

Reincarnated With A Summoning System

Chapter 251

Cain leads everyone out of the carnival and back to the ship before new trouble can find them, setting an extra watch for the evening.

With the way Lancelot's son Odin had behaved, they didn't think that Human Supremacists were such an influential factor here. He knows it's similar with the Orcs to the west of them, insisting their territory is Orc Territory, but the Landis faction had seemed extremely open-minded about such things.

"Nila, we might need a new plan. Hanging out in the middle of someone else's civil war isn't my idea of a good time. I'll go ashore again tomorrow and see if I can get any answers."

None of them want to go back into town today, in case another group of gang members are waiting on them. Instead, they pass the afternoon on the Queen Rose while Nila teaches everyone to play poker.

Mid-afternoon, the dock gets visitors. A lot of visitors. Over two hundred rough-dressed, muscular men accompanied by two men in Blue and Silver robes storm past the handful of guards and on to the dock.

"In the name of the human resistance, these vessels now belong to the cause." As they make their proclamation, black sails are seen on the horizon, the civil war in the desert has spread to Landis, and they've broken the Naval lines.

The goons have already charged into the ships docked closest to the city; it is only their low priority position that has kept the Darklight Host safe so far. The merchants are trying to rally defenses to keep from losing their vessels, if not their lives to the insurgents, but it doesn't seem to be going well; there aren't many ships in Port.

"Nila, get us out to sea," Cain calls, and everyone springs into action. He immediately summons both lesser and greater Golems as sea monsters ordering them to attack the incoming ships with the black sails. Then he calls for the full complement of Seraphim Inquisitors, staying merged with two but sending the rest to clear the docks.

Holy Light strikes repeatedly, charring bodies and scorching the stone of the pier, but the attackers seem to have either blind faith or idiocy on their side.

"Fear Not, brothers. The gods favor us; no holy attack will harm the noble crusaders reclaiming the central continent for the humans." Their leader screams, and they begin to charge, ignoring the bolts of holy light that are killing them by the handful.

In under a minute, the dock is cleared, and everyone is beginning to set sail and run out their Cannons, preparing for a fight.

"We have signal flags. Do you want me to warn them they're making a mistake?" Nila suggests as they clear the stone piers and head for open water.

"Do it. Same as last time, we will have the monsters clear a gap and run through it."

Nila runs a red and white quartered flag up the mast, followed by a large all-black one with a golden wave shape. That should give them a hint. The first means they're headed into danger, the second is the sign this is a Wave Rider Raiding vessel. Cain had no idea where she obtained it, but it's going to come in handy today.

"It's a shame we don't have black sails; the Rose is so close to red already. We could have a proper Wave Rider Raiding vessel." Nila laughs, turning the ship towards the gap created by the monsters.

They're quickly outdistancing the other merchants, but that's to be expected and closing in hard on the flotilla. Once they're almost on top of them, Cain calls his unoccupied Supporters as Kone and floods the area with Dragons. Laura and Evangeline both call their Bonded Forces, and Cain calls back the Inquisitors who have been guarding the harbor while the other vessels got away.

The flying army tears into the ships, freezing and corroding away their sails and rigging, leaving them unable to run. A great cheer goes up from behind them, heedless of the Sea Monsters still attacking, and the merchants line up at their maximum speed to follow the Queen Rose.

In the next few minutes, a great many attacking ships are sunk, and the remainder are rendered helpless while the merchants flee. Cain went through his friend's list and found the two most likely to need this information, RhickJaymz, and Sergio.

[Nonhumans are being driven from the Landis Capital with help from the Senate. All mercantile vessels have fled. The city was attacked by a Pirate flotilla that is now essentially disabled. We are back at sea but will pass on any further news.]

Then he contacts the one person he knows who might make sense of this, the Blacksmith Lukas. He should be in the Capital right now, as he is a Royal Smith.

[What happened? We have just been run out of Landis, along with all the other merchants. There's a pair of Senators dead on the dock, killed while they attempted to seize the ships that were tied up there.]

[The Senators have tried to stage a coup. The rest are dead at the palace already. With the two at the dock, none survived. But many fighters from the desert have been brought in, and there is still fighting in the streets.] Lukas responds.

[Don't trust the city guards. They're with the attackers. We had a run-in with them earlier. Lancelot will have details.]

[I'm on it. Stay safe, and I'll keep you updated.]

Once they're all clear of the incoming vessels and well past the horizon, Cain slows down, and the merchants gather around the Queen Rose to share what information they have. It sounds like Landis is winning, but the ground battle in the desert has essentially ended, and the victors are moving south into Landis.

None of that is good news for most of them, but a few still have armor to sell, so they're headed for Tortuga to empty their holds and get away from the area with a decent profit.

Cain is just about to order Nila to make south for the Serrah Woods when he gets a message from Lukas:

[Landis stands. The fighting has died down now, and the enemy leaders have fallen. We have a piece of confidential cargo that needs to leave the kingdom as soon as possible, and the King would like to know if you can pick it up by Dragon and take it with you South.]

[Happy to help. I'll be there soon.]

"Laura, I'll need both of you for this. Landis has a package for us in the Capital to take south urgently. They've started getting things settled, but we might still be attacked coming in." Everyone looks startled, but nobody argues despite having been run out of town only hours ago.

"Should we wait or set sail?"

