

# Reincarnated With A Summoning System

## Chapter 181 - Side Story Daily Guild Life

"Well, that was more interesting than expected. Did you see how fast the look on their faces changed when they realized the two transfers that got teleported in were with the Darklight Host?" Cixelcid asks, laughing.

"It was like we had stolen their candy. They were all ready to mess with the new kids, but instead they got us." Lickity laughs.

"Good thing Misha mentioned that the class change can be put off, we might have missed it. Have you decided what you're going with, or will you put it off for a while?"

"Dark Enchantress is one of my options, it's close to Sorceress, but gets a bonus to making enchanted cloth and leather items or jewelry. I think that's how I want to do it. You know I prefer fashion design to fighting."

That she does. Cixelcid has just been pushing her so that they'd be able to graduate out of the Beginner Valley at the same time. Now that they've both gotten to level 100 they can go home to Sunnybrook and relax without worry about when they'll get their advanced class.

"You finish up your class change, I'll watch over you." Cid says, kissing her forehead and inhaling the sweet bit spicy scent of Succubus making Lickity blush. She's been doing a lot of that lately, accursed Succubus hormones.

Lickity opens the interface menu and looks over her choices of first advancement classes. They're almost all Sorceress based simple upgrades, but Dark Enchantress is a good one. More life skill based than most, but that's her preference, most of her leveling has come from Tailoring anyhow, and now she will get a big bonus to experience for creating and enchanting items.

Other than that, she gets a skill tree full of enchanting abilities and bonuses to Tailoring, plus a few new combat spells. Lickity specialized in the Sorceress basic attack and saved most of her points, so she should be able to get well into this class right away, which excites her enough that Cid has had to stop her from hyperventilating more than once.

There's extra armor, Stat bonuses, spell power, attack power. These enchantments are amazing, and they can be added to any piece of armor. It's a shame you can only put on one per item though, but once she gets to the very end of the skill tree she will get one that adds all Stats.

The reflection one looks pretty good too, sending ten percent back at the attacker. If you do every piece in a regular outfit that's 50 percent returned. Sure, it's reduced by both sets of defenses, but great for a tank like Cixelcid. He's been using their summons as healers and damage while he tanks, saying it makes him feel more involved in the fight.

Lickity finishes up her selections, getting fifty five out of a hundred points into Dark Enchantress including all the Tailoring and the life skill experience bonuses.

"All done." She calls, hugging Cid, her tail wrapping around his waist. She never did learn perfect control over her tail, it's always been touchy feely, but Cixelcid has never minded, because it's also very sensitive, so having it handy is a benefit from his point of view.

"Good job. I'll upgrade next. Blood Lord is a Vampire exclusive class option I Unlocked. More tanky and more self healing. With this I might even outdo Vala on the self healing." Cixelcid laughs before sitting down with Lickity in his arms to do his class change.

It's only a few minutes until he's finished and back to reality.

"That's me set. Are you sure you want to keep this all as a surprise to the others?" Cid asks, so close to her neck she can feel his warm breath on her skin, his hands shifting Lickity's mostly lace micro dress up to slide across the alabaster skin of her hips, which makes the Succubus wiggle happily.

"Yes, the doctor said it will be a few more weeks until we can tell the baby's gender, so I want to celebrate all the good news at once."

"If you say so, I trust you."

"Good boy. Now show me again why Vampires are known for their endurance."

Speaking of which, what species will the child of a Succubus and a Vampire be? Cixelcid wonders.

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At the same time in the Elven Forest.

"Are you sure this is the way to find good guild recruits?" Mythryll asks Elmira.

"Trust me. We will stop here, and then where the Spirit Folk transfer in. Since they're a non standard Race like Pixies, they've all rolled random or been born with classes, so we've got a good chance of finding advanced classes and bringing them into the family before they've been corrupted. It's a genius plan." The Pixie declares with absolute certainty.

"Look, there's some, let's go say hello." The Elf smiles at her enthusiastic companion.

It's a group of Pixie Transfers. Five in total, all under level ten. They're all in starting gear, and isolated deep in the forest. Mythryll didn't spot a dungeon, town or anything similar for the last three days, only low level monsters that wanted nothing to do with the two high level fighters, and a couple of rude solitary fae.

"Look, she's got good stuff. There's five of us, we can split it." One of the pixies tells his friends, not knowing that senses are increased with higher levels, so both of the newcomers can hear him.

Three of the others agree immediately, but one gets angry. "Just because there's four of you and you can bully me doesn't mean you can do it to everyone."

"Fine, be like that. But don't come looking for us when the Wasps attack you again." The boy says and Elmira shudders at the memory of the poisonous Wasps during her time in this forest.

"I hope the Elf squashes you like a bug." The girl yells, flying away crying.

Mythryll sends Elmira after her with a gesture and walks towards the others with what she hopes is a comforting smile. "Well hello little ones. Have you seen any good honey combs lately? We're here looking for them you see."

"Where did the other one go?" One Pixie says confused at the way Elmira disappeared. Mythryll can see they're all basic mage class, and in starter gear, nothing even closely resembling a threat to her.

"Never mind that, she likely got wise and ran away. You Elf, give us what you've got and we won't hurt you too badly." The head Pixie demands.

"You don't know much about the system do you? I'm level 99, you're level 8. Nothing you can do would seriously injure me." Mythryll says calmly.

"Level 99? Don't be ridiculous. Just give us the gear and you can go." The Pixie sneers, pointing a wand carved out of a yew twig at her.

Mythryll flicks him in the chest, a strike that takes half his health and makes him spit up blood.

"Flee!" One of the others calls and the four disappear into the woods.

"Elmira, are you back yet? Let's go see the Spirit Folk." Mythryll calls, annoyed, and the Pixie returns with the bullied girl flying along behind her, looking hopeful.

"She says you know a place with lots of sugar and blankets?" The tiny Warlock asks hopefully. Of course Elmira would offer up Mythryll's candy stash and not her own.

"Why yes, I certainly do.. Do you know what a Guild is?" She smiles back, beginning her screening process.

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

## Chapter 182 - 181

Cain considers calling for clones of Symbia, but the real one will be here soon, so he might as well wait for her. Call it support for small local business.

He needs to decide what to have created to protect the house though. Four guards with gear, maybe a menacing Aura type curse for unauthorized visitors? Psychological warfare is good. Then a Barrier type Trap? They're simple things, if you reach the edge of the curse, you are returned to a specific point and disoriented. Either trapping the unaware, or keeping them out. It's not too hard to get around, or resist, but Cain plans to save the really good ones for the Guild Castle.

Yes, a Barrier trap on the windows would be good, have it move them back into the street. Simple, Safe and effective. Outright killing trespassers is frowned upon. Unless your Guilds are at war, in which case everything is fair game.

There's shouting from next door already, they must have had a customer when the Demon dispelled their tricks. The two without a system won't be able to do anything about it, so they'll need someone with one to come rescue them.

"Every bit of this is junk. That's not what I saw a second ago, and not what you've labeled it. I've got half a mind to call the Earl's corruption investigator here right now." An irate voice shouts, and Cain can see everyone on the block come out to watch the show.

Carlos and Symbia are coming down the street, hand in hand, but stop to see what's going on.

Cain feels a spell taking effect, and everyone seems calm again, but he can't tell where it came from.

"It is just an illusion, sir. Someone is messing with our business. We're honest and trusted names here in Assah, I assure you." The fat man almost has the mark led back into the store when Cain feels the effects break again, thanks to the Record Keeper.

The sudden change caught everyone's attention, highlighting the fact that a calming spell had been used.

"Record Keeper, where did their spell come from, could you tell?" Cain asks.

"A Succubus type magic user in the basement. No higher than level 50."

"Oath Breaker, bring me that Succubus. Record Keeper, disenchant it and put it to sleep in a room upstairs, I'll deal with it later." Cain says, releasing one of the six Oath Breakers he's still merged with.

It's gone in a flash, then back with a tightly bound Incubus Illusionist. He looks rough, like has been starved, and there's a shock collar on his neck. Cain tears it open and lets it drop to the floor before signaling the Record Keeper to force the transfer to sleep. Can't have the collar waking him up, plus it's probably the signal to cast at least one of the spells.

The collar is lighting up constantly now, arcing electricity as it sits on the floor, while the angry voices outside get louder and louder. Some of their 'customers' had come to their defense, and the Record Keeper's spell broke the illusion on their items descriptions as well. Hopefully it didn't bother any of his friendlier neighbors, but if they were using disguises, they might not have been trustworthy to begin with.

"What's all that then?" Symbia asks, before stopping suddenly when she sees the demons.

"Don't worry about these two, they're just chilling. But it seems the neighbor is a con artist." Cain shrugs.

"Alright then. But I think the police are coming. Someone was running off to get the city guard when we got here." Symbia shrugs.

"I am thinking four guards with swords and armor for the property, and then a Barrier on the windows that sends anyone trying to enter them into the street. That plus an ominous Aura effect of some sort for uninvited visitors should be enough to get us started on the home security." Cain tells her.

"I can do all of that. I even brought a map to show me where I've stationed guards, because of the numbers per area restrictions."

"Well, this will mark the first location in your map then. Let's see what we can do to secure the place."

The uniforms they brought are a short sleeved, light green knee length tunic dress, with a silver chest plate on top and plate armored arms and legs underneath. A simple short sword with a single side blade in the elegant Elven fashion hangs from their hip and a

winged helmet with a full visor adorns their head, letting long blonde hair flow out the back. Dressed like this, you can't tell they're not real humans. None of the Doll skin is easily visible unless they open their helmet.

Those who know might realize they're the standard pattern Elven Female doll that Symbia makes, and all identical, but that seems unlikely, and wouldn't make a real difference anyhow. Using her new skill, they'll have her level, and be able to make basic decisions to accomplish the task they're set.

Symbia sends them outside to guard the grounds, two on the front porch, and two at the back, so they can see the whole property. It's not large, just a standard city lot, and only a few meters to the next shops, so a walk between buildings isn't really necessary. Once every two hours they will switch positions in pairs, one each front and back, to look like guard rotations but never leave the porch unguarded.

Then comes the property curses, one to give a sense of danger, that only applies to non Guild Members and only off the front walkway or when nobody is here. Then the barrier on the windows to prevent people from entering, should they sneak past the guards.

The house finally secure, Cain heads to the basement and sets up the travel Inscription, linking it to the Guild House in Montauk.

[Beach House is up and running. Common bunks with hammocks are upstairs, open area on the main floor we will eventually use for something.] Cain sends in Guild chat and gets a wave of cheers in response.

"Well now, if I had known you'd brighten up the scenery like this, I'd have helped clean the place up before you arrived." Ghazzul jokes when Cain comes out front to check on his new guards.

"You like them? They're made by Symbia, good 24 hour security, since we've got some sketchy neighbors." Cain says the last bit louder, to be heard from the jeweler's, where a group of city guards accompanied by a man in a suit have just entered. The angry crowd has grown, many in the neighborhood fell for their scam, and the Record Keeper's spell has a large area of effect.

The Demon is still enjoying the game too, when more people show up he dispels again, breaking multiple enchantments, including a number of beauty spells that locals have cast on themselves.

Through all the chaos of the angry mob, Cain spots a familiar Gnomish merchant with two children in tow. Going by relative sizes and faces, Cain thinks they might be in their early teen years, and they're definitely excited to be here.

[Char, we've got the transport circle to Montauk operational, and the Gnomes for training are almost here if you'd like to join us.]

[Give me 3 minutes, I'm just finishing up kids rooms here in Sunnybrook for them to stay in.]

"Welcome. Don't mind the noise, the shop next door was selling fake jewelry." Cain greets them and the children immediately look at the Record Keeper, who is now sitting cross legged on the floor, since standing properly is impossible for it.

"I've heard of these. Record Keepers are supposed to be able to do amazing things with magic." One of the girls says, waking towards it.

"What have I told you about hugging demons?" The older gnome snaps.

"But I'm a Warlock. A war lock. Why would I be afraid of Summoned demons?" The little girl responds with full snark.

"Besides, she's got me. We might be small, but Gnomish warriors are mighty." Her sister proudly backs up the fearless Warlock.

"Enough you. You're level fifteen, it's level one hundred and forty six. It could squish you by accident." The Gnomish woman shakes her head at heir antics, clearly they're like this all the time.

"Are these my two mighty new students?" Char asks, coming up from the basement.

"See, see, even the teacher realizes how amazing we are." The high pitched and squeaky voices of Gnomish children makes it nearly impossible for Cain to take them seriously, but Char is looking them over like she's impressed.

Their gear is simple stuff, green quality as you would expect of a student, just good enough to have high durability, while still being very affordable. Both are in matching black pants with a tan long sleeved blouse worn untucked that has a logo on the chest, likely their school uniforms. The Warrior has a chain mail tunic under hers and metal shin plates over her pant legs with metal gauntlets on.

"It seems your mom did a fine job getting you ready for your training. Now, we'll get you fully inducted as members when we get back to Sunnybrook, so say your goodbyes and make sure you didn't forget to put anything in your inventory."

The first ones who get a goodbye are the pair of demons, then Cain, who sneaks then each a Gold Coin with a wink, making them giggle at the excess of spending money, then finally a close to but not quite tearful farewell to their mother.

"Now be good and listen to your teachers. They'll get you all leveled up and ready to fight in no time." She says as they wave goodbye one final time, headed for the basement stairs that will take them to the training grounds in Sunnybrook and Graska.



Char has a whole educational plan built for them and the other new recruits they've taken in, visiting lower level towns to let them gain experience while she just watches, keeping them from becoming overconfident. She's not even planning on letting them use the Summons from the Guild Skill until they've proven they're competent with just their own class abilities.

All professional, like she's training her own personal Guard again in this life.

Which isn't a bad idea, if Cain's new dream of having the Guild be influential everywhere is to be a reality, they'll need regional directors, with their own guards and staff.

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

## Chapter 183 - 182

Thinking of Regional Directors reminds Cain that he totally forgot about his skill tree. He was intending to update it when they got back, but food and sleep were more important and it slipped his mind.

The first Skill he will be able to get in the second tree will be [Lieutenants]. He couldn't see the exact details until he had the points, but as hoped, it will help Misha not be the incredibly squishy party member.

[Lieutenant] Appoint or Summon two Lieutenants who gain access to the [Summon Lesser Golem] [Summon Greater Golem] and [Merge] skills. Lieutenants can be given instructions using [Command] from any distance.

[System Notice: Militant Lord skill path requires all [Stat] values to be 175 or higher.]

Well, that's not a problem, though if Cain had spent his first hundred or two hundred levels in a class which didn't get to assign stats, or one that only got 3 points per level he could be waiting a long time. So he opens his Stat listing and begins to assign the wealth of points he's gotten from the rapid level up in the last dungeon.

[Name] Cain

[Level] 146

[Class] Puppet Master



[Race] Human

[Stats]+260->60

[STR] 125->175

[DEX] 125->175

[CON] 125->175

[INT] 125->175

[HP] 1000->1400

[MP] 1250->1750

[Militant Lord Skill Path Locks Class Change until complete. Accept?] Y/N

Cain doesn't see any reason why not, after all, what are the chances of finding a class that will treat him better than this? Especially before level 200.

[Militant Puppet Lord Unlocked]

[Lieutenants] learned. Please select or Summon first Lieutenant.

The system brings up a list of his friends, Guild members and nearby people with System Interfaces for him to choose from. Cain quickly chooses Misha and waits for the notification of success.

[Lieutenant Appointed: Misha] can be revoked in 23:59.

[Lieutenants Remaining 3/4]

Cain is certain the skill only allowed 2, but did his Summon duplication ability grant him extras? This skill just went from great to awesome. If that's the case, no need to hold back.

[Lieutenant Appointed: Char] can be revoked in 23:59

[Lieutenants Remaining 2/4]

[Cannot appoint Cixelcid as Lieutenant. Appointment Exceeds Limit.]

Okay, so two actual transfers or four summons must be the limit. They'll be alright like this though. Char will be a great leader, and she's already taking charge of the new recruits.

That only took 20 of his 46 skill points though, so Cain looks over the rest of the skill tree. His Summoning Skills can be doubled for 10 points each. Well, 3 of them. Lesser, Greater and Supporter, which are the only ones a new Puppet Lord would have.

They can then be tripled for another 10 points each once all three have been upgraded once. That opens up 2 final skills in the tree, whose descriptions are still hidden.

So where Lord is individual power, General is overwhelming numbers. After the basic upgrade to damage and durability that comes before any skills are chosen, Cain doesn't see a single ability in this side of the tree that increases summons abilities or durability, unless they're the last two, but those most likely have to do with the puppets.

That means his counterpart who got the class through the quest, the city ruler, won't have Legendary Summons until level 380. That's a huge disadvantage to him, the difference between epic and Legendary is huge. But then, he won't even have epic Golems until level 360.

The obvious choice for the points he has are [Summon Greater Golem] and [Summon Supporter] to each be doubled. If Earl RhickJaymz finds out how many Dragons Cain could have now he would cry. 12 Supporter copies of Kone means 24 copies of Su. At this point he's basically starting his own Forest Dragon Clan.

Though doubled Wrath Bringers is no joke either. His previous 8 Greater Golems just became 16 with that skill. Then 48 with Lesser Demon Army. Summon Cloning and Lesser Demon Army were never intended to be possessed by the same person, Cain is almost absolutely certain. By the time Cain gets all his summons tripled he'll be able to singlehandedly take over a city his own level.

What would the average city defense force even be expected to do against hundreds of epic Dragons and Legendary Raid Bosses?

Cain is broken from his reverie by a scream from the crowd outside. He rushes outside, expecting a fight of some sort to have broken out, but it looks like the scream was more fangirl than terror.

The rest of the Darklight Host is coming, with Su and Laura in Dragon form playing tag in the sky above the street. Then Su pops something in her mouth and Laura roars in disappointment. Not a game of tag then, a struggle for the last chocolate muffin at breakfast.

They land in the front yard, shifting into their smaller alternate forms before they touch the ground due to lack of space and Laura flies over to inspect the guards.

"Did you hire mercenaries or are these puppets?" The Dragon in her Pixie like form asks.

"Neither actually. Those are the Guardian Dolls that Symbia can create with her new class skill. They're smarter than my Puppets are, and level 100ish strong." Cain explains.

"They're pretty good. Should keep the Beach House safe." She gives him two thumbs up in approval and Cain is certain he can see the guard smiling under her helmet.

"Did we miss Char? The Lieutenant appointments sent a Guild wide notice, but as usual you're ignoring the chat feed." Misha teases Cain.

"Sorry, I was checking out the rest of my skill tree. There aren't many options and they're all ten levels worth of points, but they're extremely powerful. This half of the skill tree is all about numbers. I'm sure it notified you about the ability to Summon Golems now and merge with them. Merging with one of the summons from your Epic option should make you much more durable and give you an ability from what you merged with. Then you'll still be able to call Lesser and Greater Golems."

"Yeah, we tested that out. I only get 6 Lesser and 8 Greater Golems. At lesser and Greater quality. I don't get all the bonuses you and Kone do. Total ripoff, but having my own personal dungeon crew isn't too bad, so I shouldn't complain. Char says thanks, and she'll be using them to train the new members."

