha! I've got a hat!" She cheers, raising and lowering her hood, and everyone laughs.

"I picked the Random Creation and got a regular Shaman, but the Spirit Folk race. They're a hidden fae race, with high dexterity, but a very tribal vibe to their outfits. Every other hat I've tried becomes a feather or string of beads.." Char explains to the curious group.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 30 - 30

Moving on to the fourth and final boss was a rapid affair. With nobody hitting them, the little Wasps do a huge amount of poison type damage. It is a flat amount, not a percentage of life per second like Poison Arrow, but with ten of them and the bonuses from Cain's gear, they can really bring things down.

The Dragon is their last target for the day. A huge, red scaled Lizard, the wind from its wings throws ranged members back towards the ring of fire surrounding the room and pushes melee to the floor where it stomps and claws at them.

So, everyone sets up as close to the middle as they dare, and tries to dodge the tail attacks and flame breath. The whole fight is a heal check, damage everywhere with random targets getting huge attacks.

"Aren't you glad you've got Legendary armor now?" Cain jokes with the Shaman.

"Good thing too. Last time I was here one of our mages got too close, trying to avoid the wings and was knocked down and squished in one shot."

Well that sounds gruesome and unpleasant.

As damage is top priority in this fight, Cain switches the Greater Golems back to their high damage demon forms before they enter.

The Dragon is a savage from the moment they enter. No intelligent talking magical being, just teeth, claws and fury. They barely have it in position when the first wing blast hits, nearly knocking Mythryll and two Gnomish mages into the flame pits.

Cain, who was nearby when the attack started, grabs Mythryll into his arms and runs her back to the group before setting her down, making Misha and Char laugh.

"You must be careful, or he will take more than one bride." Char laughs, nudging Misha as they return to position.

Misha sticks her tongue out at the Shaman but doesn't say anything. Instead, she returns to her heals, focusing on the one mage who fell partially into the flames.

The Golems seem to have done something to personally offend the beast, as every single stomp is aimed at one of the greater Golems. Cain summons the wounded constructs back in top form and the giant Lizard roars.

Then he notices that Mythryll, now in her demon form for extra damage and training both a Blizzard and Demonic Fire upon the Dragon at once, has become the primary target of the tail.

"It is the Demon Form. It's attacking anything demonic with priority." Cain shouts to the tanks, ordering his Greater Golems to the front and off to one side a little bit, hoping to distract the flame breath they know is coming.

Sure enough, it turns its giant scaly head and burns the Golems to ash, howling in victory, then rage as they immediately reappear.

"Good thinking Golem Man." Red Beard cheers. That flame breath is one of the hardest things to survive, as a good hit right afterwards can kill the tanks before the first heals come through.

The tail knocks most of the ranged members down right before the wings send everyone tumbling. Cain grabs Mythryll and Char grabs Misha, the extra weight keeping the four of them closer than the others to the center.

"Next wing attack, link arms with your neighbors and crouch down." Cixelcid calls. "It will keep you closer to the center."

All the lighter players find a buddy, shifting around to safer positions for the next attack. They're going all out on damage, but the Dragon is the final boss, not an easy monster to bring down by any means.

In fact, the only ones having an easy time of it are the Poisoned Wasps. They're right over the beasts back, and nothing is hitting them at all. They're just happily burrowing under scales and stinging away.

The next wing attack, things go wrong. One of the Rangers moved too close and gets knocked down instead of blown back. Cixelcid leaps to his rescue, saving his life, but leaving both severely injured. Only the ticks of the Heal over time effects save the Rangers life from the next stomps, leaving them both red lined before the Healers can stand back up.

Both chug a potion and regain a little health, but it's the renewed attacks of the Greater Golems, their innate resistance making them the first to their feet, that stops the barrage and secures their lives.

"That was entirely too close. Glad you're alive." Cixelcid winks at the flustered Ranger and gets back into position as a set of healing spells reach him.

The Dragon dies without further incident, their innovative tactics working very well and everyone eagerly awaits the notice as the boss drops.

[Level Up]

[Cain Has Received An Ability Book]

[Cixelcid Has Received An Ability Book]

[Mythryll Has Received An Aura Book]

[Misha Has Received A Legendary Item]

[Char Has Received A Spell Book]

Loot notifications fill everyone's screens, very few not getting an epic or better drop from the final boss. The effect is to create an absolutely silent room as everyone checks their notifications.

After a few minutes, Red Beard breaks the ice. "As agreed, drops are personal and private, so we will break up here, and everyone can check their loot for the day in the comfort of their own homes."

Cid and Lickity, plus Char decide to come visit the hotel, with its spacious suite and hot tub.

"So, how did we all do?" Cixelcid asks. "I'll start." He shows the group a Rank A Earthquake skill book plus two epic armor pieces before using the book.

"I got [Book of Lightning Armor]." Char smiles and uses her drop.

Lickity got a Legendary pair of boots and three epic cloth armor plans.

Misha got a legendary Bracelet that heals her when she heals someone else, a great compliment to her heal over time abilities.

"I got two epic pieces plus [Book of Thorns Aura] Rank A, binds on drop. Enemies take 5 percent of damage dealt to allies within 20 meters as reflected damage." Mythryll tells them.

Now that is impressive, mages don't get many party wide buffs, even from the books they can use. It's not really part of their class role.

"And last up, the man with the craziest of luck. Cain!" Cixelcid announces in a game show voice and everyone cheers and claps.

"As you all know, I traded for the [Summon Insects] skill. But I got an epic pair of boots and this humble book."

[Book of Summon Cloning] Rank S. Passive. Doubles the number of created summons when a summoning Ability or Spell is used.

"It's alright if I strangle you a little bit, right?" Misha asks, looking entirely too serious for his liking.

"Dude, really?" Cixelcid asks. "Weren't you broken enough before, you had to add another half dozen summons?"

"Seventeen." Misha says helpfully. "He's got those bugs now too."

"Can we tell Char about your other passive?" Cixelcid asks and Cain shrugs.

"Might as well, we're going to invite her to party with us full time anyhow." Mythryll says and Char gives her a big hug.

"This broken character here adds 20 percent to everyone's experience gained for every player and construct in his party. As a passive skill no less."

Char looks stunned, counting something on her fingers. "So the rapid leveling?" she stutters.

"Happens everywhere we go." Misha smiles "Want to join our party? I feel we should actually ask you instead of just assuming you're one of us now."

"Yes, 100 percent yes!"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.