Cain considers Nila's suggestion a moment before deciding. "Start south, on a course that won't take you near shore until You've crossed the border of Serrah. We'll find you without any major troubles."

Cain mounts Laura, finding a comfortable spot between her wings where the ridges in her back form a basic saddle shape, and they fly off low to the waves, making them harder to see from the city where he can still hear fighting and see burning buildings.

[I'm incoming. Where do I need to be?]

[Come straight to the Royal Palace East Garden. We'll try to clean up this latest attack before you get here.]

A Raid party invitation follows the message, and Cain sees that Lukas is with Lancelot, the Royal Family, and a few others. Circling the heaviest battles, Cain comes towards the garden from the north. Most of the group leaders are holed up in a stone building.

Cain suspects it to be a mausoleum, while Lukas and Lancelot with a few of his Knights fight off a group of city guards out front.

"Laura, blanket the area in ice fog, but not inside that building. I don't want to freeze an innocent." Laura's ice-enhanced breath shreds the guards and leaves a lingering fog, hiding them from sight when they land.

"Good timing. They managed to block travel magic in and out of the city and killed all the Gryphons so we couldn't evacuate."

"If you need, I could send in a couple of hundred Dragons and end most of the fighting," Cain suggests.

"No, that would just make things worse. The pro-human faction found out that the Crown Prince had abdicated his position, in favor of moving to the Eastern Continent to take over his wife's Kingdom. Officially, that makes the second son the Crown Prince. The only problem is that the second son is well..."

"Not human." A young Fox kin man says, stepping into the open, his three tails flicking in annoyance.

"So they panicked and tried to take over to prevent a Beastkin on the throne? I suppose I can see why they'd feel that way, given their track record. Any of them that had been openly anti demihumans would now be enemies of the throne."

The Crown Prince nods. "We didn't realize how bad things had gotten. Everyone put on a perfect act in front of the Royal Family. It was when they hired mercenaries from the desert that they couldn't hide their intentions anymore. What we want is for you to take me into exile. My father will tell everyone I was killed, purge the ringleaders and any influential supporters they have for regicide and name the First Princess as the heir."

It's not an absurd plan. If the First Princess is capable. "Will that be alright? I don't know Landis customs, but a Princess as heir often leads to a power struggle as suitors fight to claim her power."

The Armored Knight beside the Prince gives a rather high-pitched laugh, raising her visor. "Knight-Captain Gurda. First Princess of Landis."

Honestly, she's more imposing than Lancelot, even with her armor dented and bloodied. She's over level 200 as well, which should be enough to secure her own power in the physical sense. The last question would be her political acumen.

When Cain sees the wistful look Lukas is giving her; he mentally wishes the man luck.. He'll need it.

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

Chapter 252

As they're talking, Cain remembers that he's got a gift for the family from Arial. He removes the small box from his inventory and holds it towards the King. "This might not be the time, but Arial, the Black Dragon of Earl RhickJaymz, sent this for the youngest Princess who is coming of age soon, or just did."

Gurda whoops in joy. "That's me. From Arial, you said? It must be good; she's got excellent taste."

She tucks it away as soon as it's in her hands, and Cain is about to ask how they know each other when he sees Laura sneaking up on Prince Sven, eyes firmly locked on his tails. The prince misunderstands, thinking she wants attention, and reaches to scratch her head at the same time that she takes two quick steps forward and embraces him with her front paws, burying her face in his three tails.

"Floof! Oh yeah, that's the good stuff."

"It looks like you've made a friend for life, Sven. Be careful, though, Dragons get possessive, and she's higher level than you. Plus, what is that quality? With a Tarnished Gold status plate is that Dragon Ancient?" The King asks with a mixture of amusement and confusion.

"Only in Quality. I'm still in the prime of my youth, thank you very much."

That makes Sven chuckle, and he gives up on trying to escape the affectionate advances on his tail fluff.

"Irreverent, unruly, and overwhelmingly powerful. Try not to let them corrupt you too much, brother." Gurda informs him in a severe tone.

"Enough joking. The fog won't last forever. How do we get him out without being noticed?" Lukas looks much more concerned than the others. Maybe he's actually a high-strung person?

"I could put him in a maid outfit and make everyone think I've rescued a lover from the palace," Cain suggests, and Sven throws up his hands in an X.

"No, not happening. Pick something else."

"Can you transform?" Sven shakes his head no.

"Can I transform you?" They all look confused, but nobody turns it down.

Cain calls one of the Nemu twins into a Merger with him, before activating [Troubadour's Transformation] and changing Prince Sven into a bobcat-sized, fluffy house cat. A middle aged fox woman coos at him, and Sven gives her a dirty look and hisses at her. It must be his mom. There are two other younger human women with the King as well, standing near the edge of the room, but if nobody is going to bother introducing them they must not be too important.

Though he is the younger Prince, the Fox woman is not the Queen, and doesn't seem to hold much status here beyond family, so she's likely either a consort or a mistress. That makes Cain look more closely at the highly fashionable King and realize that under the makeup, his eyes are yellowed and his skin is splotchy from heavy drinking.

Both of his surviving children look to have their act together, but the King appears barely cognizant of what is going on around him, as if he'd never paid attention before and this was all new to him despite his age. If appearances aren't deceiving, Cain is beginning to understand what went wrong in Landis. An oblivious drunkard with too much power for anyone to override his edicts turned a blind eye to the nation while his advisors in the Senate turned the nation against him and all non humans.