See, Char does make a good leader. Cain never even thought of making them interactive training dummies.

"In a few more levels I'll double the Lesser Golems, so you'll get 12 of them, that should help. But I think Merge will be the ability that makes the most difference. Your INT will skyrocket, so you'll do a load of extra damage and healing when you're merged with an Epic Golem.

The idea definitely has an appeal, Cain can see it in her eyes. But she turns to Kone for advice first.

"The Lord of Decay is huge and ugly, but when you merge he grants increased healing and mana regeneration. It's a pretty sweet combo for us. But if you pick the Record Keeper you'll likely get better Holy Fire. You could do one of each and just rely on the rest of the summons to take care of things." Kone suggests.

"You can do that? Merge with more than one type of Demon?" Misha asks, startled.

"It doesn't have to be demons, but yes. You'll get a full benefit from the first one, but only three quarters from each if you merge with two through ten." Cain clarifies.

"I'll try one of each then. A bonus to everything I do sounds like a very good start. Plus, they're basically free power ups, I didn't do anything but get chosen as a Lieutenant."

She's got a point. No matter how she decides, she will be more powerful than she was last night.

"You can call them directly to the merged state if you like. That way you don't need to do it outside to give them room to appear." Cain says and Misha gets a look of intense concentration, then a huge smile. It must have worked.

"This is amazing. Do you two feel like this all the time? Just pure power. You should see these modified stats, I'm a freaking dungeon boss. Maybe not that Granite Golem, but tough." She gushes excitedly.

"They'll stay merged until you dismiss them, so no need to do anything about it after this, just enjoy your bonuses. I wonder what it will do to your [Boon] ability. That mostly gave a percent bonus to whatever random category it chose. And the creatures it created were based on you, so they might be the same, because of level, or they might be disgustingly good." Kone ponders.

Cain rarely notices the random buffs from Misha's healing, but some of them make a large difference to Kone and her spell casting.

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

## Chapter 184 - 183

"What is everyone planning for the day, now that the house is ready and the essentials have been taken care of?" Carlos asks, clearly looking for something more exciting than buying discount gear to fill his day.

"Me and Kone want to try the Stone Giant Dungeon without Cain. No offense, but you face roll stuff your own level and we want to try out our new skills. I got more holy flame abilities, including group heals based on holy flames damage, and Kone got improvements to her spell repertoire as well as healing and damage." Misha says, sticking her tongue out at Cain when she mentions his power level.

"I'll join the ladies then, I could use the exercise, and then we can invite a few more members here this afternoon to see the beach?" Carlos says it as a question, but there's no doubt they'll agree.

"Sounds good to me. You all be careful. I can send a Vala with you if you'd prefer, though you likely want to test out your own healing skills." They both nod that he is correct, they want to see the extent of their own jacked up and merged abilities.

With all the Summons both from Kone and now from Misha, they should be more than fine even just bringing one DPS class and no tank, especially when he's 50 levels above the regular Stone Giant Dungeon content.

"Do you want some puppets to mine the place for you?"

"Oh good idea. But we'll grab Symbia on our way. She can curse the instance to create them and then let it dispel when we leave." Carlos agrees. That works too, and leaves Cain entirely free.

'Let's play in the Desert. I have a Good Feeling about it.' The Oath Breaker whispers in his mind.

"Alright then, I'll be heading to the desert to go scout out our chosen castle location. Maybe I'll find something else that's good out there to pass the morning. I'll send a Guild message if I'm going to be late." Cain says and the group breaks up, the Companions joining him to head towards the south gate while the others head East to go get Symbia and harass the Giants.

The procession gathers attention the evite way there much to Cain's amusement. Vala and Cain are both quite tall, standing out from the crowd and her milky white wings trimmed with black and gold armor really attract attention. But it's the ever affectionate Nemu, who has adopted a half human form, more like the Catgirl species transfers can get, or more correctly the mostly see through black silk outfit she usually wears and the fact she's hanging off of the Onyx skinned Nila in her brightly colored pirate outfit that is garnering the most double takes and lingering glances.

It's a good thing the girls have gotten used to being merged when out in public. All this, but with twins would cause chaos in the street. It's just a hassle to move that many people in a group, especially when they get easily distracted and bored.

"So, how are we getting there?" Laura asks from her perch atop Vala's shoulder when they reach the city gates.

"I could call back Danni. He's likely the fastest flying mount we have."

"The Dark Phoenix is faster than any dragon. They skim between dimensions to travel, much like the Oath Breaker does to ambush." The usually quiet Nila points out, petting Nemu's fluffy tail as she speaks.

That solves it then. Cain calls forth his full compliment of sixteen Dark Phoenix at Epic Quality and admires the beauty of the ash black bird wreathed in light blue flame. It's a deadly idea to touch them on a regular day, but summons won't harm their Summoner or his party.

Unlike Danni, they're only big enough to carry one person each, not counting the diminutive form of Laura of course. So Cain steps to to the nearest mythical bird and sends a mental image of where they want to be and that they're in a hurry.

The dark Phoenix squawks in annoyance, so Cain pets the bird's head before mounting, the flames licking around his hand to warm his whole arm.

"It won't be that bad I swear." He laughs and the birds hum happily as headpats are distributed by the group. The true difference between summons complying and assisting happily is definitely headpats.

The sensation of flying on these birds is much like traveling with the Oath Breaker, a stomach turning lurch then a feeling of weightlessness in the void. Only this time it lasts nearly half an hour before they emerge, looking at the stone gazebo over the portal to the lost city of Muzz.

The winds have blown the area bare, the shifting sands of the desert revealing much of the area around the portal to the underground city. There are many more ruins here, all of the same black stone. But a set of four obelisks stand out as unnaturally placed. They're all in a row, evenly spaced but with the tops broken off, so they're wider than they are tall, keeping them stable over the centuries.

Cain wonders if these might have been surface portals to other cities, there's a large amount of debris in the ways that suggests buildings were demolished to place the obelisks, so there's a good chance they're hiding something impressive.

Cain calls out a pair of Mountain Giants at Legendary quality and orders them to move the first stone. He was right, it is hiding a gate, but not like any that they've ever seen.

"Anyone know what that is? I've never seen a portal like that before." Nila says, walking over to inspect. It's like a normal portal, in that it shows a second location at the other side, but the entire scene is dyed blood red.

"A red gate? That can't be good. But look at the ground here. The obelisks were dragged through to block the location after the area was in ruins, it even ground some of the rubble into the gaps between flagging stones." Vala points out.

Cain removes a pair of the Oath Breakers he's merged with to have them inspect it.

"Any clue what a red Portal is all about? Does it lead to a Demon Realm or something, like a bright red danger do not enter signal?"

"No, Demon Realm Portals are shadowy black, because of the lack of natural light. That looks like a regular city in the desert, but I've never seen the red before."

"Let's move the others and see if they give us any more clues." Nemu suggests, looking at the three untouched obelisks. In a few moments the giants have cleared them, but the questions remain.

All four show identical scenes of a desert village in the distance, dark stone against light sand but they're all tinted with different colors. White, Green, Blue and Red.

"Could they be special dungeons? You know, difficulty levels?" Nemu asks, throwing a stone at the white one.

"Yeah, like easy, normal, hard, and 'sweet baby Satan no' level difficulties?" Vala suggests.

"But how would they even get here? The place was ruined by the time the system was formed, and well before the first dungeon spells were cast, at least according to Lloran." Laura frowns as she tries to understand what these things are.

"Check the area for clues. Maybe there's something left that will tell us more. There might be something left behind by those who tried to enter, or the ones who buried the portals under Giant rocks." Cain says, walking around the portals, looking for clues in the debris. Most likely anything that was here was destroyed or carried away by the sands, but there's a chance.

"I found a skeleton, multiple broken bones, but it looks like he was stripped bare, not even a scrap of cloth remains." Nila says, adjusting her hat to keep the sun out of her eyes.

"There's writing on this stone here. Nila, can you read it?" Vala calls, holding up a flat Granite stone.

"It's damaged, but looks like it used to read public bath. If we dig in the sand there we should find the tubs, if they survived." So an original bit of rubble.

Nothing much is found in the next half hour, and they've expanded their search radius when the Mountain Giants actually find something. They come back, holding a bronze sign, and the writing is in the common language.

"Danger. Area unstable due to bombardment. Do not Enter." The giants don't speak common, but they Grunt and point to a number of other locations, where the group finds identical signs. The entire area must have been demolished during the great war a few hundred years ago, the one which created the dungeons. Which means these ruins were likely used as a military complex.

"Well, we've found a good clue. Next up, sacrificing a victim to the pursuit of knowledge. Oath Breaker Clones, please pick a portal and enter. Let us know what you find, and the base Oath Breaker you are cloned from can tell us if you die a horrible death upon



entry." Cain directs and the demons laugh, jumping through the Green and Blue portals in the middle of the lineup.

[They're not dead. In fact, they found things to kill.] Sounds in his mind.

[Are they different difficulties? Is one having a harder time?]

The response takes a while, like the Oath Breaker merged with him needs time to think. Or maybe he's just enjoying the spectacle of watching and feels no urgency.

[They're different species. Green holds Elves, Blue has Dwarves. They're all insane, but it's a dungeon for sure. The clones think they used the portals to hide and protect their camps, then got hit with a dungeon spell, time locking them. Because both have identical layouts, and the portal underground with its shelter is still standing in both, meaning both are what this exact location looked like at the time.]

So multiple armies took shelter here during the war and got trapped. The excess magic should have faded over the centuries, but they'll have to search the area for active spells if they're going to build a castle here.

[They're signaling an incoming attack and a quest notification that I can't accept came up.] The Oath Breaker says confused.

[Assist Elven Guard to survive the battle. Sent from the Royal Castle in Muzz.]

[Assist Dwarven Nomads to survive the attack. Sent from the Guard Armory in Muzz.]

The dungeons are a time locked moment when someone set quests for people on the surface. They clearly failed, because the only one in the city that could have done it was Lloran, and he said nobody ever completed them. So the groups to be rescued were doomed from the start, and are now trapped in a dungeon, reliving the last day of their lives, most likely driven insane by the spell.

Or they're just not happy to see a Demon during what they think is the middle of an inter species war.

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

## **Chapter 185 - 184 Finishing Old Quests**

"Should we give one of them a try? Worst case scenario, can you exit the dungeon, Oath Breaker?" Cain asks.

The one from the Dwarven quest dungeon exits successfully and unharmed. "Yes, it starts you well away from the group, and leaving is no problem. I don't know why the dungeons were blocked off. Perhaps they were still unstable then? Or there might be something strange about them. None of the other portals were visible inside the dungeon. Not even the one into the city."

"Here goes nothing then. Everyone, follow me into the dungeon. We'll go rescue the Elves, since that dungeon and quest is still active."

Cain heads into the Green Portal, hoping nothing disastrous happens, but finds himself near the entry to the city, the Elves off in the distance, digging into the sand to build defensive fortifications.

[Quest Accepted: 80/80 Elves surviving.]

The message comes the moment he enters, so Cain dismisses the Giants and summons a full compliment of Oath Breakers, keeping only one merged, and then the rest of his summons.

"Stay well clear of the Elves and let nothing get to them. The quest didn't specify what the attack is or where it's coming from." Cain instructs everyone, and they all head out into the desert, looking for the attack that must be coming.

The incoming force is surprisingly easy to spot, but Cain understands immediately why the Elves didn't run. What he's seeing, kicking up a sand storm in the distance, is an entire Human Army riding camels. The livery is unfamiliar, but the ones without helmets all look human, as do the scouts that the Oath Breakers caught. One scout fired off a green flare, alerting the army to the target before the Oath Breaker understood what was going on and informed Cain about the incoming attack quest in this dungeon, but the rest have been killed now.

"Everyone form up. We will circle behind that dune to the east and ambush the army when they get close. They're headed for the Elves, so they won't be expecting us now that their scouts are dead."

Keeping low to the sand, they all move to intercept, the Oath Breakers looking exceptionally creepy doubled over, moving rapidly on their 6 hands to avoid becoming a giant silhouette against the horizon. By contrast, the Lamia have it the easiest, simply slithering along parallel to the ground. The Snapping Turtle kin moved better than expected, their limbs partially withdrawing into their shells before launching themselves forward on their bellies like they're the shells in Mario Kart. Given their size and armored shell edges, they might be even more dangerous as a flying object.

Now in position, Cain inspects the incoming group. They're lower level than he expected, most showing as twenty or more levels beneath him, while the leaders are mostly close to or equal to his current level. During the war, and right after the system was formed, this must have been a truly fearsome force.

None of the creatures that Cain brought are truly in their element in the desert, though the Lamia do well in the sand. If only their scales even closely matched the sand, since hiding is important to this tactic until the vanguard of the army is a hundred meters away.

"Turtles, move in front of the army at a fast jog, like you're trying to cross their path and escape. If they don't engage, come back and attack the far flank. Wrath Bringers, you've got the front, stop them from advancing towards the Elves, while the rest of us attack from the close side. I'll need two Oath Breakers in the rear though, to stop them from organizing or retreating." Cain sets out the battle plan and the summons start moving.

The Snapping Turtle kin are still pretending to be giant Tortoises, moving on their bellies as the others watch in amusement. The army leaders call out a halt, fear evident in their voices at what they believe are Legendary Quality Beasts in an already dangerous desert.

The first of the Snapping Turtles have passed the army now and they turn to head up its side, getting into position while the others pass the front. This puts them out of sight behind a dip in the sand, and makes the army brave. Only a few are still left to cross when the leaders call the attack.

"Grab the last few. Our food stores are almost empty and they'll fill our soup pots for a week."

As instructed, the rest of the Turtles launch the attack when the first Arrows land, and Cain gets the Wrath Bringers in motion.

"It's an ambush, the demons were using the Beasts as bait." The army leaders call and Cain signals the Dragons to fly up and launch their breath attacks, covering the army in withering Forest Dragon Breath and a thin Ice Fog.

They're well disciplined though, and both spells and arrow fire quickly drive the Dragons up in the air and out of range. But the Oath Breakers teleport in to cause chaos in the ranks while the Lamia charge through the sand, trapping the army between angry Turtle kin and a wealth of demons.

Cain and the Companions are still waiting on the perfect chance. Once the Lamia are fully engaged it will be time for them to charge and start adding debuffs to the mix, both Pestilence and Nemu's bard techniques.

"Avoid the back third of the army, I'll be casting a water pool under them, turning the deep sand to quicksand." Nila whispers as it gets close to time.

"Now, get as close as you can before drawing attention. I don't want them to realize we're not all demons and Beastkin." Cain says, seeing the time to engage. He wishes he'd thought to put a hood up, but in his excitement to plan an ambush he totally neglected his own appearance as a factor. The helmet he has on looks like a bandana, hardly enough of a disguise. He might as well have stayed bare headed.

Nila laughs quietly at his statement, like the species of the attackers will be less suspicious than the six identical Beast Lords behind them.

The army has discovered that the Forest Dragons can and will heal the others, so they're focusing most of their inner ranks on anti air firepower, leaving them vulnerable to being ambushed by teleport attacks by the Oath Breakers.

At the beginning of the battle, Cain's force was outnumbered ten to one, but that is changing very, very fast. He never did change the Fire Elementals serving as his Sorcerers back to Plague Mages, and their presence is destroying all remaining morale in the human force. Their supplies are being burnt to a crisp and from the shouting, Cain believes they don't know how far the desert extends. They certainly don't realize that only a day or two north they would be at the ocean.

Sometimes just selecting last used when he casts Summoning spells has unexpected benefits.

Cain himself is into the army now, slicing his way through the front ranks with grace and speed they have no hope of matching. Every attack causes Pestilence, which has spread as far as he can see, and the area damage of his attacks is dropping huge swaths of fighters around every target he hits. The spear only causes a minor area damage effect, but being merged with an Oath Breaker sends full damage to a large area.

This means Cain is using Cloud Dancing to its maximum extent, just to reach new targets, and the Human Army is rapidly becoming isolated pockets of resistance trying to survive the ambush.

Cain sees the command group has rallied a group of Mages and Clerics to create a Barrier and cleanse an area of Pestilence, but Nila is closer. A mighty Tsunami races forward from the Wave Rider, crushing the hastily erected barrier and sweeping everyone in the area off their feet.

Those who ended up in the low lands are having the worst time of it, fighting knee deep in water with a wet sand bottom. Those washed away from the fight only found themselves even more isolated and being targeted by Legendary Snapping Turtle Kin. Not a great option, but at least they have a chance to run.

The Elves who were the actual target of the attack have now joined in, attacking the humans from a distance, not trusting fully that the Beastkin won't turn on them, and trusting the demons even less, even if they do seem to be on the same side right now.

"Nila, go let them know we're allies today. Hopefully they still trust Dark Elves enough to take your word for it. I don't want to fail this quest because some idiot attacked us and suffered area damage." Cain calls and the wave rider sprints off, calling something in elvish to the lead forces in the rescued group.

They're not attacking her, which is a good sign, and the incoming Arrows are all finding human targets.. Cain wonders if he should feel bad about that, picking another team in a species based war, but for today's Quest he's not going to worry too much about it.

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

## Chapter 186 - 185

[Quest Complete 80/80 Elves Rescued] quest resets at 00:00.

It's a Daily Quest? No wonder the ones trying to rescue their kin from the dungeons when they first formed gave up. Cain hasn't even heard of repeatable quests in this world.

[Quest Reward Calculating]

[Item Obtained: Royal Guard Cloak] hooded cloak with the insignia of the Royal Guard. Decreases chance of detection by 30 percent.

Not bad, for someone trying to blend into a crowd. Cain doesn't do it often, but the cloak might still come in very handy. In fact, he could have used it today.

The rescued Elves are waving a cheerful goodbye to him as he heads for the exit, and Cain briefly wonders what might happen if he brought some out. The Spider Princess Aramia they were awarded from a Quest left successfully, though to others who didn't do the Quest, the dungeon is unchanged. Most likely, they would reset at the end of the day like the Ogres attacking Sunnybrook did.

No harm in trying though.

"Tell them we know of a safer location, and see if they will follow us." Cain tells Nila, who repeats his message in Elvish.

The group thinks it over a while, then decides to come with him, following the Companions through the Exit before Cain leaves, closing the dungeon instance, having carefully counted that all 80 Elves left.

"If you go straight north for about 2 days on foot, you will reach the ocean from here." Cain informs them, relayed by Nila in Elvish. They don't speak any common, so maybe the concept of mixed species cities only began after the war, and wasn't something interrupted by the war.

They thank him profusely, then head out, wanting to get some distance in before it gets too dark. In the dungeon it was a new moon night, hard to navigate in even with their superior night sight.

Thinking of mixed species cities though, he should have someone deal with that Incubus he tied up in the beach house. A quick message to Arial informs the Dragons of the situation, and Cain decides to leave the rest to the officials.

"Hey, the dungeon changed." Laura points out, looking at the collection of portals.

She's right, the green one is no longer green, instead it looks like a regular dungeon portal.