"Don't you think it will be suspicious, leaving with just a cat?" Lancelot asks.

Gurda claps him on the shoulder. "Good point; we need a better cover story. Maybe we really should send a maid with them?"

"I've got that covered. I am a Puppet Master after all." Cain takes a maid-dressed Puppet out and instructs her to get comfortable in Laura and raise her skirt.

The Landis Royals look scandalized, but Cain picks Sven up and places him under her dress before smoothing it down. "There, one pregnant Elf Maid. Hold on tight to the Prince."

The Puppet wraps her hands around Sven as if cradling her belly, and Cain mounts up.

"We're leaving now. Good luck."

The fox woman conjures a mangled body that looks like the Prince, and Cain takes to the air, sending the second Laura to a higher altitude and attacking anything that comes close as if he is defending her passenger.

[Area Message: Crown Prince Sven has been removed from the Royal Family. Gurda becomes Crown Princess.]

The announcement stops most of the fighting almost instantly, some cheering, some gloating, but most simply disappear from the streets, afraid of being identified and

hunted down as insurgents later should the Revolution ultimately fail to overturn the Monarchy. Mercenaries have already begun to regroup and move towards the outer perimeter when Cain loses sight of the city, headed back for the Queen Rose.

Sven manages to escape from the Puppet not long after they lose sight of the city, changing his shape back and taking a seat on Laura, while the Puppet wraps him in a hug, following her directions to keep a good hold on him. Laura would have complained about the extra weight, but the wind was whipping past, making his tail fur tickle her scales, so she decided it could wait until they landed.

There are scattered signs of the Naval battle still visible in the water, damaged vessels, debris, floating cargo. Any Pirate ship that could still move has fled the area; if any did survive the battle intact.

There are a number of Navy vessels still in the harbor unmanned and Cain sees many more out at sea as they leave. Some show signs of damage, but nothing major and they're making no attempt to assist in the battle in the city. That might be orders to guard the waters, or it might be indifference to the chaos in the city, it's impossible to tell from up here.

According to the summons, roughly a third of their numbers turned on the others and tried to save the Pirate fleet, being summarily sunk by their former compatriots or the Octopus in return.

Cain has Laura drop low to the water, close enough that he can talk with their guest, and Sven decides to start with his most pressing concern. "Your maid is cute and all, but isn't she too affectionate and obedient?"

"Puppets follow orders. I don't have the skill that makes them more intelligent and autonomous yet. She won't let you go until instructed to. If you jumped off, she'd go with you."

As they get closer to the ship, Cain notices a lot of flying creatures and churning the water. Thinking they're under attack, he brings up his interface and finds that it's just the Inquisitors and the Giant Armored Octopus relaxing after the Naval battle. They'd all been wandering around looking for targets until they found the Queen Rose again. Now they're bored and playing a game of catch in the ocean.

Since it's safe, Cain sends Laura to land on deck, letting Sven dismount, while the Puppet holds him from behind.

"You can let him go now," Cain instructs, and the Puppet almost looks sad to release him.

"Everyone meet Sven. Formerly Crown Prince of Landis. He'll be traveling with us for the time being until we find a good and safe spot for him to settle, or he decides to join our little family of misfits."

"Hello, everyone. It's a pleasure to meet you all, and we thank you for helping us during our time of need."

"The pleasure is all ours. Did you have any destination in particular in mind? Or would you prefer anonymity?" Vala asks.

"The Demon Kingdom might be the safest. No decent human would set foot there. No offense to, wait, are there any other humans on this crew?" Sven says, looking at Cain.

Misha raises her hand. "Since Cain isn't actually human anymore, I'm the only one in the group." The Prince does a double-take, having just now inspected Cain with his interface.

"You aren't human. The transformation hides it from casual view. Fascinating."

Cain also takes the opportunity to inspect Prince Sven. Other than the fact his tails are very much to Laura's preference, he knows next to nothing about the man.

[Name] Sven Landis

[Race] Spirit Fox

[Class] Wraith Shaper

[Level] 76

"What is the specialty of a Wraith Shaper?" Cain asks, unfamiliar with the class.

"It's a racial exclusive. We specialize in rapier-style sword fighting and illusion magic. I can make mirages that cover over an acre. It's perfect for hiding, diversions, and ambushes." An acre of hidden soldiers or traps? That would be brilliant. Cain double checks to make sure Sven is recorded as a Supporter before hiding his interface screen away again.

Cain and Nila share an intrigued look at that description. He's incredibly well suited to be a sailor, or in Cain's estimation, even a Commander. He's thinking of all the fun they could have making enemies attack a disguised fortress when Nila pokes him and Cain realizes he's been quiet too long.

"That sounds like a very versatile class. If you enjoy a life at sea, you might make an excellent Captain, able to sneak by Pirates and Blockades alike with ease. Or we could

find you a position in command of a smaller fortress? An acre worth of mirage would keep intruders thoroughly lost."

"I never thought of it that way. As the younger Prince, and under the King's explicit directions, my training focused on using it to impress and deceive foreign dignitaries. It's going to be a bit of an adjustment."

"You could be a kept man. Find a Sugar Momma to brush your tail and pet your head." Nemu jokes, and Sven shudders in horror.