"Let's do that again, see what happens." Vala suggests, and Cain thinks it over for a moment. He can't see any harm in it, it will just start a new instance anyhow.

They enter cautiously, unsure what to expect.

[Daily Quest: Rescue the Elves] 80/80 surviving.

Everything seems identical to the last time they were here, but the Quest reset early. Possibly because of the change in the dungeon?

"Head to the same locations again. The ambush worked well, but let me know if things have changed." Cain says.

He has kept only one Oath Breaker merged for now and the others all blink out before rapidly reappearing.

"It has changed. The Elves are no longer building a defensive positron, instead they're spread through the area, captured by humans. The army is no longer one long column, but has spread into groups to capture the Elves."

Well that's unexpected. Dungeons change between instances, but never before had Cain seen the general design change. It's like this is a different scenario entirely.

"Change of plans. Split into groups. Companion twins take a Kone Clone and an Oath Breaker with you and go rescue Elves. I'll take the extra with me and hunt any larger groups of forces." Cain decides, having everyone spread out with a large group of Snapping Turtle Kin plus their Bonded Forces and the Oath Breaker.

The Demon can safely grab the Elves, then teleport away a short distance to safety. The combined force should be enough to deal with whatever they find.

"Large group ahead boss." An Oath Breaker informs him, indicating a Lamia that is pointing in a specific direction.

"Excellent. Tell me if anything else is strange in here."

They're not exactly stealthy, but the army forces haven't even sent out scouts. Cain stops his group just behind a wind blown ridge line, shocked at their ineptitude.

"We've captured the Elven forces Milord. Give the soldiers three days to break them and they'll be perfect slaves for the market." A nasal voice gloats.

No wonder they're not on Guard they think they've already won. Cain signals his forces forward, activating Cloud Dancing to leap high into the air, impaling the Commander with his spear from the collarbone to the thigh and pinning him to the ground.

Spear temporarily stuck, Cain grabs another Scimitar from the Guild Bank, a random one that Dimnys created, and gets to work on the surrounding officers, who are all still in shock at the brutal death of their leader. The Oath Breaker uses his multiple arms to dismember the advisor in a bloody shower, breaking the remaining officers from their stupor and causing a round of horrified shrieks to sound through the camp.

But the summons are already on them, the Lamia sneaking close through the sand without being noticed, and the Wrath Bringers charging silently into sight. Cain thinks it might be fun to mess with the slave traders, but there's hardly time. They're falling much too quickly to plan anything, caught off guard when they thought there was nothing to be afraid of.

A horn sounds from a number of other locations and Cain can see the last of the officers have lost all hope, simply dropping their weapons and waiting to die.

"That horn signal, I know it. It's the signal for an attack by a Beast clan army. The final tone indicates company sized, and the horns came from four different directions." The Oath Breaker merged with Cain informs him.

So all the others have engaged then.

"Oath Breakers, grab as many Elves as you can and bring them back here. I've got the largest force still, so they should be safe with us. We'll see how many we can recover



before they start killing the hostages to prevent them from being taken." Though they might not kill them. Depending on the reputation of the Beasts they might leave them to suffer.

The Oath Breakers disappear on their new mission and Cain moves out to look for more groups to take down. It's not a hard task, many are already headed their way, not realizing the fight is over and their Commanders are dead.

"Forces, large circle formation, make ourselves as big of a target as we can. It will draw more enemies in and give us somewhere safe to put the hostages in the middle." Cain instructs his summons, causing the Wrath Bringers and the Snapping Turtles that are with him to spread out.

They're still not drawing enough attention though. Something bigger is needed, so Cain swaps the Wrath Bringers for Epic Granite Elementals. Standing nearly ten meters tall, there is absolutely zero chance that the forces of the human army can miss these things.

There might not be a many of them as the Wrath Bringers, since they're not demons that Cain can triple the numbers of, but with the new skill to double the base number, he's still got a very respectable 16 gigantic Granite Elementals, that seem to be taking zero damage from the soldiers attacking them.

This is way too good to keep to himself.

"Granite Elementals, find a group of humans to yourself and go stomp all over them."

They seem almost happy with the order, their sweeping fist attacks becoming stomping strides that shake the ground, like kids jumping in a mud puddle. The humans are distinctly less impressed than he is though, and are rallying a force to attack him.

"We've found the Beast Army Commander. Elite forces to me." Someone is shouting, and the humans are gathering into a cohesive force again.

Cain orders his troops forward, Turtles first and then Lamia, who can easily be mistaken for a number of snake type Beastkin species instead of demons. The rest surround him in a loose circle, making it look like he needs protection from enemy attack. The more obvious of a target he is, the better.

The Oath Breakers have taken his earlier command literally, and have brought a majority of the Elves to the location Cain's army was in earlier. For their part, the hostages look confused and terrified, as Cain forgot to mention untying them, so they're all still in chains, and attached to various posts and racks.

Nemu has almost finished with her group though, and is very close, so Cain instructs her to go protect them when she's finished, knowing the Felian has at least a bit more sympathy in her than the demons.

The assembled remains of the human forces have charged Cain's summons now, locking them into close combat, under the assumption that they've got the upper hand.

One strange thing Cain has noticed about this instance is that everything in the instance is the same level. Himself, his summons, every human, every Elf. The system has set the difficulty to match his group, as it does in some other scaling dungeons.

He's not sure how low or high it will scale, but he now knows that level 147 is a possibility, as he's leveled up again. The quest completion after the last instance gave a rather significant amount of experience.

The Granite Elementals have become a beacon to the forces of Cain's Companions, the troops moving in quickly, overwhelming and slaughtering the forces locked down by the nearly indestructible stone monsters. Then the Golems look for another group and the Companion led forces move to another Granite Elemental.

"All 80 Elves are here now Master." Cain hears Nemu in his head.

"Good, stay there and help them, keep them safe. Everyone else, wipe out the remaining targets."

It's a one sided slaughter, but that's the way Cain likes his dungeons.

[Quest Complete: Reward Processing]

[Bonus Experience Exceeds Maximum Due to Skill]

[Quest Reward Received]

[Book of Eternal Solace Denied] Puppet Master Exclusive. Return one target to life within ten minutes of their Death. Target becomes a loyal [Supporter] until released by the Puppet Master. Maximum 1 Active Target.

That's either awesome, or incredibly cruel. Entirely depending on how upset they are about becoming a Summoned Being bound to the one who killed them.

Though technically, Cain could use that to make a fallen friend into an extra Summon too, couldn't he? The description just says target.. Hopefully he doesn't have to find out.

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

## Chapter 187 - 186

Cain exits the dungeon, keeping all his summons active and inspects the desert around the portal to ensure nobody has come across the location while he was busy. Nothing but unmarked pale sand dunes as far as the eye can see, as if the whole world was sun bleached.

This honestly seems like the best castle location they could have hoped for. There are dungeon entrances, an underground city entrance, nobody to bother them, and an abundance of building materials, also known as sand and stone that the Elementals can turn into a castle.

The more he looks around, the more of the dark colored stone he finds, the ruins of the old civilization brought either from deep underground or somewhere far away. Cain and his summons haven't found anything like it in the area.

"Granite Elementals, call for as many Earth Elementals as you can." Cain directs his summons. These were only Greater Golems to begin with, much less formidable sorts and certainly not as strong as the boss Granite Elemental was, but upgraded by his skills they're Epic Quality.

Looking through his logs he finds that these Greater Golem versions of the Granite Elemental were the ones that accompanied the Diamond Elemental. Those ones were elite versions, but still recorded as Greater Golems.

They each Summon four lesser Earth Elementals, which is a good start to a construction force, so Cain starts drawing out a castle layout, based on the surroundings and what he knows of Castle warfare from strategy games and human history.

A Star fort, Eight Points with four larger arms at the cardinal directions seems like the best bet. Placed properly, the entrance to Muzz, the underground city, will be in the East Arm, while the portals will be in the South Arm, leaving a large area for a central keep, plus plenty of room for additional buildings and fields. Cain's idea for that is to have the Elementals and his Oath Breakers reconstruct the old buildings of the ancient settlement as much as possible, filling in only where necessary with closely matched Granite, keeping the weathered details and ancient layout, but contained within a secure fortress wall.

Being in the desert it needs to be self sufficient, which means large, which also means it's going to take some time. Time he already spent in the dungeon. He's definitely not making it back today.

"Alright Elementals, here's the plan. I want solid basalt walls in this pattern on this scale. See where the portals are?" They make a grinding noise Cain assumes it's an affirmative, so he continues.

"Make the walls five meters thick at the top, twenty meters tall, and expanded out at a fifteen degree angle on the inside wall with stairs at these locations. I want battlements that look like this, see the way they're angled? We will work on the interior of the castle afterwards." Cain gives the directions and the Granite Elementals start casting some sort of spell, creating an outline of the eight pointed Castle walls with the larger triangles at the ends, giving room for a defense force at the first point of impact by a charging army.

The ground is rumbling and the shining lights are solidifying into a low wall of nearly black basalt, slowly rising out of the sand. The Lesser Earth Elementals have added their magical might to the effort now, and the walls are rising a few centimeters a second.

Cain gives a short thanks that he drew the very best diagram he could, complete with staircases, because the Elementals are raising an entire castle wall in one piece.

If this is how higher level cities build and repair defenses, no wonder they're not worried about being overrun. A thousand seconds is Cain's estimate to have the walls raised with 16 Epic Granite Elementals and their assistants. A mere 17 minutes.

At this rate, he had better start drawing the inner fortress and any other additions, including the basic design of the underground labyrinth and the water cistern to keep everything fed.

"Oath Breaker, how deep can we go before there is interference with the underground city?" Cain asks.

"About a Kilometer before you get close to weakening the highest points of the roof. More on the south side, which is almost past the edge of the city cavern." The Demon answers helpfully.

That's a relief. Putting a seventy meter deep cistern thirty meters underground should be plenty far enough to keep surface events from damaging it. Then Cain draws an elaborate series of rooms comprising four different levels to link the surface to the cistern, all starting from the basement of the new central keep.

The walls are long since completed by the time he has his plan drawn and is ready to give building instructions. Ten meter ceilings, ten meters between floors, starting ten meters underground. Done this way, it should all be very solid, at least from what Cain knows of mining. Maybe he should call an actual miner first?

Cain dismisses one of the Kone Clones and calls for one of the Old Dwarves, the Earth Mages who have spent centuries in the mines.

"Is this safe and stable?" He asks, handing them the paper. The Dwarf makes a number of changes to it with a pencil in his pocket, then alters the design plans for the central keep before nodding in satisfaction at the wall design.

"Four out of ten. Not quite passable. But the walls look good. The rest should be safe to build now." The Dwarf says gruffly. Unlike the chatterbox of a Dark Elven Priestess, the rest of his Supporters rarely speak unless directly asked a question, despite being capable. They don't have all the personal memories of the one they're cloned from, mostly just skill related memories and some important details remain intact. The clones of Kone do share some of her personality though, they love cuddly things, often leaning against Nemu when they're not busy, or petting the clones of Su.

Cain passes the paper to the Elementals, who proceed to have some sort of conversation with the Earth Mage before getting started.

Cain can feel the ground shifting, and piles of rock are being pulled out of the ground as they go, creating a small mountain in the middle of the castle. It's far too much for the keep and buildings Cain had planned, so he will have to discard it somewhere. Randomly scattered through the sand doesn't sound bad. It might help guide the dunes formation, keeping them from piling up too high within arrow range of the castle walls.

That is again a job for the Earth Mage, who understands exactly what is needed, designing a series of obelisks and retaining walls at a four hundred meter distance from the castle that will partially block the wind and create a sheltered spot around the castle, with the worst of the sand storms passing over top of them once the dunes build up.

It would be nice to have some sort of castle sized barrier, but that's a bit beyond their means right now. At least, Cain doesn't know anyone who can do it.

The sun had gone down and come up again by the time the interior castle structures and basement city as the Old Dwarf called it, are done. The underground levels stretch almost the entire two hundred meters of the central castle yard, enough that they truly could be a city. They're somewhat set up like one. Cain designed clusters of small rooms around central areas that could work as apartments, as well as a system of water and sewage pipes, the latter leading over a Kilometer from the castle to a deep ravine. In time, the sand should filter everything and create an oasis out there.

For once, the details of some of the city building strategy games Cain had enjoyed in his past life actually came in useful.

Mostly the underground is for future development, Cain just wanted it to exist for now, a deserted maze leading to the treasure vaults he designed into the fourth and deepest underground floor.

In contrast to the black basalt walls and dark gray of the ancient buildings, Cain built the central keep out of solid white marble with a gray slate roof. A square building, with round towers at the corners and many narrow windows to allow ventilation but keep the building secure. The interior floors are mostly white and gold checkered pattern marble tiles, but assorted bedrooms got different colors, a lesson he learned from the design team in Graska.

The Guild Bank has a lot of leftover furniture items from renovations to their other properties, so Cain sets up a dining room and two bedrooms in the keep, before setting up a Throne they found during the Guild's most recent property acquisition in one of the main floor great halls. Because what is a castle without a throne room?

The sun has long since fallen and is nearly ready to come up again by the time Cain is done, so he sends an update to the Guild, letting them know he'll be here in the desert for an extra day, and asking how everyone else is doing.

Most of the answers are as expected, but Cixelcid, Mythryll, Elmira and Lickity have all gone off looking for new arrivals. Lickity and Cixelcid returned together to transfer village, where so many of them arrived. While Mythryll and Elmira went to the starting points in the Elven Forest.

Their grand plan is to bypass the usual guild logic of waiting to see who snaps from the stress or dies in their first few dungeons and poach promising potential Guild members as soon as they can.

It's an open secret that nearly half of new arrivals either mentally crack or die in the starter dungeon soon after arrival, so even the newest of low level groups usually wait and see for at least ten or fifteen levels until the reality of the transfers situation sets in. The numbers are even worse for arrivals showing up at random in the middle of the Elven Forest.

The Guild has enough levels and property now that they can have a hundred members, and once Cain has registered this castle he built that should increase even more. So the more new members they can gather, the better.

Which leads to another thought, the cities have training dummies at their academies that give experience. But where does one find such a thing?

[Does anyone know where to get training dummies? You know, the ones to have rookies gain experience on while they learn basic skills?] Cain asks in Guild Chat.

[They're imported from the west side of the continent. Do you want some? The ones that are available come in 3 different level groups, 1 to 10, 10 to 30 and 30 to 60.] Carlos sends back.

[Get us a bunch of each. It will give the new members somewhere to practice that isn't risking their lives.]

[I'm on it. I'll have a bunch in the Guild Bank this afternoon if you don't mind me using Guild Funds.]

[Use what you need. That's what they're for. We can't have the recruitment officers saying we're not doing anything to help them out here..] Cain laughs to himself as he sends the final response.

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

## Chapter 188 - 187

The first order of business is furniture. Cain isn't certain the system will recognize an empty castle as anything more than abandoned structure, so having a good section of it decorated before trying to register it as a Guild Castle is at the top of Cain's to do list.

[Dimnys, can you get me a bunch of furniture? Whatever you can get on short notice is fine.] Cain sends his request. They've got a furniture maker in Graska, so they're should be at least something available, and if not the Dwarves have a pretty good stock.

[Most of this order is spoken for, but we have about a dozen bedroom sets and some assorted couches and tables.] She sends back a few minutes later. They were fairly popular after getting the approval of the Dwarves in Montauk, so he shouldn't be too surprised.

[That will do. Pay for them out of the Guild fund. I'll grab them as soon as you put them in the Guild Bank then I should sleep.] It's not like he's never pulled a double all nighter before, but Cain wants to try out one of the other dungeons tonight, and that will need a clear mind.

Leaving a bunch of unexplored portals inside the castle is just a bad idea. They might have been blocked for a good reason after all.

With the transferred furniture, one floor of the keep is mostly decorated. A bit sparse and the kitchen is totally empty, but it's a start. Cain retires to the nearest bedroom for a quick nap, planning to see what the white portal has in store when he wakes up.

The Green one was Elves, the Blue one was Dwarves, which he had yet to clear. The White portal next to the Elven dungeon, which has now settled to a regular appearance instead of green, seems the least threatening, so Cain is going to do it next. He has two



theories, either the colors indicate the species trapped inside, or the difficulty of the dungeon. Green was Elves at his level. Green is also common level gear, so either could work.

If white is below his level one theory will be confirmed. If it's at his level and not Elves, the other should be right.

Cain heads to the window of the room he picked for the day and looks out over the newly built castle, seeing nothing that concerns him at the moment. The earth Elementals leveled and cleared the area exceptionally well, and the ring of posts seems to be doing its job, as he doesn't see much sand blown in to the new construction.

Soon they will have water available and be able to get plant life growing in the area to help secure the surface sand, but not today.

After a quick breakfast from the random foodstuffs kept in his inventory, Cain walks out into the courtyard, checking every room he passes through for signs he missed something important. Everything looks like it's in place, so he jogs over to the White portal and double checks his equipment. A few things have taken damage, or gotten worn from use, but it's all in serviceable shape, so Cain enters the portal and calls his summons.

That was his first mistake of the day.

"Die vile Demonic Horde." Comes a voice from above and a winged warrior in a toga descends upon his Lamia, spear thrusting forward in a vicious attack pattern. That cry has brought more reinforcements, and Cain quickly realizes he's brought a wealth of demons into a seraphim populated dungeon.

"Vala, head back outside for a bit. I'll call you when we're ready." Cain calls, recalling all the demons. He keeps 6 Oath Breakers merged with himself, one Summon Cloned and tripled, but replaces the other with a pair of Epic Diamond Elementals, upgraded to Legendary by his skills. The Wrath Bringers are changed for Greater Golem quality Granite Elementals, upgraded to epic and the Lamia are switched out for Dire Crows, a carnivorous flying beast they encountered in the Beastkin dungeon. The Plague Mages are again exchanged for Fire Elementals.

That gives Cain at least a few flying units other than the Dragons, as Fire Elementals care little about gravity, and it has also calmed down the attackers. They're still calling out tactics to deal with the intruders, but they're no longer in a frenzy because of the demons.

They're quite determined to destroy his summons though, much more than most dungeon residents are. Plus, they're tough, level 184. In fact, everything in here is. So not only is it a different species, they're tougher than the last dungeon too.

If it weren't for the fact that Cain's jewelery has all been chosen specifically for bonuses to construct damage, his summons might be in real trouble here. These winged warriors are incredibly skilled, blocking or avoiding three quarters of the attacks that come their way.

They're not high in defense though, and every attack that lands does significant damage, littering the ground with bodies in mere minutes.

A second wave of creatures has arrived, Golden armored soldiers with shining skin, like they were painted gold. Which, on closer inspection Cain suspects is actually true. They've got winged helmets on, but are otherwise looking like golden versions of the Roman Legions. They even form a phalanx, shields up in front with archers in the rear beginning to rain arrows on Cain's forces.

"Diamond Elementals, break the shield wall. Granite Elementals, get to the archers. Dragons and Drakes, assist the crows and Fire Elementals in dealing with the flying fighters." Cain calls out orders by type, keeping only his Companions and the Dread Spiders near him in the end, everyone else has been sent to the front lines.