"Preferably not. It was bad enough as a Royal. Now that I'm out of the castle, I can finally make some of my own decisions."

"You'll have plenty of time to think; we're going to take a roundabout route at sea before going to the Serrah Woods. I doubt anyone is following us, but they might have hired someone to wait for ships trying to flee during the fighting. Everything north of Landis was already in the middle of a civil war, most of the way to Pampa." Cain says with a shrug, heading for the hammock.

He dismisses the Seraphim but not the Giant Armored Octopus. Those he leaves to roam the ocean to guard against attacks. They're also happy to fish for the crew, bringing fresh fish to their daily meals and reducing the strain on the stored goods.

Once they got a few days south of Landis, a strange message came up when they tried using the Guild Bank. [Maximum Distance From Guild Property Exceeded]. Until they purchase a Guild House down at this end of the continent, they will be unable to access anything but the stored money from the Guild Bank.

Somewhat inconvenient, but they brought enough supplies with them to last several months, and Laura loaded her limited inventory with bulk sweets.

The days at sea got cooler and wetter as they traveled south, and they slowly realized that seasons were an actual thing when you weren't in the bone dry and scorching all year-long desert or the sheltered Beginners Valley.

Outfits also got heavier and more protective as they went, and the deck less crowded, with the covered wheelhouse becoming the preferred spot for those on duty. Mythryll's limited amounts of Fire Magic saved them a great deal of hassle, keeping the stove heated to warm the ship's inside as temperatures dropped towards freezing overnight.

They've certainly gone beyond what anyone might be patrolling, so Nila decides to take them northwest back towards the central continent the first time they see signs that there might be ice or snow in their future.

This was intended to be a vacation, they've got no intentions of dodging icebergs just to remain hidden.

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

Chapter 253

The weather started to turn foggy, and the position of watchman atop the mast became a full time job. Mostly they watched for over vessels, while the Giant Armored Octopus kept an eye out for underwater monsters. There weren't many to be found, but they had been catching one almost every day since the weather started to get cold.

If it weren't for the temperature, the white fog against the blue of the sea and gray sky would actually make for a beautiful day. Everyone had spent at least some time out in the cold just to enjoy the view, limited as it might be by the fog. This also marked the first time since arriving in this world that any of the transfers had truly longed for a camera, or even art skills good enough to replicate what they were seeing. Especially when the bored Giant Armored Octopus would play with each other in the waters near the boat.

In the afternoon of the second day of heavy fog, the Octopus reported that the water was getting very shallow. Which, according to their charts, shouldn't be correct. The seas in this world weren't the best explored, but finding an island in what should be among the planet's deepest oceans was a true anomaly.

They took another sighting to determine their location and found again that the chart said they were in the dead zone, too far east to be on any of the major trade routes and over a thousand nautical miles from land.

The Octopus was the first to spot the island in the fog, surrounded by floating icebergs and snow. The summons were happy to clear the route for them, and Nila carefully guided the Queen Rose into a protected bay before setting anchor so they could explore the mysterious and Snow covered island.

The plan was to have Laura and Cain explore the area, as both can be formidable Dragons who are unbothered by the cold. Flying seems like a much safer way to explore, and Evangeline is not a fan of the cold in any way shape or form, so it seemed like it would be best for the two of them to see if the island was occupied.

"Fly out for ten minutes and then return. We don't want to be gone too long or get too far away from the ship." Cain instructs both clones of Laura before transforming into the Golden Proto Dragon and taking to the air.

He decides to check straight up the center of the island, not knowing yet what size it is. But once they've gained enough altitude to begin the survey, Cain and Laura realize

that the island is only a few Kilometers across, with a small village in the caldera of an old volcano.

They drop back to just above the fog, landing a few hundred meters from the village and transforming into smaller forms so as not to scare the locals. The wind immediately cuts into Cain's human skin, so he adds a thick fur cape to the outfit, wrapping himself up and disregarding the fashion.

They could see activity from the air, so the village isn't abandoned, but it wasn't possible to tell what lived there. Humanoids under 2 meters tall with white robes, but that doesn't narrow it down much.

Waking closer through the fog, they can make out the details of the people inside. They're Yuki Onna or Snow Women, an ice element Youkai. There are a handful of Yeti serving as guards patrolling the area, so Cain steps out into the open and waits until he's noticed. It's only a few seconds before a pair of huge Yeti guards come running over, and Laura tenses up to attack before Cain stops her with a pat on the head.

The Yeti are well over 3 meters tall, built like a Polar bear designed to stand upright and just as furry, but they don't look particularly angry or aggressive.

"State your name and business here, traveler." The Yeti insists in a surprisingly pleasant and soft-toned voice.

The language is strange, Cain understands it, but he can swear it's not the common language. It takes him a second before realizing it's the language he knew in his previous life. Hence, he responds the same way, finding that the language now feels dull and difficult for his mouth to form as if he had never used it and was trying to Mimic a foreign accent from memory.

"My name is Cain. We happened across the island during our travels and came to see if it was inhabited. We have some trade goods if you are short on anything."

Both Yeti look startled when Cain answers, and he can see Laura giving him a strange look, but the guards aren't getting aggressive. Instead, one whistles over a passing Snow Woman and whispers something to her.

"Hello, I am Eri. I will be your guide to the village Elders; they take care of all business involving outsiders." She's a very slender, white-haired, ice white skinned woman roughly 165cm tall. The thick blue dress and the soft curve of her body indicate that Eri is, in fact, female, but the board flat chest suggests she might actually be a beautiful man.

Eri didn't speak as they walked, nor did anyone else, though many stopped to stare at Cain with a clone of Laura on each shoulder as he is escorted to the middle of town. Seeing the locals is unnerving. They're all similarly dressed and all very slender in build,

but it's the faces that get to Cain. They're not quite clones but so close that his brain wants them to be identical for ease of comprehension.

Eri is one of the tallest they've seen, with many being no more than 150cm tall, though all appear to be adults. No children are visible anywhere in the village.

Along with a few dozen more Yeti, there is also an assortment of Ice Harpies, wing-armed humanoids with beaked heads, bird feet, and blue to gray feathers. Cain did his best to record every new variety and class they came across, expanding his repertoire of ice-type creatures.

"This is the council building. The Elders will meet you inside." Eri says politely when they reach the large stone hut in the center of town, waving them in but remaining outside herself.

The Snow Woman Elders also look very similar, though with age wrinkled faces, and Cain doesn't see any men among them. That shouldn't surprise him, given what he knows of the species, but somehow it does. Yeti don't seem to show their age, only get bigger, and Cain is mostly unable to tell Harpies apart by anything other than feather color.

"You are the first traveler in a long time to speak Youkai." A furry Yeti elder whose head nearly touches the ceiling greets them, having a deep and hoarse voice instead of the soft and gentle voices of the guards. Perhaps those were female Yeti? They all wear skirts of white wool, and Cain didn't think to find a way to differentiate them.

"It is an old memory, nearly forgotten, but I'm glad we could talk to each other." Cain smiles back with a polite nod. One of the others growls at him, and Cain turns towards the voice, confused.

"Are you flirting with my husband, human?" The Yeti Elder growls at him.

"You mistake me. That is brotherly camaraderie. I'm a male human and uninterested in other males that way." His explanation calms the Elder down, but the Snow Women and Harpies are laughing at her.

"Harpies and Yuki Onna are all females, you see. She's never seen a man that isn't a Yeti or a dragon." Despite her age, Cain can tell the Snow Woman Elder used to be a beauty in her youth, and extremely similar in appearance to the others in this island, with pale hair and skin that looks like they've been frozen to death.

"Is that why I don't see any children?" Cain asks, curious.

"There are some, but they're in school right now. The Clan of Woolly Ice Dragons that create the fog that hides us sometimes take a lover from the other species, but not often enough that we have many children and Yeti can only have children with each other."

"I didn't see any Wooly Dragons," Laura says with a hint of sadness in her tone.

"They're likely sleeping in the fog. The Wooly Ice Dragons sleep a lot during the winter. Almost enough to say they hibernate." The Yeti Elder explains.

"Since we're here, is there anything that your village needs? We don't have full stock, but we carry many things."

"Other than a way off this rock to resupply? Maybe some snacks? We have plenty of fish and walrus and whales, very little in the way of berries and summer vegetables, but no sugar." Laura looks horrified at this revelation and flies over to hug the Elder. Or at least the side of her neck, as that's as much as the Pixie Dragon can reach without changing forms.

"I believe we can help you with all of those things. The Guild System should let me create a portal to our other houses if I can find a building big enough to qualify here. But the crew is undoubtedly well supplied with sugary treats.

"There are no buildings that big. Too hard to keep comfortable, and the Dragons wouldn't allow it. But we might be able to work out a portal solution. Are you familiar with the intercity portals?"

"I am, but can they reach this far? We're from the north side of the central continent." Cain wonders what she's got in mind, as he's confident he hasn't heard of city portals leading between continents.

"If there is a Youkai on the other end, our Elders can create a portal to them. We only need to send someone with you to your home and then go to them. It's a unique spell from the southern continent."

"We've got three Tengu already at the castle. Sora, who is my Lieutenant, and adolescent twins. But I don't know how to link your spell to them."

"Youkai on the Central Continent? That should be easy to sort out." The Elder focuses for a moment and then smiles.

"Three Tengu in a castle in the desert? That might be the worst possible place for us to create a portal, but I can do it."

"If it helps, the portal room that we use is underground, in a cool dark basement area. You can go from there to the other underground areas without going up into the sun. It's hot enough out in the open that I almost melt; I understand where you're coming from."

Cain's joke puts everyone at ease, and they begin to joke with each other, breaking the subtle tension in the air.

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

Chapter 254

[Sora, please go to the Castle portal room and meet some guests? They should be there within ten minutes and will have a lot of shopping they need to get done but can't do for themselves.] Cain sends in Guild chat once the Elder confirms that she can indeed create a portal.

"Now, once it's connected, are there restrictions?"

"More than a few. But the most important ones are that only living creatures that have come from this side can return through it, so it can't be used to abduct anyone, and the Youkai at the other end must welcome you before you can fully exit the portal. Until then, you must remain touching it. If they reject you, you'll be sent back home."

"So it's limited to Youkai visiting friends? That explains why it never caught on for general purposes." Laura giggles, and the Elder smiles.

"But today, we will be able to use it to get supplies. We were banished from the Youkai settlements of the southern continent because of our ice Affinity. There are other places like this, hidden all around the world for affinities that weren't compatible with the tropical climate of our homeland. Most Youkai don't die of old age, but there were never many of us, and it's only a dozen species with incompatible affinities, so a few islands were enough."