"You've left yourself vulnerable." Comes a voice above him, from a six winged giant version of the first attackers they met. The female flying giant, the system simply calls Seraphim. Where the first group were Seraphim warriors and the ground troops are Holy Warriors.

"Not so defenseless." Cain responds, using Cloud Dancing to meet his opponent in the air after mentally directing the Companions to lead the summons. Laura has taken charge of the Dragons and Drakes, while Nila has joined the Kone Clones near the Phalanx, where they're assisting the Turtles in breaking the lines.

The Diamond Elementals crushed the human sized warriors without issue, but the lines quickly reformed behind them, leaving the Turtles a hard battle to join the Elementals. But still, it's the aerial fight that's the most savage, as those winged warriors are much better fighters.

There's no more time to survey the battle though, as the six winged Seraphim has lashed out with holy fire.

"I can smell the blessing of the Laughing God on you. We know they were last seen here when the system appeared, tell us where your Master is and we might spare your pathetic human life, in the name of the two righteous hosts."

Two righteous hosts? Does that mean they're not the only army that's here looking for the Laughing God? The other must be the Red Portal. Cain knew that thing was bad news.

Cain chuckles at the creature's mistake, parrying the attacks with minimal difficulty.

"The Laughing God has been missing for centuries and you're trapped in a dungeon spell. Don't threaten me, Seraphim."

"You think we're trapped? No, he is here somewhere, and we will find him." The creature responds, adding sword strikes to the bright light of the Holy Energy whip it has been using.

That whip is tricky, it doesn't follow the laws of physics, like it's a living thing, not a length of cord being swung.

The two exchange attacks for a while, Cain taking multiple light hits before landing a solid strike across the belly of the Seraphim. Golden blood flows from the wound and the creature is enraged, glowing with bright golden light and increasing the speed of its attacks.

That's more than Cain can handle, and the wounds start piling up to the point he can see his life globe start to drain before being refilled by the healing Aura and a long duration heal cast on him by a Su. The first actual healing he's needed in a while.

This thing is ridiculous. It's Legendary, and level 184, but even combined, a pair of Oath Breakers wouldn't be its match in combat.

[Legendary is a fairly wide category. This Seraphim is nearly beyond that.] The Oath Breakers Cain is merged with reply with a mental shrug.

[No kidding, there's six of you in here and we don't have the upper hand.] Cain sends them a snarky reply before he notices the golden light around the being flicker before disappearing.

The Elementals have taken the center of the Phalanx, and killed whatever was casting the buff. Apparently it wasn't an innate ability of this being, which is a bit of a relief. If it had been able to overcome all that Cain threw at it alone he would have been very, very worried.

Without the enhancement spell, the holy army is on the back foot. The Dragons and Drakes have mostly controlled the skies, while the ground army is starting to look thin when Cain gets the opportunity to spare it a glance. The last hold out is their six winged Commander, who is slowly losing health as Cain gets more hits in on it, getting used to its fighting style even as the Seraphim loses strength with the loss of the buffs from its army.

The final strike doesn't leave a corpse, instead it fades into a blinding Golden light before vanishing, taking the remainder of the forces with it.

[Dungeon Complete]

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

## Chapter 189 - 188

[The Dungeon entrance changed to a regular one the moment the completion notification came through. I think you might have been the first person to actually clear the dungeon.] Vala sends a thought to Cain from her position outside.

[That's a possibility. Two hundred and some years ago when the system first formed, the mortal armies probably wouldn't have had anyone that could stand up to that being. The next group along might have blockaded the Exits for their own safety. Sorry for having you stay outside though. They were getting an enrage effect from the presence of demons and I didn't think about merging with you.] Cain sends back, pondering just what might have happened here.

Did the Laughing God trap the armies pursuing it and destabilize the area, which trapped a few more forces who came later? The last Seraphim seemed certain that the God was still in the area, and said Cain carried its blessing, likely in reference to the system interface.

On the bright side, Cain got some sweet new summons when he inspected his combat logs. The six winged thing was Legendary, so he can't Summon it yet, or possibly ever, depending on his future class options, but the others, the Seraphim Warriors can fly and are excellent fighters.

A description check shows that they are a Greater Golem option, where the ground based forces, made up of Holy Warriors, Priestesses and an Arch Priest, are all Lesser Golem options. Interestingly, the ground forces all show as having originally been Summoned troops. They must be from the Legendary Seraphim, because the Seraphim Warriors that he can use don't have any such ability.

"Looks like that one didn't have a quest, so why don't we move on to the scary dungeon, get the unknown out of the way?" Cain suggests, looking at his companions.

"Might as well. Hopefully they don't freak out about any of us being there. It really limits our forces. Without Vala and her group healing we had to be a lot more careful than usual." Nila says and Laura nods.

"We even had to dodge stuff to keep from overworking the healers." Laura adds.

Wait, did she just say she usually just face tanks everything and relies on the healing? Lazy Dragon.

"You should dodge more. It builds wing muscles which helps you grow huge and powerful." Cain suggests and Laura gets a thoughtful look, like she's considering if it's worth it.

"Alright, I'll try that."

The Red dungeon looks just as ominous as ever, showing the ruins of the spot they're standing in the same half crumbled state that the interior of the other dungeons have been. But coated in a red tint.

The Seraphim says there are two Righteous Hosts, so either this is more of the same, or it should be something they consider righteous. Neither option really says 'happy fun time' to Cain.

"I've got six Oath Breakers merged with me, so I'll enter first and then call for everyone once I see what's there." If what's in there enrages at what he sends in and destroys the Summon right away he'll never find out what it is. Plus, he's got a load of HP and damage reduction.

Filled with confidence, Cain steps through the portal and is immediately engulfed in flames, his HP globe dropping like it has a hole in the bottom.

Jumping and using Cloud Dancing to get out of the range of the damaging effect, Cain discovers that the fire is actually Dragon Breath. In fact there are Dragons everywhere. Both the ground and sky are packed with them to the point Cain is surprised they can fly. He scans around, recording as many as he possibly can, when he finally looks at their descriptions.

"Level 384 Divine Fire Dragon. Fuck that, I'm out."

With scaling, any dungeon mob more than 100 levels above you takes no damage. Cain couldn't hurt these if he wanted to. He collected a bunch of new Dragon forms though.

"So, how does it look?" Laura asks when Cain comes fleeing back through the portal.

"There's a level 384 Divine Fire Dragon at the entrance and he's not happy to see me. Or maybe he is, but not in the good way. Let's just put the big rock back over that one for now."

The Diamond Elementals oblige, placing a huge black chunk of obelisk over the portal for everyone's safety.

"Can't you go back and get more Dragon forms? I could be Legendary." Laura pouts.

"Maybe another day. I've been scorched enough today. Plus, I need new armor, only my accessories survived that encounter." Cain's gear is mostly beyond repair, destroyed and crumbling or burnt to ash.

He checks his inventory to see if he got anything from the Seraphim dungeon that might replace what he was using, finding it dropped better than expected amounts of gear, where the Stone Giant dungeon was mostly smithy materials.

From the various dungeons he's competed since fully emptying his inventory, Cain finds a toga, sandals, gauntlets and a Golden helmet that all give bonuses to construct damage, as good or better than what his old gear did. Hopefully he can equip pants with a toga, it looks like it might let a lot of sand in while exploring the desert.

On equip the toga becomes a white silk tunic shirt on Cain, which is a better outcome than expected, so he looks for new pants in his inventory, finding a pair from the Stone Giant dungeon that increase all resistance. It's not bonus damage, but it might be even better if things like ancient Dragons are going to be setting him on fire.

They equip as past the knee length leather cargo shorts. Combined with the tunic shirt and sandals, plus the helmet that equipped to look like a thin golden braided headband, Cain feels like a fashion impaired hippie tourist. But it's really good gear. Like, really good.

Oh, there's a Legendary Item drop in his inventory.

[Belt of the Heavenly Host] double the number of Heavenly Host units Summoned.

Now that's the sort of drop he needed. It's like that whole dungeon was tailor made for him. Except the fashion. Yes, everything but that. The belt equips over the tunic shirt as a loop made of gold coins, somewhat tacky, but it blends in with the almost bohemian look he's got going on.

There's lots of Turtles to tank, so Seraphim Warriors as his Greater Golems should be a nice damage increase. He also can't discount the fact that they can fly, because air superiority is never a bad thing.

Cain calls them to replace the Granite Elemental forces he had active, getting 32 winged warriors with spears and Short swords. These ones have Golden Chest plates over their toga, form fitted and emphasizing their presumed assets in the ancient Greek ornamental fashion.

Cain is busy admiring his new summons when he becomes aware he's being watched. The area is oddly quiet when Cain turns to see what's going on and Cain realizes everyone is frozen, as if time stopped. Even the grape Nemu was eating is stopped in mid air.

Two small six winged girls, one with white wings, one with black, are sitting between Cain and Vala, a puppy between them, smiling up at him with its tongue hanging out.

Cain smiles back at the happy puppy before addressing the situation at hand. "Good morning. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Not really, we were just betting on if you could beat the synthetic Seraphim we left in the Dungeon spell. I won a whole week with the puppy." The Black winged one informs him and Cain quickly records the two beings and their puppy.

"Synthetic?" Cain finally asks.

"You didn't expect a full grown Seraphim to just stay in a dungeon spell for centuries did you? Even we could walk out of that, much less a Seraphim of my parents power." The White winged girl laughs.

"Even the stronger Dragons in the other portal are just clones. The real ones left ages ago." Her black winged friend adds.

"We have to go. If anyone asks, you didn't see us and you don't know where we got the puppy." The White winged girl says before they vanish and time starts moving again.

That has to be the strangest interaction Cain has had since arriving here, so he checks the log to see what they were.

[Seraphim Child] Legendary Divine Being

[Fallen Seraphim Child] Legendary Demon

[Mittens] Female Werewolf Age 3 Class undetermined

You know what, it's better to just pretend that never happened.

"Now that we know what's in each of the portals, how about we try setting this up as a Guild Castle?" Cain suggests to his Companions who don't know anything unusual just happened, trying to move that strange group of kids out of his mind.

But where did they get the werewolf puppy from? Try as he might, it's just stuck in his thoughts.

In theory the process to set a Guild Castle is simple, go to the Guild Master section of his interface, select add a Guild Property and then place a Guild Token on the front door of a property the Guild owns. Signing and stamping a Guild Property purchase document does all these steps for you, so this is the first time Cain has done it manually.



Cain follows the steps as he understands them, going to the front gate and placing the token he got when he chose to add a Guild Property, against the gates of the castle.

[Castles Require Names: Enter Castle Name]

Oh no, Cain is terrible at naming things and he can't open chat until he finishes the registration process. Hopefully nobody gets too mad at his lack of creativity.

[Fort Darklight] registered as Guild Castle. Guild maximum members expanded by 100. Castle services now available in Guild Management.

That's cool, he can see all the potential homes and shops in the castle he designed, assign tenancy to them, collect taxes. A Guild Castle is basically a small town, and not just a Guild only facility.. He can even set a travel circle here to their house in Assah, or a Guild House Travel location from the keep to the other Guild Houses, as the keep is registered as the Guild Dwelling.

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

## Chapter 190 - 189

While Cain is very proud of his underground fortress, it's lacking two essential things. Lighting and details. Fortunately, he has a plan for both issues.

The first up is lights. Torches are smelly and smoky, unsuitable for such a large complex, instead he plans to go the same way as Muzz, with glowing roof moss. It's growing in the underside of many structures in the abandoned city, so Cain is just going to go gather some and strategically place it through the underground levels of the castle, then hope it grows as well as it does in the city.

"Oath Breaker, I'll need you to bring me into Muzz so I can gather some materials." Cain directs, releasing one from his Merger. The Legendary Demon simply sets a hand on his shoulder and in a flash they're in the city, the portal must have been in range of where he was standing.

There's a large statue of the Spider Goddess near the entry with moss growing underneath its belly. For some reason this stuff only grows upside down, it doesn't creep up or down the sides of anything is growing on. Peculiar stuff, but perfectly adapted to its purpose.

"Let me clean you up a bit Goddess." Cain chuckles, cleaning the moss off the bottom of the statue. It's careful work, but if he pulls slowly and evenly it comes away with roots attached, ready to be transplanted, assuming Cain can get it to stay where he puts it.

Once he's got all the moss removed, Cain takes out a cloth and dusts off the statue, leaving it looking pristine, as if it was never abandoned.

"Take me to the main room on the first underground floor of the castle. Let's see how this works before I gather more." Cain instructs, holding a large bag full of the glowing moss.

Oath Breaker picks him up this time, shifting with a couple lurching jumps until they find themselves in a pitch black cavern. Cain activates Cloud Dancing and steps up towards the roof, pulling the large mat of moss from the bag.

Holding it roughly flat, Cain lifts the moss to the roof, looking at the light it gives off. The room is pleasantly lit with a pale blue glow now, so Cain is going to get a few knives and daggers from his inventory to pin it to the roof until it can take root, but finds it is already stuck.

"Looks like your moss likes this place, Spider Goddess." Cain laughs, adding more pieces and smoothing the mat out to make a two meter patch, like a living chandelier. Once fully placed, it starts visibly expanding, stretching out to expand across the roof until the whole surface is covered and the area is lit just as well as the underground city.

"Well, that was unexpected. But if the moss likes it here, I'll gather more for the other floors." Cain looks around the room impressed.

On closer inspection, the walls are smooth, well cut but completely plain. The place is trait is really quite basic and boring.

[Carlos, want to go talk to your new girlfriend and her Sculptors Guild, see if they want a huge commission to carve decorations on the inside of a castle? I made this huge underground complex, but it's all smooth walls and no details.]

[She says they're be overjoyed. Is there anywhere for them to stay? They're a bit broke and can't afford a hotel. Wait, where did you build that thing anyhow?]

[In the middle of the desert. I knew a good spot. If they're fine with it, I'll come get them in a little while, once I link this castle to the other Guild Houses.]

The Guild House portals are an available function of the Guild Castle, so he can link the ones they already have active to the new one. It adds a destination to the existing ones, a hidden option when you walk through. If you just walk through you'll reach the default primary location, but if you focus on the castle you'll end up there.

The system calls it a secure location, as only those who know can access it, but it doesn't actually restrict who can pass through if they know the trick. So, Cain picks a secure room in the keep for the portal room, one that can be easily locked with a sturdy door. They can activate traps and such on it later.

[They say they can be ready whenever you are. They're not exactly in high demand.] Carlos sends in Guild chat and Cain can almost hear the laughter from his text. Symbia is one of the better earning members as Cain understood it, and she's in a very niche industry.

Hopefully he's not making a mistake picking them to carve the decorations. If they're not great he can politely pay them out and send them home after they do a portion of the first floor. He could also start them with the main room where he planted the moss. Nobody expects much of a common area.

Cain gets the portal up and running, then sends the official message.

[Fort Darklight is now accessible. Just think of going to the Castle when you walk through a Guild House portal and you should end up here.]

Seconds later Mythryll and Elmira arrive with a second Pixie, a Warlock named Cindy Lou and two Spirit Folk children.

"We were bringing the recruits to Char, but thought we'd stop here first. Let's see the place." Mythryll laughs, holding the kids hands.

What exactly were their recruiting criteria? Are they just building a daycare so Char can have infinite cuddles? But they're a Warlock, a Paladin and a Druid, so maybe they're actually choosing them to build dungeon teams? Char said she's taking them through the Beginner Dungeons in groups to get them trained up properly.

These ones are all under level 10 too, so they'll be training them from the very start. Maybe they wanted to get members who weren't as jaded and traumatized? Elmira still hides all the time. In fact, she already made herself comfortable in his shirt pocket.

"This isn't bad. Not as good as the leather coat though." The Pixie announces from the Dark Elven Suit shirt Cain is wearing, having changed out of his odd looking combat gear when he got up this morning.

Personally he thought the suit looked very good on him, but the secure pocket of the leather coat is more important than fashion to the Pixie.

Cain has an Incubus Leather Jacket that equips as a cloak, mostly fashion and not armored like the old one, so he equips it, making the Pixie squeal in glee. He's sure it looks strange, but at least she's happy.

"You have to try this Cindy. Pocket Pixie is the life." Elmira declares and the other Pixie laughs.

"Thanks, but I'm claustrophobic, I don't think I could just hang out in a pocket like that." The Warlock shakes her head, short silver hair bouncing. She's still in beginner clothes though, and so are the other two which seems odd to Cain.

"Is Char that particular about training gear, or have you just not had time to equip them?"

"No time yet. There should be blue quality gear in the Guild Bank that Char had Dimnys make for the new members to train in."

Warlock is easy, spell power and mana regeneration. The Druid gets extra healing and damage reduction, better for her if she needs or wants to use bear form for safety.

"Little Paladin, what do you want, healing on hit or extra damage?" Cain asks the Spirit Folk boy.

"Damage I think. I can heal a bit on hit anyway and I have a heal spell, so extra damage seems safer."

Wise kids. Though, they might not have been kids before arriving. The system seems to match random creation bodies to personality not real age, in Cain's opinion.

He finds a shield with extra damage reduction and a solid set of plate armor before searching for a blue quality weapon with extra damage. He finds that Dimnys has made a Kopesh with a bleed effect on it that should stack up well.

Equipped by the Spirit Folk Paladin, the armor looks like painted wood with a leaf cape, but Cain knows the stats will be the same as any other appearance.

"How is that? Everyone comfortable?" Cain asks as they marvel at the new gear.

"Why do I have all this damage reduction? My Bear form is already tough." The Druid asks.

"That's why, enhance your strengths. A Healer that isn't squishy makes things easier on the whole group. As I recall from Kone, who started out as a Druid, you can still heal while in bear form, it's just that the bear spec skills path limits your healing bonuses. So you can do both damage and healing if you want, like the Paladin.

Char joins them along with Dimnys, the werewolf Belle and Misaki the Elven Fire Mage.

It's quite the assortment, Misaki has dyed her hair bright red and chosen gold Robes as her casual wear, while Belle has clearly been shopping in the Demon Dungeon, with matching black leather pants and jacket.

The werewolf runs up and gives him a big hug, avoiding squashing Elmira who climbs into her hair and stands on her shoulder.

"Let's get the tour! Are there dungeons near here? What are they like? " The bubbly werewolf asks excitedly, contrasting with her more serious, biker chick fashion.

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

## Chapter 191 - 190

"There are. Three that are safe to enter. I've blocked the last. There's also a portal to a ruined city, but it's blocked for safety as well." Cain explains, mentally sending the Oath Breaker to place a large stone over this side of the portal to Muzz so none of the Guild members accidentally get harmed. No need to leave it as a trap when it's inside their castle.

"Sweet, I'm so very close to level 100 you see. All I need is one good dungeon." Belle smiles hopefully, looking at Cain.

"Well it's been a while since I was on an adventure with most of you, how about we head into the one I'm most familiar with after the tour? I haven't had the time to fully inspect one, and the third might be a bit difficult for some groups, there's a lot of flying creatures."