Cain's eyes light up at this news. "There are more species here?"

"Not that care to interact with others. If you're in a 'difficult situation,' I'm sure that one of the ladies or the Harpies would be glad to help you." Her insinuation makes Laura giggle.

"As cute as Miss Eri was, I've already been spoken for. She's waiting for us back on the ship, Laura and I only came alone because we can fly and don't mind the cold."

The female Yeti elder looks confused at that announcement. "Humans can fly? But you don't even have wings."

"I can transform when I need to be in a nonhuman shape. I fly in Dragon form." Cain explains, but it doesn't change the expression on her face. That's fine; she can figure it out later or ask someone to explain it privately.

Eri comes in a few seconds later, her arrival with a large neutral cart breaking the tension in the room caused by the Yeti Elder's confusion. "I'm ready to go whenever you need me, Chief. You said we're meeting with a Tengu?"

"No, you're meeting with a Tengu. I'm going nowhere near the desert. You've got the list of things we need, along with the items to trade. If they don't want them, come back, and we'll find other things." The Chief explains to the younger woman.

"Might I ask, what does she have to trade? I can save trouble if it's not something they will have a use for.

"I brought Frost Iron and Icedrop Gems. They're both excellent Ice Element materials that the island has in abundance. Will they suffice?"

Materials of any sort are always in demand by the Guild crafters. Especially rare Elemental items. "Yes, I do believe they'll want those. Tell Sora, who is the Tengu you'll be meeting, to call for some of the crafters, and they'll sort everything out."

The Elder seems quite eager to open the portal, creating it right in the middle of the council hut. The portal itself is a shimmering surface, almost like a heat mirage, and right now the view through it shows the portal room in the castle. Cain moves a little, so he can see who is on the other side, and Sora waves to him as Eri pulls the cart through. He can't hear what they're saying, but Sora nods along then calls a Summon to get someone, returning moments later with Char and Ragnar.

They look startled to see Cain through the open portal that has appeared at the edge of the room they're in, but get right to business and start loading up the cart, mostly with foodstuff plus some wood and other materials.

The Dwarf looks ecstatic about the Frost Iron, and Char tells someone Cain can't see about the Gems, her hand gestures with no accompanying sound giving Laura a good laugh before Char and Ragnar collect both trade items and start loading more bags onto the hapless Snow Woman, as the cart can't hold anymore.

She's passing them through to this side as fast as possible Cain can see Sora laughing as Char pulls out more and more.

"You didn't ask for the entire value of those hundred kilos of Frost Iron in food, did you?" Cain asks, and the Chief shakes her head.

"No, see there's those materials too, for upgrading the misdirection barrier that hides the island. With those, unfortunate souls like you shouldn't happen upon us by accident."

Rare metals by the kilo are already expensive, but to pay for a hundred, Char and Ragnar must have bought out a produce market or two. The stream of sacks just

doesn't end, they must have people buying items and placing them in the Guild Bank for them to transfer.

"I hope you've got a lot of people here. Because that metal is quite valuable in the desert." Cain laughs as the food bags start piling up, forcing the Yeti elders to begin moving it outside.

"We've got magic to store it, never you fear. But that's an awful lot. I hope the cellar is big enough."

They finish transferring the groceries, and Eri returns with the cart full of assorted nonfood items, back slumped in exhaustion from transferring all the foodstuffs.

"That's everything. Even the turnips for the Harpies." The beaked Elder cheers in victory, and Cain laughs. Are turnips their favorite food? They're definitely in luck trading with the Darklight Host, turnips are the easiest to grow crop around Montauk, so they're cheap and plentiful year-round. The locals do their best to disguise them with spices and other ingredients, but they're the staple food of the poor; even potatoes and rice are more valuable.

"Do you have pickaxes? We'll trade mammoth fur goods for them. Not many of us can stand the heat, so we're very short on any Smithy workers." The Yeti representative asks, and Cain checks his inventory before asking the others in the group. He's got a bunch for the mining Golems, but nobody else has any.

"I've got a bunch of Green Quality pickaxes. I could spare you forty or so if you need that many." That's about half the total number that Cain has.

"Ten is enough to keep digging the Frost Iron to trade. Next time I will put them on the list of things we need."

They have a collection of hooded coats and boots covered in thick white fur, along with mittens in a softer hide that reminds Cain of rabbit fur. Cain gathers enough for the whole group and hands them the tools, happy with the exchange.

"You must go now before it gets dark. The misdirection spells will move your ship, and if you're not on it, you'll be trapped here." The Yeti Elder explains, looking happily at his new pickaxe.

"It was a pleasure meeting you all. You know how to contact my Guild in the future, and if I get a Guild House built somewhere with a suitably cold climate, I'll be sure to have Sora inform you."

As soon as they step outside, Cain transforms back into the Golden Proto Dragon and takes to the sky. This time, he sees the Wooly Ice Dragons, or at least half a head that is poking out of the cave they're hiding in. They look terrified of the three unfamiliar

Dragons though, and he's on a schedule, so Cain heads back to the ship and distributes the winter gear without stopping to record more than the one that he saw.

In this cold, everyone has given up on the idea of using Merger, finding that the extra body heat matters more than the extra space. Despite the stove heating the cabin, Cain's arrival with winter gear is enthusiastically welcomed. Everyone is eager to try on the warm furs, the Companions even going as far as having Nemu use [Troubadour's Transformation] to put them all into forms that can wear a nice warm outfit.

Cain piles the the new winter gear on the floor of the cabin for everyone to pick from and soon the ship's interior is full of fur-clad bodies and happy Companions. Prince Sven just looks like a big fluff ball, with his snowy white tails poking out from a white fur floor length coat. The effect is almost magnetic, he simply draws the fluff loving Laura to him, the Pixie sized Dragon snuggling in his warmth and causing him to give a resigned sigh.

As the Elders warned him, just after dark, they find that the ship is no longer anchored near the island, instead being somewhere in the open ocean with the anchor swinging freely beneath them. It's quickly hauled back up, and the Giant Armored Octopus are Summoned to defend the ship against any attack.

Dimnys finally sends a happy message about the Frost Iron just before dawn, having spent all night in the Demon King's castle studying the Dwarven Smithing Book with the Dark Dwarven Masters there. She's been staying in their new Keep in the Demon Capital, right next to the Smithing district which powers their forges from a river of hellfire that runs through the city.

Dimnys explains that it was vacant because of its location. To the Dark Dwarves wealthy enough for a Keep in the city, it's too far from the forges, almost a kilometer. To the Demons, it's too close to the forges, where they'll hear them the second they step out of the soundproof building or open a window. So it just sat empty since it came into the Demon King's possession over a year ago.

It sounds like an exciting place, and Dimnys insists that he must visit to fully appreciate the architecture, leaving out any other details about the building itself. She certainly seems to be enjoying the gift of knowledge though, if she's going to be up until dawn practicing.

With the return of the morning light, Nila can finally get their bearings, finding that they're less than a hundred Knots off the south coast of the Central Continent and should be under a hundred and fifty from one of the resorts they wanted to visit. With the speeds achievable through the combination of water and wind magic, they'll be there by lunch.

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

Chapter 255

The port of Sylvan Lake is an elegant wooden pier extending out into the ocean, only a kilometer from where a sparkling blue lake of mountain runoff can be seen between the gigantic Redwood trees. There are several Wave Rider and other Elven vessels docked here, but no human ones and Cain recalls that they were in a trade war with Landis, prohibiting the human Kingdom from getting Elven Tea.

He instructs all the Companions to Merge again, as the weather here is a muggy tropical heat, making a large number of bodies below deck undesirable, and they're going to be headed to shore soon, which brings up the question of what form Cain himself is going to be traveling in today.

"Are you going to be an Elf this time? You know you want to. Just a strapping young Wave Rider, with calloused hands and strong arms." Nila teases Cain as they slowly approach, looking for a good spot to dock.

"If they're anti-human, we could disguise Misha too, and then they won't have a reason to complain." Evangeline points out.

"It almost feels like I'm doing something wrong. Like we're tricking them for no good reason," Cain says, shifting into the form of a larger than usual Wave Rider man they saw working one of the vessels in Tortuga.

Misha looks down at her petite Felian form and sighs. "Why must I always be the tiny cat girl?"

"If you were bigger, you'd be hard to carry." Cain laughs, tossing her up in the air and catching her to kiss her nose.

Prince Sven laughs at that, ignoring the fact Laura is buried in his tails again. She's been doing that ever since it got cold out.

Two Elven vessels with visible Cannons come out to meet them, directing them to a mooring ball not far from the dock. The actual landing seems reserved for merchants actively doing business; anyone just waiting or visiting goes to the moorings and comes in by dinghy. The Elves helpfully assist them in tying off before a customs officer comes to the railing to greet them.

“Welcome to Sylvan Lake Marina. Please note that no humans, gnomes, or openly carried weapons are allowed in town or at the lake. Will you be loading bulk cargo this visit?”

The officer directed the questions at Cain, who was now glad they thought to transform before arrival, despite his initial qualms. “Noted, thank you, officer. We’re just here to visit on our journey to the west side of the continent.”

“Enjoy your stay then.” Cain can feel that they’re using some ability to search the vessel but transformed Misha will show up as Felian to most scans, and Cain isn’t human to begin with, so they should be fine.

The cold war with the humans, Cain understands. But what did the Gnomes do to get their entire species banned from town? The possibilities are endless, and the question gets stuck in Cain’s mind most of the way to shore, despite the spectacular view of the tropical forest.

Vala swings her hand through the water as they lower and board the dinghy, smiling happily at the golden sand underneath the ocean.

“The water here is so warm it’s almost a bath. I wonder what the lake is like?”

A small splash signals Laura’s Dragon Pixie form diving into the ocean, and Nemu splashes water at her when she surfaces.

“It’s swimming weather again for sure.” The Felian laughs.

The wooden pier is impressive, but the village beyond it is even more so. Nature magic has been used to create a tangle of houses from living trees, fragrant herbs and flowers grow everywhere, and will o wisps hover in the foliage giving the whole area an ethereal feel the moment you step out of sight of the shore.

Vala and Evangeline are getting a lot of attention from the men, while Cain is getting smiles from almost every woman they pass, much to Misha’s annoyance. In this form, even clinging to him doesn’t stop them, as they don’t see the Felian she appears to be and the Wave Rider man as a pair. She also can’t help but notice the skimpy leaf-themed outfits the locals are wearing.