"Like Harpies? I got a lot of them in the Beastkin dungeon the other day, what a nightmare." Dimnys asks, her brown leather smithy apron scorched and her hair sweat matted from working in the heat of the forge all day.

"Seraphim Warriors actually. They're mostly close combatants, but there's a lot, and flying lets them attack from every angle." They almost overwhelmed even Cain's forces of Dragons and Drakes.

The rest of the Guild is starting to file in now, coming to see the new castle. There's a lot of new members for Cain to meet, and then promptly forget their names. But that's fine, he can always check with the interface, right? Char must have her hands full with so

many low level new people, but she looks happier than Cain has ever seen her, surrounded by young adventuresome transfers.

Within a few minutes, only three people are missing, Misaki's boyfriend the Elven Ranger Lysander, Cixelcid and Lickity. Cain is about to ask Misaki what he's up to when Belle discretely waves him off, signaling that it is a bad idea. They must have broken up. He's still a Guild Member though.

Cixelcid and Lickity come through together, glowing with happiness and the Oath Breakers merged with Cain begin to chuckle in his mind.

[What's so funny?]

[The Vampire has been practicing his Merger Technique too. With the little Succubus.]

Cain does his best not to laugh out loud at the voices in his head, but looks Lickity over closely. Yep, that's definitely a baby bump. Good going Cid.

"Now that we're all here, let me begin the tour. We're currently in the basement of the central keep, but if you follow me up the stairs, you'll see the main floor. It's the only one furnished so far, and I think we will need to call in Profesional sculptors to address the blandness." There's a happy noise at that and Cain sees that Symbia accompanied Carlos, Misha and Kone here through the portal.

"Exactly the person I wanted to talk to. How would your Guild feel about a long term contract to decorate all the new structures in the castle? It will take a LOT of time though, so they'd basically be living here."

Her face goes blank for a long while while she sends text messages to her friends.

"How would you feel about an artistic division of the Guild? Our moms are threatening to repossess the Guild House because we can't afford the property taxes between the five of us. If they do, we'd have to disband."

There's only 5 of them? Well, it's certainly not a hardship to Cain to take them in, especially if that means he doesn't have to pay full price for their work to get an entire castle and underground town renovated.

"I don't see a problem with that. You can go get them after the tour if you like. There's still going to be a lot of work for them to do though, even if they are Guild members. You'll understand why in a little while."

The Sculptor nods happily and Cain continues the tour. "There's four more floors like this one, then the top floor of the keep is just open area, with lots of window slots to use as a defensive position. Let's move outside. As you can see, the castle grounds are filled with these dark stone buildings. The Elementals took the liberty of reconstructing the old village when they removed the sand from the castle grounds, so we've got

houses, a park, a public bath, many shops and some stables, all missing furniture, but well built by the Schaub Empire thousands of years ago."

The Guild spreads out for a while, looking over the buildings, seeing the layout and checking the amenities. The lack of plant life is pretty evident right now, but Mythryll, who is a nature mage, is talking with the young Druids, so that might change soon.

"Big plans?" Cain asks the little group as they huddle together, all talking at once.

"Yep, we're going to rebuild the park. There's a type of grass that would do well here, then we can do a few trees that don't need much water and store what they get. It will add a lot of shade to the Castle grounds." Mythryll says happily.

"Do you need to go get them, or can they be placed with magic?" Cain asks hopefully.

"We can just create them here, but they'll need some water to survive and the ground is really dry." The little Spirit Folk Druid Cain recently equipped informs him seriously.

"The ruins had underground pipes, soaker pipes, with holes to let some water leak out, like an underground garden hose. They're attached to the new cistern, I just need to fill it and get the pumps running. They were designed to be manually operated, so I can run them with summons today if you want to create some life here."

Cain calls a full compliment of Greater Water Elementals, now epic summons, and instructs them to fill the cistern halfway and start pulling water through the city.

They simply sink into the sand, leaving a wet spot as they disappear, but soon afterwards Cain can hear running water from a nearby fountain.

"The bath water is filling, but it's all cold." Laura complains, but he can hear splashing, so she's definitely in it anyhow.

"Does it look like there's a bath attendant? I've got Elementals ordered to pressurize the system for now. It should get some water to the courtyard so the druids can place plants to keep the dust down, and give us running water in the keep. These buildings, other than the baths, never had it to begin with."

That might be because of the age, or it might be because of the level of magic in the ancient empire that they never needed it, with magical devices replacing mundane things like plumbing. Unfortunately, they're all long gone here on the surface. There might be some underground, but Cain is reluctant to loot the place.

The Guild members explore the courtyard for most of an hour while the druids work, until finally the park has a covering of the durable dune grass, along with date palm and a few Cypress trees. Desert thyme brushes decorate some buildings and the yard around the Keep.



The ground still looks dry, but to the nature sensitive mage and druids, it's perfect. Cain notices one large round building he had overlooked before, on cost inspection it is clearly a water tower, and it sounds like it's filling. That should keep things working even when he doesn't have Elementals running the underground pump.

Next up, they climb up on the walls, and Cain points out the ring of posts that should help keep the sand back from the walls by more than standard archer range, giving them some security. That about covers the aboveground sections, so Cain gathers everyone together again.

"Next up, we go back to the Keep to enter the underground portion. Symbia, this is where your friends will be spending a lot of time. Yes, the keep needs done, but the underground is much more than a basement."

The demons in Cain's mind laugh at the understatement, looking forward to her expression when she realizes that Cain built an entire city he wants decorated with artwork.

They file down the stairs carved into the light tan colored sandstone, topped with black Granite steps for durability, until they arrive at the first floor, glowing with the soft bioluminescent glow of the moss.

"It's pretty plain, just smooth stone everywhere. But that's where the artists come in. This floor and the one below it have hundreds of houses and shops carved along the walls of the central caverns. There's six main chambers like this in each of the first two floors, covering roughly one hundred acres per level, the extent of the castle walls.

The third one is wide open, except the support pillars, and the fourth floor is an intricate labyrinth, that also has an entrance to the underground cistern and water pumps."

Plain isn't the impression everyone else gets though. Empty, yes. But the moss covers the entire roof of each main cavern they pass through, much more than the single room Cain placed it in. It hasn't spread to the second floor yet, so Cain cuts a small section and brings it with him.

"Here you go. Another level for you to light up." He tells the moss, making the others laugh a little, but it quickly latches on to the roof and starts spreading.

"I think it's a magically engineered plant. It doesn't really spread anywhere but roof surfaces, it only grows upside down like that. But when it's introduced it expands rapidly, without need for water." Cain shrugs, not really understanding.

Seeing the first two floors underground is enough for everyone, this is more than enough of a bunker for their Guild, enough to create a small city under the castle, in addition to the one above ground.

"Looks like we've got a lot of work ahead of us. It will likely take months just to do a single floor of the underground." Symbia smiles happily.

"I'll also be wanting castle guards and staff and defensive spells added using your unique witchcraft. What good is a castle without an army to defend it right? Even a few dozen guards would go a long way to making the place look alive."

Cain can Summon clones of her to create the defenses, those will stay active, but the animated statues count as a type of construct and will deactivate if the clones are dismissed, so he can't just make an entire army to defend the place long term.

"I'll work out a distribution. Some for the bottom labyrinth, and some for general tasks, with half to serve as castle Guards." Symbia agrees, her dark eyes lighting up with excitement.

"This is going to be great."

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

## **Chapter 192 - 191 The Announcement**

"Since we're all gathered here right now, me and Cid have an important announcement for everyone." Lickity begins once Symbia calms down.

"First of all, we've both reached level 100, and I Unlocked the Dark Enchantress class. It allows me to enchant equipment without the incredibly rare and expensive materials needed for traditional enchantments. So those who have finished their training can feel free to come to me to get your gear enhanced." She informs the group, and a round of congratulations ensues.

"Secondly, we will both be retiring from active leveling for a while to help Char with the training and focus on my crafting skills. But the reason for that is the actual news. I'm pregnant. Three bouncy baby Demons out maybe Vampires. The doctor in town couldn't tell us exactly how they'll turn out, being a blend of Vampire and Succubus, but they're non identical triplets. A boy and two girls."

Oh, she's in for quite the time. Triplets, for her first pregnancy, and Lickity is quite small, so she will look and feel huge by the time they're ready.

"How long is a Succubus pregnancy? I need to go shopping. Where are we setting up the nursery?" Misha asks excitedly, taking Lickity's hands.

"It's variable. Anything from two weeks to three months. Something about Succubus physiology growing them at an optimal rate based on their attributes. The stronger they are going to be as demons the faster they will grow. So we don't know the due date yet. But we will build the nursery in Sunnybrook first, as Cid is going to help train the new warriors while the kids are little so he can be with me." The Succubus says, leaning back into the big Vampires arms.

"So, if they're growing based on strength, we should plan a baby shower for next week?" Char laughs and Lickity gets a contemplating sort of look.

"Likely. We found out three days ago and already I'm feeling big. I don't think we're going to have a maximum length term."

"I like your recruitment technique brother." Nathaniel, one of their Clerics, a slender human man with short brown hair in a tidy style, congratulates Cid.

"Yeah, with terms that short, you can just add a handful of members a year and Auntie Char will never run out of kids to train." One of the girls teases, who exactly it was Cain can't tell, but Cid is laughing so hard he's gasping for air.

"No, I don't think so. I might be a Succubus, but I'm not a brood mare. We've got three coming now, so one more time is enough. Five children maximum, and even that is a lot of toddlers for one family." Lickity insists.

She sounds like the triplets news was a big shock to her system. But her annoyance isn't what is catching Cain's attention, it's the longing look that Misha is giving Lickity's belly. Is he ready to be a family man though?

Things might have started out as party members with benefits, but they've moved way beyond that, even if they've not formally discussed it.

"That calls for a party. How about Graska? We've got the tavern there and the Dwarves are always up for a good celebration. Don't worry Lickity, we know a lot of good non alcoholic recipes." Triss, the bartender and Dwarven Warrior with great skill in brawling suggests.

"Gramps and Ragnar will be overjoyed." Cid laughs and Cain sends a Guild message.

[Attention everyone not currently at the Guild Castle. Big party in Graska tonight to celebrate Lickity's pregnancy. All are welcome, prepare for full Guild attendance.]

[We're on it.] Gramps sends back, reassuring Cain that there will be enough food and drink for a large party.

The Guild is up to over forty members now, many of whom are too young to drink, but they'll need a lot of food and cake. The old Dwarf knows what he's doing, he ran a pub for longer than Cain has lived in two lifetimes.

Heading outside into the courtyard for one last look around, admiring the now flourishing little oasis that is their castle compound, Cain calls out the Lamia and releases all but one of the Oath Breakers from his Merger, before calling and Cloning the rest with Lesser Demon Army, so there are eleven standing in front of him.

"You lot, along with the water Elementals, are on Guard duty. Don't let anyone mess with our castle while we're gone." He instructs and they nod in agreement.

"Sorry to everyone who was looking forward to a dungeon run, we can do that tomorrow afternoon, celebrations take priority." Cain says with a strict look, making Belle laugh, the chains on her biker leather outfit jingling.

"As long as we still get to do the dungeon eventually, it's all good. Who would have expected today's news, right? Though maybe I should have. Because, you know, Succubus." Belle teases and Lickity thumps her head.

By the time all the joking and teasing is done the pub in Graska has announced they're ready to receive the party. It's still early in the day, so the place isn't too busy, just a few regulars who would have shown up when they heard the party going on anyhow.

"That's quite the group you've got going on. Did you steal every fresh transfer and advanced class under level 20 in the valley?" Gramps jokes when he sees the wave of new recruits enter the pub.

"Of course not. Only the ones with a good attitude." Char jokes.

"We've got a couple of members getting close to Graska's level too, so the house here will start getting busy again before too long, filled up with members building strength in the Beastkin dungeon." The ones Char is talking about mostly already live here though, the first few recruits they took in from the Orphanage and Sunnybrook that have finished training and are getting close to level 50 now, but it shouldn't be too long until they're ready for the Beastkin dungeon.

Gramps snorts in amusement at her definition of close, since it usually takes a number of years at a regular weekly pace to go between level 50 and 70, but the whole Guild is powering through the levels, so she might not be wrong.

"I went to the shops in Assah first, so I could buy you a gift from the Guild." Triss begins, holding out a small box to Lickity.

"It's not much, and I used Guild Funds, so technically it's from us all, but congratulations on level 100." The bartender smiles as Lickity opens the gift.

[Book of Experience Enchantment] Armor Only. Enchantress, Dark Enchantress exclusive. Grants wearer 10 percent bonus experience on kill.

Cain checks the Guild fund log, finding that the A rank book cost them eight thousand Gold, but with the ability to enchant 5 pieces of gear per member, everyone can enjoy a little of the fast leveling experience.

Lickity has the Dwarf in a crushing hug, planting happy kisses all over her face while Cixelcid struggles not to laugh. Lickity wasn't joking about Succubus hormones, she's running every emotion at 110 percent all the time.

"You know she actually just brought you more work right?" Cid finally says, making Lickity stop and glare at Triss.

"He's right, now everyone will want me to cast this for them five times." The Succubus agrees.

"Cake as an apology?" The Dwarf counters, smoothly deflecting the criticism with all the grace of an experienced waitress. Those who noticed all share a smile, but the youngest members are more interested in finding out what kind of cake there is.

The pub is packed, to the point Dwarves are drinking in the streets outside, with the front doors wide open so everyone can hear Nemu sing and play various instruments while everyone dances, shaking the entire building in time with the beat.

It's looking like a long night when suddenly an Alert flashes across all the Guild Members vision.

[Montauk Guild House is under Attack]

"Dammit, everyone stay here and keep partying, I'll go see who is stupid enough to try attacking the house while we're out." Cain shouts, running for the portal.

Others make to follow him, but he waves them off. "I can take care of this alone, but if there's a bunch of us it will likely turn into a full blown war and a bloodbath."

That's good enough for the others, who retreat back to the party, a little more concerned and less lively than before, but they quickly calm down the lower level members, lying and telling them it is most likely just someone's mistake at the other end.

Cain is already annoyed when he reaches the portal, he was going to set up proper security in the next few days, using Symbia's magic, but some idiot just had to attack the house today.. So when he sees that the main room is trashed and full of drunk and celebrating transfers, sun bleached from the desert with a [Montauk Exiles] Guild Tag, he's not in the best mood for negotiations.

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

## **- Chapter 193 - 192**

### **Chapter 193 - 192**

"We did it boys, not even a lick of resistance, just like I told you. They all left the city, and by tomorrow morning, their Guild House will be ours and we'll rule Montauk with an Iron Fist. There's no way they'll return in time, they were headed to Assah to the beach. Even if they get the notification, we will hold the city before they get back." One of the home intruders tells his companions.

"Are you sure you brought enough members to hold the city?" Cain asks from the stairwell.

"Of course, we brought a full hundred, all first advancement." The braggart of a transfer, a human Shadow Assassin barely 160cm tall declares, before realizing that question wasn't from one of his men.

"How did you get here? You haven't been in the city for weeks." He snarls, pulling his daggers.

Cain calmly looks him over, realizing he is barely level 100, before selecting him with his interface and declaring war on the Montauk Exiles Guild that he belongs to. Most likely remnants of the old Guardians, but there might be mercenaries and sympathizers in the Guild too.

[Area Notification: Guild Master Cain of Darklight Host has declared war on the Montauk Exiles Guild. War will continue for 24 hours.]

The notification causes chaos in the city, the last time this happened they were very nearly all killed. Doors slam, window shutters are locked and the streets empty in seconds.

Cain calls for all 12 of his Supporters as Kone clones and gives the day's orders. "Call your full compliment of Turtles and Bonded Forces. Find and Kill every member of the Montauk Exiles, and someone find me the Mayor. If they're attacking me, he's likely in trouble."

Two dozen Dragons take to the air in pairs, half of them carrying a spirit folk girl, with each group surrounded by sixteen Drakes.

Nearly two hundred Legendary Snapping Turtle Kin fill the streets around the Guild House, fanning out in a search and destroy pattern.

Cain's Dread Spider Bodyguards appear at his side, along with a quartet of Fire Elementals. This is enough to make the invaders panic, even before the webs wrap them up from toes to neck.

"Tell me what's going on and this can be quick." Cain says with a smile, making the Oath Breaker in his mind give an evil laugh.

"The city will fall. You messed with the wrong people." The braggart laughs.

[There are transfers here from Something called a Port Rattle Trade Alliance, fighting alongside the Exiles.] One of the Kone Clones sends updated information to Cain.

[Make them all disappear. I'm not going to declare war on them, but I don't want to see one left in the city.] Cain responds and the Snapping Turtles get to work.

They must have been in town all day, making merchants offers they couldn't refuse, because from the sounds of smashed buildings, the summons are finding a lot of targets hiding indoors.

This is why Cain didn't want the others to accompany him. Politics are always messy, especially here. He didn't expect the Port Rattle members to come all this way, but since they did, he's not going to spare them from their stupidity.

As the sounds of fighting grower more distant, Cain returns his attention to his hostages. "Care to explain why you thought you could win this time?"

"You will lose. The trade alliance sent us thirty fighters, all over level two hundred. Even you, the much feared Guild Master Cain, aren't within fifty levels of that. Kill me if you want, but you won't live to see the morning if you do."

Cain wonders if this is payback for the idiots he ran out of Assah, and they just couldn't take revenge easily there with Earl RhickJaymz around. It seems like a plausible idea, though they might have been looking to expand here anyhow and were simply enticed by the prospect of taking over the city at the exit to the Beginner's Zone. They are a trade alliance after all, and that's an untapped market.

[Thanks for the Rescue. Your Dragons are here with some giant Turtles. They broke the enchantments locking me in my manor.] The mayor of Montauk sends Cain in friend chat.

[What about the council?]



[All with me. We were having a dinner party, discussing trade deals with the Port Rattle Trade Alliance when they turned on us.]

That's actually pretty smooth. Get everyone important together with a legitimate looking deal, and you can trap them all in one spot while you take over the city. Cain might have to remember that tactic. If he hadn't shown up, they would have taken the city without anyone getting hurt.

[Wait there, I'll be by in just a moment. Tell the Turtles to keep the leaders alive if they can.] Cain gives them just that instruction before turning to the Montauk Exiles members.

"I hate to cut our chat short, but I've got business to deal with. Elementals, try not to scorch the decor while you deal with them. Spiders, with me."

With that Cain leaps of the front door, equipping his finest black Dark Elven Suit with matching cap and shoes, before activating Cloud Dancing to speed to the Mayor's house, only a few short blocks away.

Five very battered transfers, all over level 200, with their hands behind their heads, are on the front lawn, surrounded by sixteen Turtles, with a Kone and a pair of Su twins in attendance. It looks like the Dragon accepted their surrender, as they're facing one of the two in an organized row.

"Greetings everyone. I am Cain, Guild Master of the Darklight Host, and the target of the terrorist forces you were unfortunate enough to have allied with tonight." Cain introduces himself with a graceful flourish.

"Giamatti, ambassador of the Port Rattle Trade Alliance. We've been looking forward to meeting you." One of the hostages says with dignity.

"Care to explain? Because I do get upset when people attack my Guild Houses. Especially after what those particular ones did to the residents of this fine city."

"It's just business, friend. A hostile takeover if you will. There is no group controlling trade in and out of the Beginner Valley here in the central continent, so we decided to make a play for it. Our informants didn't mention a thing about it being under protection, so imagine our shock when the Guild who disrupted our shop in Assah just happened to be here." The man says in a polite tone with a diplomatic smile.

"It was a good theory. Unfortunately, the area self regulates the flow of fake goods. The shopkeeper in Assah ran into the same problem." Cain responds in kind and the man laughs.

"Pair of idiots those ones were. They're supposed to mix them in, one for every ten real items they sell, but they saw nothing but gold coins and thought they'd never get caught."

"Yeah, they had imprisoned an Incubus with a calming ability and were using him to deceive visitors. The Earl will likely want to talk to your alliance about that the next time you're in town." Cain informs him and the man nods solemnly.

"So what's next?" He asks.

"You can take your men and leave if you like. I won't stop you. But the Montauk Exiles are forfeit. Call it mutually beneficial, an intercontinental Guild War sounds like a lot of trouble to me." Cain directs the Summons to hold off on the Trade Alliance members while he negotiates, an easy task as they haven't found any of the high level ones yet only smashing up a few shops that had agreed to join them.

The city has unfortunately taken heavy damage this time, the self titled Montauk Exiles think nothing of using the citizens that banished them as human shields, and the Summons don't care about property damage, only about avoiding seriously injuring the wrong people.

"Deal, I'll call off my men and inform home base that this city is claimed. If a tenth of your forces can capture the five of us like this, any actual battle would be a serious loss." Spoken like a true politician, a truce because the other option doesn't pass the cost benefit analysis.

"Deal. I'll instruct my forces not to kill Trade Alliance members unless they're attacked." Cain agrees and the group stands up, giving the Mayor a nod before jogging out of the compound and towards the north side of the city.

"How did they arrive? Through a portal?" Cain asks the shocked mayor.

"With a caravan on enchanted camels." The mayor says absently and Cain mentally imagines the map between here and Assah.

If they follow the usual trade route, the flattest and easiest route with multiple oasis, they'll return well clear of the castle. Even a straight line misses their new fortress. Both are good news for Cain. Uninvited visitors versus Oath Breakers would create a huge mess.

"Looks like everyone has got some renovations to do, and I've got a party to return to, so I'll see you again tomorrow, when I come by with a security specialist to get the house set up to avoid another incident like this." Cain says his goodbyes to the Mayor and asks all the summons to check in.

Seven possible members with the Montauk Exiles Guild tag remain unaccounted for, but the other ninety three have been found and dealt with. Annoying, but likely the best they'll manage.

"You lot, watch the house. But I think we're done here." Cain informs the group at the Mayor's house and dismisses the other summons.

He should still have plenty of time left for cake tonight.

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

## Chapter 194 - 193

Cain knocks lightly on Carlos's door the next day at lunch time, not wanting to startle him, but needing to borrow Symbia to increase the security at the Montauk Guild House.

That ability of hers is truly useful, making permanent security forces. The limitations on them might be strict, but seem irrelevant when you don't expect them to ever have to leave a set location.

The two come out a few minutes later, freshly showered and looking only mildly hungover.

"Glad you made it. We had a minor security issue in Montauk last night, so I was hoping you could set me up a security force there before we go back to the Castle. It's not as safe as the Beginner Valley, and without anyone there last night, some fools thought they could take advantage."

"So, how bad of shape is the city in?" Cixelcid asks, coming down the hallway.

"It shouldn't be too bad, but I didn't really check. I let the Snapping Turtles and Dragons deal with most of the chaos."

Cid smiles as Cain comes to the same realization he did. That the city is likely trashed.

"Yeah, I'll go talk to the Mayor and provide a repair fund."

Cain, Carlos and Symbia all head for Montauk, dismissing the guards when they arrive, much to the dismay of some shopkeepers who were using the Turtles for heavy labor.

"Sorry guys, I should have checked before I sent them away." Cain calls out the front door and the locals laugh. The summons are immensely strong, so having them do all of the morning's heavy lifting saved them a lot of back ache. Their shops were long since repaired from the minimal damage they suffered last night.

"Alright, what we need is a Guard Force for the house. Then add some basic protective hexes and we can call it good. Even a half dozen guards would have been enough to deal with the problem until the local police arrived under normal circumstances."

"So if six will do, use twelve?" Symbia asks happily.

"That's about right. Another dozen Elven Guard type security forces should secure the house well enough. Normally there are people here too, we just all gathered in one spot yesterday, so nobody was here to give us the heads up until the actual notification came through that they were trying to claim the Guild House."

"I have prepared all the necessary items. I thought we might want more of them, so I got a hundred matching uniforms and fifty sets of armor and weapons." Carlos laughs.

"Good thinking. Make it ten here then, and we can Station the other forty armed guards at the castle. How did your sojourn into the dungeon go, by the way? Get anything good while mining?"

"Mining was a bust. Ends up, Symbia can't place the guards in a temporary location like the dungeon instance, so we dug the few good things we found ourselves and skipped the rest." Carlos explains.

"The hex and curse spells worked great though. I was like a real dungeon team member." She says proudly, working to place spells all around the Guild House.

"These have a one year shelf life by the way. So you'll eventually need to redo every one of them, but for now, they're good. I'll create the Guards and we can go to Assah to meet the rest of my Guild. I think our parents want to meet you too, to make sure you're not some creep who is going to abduct us all."

Ah, meeting the parents. The final boss of Guild recruitment. Well, at least it is if you're collecting normal people who are born here.

It only takes a few minutes to create, equip and give directions to the Guards, who are all stationed inside the house for now, hopefully not to be needed anytime soon.

Cain also leaves behind five puppets with maid outfits and a set of instructions that should keep the house clean and tidy. With armed guards and maids, the essentials of a high society home from his last life are now in place. The basic skills ability that Arial found for him really made giving instructions to the Puppets easy. They understand cleaning and other basic tasks now, so he only had to tell them to make sure the house

was clean twice a day, in the morning and evening, and to follow any other instructions the Guild Members give them.

"All finished here. Should we go meet the parents?" Cain asks, giving Carlos a wink that makes him chuckle.

"You have no idea how nervous I am. I hope they'll all approve of the Guild change. Some of us were barely allowed out of the house, their parents aren't as forgiving as my grandma." Symbia says nervously.

"Fortunately, we're not the low level and vulnerable sorts that moms need to worry about being able to survive on their own." Carlos teases, breaking the tension.

"Plus, we've got respectable, good paying jobs for all of you. What parents wouldn't approve of that?"

The three head to the basement, using the transport circle to get to the beach house in Assah. Fortunately, everything appears to be in order. Cain left Puppet maids here the last time he visited and their orders seem to be working as intended. The guards are stationed front and back, looking just as pristine as when he left. The old Orc next door waves them down when they go outside, excited about something.

"My grandchildren say they're going to be in your house in Montauk tonight something about having captured a runaway Cleric. Do you suppose you could send me there?" He asks happily.

"They must mean Morgan's boyfriend Nathaniel. He's still a little low level to be leaving the valley, so take good care of him." Cain laughs.

"I'll activate the circle to send you to the house there and you can wait for them to arrive, surprise them if you want."

"Excellent idea. I'll have to grab them some gifts, give me a second." With that he disappeared into his shop before coming back out with a bag in his hand and a scroll. He placed the scroll on the front door, chanting a spell to secure the shop while he was gone.

The Dwarf across the street noticed the commotion and came out to visit as well, passing over a list of Dwarven essentials he needed. Montauk has a large Dwarven population, but Assah doesn't. The stout folk much prefer the mountains to the sea, so few of them choose to live at the beach.

Once through the portal he immediately heads out shopping, intending to return when the kids are there. Cain sends a message to the core members of the Guild, giving them the heads up without alerting Nathaniel, as Cain suspects what Morgan meant by capturing him is really a marriage proposal.

You can't just go ruining a moment like that.

With all the distractions taken care of, Symbia leads them to the Sculptors Guild House.

A group of teenagers and what look like their parents are waiting for them to arrive, standing in the front yard of the Guild House. The old Elf who runs the library waves in recognition, while Symbia moves to the front to introduce Cain and Carlos.

"Everyone, this is Cain, leader of Darklight Host, and our potential employer as well as Guild Leader. The other is Carlos, a local merchant that I believe many of you know already. I sent everyone the details of the construction proposal this morning, hopefully you've had the time to look it over."

The Guild members are super excited, but their parents aren't as easily swayed.

"Is there a formal contract? I'll need to read that before I let my baby girl sign anything." One father says possessively.

"Of course, Guild Contracts, with payment details and lodging information, as well as a detailed work order are both available and will need to be reviewed and signed." Carlos agrees, pulling them from his inventory. Cain made up the Guild Contracts, the same as everyone else's, but Carlos made up the work order contract, as he's been doing them much longer.

"This pay schedule in the Guild Contract, what is that all about?" One parent, an elegant looking Elven fellow, asks.

"It's the standard of a skilled worker in the Beginner's Valley. Any of our members can move there at will, and being a Guild Member will guarantee they don't starve. There's a section on availability of Gear from the Guild Bank, as well as the right to retain all income they might earn, except for the base tax rate the System charges that goes to the Guild." Cain explains.

The Guild Contracts are generous, and have few limitations, so they all pass parental muster after only a few minutes. The work order, on the other hand, covers hundreds of thousands of square meters of area to be decorated, with great detail, including materials to be used, provisions for employer funded tools, schedules and quality requirements. Carlos really did an excellent job of them, where Cain would have essentially just left it up to fate how things turned out.

"I require an additional addendum." The possessive father declares after reading everything.

"That shouldn't be an issue. What do you need added?" Carlos asks, paper and pen at the ready.

"My girl is to come home every weekend for at least one family dinner. I want it in writing." Many other parents agree, and Cain can see the laughter in Symbia's grandmother's eyes.

These are definitely sheltered kids with good families looking out for them. And the parents are far from ready to actually let them out on their own.

They weren't helping them start a sculpting business by paying for the Guild House, they were ensuring their precious babies didn't go far, while still giving them a little independence.

"Can we put in an option for the family to come to us? I'd like it if they could see that we're doing real work, with real skills and not just playing around?" A teenage looking Beastkin of the wolf persuasion asks.

That's when Cain realizes they again have recruited all females. He thought there were two males in the group, but they're actually all female according to the system.

"I don't see why not. Maybe a monthly gathering might be in order, but for now, we'll just add the right to bring family visitors for visits in to the contract." Cain suggests and Carlos gets to work adding the details.

That was seriously all the parents wanted, a codified agreement that their kids were coming to visit, so in just a few short minutes the Sculptors Guild is disbanded, and Darklight Host has gained five new members.

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

## **Chapter 195 - 194 Fort Darklight**

"This place is seriously amazing. I mean, the details you put in already, just to prepare the surface for decoration makes it nicer than most noble houses." The almost human-looking wolf girl exclaims, climbing the wall to get a closer look at the crown moulding that the Elementals created based on Cain's designs.

"I had them leave it deliberately thick, so you can carve into it and not need to use earth magic to alter it first," Cain informs them as the group heads up the stairs into the keep.

"This, did you build it entirely of marble?" Symbia asks, gesturing at the building in general.



"Of course. I used Elementals, so everything had to be Earth-based. So the whole building is made of solid stone. I hope you like it. As we put in the contract, the crown moulding, those decorative ceiling bits, a lot of stained glass and some pillars need to be done here. It's pretty large, and a lot of it is repetitive, but that might make it easier for those working with magic."

"Yeah, we will do the repetitive bits. I've got a spell that can do it from a drawing, so once we're decided on the designs, I can do the whole keep in a few hours. It's the individual statues in the pillars that will take time. Unless you want us to use existing drawings." One of a pair of human twins explains.

"I don't see why not. I'm told you guys didn't sell much of what you made and designed, so it's all new to anyone who might visit. If you use up all your saved designs here, where the most people will see it, you'll have all the time you need to make fresh ones for the underground."

"About that, just how big is the underground?" Symbia asks.

"First, follow me outside. You'll enjoy the ancient architecture and it will help me explain." Cain says, leading the group out the front door.

"The keep is roughly in the center of the castle. The underground extends almost to the walls, multiplied by four levels, only two of which will need to be fully decorated. But Symbia here will be busy because the bottom level is a treasure labyrinth and will need all sorts of hexes and enchantments. Speaking of which, we can make and equip the other forty Guards now, and have them patrol the city and keep watch from the towers."

Symbia is very skeptical that forty of anything less than Dragons is enough to secure this place, but she's happy to get started creating the Guards.

"Why don't you Summon a Lieutenant to run things here?" Carlos suggests.

"I Appointed two, Misha and Char, and it told me I couldn't do anymore, see." Cain says, using the [Lieutenant] ability to try to Summon another.

[Target may only be selected as Lieutenant 1 Time. Randomize Lieutenant?] Y/N

Oh, maybe he can Summon the other two, he just needed to try it that way instead of trying to appoint a Lieutenant.

"I stand corrected. I can Appoint two and copy them with my summon duplicating ability, but the appearance is randomized I think." Cain says, selecting the yes option.

[Lieutenant Created. Please Select A Name to finalize appearance.]

Is it creating the Lieutenant based on the name? Or is he risking a horrible name for a Lieutenant it has already created? Cain is almost 100 percent sure the system is just messing with him at this point.

But he'll play along. How about a good Orcish name for his new Lieutenant, see what the system does with that?

[Name Selected: Magnoth]

[Creating Lieutenant]

The form it created looks like an Orc. 190cm tall, heavily muscled, almost an identical match for Cain's current physique. Short for an Orc though. Maybe it's a Half-Orc? The Summon is surrounded by a haze as it forms, like looking through a frosted window, so Cain can only guess what's happening by the silhouette. Dark coloured armour, which seems to be a set of full plate is forming around the indistinct figure, so he guesses it's a warrior-type Lieutenant.

The haze clears to reveal an Orcish woman, light-skinned for the Green Orc race, an almost mint green colour. She's wearing a black chain mail over a black leather skirt, and what looked like plate armour is a polished black leather chest plate over a sleeveless chain vest. With sturdy leather boots and a leather bracelet with dangling feathers and gems, her long black dreadlocks tied with purple string, Cain suspects this might be a Shaman and not a Warrior type. Based on Char, who he appointed last maybe?

She carries no visible weapons, but that's not surprising if she's a caster type. Cain inspects his new Lieutenant with the interface, hoping for more details as it finalizes.

[Name] Magnoth Elfsbane (Maggie)

[Class] War Oracle

[Lieutenant] to Cain

Cain isn't sure exactly what a War Oracle does, but it sounds like a Shaman. Maggie stretches as she finally forms, looking around at the startled artists.

"Good Morning Commander. You can call me Maggie, or Lieutenant Maggs. It's a pleasure to meet you." The Orc introduces herself, her voice surprisingly soft and musical, not all matching her physical appearance, which, with a large scar from her forehead down across her right eye, ending on her cheek, is that of a formidable warrior. Though if you disregard the scar, there is no doubt she's beautiful, in an Orcish way, her short lower tusks giving her a permanent smile.

"It's a pleasure to meet you too. Welcome to the Darklight Host and Fort Darklight."

"Not much of an army. But we can whip them into shape, never you fear Commander." Maggie's smile looks somehow sinister right now, but Carlos is laughing.

"These aren't the warriors, Lieutenant. They're the Sculptors who are decorating the Fort. You'll meet the actual fighters later."

She looks Carlos over in approval, before holding up a hand to indicate his height.

"Good height, but Vampires are always tall. Strong, well equipped. I approve."

"Thanks. Good to see someone takes their job seriously around here." Carlos says, trying to stop laughing.

"Castle defence is a serious matter." She agrees, crossing her arms and looking at Cain.

"Hey, don't be like that. I've got forty Summoned Guards here so far, plus the forces you can Summon. We're quite a ways into the desert, built on a forgotten ruin, and the castle is only a day old. We'll get a proper security force going in no time with your help." Cain insists, deflecting the blame.

Lieutenants don't get all his summons, only Lesser and Greater Golems and Supporters, but that should be enough to get her started.

"Do you have a suggestion for my Supporters Commander?"

"I use clones of my Appointed Companion, a Beast Lord called Kone who is a Guild member, for her ability to Summon Snapping Turtle Kin Tanks and healing type Dragons. You can do the same, or you can pick something different to compliment the expected reinforcements."

Maggie thinks a while before getting a big smile. "Then I have the perfect Supporters. The Flame Sisters."

Cain vaguely recalls seeing them in the Yellow Tusk forces. Flame Sister is an Orc Specific fire Elemental Shaman. They are geniuses with attack magic, can use an assortment of Totems and can Summon Fire Elementals. It might not be Kone and Su level powerful, but they're going to have some serious attack power. Plus, fire Elementals in the desert just seems right.

"I'll go survey the area first, then return to visit once I have defences placed." She declares, her gentle, lyrical voice making the announcement seem harmless when her intentions are anything but.

"Looks like the base will soon be secure, so the Doll Warriors can patrol the interior grounds and just head up to the walls to assist when needed." Cain smiles, watching his

Lieutenant happily skip away, Summoning six other Orcs, who each call out two Greater Fire Elementals before Maggie calls for eight Greater Granite Elementals. He can't see if she picked a Lesser Golem option yet, but she's sending Golems to each point of the base and four of the Supporters to the larger arms of the cardinal points.

There's an enclosed area at each of them, designed for the defence forces to be stationed without being rained on by spells and arrows, but there's nothing in it at the moment. If they're going to be waiting there a long time, Cain should add couches or something. Hiring professionals for this every other time has been a marvelous time saver.

Once the basic forces are stationed, Maggie returns with a pair of Supporters and six small Beastkin. Almost like Naga, they are fully scaled with snake-like heads and two arms on a more humanoid but still scale covered torso, but these are tan and brown with a Rattle at the end of their tails. Diamondbacks the system calls them. They blend into the desert so well Cain almost missed them at first.

"First-line defences are set, Commander." Maggie declares, clearly proud of her deployment.

"Excellent work. Feel free to explore the compound, you'll need to get to know it intimately. Everything here is at your disposal.. As for the Sculptors, pick a spot and start your design process, I'll come back in an hour or two to see what you've come up with for the keep."

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

## Chapter 196 - 195

"We're going to need more equipment. Bows and arrows at the points, or siege weapons of some sort so the Doll Warriors can shoot at attackers since they don't have a skill for that. And then furniture, a lot of furniture."

"We can get [Multi Shot] enchanted Hwacha. They shoot fifty arrows at a time and can reach the dunes if you're firing from the wall. You'll just need someone to fill their mana storage." Carlos suggests.

"The Flame Sisters have mana Totems will that do it?"

"I guess, it won't be a fast rate of fire, but it's something." Carlos shrugs.

"The idea is to have the defenses automated, left to Maggie as much as possible. So three at each cardinal point, to be manned by the dolls, should do. That's a lot of arrows in one direction. Things will get easier as my level goes up because I'll be able to increase the number of Summons the Lieutenants get."

"You've got one more Lieutenant left to call as well, don't you?" Carlos asks.

Cain does, but does he want to let the system troll him twice in one day? He's not sure if that's a good idea or if it will just lead to something especially strange.

[Do it. You know you want to.] The Oath Breaker whispers into his mind.

"Might as well call it then. Who knows, maybe we'll get something awesome and overpowered." Cain says out loud.

[Target may only be selected as Lieutenant 1 Time. Randomize Lieutenant?] Y/N

Yes. Like ripping off a bandaid, it's best to get it all over with at once.

[Please Select A Name to finalize appearance.]

[David]

[Name Unavailable. Randomized Name Selected]

He knew it, he just knew it, the system is messing with him. No giant slayer for him today.

[Creating Lieutenant]

This Lieutenant is much smaller than the last one. Much smaller. It also seems to be getting shorter. Did he Summon a gnome?

Cain can hear a childish giggle even before it becomes clear what he's Summoned as his final Lieutenant, indicating that whatever this tiny being is, is unlikely to be a serious combatant. As the barrier surrounding the Summon becomes clearer, Cain sees long black hair, black, silky clothes, and matching wings. Big, fluffy, black feathered wings.

The Lieutenant jumps up, opening her wings to reveal a young girl, perhaps in her early grade school years, in a loosely worn black kimono, her long black hair flying loose around her with bare feet. She flaps her wings and lifts into the air, circling Cain with great interest.

"I should have kept my mouth shut, you pulled a weird one this time. Can you take a mulligan, get a do-over?" Carlos says, looking at the strange flying child.

"No, wait, it was just a joke. You should have seen your faces when you all thought I was a tiny four-legged creature. I swear, I'm a Proper Tengu, I can help." The petite flying Lieutenant declares.

[Name] Sora

[Race] Tengu

[Class] Prankster

[Lieutenant] to Cain

"Well Sora, tell me, what skills does a Tengu Prankster have?" Cain asks.

"Other than the Summons for being a Lieutenant, I'm a really good Archer and a skilled illusionist. Nobody in the Tengu Kingdom can create a better illusionary Army than I can." She says proudly.

She links her skill in a message to Cain.

[Illusionary Army] create casters level in Summons at level/10 strength. Illusions have access to all of the real version's abilities with reduced effects.

That's pretty cool actually. They're illusionary combat Puppets. Not strong, but plentiful enough to distract an enemy away from the real threat.

"How about we go to the wall and you can create your Illusionary Army out in the desert, so we can see how fearsome the enemy will find it?" Carlos suggests, dubious of her claims.

The little Tengu grabs Cain and flies him to the wall at breakneck speed. "You'll see, it'll be awesome and everyone will congratulate me." She insists and Cain can't help but laugh at her enthusiasm.

"Alright, I'm prepared to be impressed."

"Behold, the Army of Heaven!" Sora shouts, and a hundred and forty or so six-winged Seraphim appear in the sky.

They're all at Epic Quality and level 14. That alone is pretty cool, then they start glowing with golden light and a massive number of additional summons appear. The ground forces of the Heavenly Host from the Seraphim dungeon, but level 14. They're in groups of 28, standing around waiting on a command.

"See, see. Praise me." Sora declares pointing at her illusion.

Cain has to admit even at level 14, thousands of infantry look very impressive. The huge mass of six-winged holy beings can't be ignored either. They can cast some impressive holy magic, and being hit by it a hundred times is bound to hurt.

Not just that, if you saw this army, in addition to Cain's army, anyone would panic, thinking they were all at the same power level.

"Okay, Epic Quality Seraphim is pretty impressive, I'm not going to argue that," Carlos says, finally arriving on the wall.

Sora looks confused at his words and sets Cain down to fly over and poke her summons, looking them over closely.

"That's weird, they're usually Elite Quality." She mutters and Cain understands what's going on. She doesn't get the benefit of all his skills, being a Lieutenant, but as a Summon, her Quality has increased a Rank, and these particular solidified Illusions are based on her power level. The same will be true of Maggie, her quality will be better, and her stats higher, than the average Lieutenant.

They're both technically duplicates created by the [Lieutenant] ability after all. They just got randomized.

"Well, we can release the illusionary army now. I'm convinced that you're fully capable of serving as a Lieutenant, assisting Maggie in base defense, or helping me complete tasks." Cain says and immediately gets smothered in feathers as Sora hugs him.

Once she's done hugging she doesn't let go, but shifts sideways, still hanging off Cain, so he wraps an arm underneath the Tengu and walks down off the wall.

The rest of the Guild should be awake now, and Cain promised them a dungeon run to help those near level 100 pass the breakpoint. The Sculptors should be hard at work all day though, so he will let everyone sleep a while and see how far they can get in updating the Keep interior.

Inside, many of the small repetitive details are already carved, the Sculptors using their class abilities to move smoothly through the easy parts. They've also done the entryway and major rooms on the first floor, putting statues and wall carvings all through the public areas of the main floor. They've also replaced the throne in the throne room, with a huge stone version that looks like you're sitting in a Seraphim's lap, the six wings forming the bulk of the throne.

It's over the top, but then, it's in a huge white marble keep, nothing in here is subdued and understated.

The throne room has a double row of pillars running its length, an addition by the Old Dwarf for structural reasons, but they've all been carved to depict angelic sentries.



The wolfkin waves as Cain enters. "I'm almost done in here. I had a whole sketchbook full of angels and I think I got them all in this room and one bedroom upstairs."

"Good job, the place looks amazing." Cain congratulates her and moves on to see the rest of the keep.

They did have a lot stored up, there are carvings, decorations, and statues everywhere, turning the entire keep into an art museum. Even the bedrooms all have themes, both carved into them and painted on the ceilings. One human artist has been assigned or has chosen to do all the common area stained glass windows, each depicting a different creature. Monsters, animals, people, they're all here somewhere. The windows are narrow and swing open in case you need to attack out in an emergency, but they look amazing.

[One hour and the keep should be ready to start bringing in furniture.] Cain sends in Guild chat, knowing they've got a lot available, it just needs to be brought here. And paid for by the Guild of course. He doesn't expect anyone to work for free.

[We'll be ready. The training dummies showed up today too. Do you want them?] Misha sends back.

[Yeah, bring most of them here, send some to Char. I think our new Lieutenants will enjoy helping the recruits train.]

"Did you call for more friends? Are they nice? Do they fly?" Sora asks, talking so fast she's stumbling over her words.

"Calm down. They're the Guild members, if the Commander invited them, of course, they're nice. But how many transfers fly?" Maggie reprimands the Tengu, her height advantage making Sora feel tiny, even while she's being carried by Cain.

"Actually, I've got Dragon companions, and so does one of the other members, plus there are Pixies, so you'll have people to fly with soon." Cain smiles, patting the little one's head.. He could get used to that, she's so soft, even her hair feels fluffy like feathers.

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

## **Chapter 197 - 196 Group Advancement**

Not long after, the handful of Guild members that are very close to level 100 has arrived. Char, Elmira, Mythryll, and Belle. Dimnys is level 96 now, and could likely hit 100 in a single run, but she's currently very occupied with a smithing attempt using the Mythril from the Stone Giant dungeon, as she has been the past few days. If it weren't for a need to let the project cool naturally during one step, she likely wouldn't have even shown up to the party.

"So, the plan is to visit the Elven dungeon. When I went inside alone it matched my level, so I'm not sure if it scales to the visitors or will stay the same. The other options would be a Dwarven dungeon that I haven't done yet and a level 184 Seraphim Dungeon." Cain informs his party members.

"How about we try the Dwarves? Since you haven't done that one yet, it can be a surprise to all of us. We might even get something cool for a first completion bonus. What did you get from the Elven one?" Elmira asks.

"I got a Royal Guard Cloak that reduces the chance of being noticed." Cain begins and sees the Pixie's eyes light up with longing.

"Here, try it on. I'll bet it's perfect for your class, with the abduction skill and various hiding abilities." Cain suggests and Elmira grabs and equips it with a whoop of victory. It almost looks like she's fading from reality, just a shadow of a Pixie where she lounges in his pocket.

"Very good. You're almost invisible without using a skill." Mythryll says appreciatively.

"Let's go see the dungeon. Are we killing Dwarves or saving Dwarves? Because I fight better in wolf form, and Dwarves taste bad." Belle asks, making the group hide a snicker.

"Saving them. We're not sure from what though. So no guarantees that you'll get lunch out of the deal." Cain teases the werewolf, who has already shifted to her Husky-like werewolf form.

The Bright Blue dungeon entrance welcomes them to the historical version of the exact spot they were standing, leaving the group in the desert without a soul in sight.

[Quest: Rescue the Dwarves from imminent demise.]

[Bonus Quest: Find the Dwarves lost item.]

Alright, that will most likely require talking to the Dwarves. Hopefully, they speak some common, if not Cain will have to call for a Dwarven Supporter later.

He calls out all his summons, but in a modified pattern this time. No more giant demons, except six Oath Breakers. The Wrath Bringers are replaced with Seraphim Warriors and the Lamia with Earth Elementals.

Dwarves have an affinity for the Elementals, so their presence might help smooth things over. They're also quite durable and can throw Summoned boulders as ranged attacks. The Seraphim are simply for their incredible damage output, the Snapping Turtle Kin are already enough tanks to deal with almost anything.

"Oath Breakers, Spread out and find us the attackers and the Dwarves. Don't let the Dwarves die."

Char brings out a pair of Primordial Shamans, along with two sizes of Fire Elementals, the summons she gained as his Lieutenant. Elmira and Mythryll both call Epic Quality Treants, the Pixie moving to hide in the branches of her summons, whereas Belle calls out a pair of huge Dire Wolves. They come out as one with mottled gray fur and one pure white, making the much smaller werewolf look like their puppy.

The Epic Summons he chose to fill the [Benevolent Leader] Guild Skill seems to be serving the Guild well, they've all found a favorite form. Mostly it compliments their role, though it seems Elmira just wanted a hiding spot. It's a good way to launch sneak attacks though, if you didn't know she was in there you'd never suspect the Pixie Assassin.

"We found them. Looks like the Dwarves ran afoul of a group of low-level Seraphim. I saw Initiates, Warriors, Crusaders, and Inquisitors, along with the Holy Warrior type Summoned ground forces. No sign of a big boss Seraphim though, and everything is around level 125." One of the Oath Breakers returns to inform them.

"Are they grouped up, so we can attack as one, or are they spread out?"

"They're advancing like an army, flying units directly above the ground forces. The Dwarves are behind us, so we're currently in between the two, in the path of the Seraphim advance." The Demon informs them.

"Alright everyone, expect some of the targets to enrage, we've got demons with us after all. But today we will use that to our advantage, so demons, gather to my right, and move wide of us. I want the Seraphim force to split between the ones that are targeting the Oath Breakers and the ones targeting us." Cain instructs, and Char sends her Primordial Shamans to join the Oath Breakers. With some reluctance Cain changes the Earth Elementals back to Lamia Scourge Casters, giving the Demon force additional numbers.

"Guide us towards the Seraphim, once we're engaged, or they notice you, Vala can lead the demons in the attack."

Come to think of it, that last bit about being noticed was redundant. Seconds later, all the Dragons and Drakes take to the air, and not even the blind could miss that. The Seraphim form up in five flying unit wings for an attack, and the ground troops again move to form a shield wall and begin advancing towards them.

They're chanting some sort of battle hymn, and it's creating a glow around the Seraphim force, but Cain isn't certain if it's an attack or defense buff.

Vala has led the demons out of sight behind a dune, but the flying units will spot them soon enough. The demons have gotten way ahead of Cain and the Dragons though, so that might truly split the enemy forces.

When they're a hundred meters apart, Cain orders the Dragons to engage, meeting the charging Seraphim flying units. Once they're in motion the Snapping Turtle Kin charge, again utilizing the 'flat on their belly' launching technique that moves much faster across the sand than trying to run.

The girls think it's hilarious, but have no time to laugh, as they're struggling to keep up. Even the large paws of the Wolves are having trouble in this soft sand.

The Flying enemies, which all look so similar Cain can only tell them apart by their choice of weaponry, are fully engaged when the Demons attack from the rear, taking advantage of the confusion to tear apart the back lines. Their attack enrages the Seraphim Warriors and Crusaders, but when the flying creatures turn to face the demons it just leaves them vulnerable to the Dragons and Drakes.

They're insulting the Dragons for continuing to attack them when there are demons present, a mutual enemy of both species, so Cain gives Laura special instructions.

"We know you've been protecting the Laughing God, traitors. Perish along with the Demon spawn." The Opal Prismatic Dragon roars, making the Seraphim even more confused.

Their entire species is dedicated to finding and stopping the Laughing God and the reinforcements. They were excluded from the spell after all, receiving no additional forces, and their influence on the world is waning as a result, how could that Dragon accuse them of harboring the accursed Laughing God?

Cain surveys his handiwork with appreciation, there is no cohesion left. The battle in the sky is a mixture of chaotic one-on-one battles, the numbers fairly evenly matched. The battle on the ground has broken up into multiple formations, each struggling to deal with the forces attacking them. Ranged attacks are proving ineffective, the Snapping Turtles are hard to injure with arrows, and the Oath Breakers keep teleporting into the middle of their formations and tearing their healers and archers apart.

The Treants are also on the offensive, enormous wooden bodies swinging mighty branches through the humanoids, tossing them from their feet and leaving them vulnerable to the assorted attackers.

Char has become a lightning pole at this point, electricity constantly arcing from her body to stun and burn anything in range, even low flying Seraphim Warriors aren't spared. Nemu and Nila have remained beside her, playing a jaunty battle tune for an attack buff and conjuring mighty waves to crush their opponents and conduct the chain lightning Char is casting.

Undoubtedly Belle is having the most fun though. She's with her Wolves at the outskirts of the battle, tearing apart anything that gets flung towards them with a disturbing vigor.

Cain decides the air battle is all but won, so he moves to engage a cluster of Holy Warriors. His spear drives forward with precision, skipping along the top of a shield and through the visor of a winged helmet, the area damage from his strike dropping the entire cluster of Warriors. One group after another he does the same thing, knocking shields aside and butchering the defenders, the small groups they've been forced into leaving them extremely vulnerable to the area damage him and the Oath Breakers are inflicting.

The fact that he's twenty levels higher than the enemy doesn't help their cause either.

[I found a shiny thing. A Dwarven Earth God Statue. I think it's the quest item.] Belle sends in party chat, unable to effectively speak in her wolf form.

[Good job. Keep that thing handy, it will likely complete the quest once we get back to the Dwarves.] Char sends happily. She's already hit level 100 and minimized the class change notification, being the closest to advancement.

A few extra levels to get new skills couldn't hurt though, she used most of her points already, the Shaman class just has too many useful abilities. It has so many options you need to pick and choose. Much like mages, a hundred levels isn't enough points to max everything out.

With the area damage tearing through their numbers and the air forces defeated by the host of Dragons, the battle is quickly coming to a close. Cain double checks his battle logs to make sure he's recorded everything, as his list of Seraphim and related Angelic Forces is rather limited.

He's already got the Warriors, and the Initiates, then there's the Crusaders which were savage opponents. Still Greater Golems, but heavily armored with round shields and swords instead of spears. They fought in an incredibly aggressive style, not at all what Cain expected from their Tank like appearance.

The final one should be Inquisitors, but he didn't get close enough to record one, so he's got to find it in the log. Engaged and defeated by Vala. Good going to the Demon Companion.

[New Companion Available. Summon Now?] Y/N

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

## Chapter 198 - 197 So Many New Friends

A new Companion from fighting the Seraphim? Why would he ever say no to that?

[Companion Generating]

[Calculating Requirements]

What exactly does he still need? The Companions he has cover almost everything he could need already.

He's got a Demon heal Tank, a Beastkin Bard, a Dark Elven Shaman type for area damage. Then there's the Dragon. Reluctantly a form of transport, but incredibly good at crowd control with her Ice Fog breath and assorted Ice Spells. What could they even be lacking?

As Cain is thinking and the Companion is forming, the first Quest notification comes in.

[Quest Complete. 65/65 Dwarves Rescued]

[Level Up]

The new companion is starting to properly take shape now in an intense pillar of Golden Light. It's a Seraphim for sure, Elf sized, at about 150cm, with white wings wrapped around itself. The light fades and the new Companion remains, becoming the target of everyone's attention. Elmira and Laura, now in her smaller Dragon Pixie form, have each claimed one of Cain's shoulders for a better view, knowing the first person the Companion will address is him.

The Seraphim shakes out her wings and takes a step forward, looking straight into Cain's eyes. The first thought that comes to him is 'Beautiful' the Seraphim is stunning in a way no mortal being was ever meant to be. The next is 'Naked', she is one hundred percent naked as the day she was born.

Though maybe this is the day she was born? How does that work with companions? Should he be celebrating birthdays for them when he's been here a year? Has she put on clothes yet? No, not yet. He should say something. And the Oath Breaker needs to stop sending him mental images.

"So many lustful thoughts in one second, even when trying not to. You're an interesting sort aren't you?" The Seraphim begins, making everyone but Cain burst into laughter.

"Welcome. I'm Cain. Do you perhaps have clothes?" Is the best greeting he can muster, trying not to focus on the Seraphim. Is there some sort of spell on her? He's far too old to be a hormonal teenager.

"No. But I can wear some if someone gives them to me."

Cain grabs the first top he sees in his inventory, a toga from something in this dungeon. "Here you go."

Oh, that's not much better at all. But she's not nude anymore, so it's an improvement. Even if the thin linen clings to her just right.

Cain closes his eyes to gather his wits and sees a spell effect active in his interface. That's strange, they're out of combat.

[Grace of the Seraphim] Aura effect. Increases affection and reduces aggression towards the caster.

"I don't suppose that Aura of yours has other settings, does it? You know, like much, much lower."

"Sure, I'll dial it back to two, how is that?"

Cain opens his eyes and the Seraphim is still absolutely stunning and that dress is borderline scandalous. Hanging low at the hem, but leaving almost the entirety of her back and sides revealed with a deep neckline almost to her belly button, at least it covers enough that he can think properly again.

"Much better. I'll find you a proper outfit in just a few minutes. But how about we do introductions first. You already know me, but these are Vala, Nemu, Laura, and Nila, the rest of my Companions. Then we have Char, Mythryll, Belle, and Elmira, four of my Guild Members that I brought here today to help reach their first advancement. Speaking of which, did everyone achieve their goal?"

"I'm 8 experience points short of level 100, but everyone else has their class change on hold." Belle answers for the group.



"Well, there's that quest item you found, that's bound to put you over the limit. Congratulations to everyone of their advancements. Now, how about you tell us a bit about yourself, young Seraphim?"

The Companion giggles at that, but begins her introduction. "You can call me Evangeline. As you can see, I'm a Seraphim, twenty years old, and an Aspiring Archangel. My skills are mostly healing-based, but I've also got some skills with protective barriers. There's not much else to tell." She beams a smile at everyone, giving a little twirl and a bow when she finishes.

"But where's your clone? There's always a clone." Laura pouts and Cain feels his heart flutter. One instance of that Aura was enough, he's not sure he's ready for it at double strength.

"Clone? Why would there always be a clone?" Evangeline asks, looking around, just now noticing the Companions all have twins nearby.

"I'll cast the spell again and your clone should appear. Give me a second to prepare." Cain says and Char hides her smile behind a fist, understanding his dilemma much better than the younger group members.

When the second clone appears the Aura returns to full force for half a second before she tones it down and looks at the duplicate of herself. "Why are you wearing clothes? No, why are we wearing clothes? Do you understand how hot it is out here?"

"You missed the fun part. You should see what our Aura does in this world at full power." The first clone says before the second one reads her mind and laughs.

Laura is much happier now that there are two of them and each copy of her flies over to land on one's left shoulder. "Hi and welcome. As Cain mentioned, I'm Laura, the Opal Prismatic Dragon. It's so good to meet you."

The Seraphim rub her head in greeting, understanding what the little dragon was after and Laura makes a happy noise, shifting to a seated position for stability.

"I am going to go finish that quest, and then we can all update our classes once we return," Belle announces, sniffing around for the Dwarves to turn the item in to.

"They're this way." Nemu points back in the direction they started with a smirk. Out here in the desert, the wind and blowing sand eliminate almost all scent trails in moments, tracking by scent is almost impossible.

The two take off over the hill and Cain looks through his inventory for healing-based items. Something to increase shield barriers would be good too, but that's a much more rare and specific drop.

Healing gear is relatively plentiful. From what Cain has seen so far, almost all melee classes wear at least one piece of life on hit or healing on damage type gear for survivability. It's not a whole lot, unless you get really lucky with the drop item, but even a few points healed every attack helps.

"Evangeline, what sort of gear can you use? Just cloth?" Cain asks, looking through the options.

"I can use cloth or plate armor, nothing else." The Seraphim shrugs. That's a bit odd, but it does add a few extra options.

He quickly finds a cloak, robe, and pants in cloth, plus boots and gloves made of plate. He also finds a chest plate with a lot of mana regeneration on it and adds it to the collection.

"Here, try these," Cain says, handing them over.

Her appearance didn't change much. Evangeline gets golden bracelets and sandals, but she's still in the same thin toga. He should have expected that, given his attempts to change Vala and Nemu's outfits in the past. Cain inspects her to see what she chose, and sees that she's wearing all of what he gave her except the cloak, which is in her inventory.

Interestingly, she can equip both the chest plate and the robe at the same time, as the plate armor and pants are both equipped as underwear.

Looking at her, it's not visible, but she gets the bonus from it, so it doesn't really matter what it looks like.

"Not the cloak?" He asks.

"Much too hot for a cloak. You might wear a coat in the desert, but I would cook, I'm certain of it." Evangeline laughs.

She's got a point, even in the tunic and shorts he's currently wearing it's incredibly hot in this dungeon. Warmer even than the outside air, which should be nearly mid-summer and sunny. The average temperature must have been higher just after the war.

[Quest Complete: Return the Lost Item to the Dwarves]

[Level Up]

This brings Cain to a nice even level 150, high enough to unlock his next skill, doubled [Summon Lesser Golem]. That's all three Summon options doubled, and Cain is looking forward to begin increasing that to tripled ten levels from now.

A new Skill appeared when he unlocked the final doubled number of summons as well, and it shows as available. Selecting it, it instantly activates, costing zero skill points. A pleasant surprise given how his class has been about giving new abilities in the past. After all, it took him a hundred levels just to get the basic skills.

[Militant Lord Skill: Unquestioned Authority] Companions and Lieutenants wield the full authority of their Lord. Companions and Lieutenants gain the rank of Knight and associated benefits.

[Knightly Pride] Knight Rank benefit. Summons gain increased damage done and reduced damage is taken. Benefit scales with Knight's [Stat] level.

So there was a benefit to taking the Militant Lord Path beyond the benefits of extra summons. Cain can't quantify how much benefit the skill gives, as he didn't test his changes one Rank at a time, but the total change was significant, and that was the only one that specifically increased their damage and increased their durability, without changing their rank.

Stacked up with his copy, as he hopes it does, the Bonded Forces of his companions and the Golems of his Lieutenants should gain a noticeable increase.

"What's this, I just arrived and already I get a promotion? You know, I might grow to like you, Summoner Cain." Evangeline laughs.

"Speaking of which, you'll get a Bonded Force of eight Greater Golems from your type. I think the only options I know for that are Seraphim Warriors and Seraphim Crusaders though. Everything else is either a Lesser Golem or an Epic Golem." Cain informs her.

"Both of us or one of us?" The twins ask, making Laura laugh and almost fall off her perch on the Seraphim's shoulder.

"Both of you of course. What sort of ripoff skill would only give them to half the Companions?"

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

## Chapter 199 - 198

"If everyone wants to do their class change now, we can wait here. Then you can show it off when you return." Cain suggests, distracting everyone from their reverie.

"Good idea, I got so caught up with the new Companion that I almost forgot that I reached level 100." Char says before her eyes glaze over as she enters the class selection screen.

The others have done the same, leaving four immobile group members standing like statues in the desert, surrounded by summons. All is quiet for a few minutes before Mythryll returns to her senses with a deep frown.

"All I can pick are crappy versions of advanced nature mage that barely qualify as an upgrade. I think I'm going to hold off until I can get to the library and get some new skill books made that might unlock something better. I mean it didn't even offer me Druid as an option. How lame is that?"

She's got a point, with so many of her Guild mates choosing between great hidden and second advancement classes, an advanced nature mage would just feel like a letdown.

Maybe don't mention that to Carlos though, as he picked an advanced Barbarian tree and has been in it for over 90 levels.

The next to return to the land of the living was Elmira, and she's in a much better mood than Mythryll was.

"I got the Specter class. I get a bunch of new ranged poisons and curses and now I can go invisible at will. There's a high chance to notice me in the sunlight, but I've got the Royal Guard Cloak to help me blend in, and it should make me almost impossible to find in the dark." The happy Pixie explains. That's actually pretty sweet, and Cain wonders how many points she had to put in to get full uptime invisibility, but their friendly neighborhood pocket Pixie will be a very good Assassin now.

Belle awakens next, nearly as happy as Elmira. "I Unlocked Pack Leader. A werewolf exclusive Ranger or maybe Hunter type class. I get a huge bonus to night sight and tracking, but I can also use [Command] on Wolves and werewolves. Plus, there's a bunch of added damage skills and I get my very own Companion. It's the [Second in Command] skill. It's pretty much a Vala without all the extra bonuses you give her."

"Well, let's see this second in Command. You never know what abilities a Companion will get until they appear for the first time after all." Cain smiles at the werewolf. If she had a tail right now, it would be wagging so hard she'd hover like a helicopter.

Belle summons her Companion and a burly tanned skin man in dark brown leather pants and a black silk shirt open almost to his navel with the sleeves rolled up appears. He's got shoulder length brown hair and golden eyes that have the look of a man who's seen too much. Like a seasoned combat veteran, but set into a face that looks to be in its mid twenties.

He smiles at Cain, sizing him up. The werewolf is a bit shorter, at about 185cm, but much wider. His arms are thicker than Belle's waist, and the little werewolf is nearly drooling looking at him.

"What are the ethical rules on Summons?" She whispers, making Cain and her companion both laugh.

"Whatever you want them to be Princess. I'm Xander, and it is a distinct pleasure to meet someone as lovely as you." Everyone in the dungeon can see that Belle is getting flustered by her smooth talking Summon, even before her face goes red and she stutters out a response.

"It's suddenly very warm in here isn't it? Yes it got much warmer."

Xander laughs and gives her a kiss on the forehead, and Cain pulls a cloak from his inventory, silently handing it out the big werewolf.

"Ah, thank you. Here, Princess, shade to keep you out of the sun." He says, moving the cloak over her head and stepping close to her. From the look on her face, it's not helping her overheating issues.

"If you're all done teasing Belle, I think we're done." Char laughs, having caught the majority of the interaction while everyone else was distracted by the appearance of Xander and his antics.

"Not yet, what did you get? I got Specter class, and Belle got Xander, and Mythryll is waiting until she can get some new skills from the library." Elmira informs her.

"I picked Totemic Shaman. It gets bonuses to duration and effects, plus a bunch of new types of Totems. I can even set up long lasting defensive Totems called Fire Towers. They last 30 days and attack anything flagged as hostile." Now that's a useful skill for base defense. Set a couple of those up in the yards of the Beginner's Valley Guild Houses and not even a Guild Raid would likely take the house.

[Carlos, are the preparations for the party almost ready?] Cain asks, hoping he wasn't too distracted watching Symbia work today.

[Just arrived. The Puppets you left in the house have set up the buffet, cleaned everything, and they're putting up the party decorations now. These things are incredibly useful.]

Well, if he just assigned the Puppets, there shouldn't have been any time constraints. Other than that, there's just hoping everyone does show up. They just had a party, but level 100 is an important event.

Cain didn't need to worry. When they step out of the dungeon they're greeted by the entire Guild, it's staff, dozens of Dwarves and Elves from the Beginner Valley and even Earl RhickJaymz.

"This is impressive. How did you gather so many?" Char asks.

"Well, Lickity and Cid told all of us in Sunnybrook that you were going to reach level 100, and brought us through the Guild House." An older Elf Cain doesn't recognize answers, but Char smiles, so it must be a friend of hers.

"Triss told us the pub was closed for a level 100 party, so we brought everyone." Ragnar gestures to the swarm of Dwarves and Belle laughs.

"Anything for a party, right?"

"We brought good food and Ale by the keg. The little Smith even brought cakes. You should see the hammer she finished, a true thing of beauty."

Dimnys comes forward with a box in her hands and gives it to Char. "Congratulations on level 100. I made this from the finest Mythril just for you."

Cain isn't sure if that's an axe or a hammer. It's got a large flat face on one side, but a wide axe blade on the other that makes him reluctant to call it a Warhammer. It's two handed and crackles with lightning the moment that Char takes it in her hands.

"A Legendary Hammer of the Thunder Gods. This is beautiful, thank you Dimnys. You must have spent forever working on this."

"Just a little while you know. It was too good not to make it for you." The Dwarf smiles, finally releasing nervous hands from the skirt of her party dress now that she knows Char likes her gift.

"Just a little while for sure. Girls been holed up for an entire week." Bertha, the Hostel manager laughs, setting kegs out to be poured. Cain looks around a little more, finding even the Orphanage Matron and all her kids are here tonight. The ladies of the Guild must be incredibly popular in the Beginner's Valley.

Looking over at the line of dungeons, Cain sees that all three have returned to a normal appearance now, with the Dragon Host portal buried under a giant rock next to them. That makes a full set of dungeons for their Castle, all safe to enter and stable. There's a bit of a difficulty jump at the end, but with a bit of assistance, the Guild members should be able to grind from First Advancement all the way to Second Advancement right here in the castle.

Taking advantage of the distraction as everyone moves to the yard of the Keep to get the party going, Cain runs off to the nearby remains of a park. There are some trees

around it now, giving a spot to rest in the shade, but the ground is solid stone, with nothing growing. The ancient design is long since destroyed, filled in with desert sandstone, but it's the perfect place to set up the training dummies.

The park starts only one building away from the Keep, and there's room for about a dozen to train comfortably, so Cain sets up some dummies, a few of each level, before returning to the party. The recruits should find them in the morning, giving them somewhere to practice when they're visiting. Now, that eliminates any excuses they have to escape Char's educational program, but that's part of the point. To keep them advancing no matter what else they're doing.

Once the underground levels are done Cain will set up more training grounds down there, instead of just this little space, but this one comes with the added bonus of getting to work on your tan, and that's got to count for something, right?

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

## Chapter 200 - 199

Everything is chaos in the morning. Maggie and Sora, or more correctly their stationed guards, have spotted people coming their way. Thanks to the effects of a mirage reflecting the castle in the heart of the desert, an off-route caravan is going to be paying them a surprise visit.

This might be good news, it might not. If they're not bandits run out of civilization they're lost. Very lost. At least an entire day off the nearest caravan route that runs between Oasis. Deciding that caution is the best course of action, Cain decides to greet them before they arrive at the castle gates. If they're hostile, it's better to give the guards some warning, and they're unlikely to be so naive as to attack a castle from a distance.

"Laura, I require your assistance for a moment. In Dragon form." Cain calls and then watches the twins play rock paper scissors to see who has to do it.

His mode of transport decided, Cain takes to the air, soaring over the dunes to meet the travelers. "Greetings everyone. I'm Cain, leader of the Darklight Host. What brings you fine folks to our humble abode?"

They're giving him a look like the words humble abode do not belong anywhere near a sentence that references a giant basalt fortress, but their leader recovers quickly.

"The trade routes have been heavy with bandits lately, so we decided to take a longer route. Unfortunately, the oasis that was marked on our map has dried up, so we just



headed north from that point, hoping to find a ruin with a surviving well." The man, a human fully wrapped in cloth against the desert sun, pulls a map from his clothes and shows Cain their intended route. Indeed, the castle is in a direct line between the oasis he was headed for and Assah.

"Please, do come in. We're having a bit of a Guild Gathering, a number of our members reached level 100 last night. We've got water and shelter inside the castle walls." They're not far away, so Cain has Laura take to the sky again, headed for the front gates so he can open them.

The entry is a simple set of double doors, but behind it is a stone hallway, leading to a portcullis and the second set of doors, designed to slow or trap attackers that breach the main gate. Fairly standard for a castle as far as Cain knows.

"This is an impressive fortress you have found." The leader says in appreciation when they reach the gates.

"I built it around a set of desert ruins. There were enough bits of the old buildings to build a replica of an outpost of the old Schaub Empire. See, over to your left is the old stable, it's been renovated and you can keep your camels there." Cain explains.

"Appreciated, friend. But tell us, how far is it from here to Assah?"

"With camels, about five days I would imagine." Cain shrugs, never having even ridden a camel before.

The caravan members file into the castle, tying their weary mounts in the shade of the old stable and getting to work removing their burdens and rubbing them down, before bringing out feed for them and leading them to the water troughs.

"What all do you guys sell, that you would risk such a long detour through the desert?" Sora asks, coming in to supervise their guests.

"We're cloth merchants, bringing silks and fine linens from the Southern lands. We do a half-year loop selling a bit of everything. Normally we leave the Holy Landis Kingdom and stop in at the villages along the Ridgeline of the Beginner's Valley, turning north before Montauk for safety and following the trade route to Assah, then back down the coast and home." One of the merchant guards informs her.

"Yeah, that place is way too dangerous. But this year there are all sorts of bandits along the trade routes." Another complains.

Cain suspects Montauk and the bandits are very much interconnected. Since he drove the old Guilds out of town, the survivors and their allies will have had to make a living somewhere.

"The Guardians were driven out of Montauk and most of their members were killed. That might well be the cause of the bandits along this stretch of the trade routes. They've been sporadically attacking the city as well, every time they can gather enough mercenaries, or trick another group into helping them." Cain informs the merchants, who sigh in disgust.

"If that's the case, there is no winning for the caravans. As you can see, most of us don't have an interface, so we mostly rely on the guards if it comes down to a fight with bandits. But if a high-level evil Guild is out there in the desert looking for victims it makes things hard."

"Why not skip the desert section entirely? Use a transport circle to move between your last point of call and Assah?" Sora asks.

"At five gold a head, including the camels? We'd need much higher quality goods to be able to afford that. The noble merchants do it that way, but then they're selling magical silks and gold jewelry. We provide things the common man needs and can afford." One of the junior merchants says proudly.

That makes sense, Cain has gotten used to the high-level items and extremely high prices associated with them, but with fewer than one in fifty among the population not including those born of two transfers getting a system, there are a whole lot of people who are not working on that same financial scale.

They're the primary reason Earl RhickJaymz set property price limits. Sure, skilled adventurers could pay the high rates, but who would work the shops, clean the streets, do the paperwork, or work the docks and the fishing boats if only high-level transfers were left in town?

Cain notices one of the guards removing his shirt and head covering to wash in the water trough provided for the camels and begins to laugh. "I should mention, before you get too comfortable, that there is a former hotel right next door that has running water in the rooms. There's no furniture yet, but the showers work."

The guards all cheer and the shirtless one waves it around his head in victory before running across the street to the elegantly carved black building with the row of evenly spaced doors. If this world had cars, it would be a roadside motel, being next to the stable that serves as the town's parking lot.

A few others go with him, but half the guards stay to watch the camels, and the others are still working.

"Let Sora here, or Maggie, who will likely be along in a minute, know when you're done. We're still getting things set up here, the castle isn't finished, but we will have a lunch buffet in a few hours, and some of the group might want to see your goods. You said you carry products for the commoners, but what exactly?"

"Spices, cloth, leather, some smithy tools from the Dwarves, and a small assortment of crystal dishes. They nearly bought us out at Mountainheim though."

[The merchants have foreign spices, Dwarf made tools, and some other things if anyone wants to come to visit them.] Cain sends in Guild chat.

Sora gets along quite well with the merchant guards, who she discovered are usually hired from among the ranks of mediocre transfers. They sign on for a leg of the journey, to get to new training grounds and strengthen themselves, making some coin along the way.

This leg of the journey pays well, as it is dangerous, but there's not much left to sell, instead the merchants restock at the Ports and visit all the slightly inland villages between them as they head back to Landis.

The whole thing intrigues the little Tengu, and her exotic appearance intrigues them, with her fluffy black wings and her elaborate kimono, a garment they've never seen before. Only one of the guards, who is an actual transfer and not born in this world, even knows what a Tengu is.

"Did you random roll that class? Or did you come here from another continent?" The guard asks and Sora looks confused.

"Sora is Summoned, not a transfer. One of my Class abilities lets me call for Lieutenants to help me out, and she's one of them." Cain explains.

"Oh, like the Puppet Master of Gillibrand. He's got Summoned Lieutenants." Their leader says and the others nod in agreement.

"He's kind of a jerk though. If he had someone like Sora working the gates it would be much more pleasant to visit his city." A guard laughs.

"Is that along your trade route then?"

"Not quite, but close to it. They're very particular about who they let set up in the markets there. It's a popular place, but almost all transfers, since his puppets and summons take care of the essentials and city functions." The caravan leader says with a hand gesture that indicates his annoyance at the city that thinks they're too good for him.

"If the summons run the city, does he not go out to level up?" Cain asks.

"Nah, there's supposed to be a scaling dungeon in the city, always the same level as the person who enters it, so the rumor is he goes every morning before sending the summons to work."

Or he just sends the summons. What Cain knows, that very few others would, is that a Puppet Master gets experience from his summons actions no matter where they are.

Now that they've got the castle set up, Cain could do the same thing, and have his companions run dungeons on his behalf. His bonus experience passive won't be in effect if he's not in the dungeon with them, but it's still experience. As good as any other transfer gets, and much less work.

The other Puppet Master doesn't strike Cain as a do-it-yourself sort of person.. At least from what he's been told.

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