“Why don’t we go for a hike to the lake? See what we can find, and then we’ll come back into town and find some food?” Evangeline suggests, and a happy squeal comes from beside them.

“How about the hot springs? Will you come with me to see them? They’re so good on the wings, and my friends will love you.” A young fairy cheers, landing on the Seraphim’s top wing.

That doesn't sound bad, so they let the fairy lead them through the woods to a small waterfall. "Wash first. Then come through the falls, and the hot springs are inside."

The fairy flies through quickly, and the group exchanges amused glances at the tiny creature's enthusiasm. They strip to their swimsuits and towards the waterfall when the laughter of an Elf stops them. After all, the fairies might be messing with them.

"No clothes in the hot springs. I know you've been around humans, but that's just common sense." The older woman laughs.

Evangeline cheers, happy that someone else agrees with her 'clothes should be strictly optional' policy, while Cain and Sven shrug and unequips their trunks.

The Old Lady led them to the proper etiquette; there were fifty Elves in here plus dozens of fairies, which promptly swarmed Evangeline, making everyone laugh.

"This looks like it's a local secret, but the fairies wanted to meet Evangeline." Sven explains to the locals as the Seraphim steps into the hot water to force the fairies off of her.

"No wonder. I've lived in the village for almost four centuries now, and that's the first time I've seen one here. The last ones I saw were during the war." An Elven man with long green hair says, looking at the feathery white wings.

"And a Six winged one as well. How lucky is your crew to find members like that?"

Misha crawls into Cain's lap to deflect attention and chase away the overly friendly Elven women, not realizing that she will simply be cuddled in a new location. "You have no idea. The amount of pure insane luck our Guild has met with since we left the Beginners Valley is beyond my ability to describe."

[It's mostly not sexual, Serrah Forest Elves are even more physical than Nemu. Just go with it.] Nila sends a private message to Misha as a young Elven woman comes over and hugs her.

"Hi, I'm Fran. If the fairies like you, you must be good people. Can I touch your ears? They look so fluffy."

[See. Worse than Nemu.]

They've been meeting with the local Elves for about ten minutes when a bell rings outside and half the crowd runs out.

"It's the chef from our local restaurant. When there are many people here, he brings puddings and fruit." One of the fairies explains.

Cain nods to Send Nila out to get puddings, and she comes back in with one of a dozen assorted trays set up on the rocks along the side of the cave.

“Since we’ve got new visitors, I should explain. The Sylvan Lake Elves share everything. It’s just how we are. Clothes, food, partners. Everything in the village belongs to the villagers as a whole. Our agreed personal space is our bedrooms, so if you wish for privacy, you won’t find much here.” One of the younger Elves explains as he feeds a berry to an Elf who isn’t in reach of the food.

“So the treehouses aren’t for separate families?” Vala asks him, and he shakes his head.

“They’re separated by ages mostly. Only parents with young children live in a single group to look after them until they can look out for themselves. After that, everyone picks an empty spot they like and moves around from time to time as their mood changes, or they want to pursue a hobby with a different group.”

“There’s only two hundred of us anyhow, and after a century or two together, you get pretty comfortable around everyone.” The girl petting Misha’s ears says, giggles when she finds the sweet spot, and Misha begins to purr.

“One hundred eighty-six right now after that group left to look for Mole Dogs. They got obsessed with them a few decades back and wanted to see them in person.” Another youth adds helpfully.

Cain laughs, recalling his run-in with them inside a dungeon. “They’re cute when their riders aren’t telling them to bite your face off.”

Nila and Mythryll nod enthusiastically. “The Mole Dog Rodeo has to be one of the coolest things I’ve ever seen.”

That leads to a long conversation about Mole Dogs, as the long-lived forest dwellers are always keen to learn new things. Cain even ends up Summoning one outside the waterfall when they leave to see the lake, just before sunset.

The walk to the lake is amazing. Will o wisps light the Redwood trees, and reflect off the polished rocks that form the pathway, before the trail enters a clearing and the crystal clear waters of the lake come into sight, surrounded by artistically woven vine brunches and manicured picnic spots.

In contrast to the springs and the lukewarm ocean, the lake is quite cold. The Elves inform them that there is an enchanted mountain range just inland that stays snow-covered all year, and the glaciers run straight here. The forest gets a lot of rain, which the mountains enchantment turns to snow, but being in a tropical climate, it constantly melts, giving them a steady supply of cold clear water.

Despite many invitations to stay, the group decides to head back to Queen Rose for the evening and rejoin the Elves in the morning for breakfast. A few of the Elves follow them to the dock to wave goodbye, and Cain starts to wonder if they've accidentally infiltrated a friendly nudist Cult.

Probably, but it doesn't seem like too bad of an outcome.

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

Chapter 256

The following day they come back to shore at first light, eager to try the authentic cuisine of the town, having only tried their collection of vegan puddings and fruits yesterday.

Breakfast at what looks like the only restaurant that's open in the morning is both extravagant and familiar at the same time. Fruits, pancakes, that Elven version of French toast made with almond milk and bananas, oatmeal and finally herb roasted potatoes, a leafy salad, and what Cain was confident were eggs until he tried them and found it to be an apple cinnamon-flavored tofu.

As expected from the description of the local Elves lifestyle yesterday, it's served as a buffet, and all the locals drop in and find someone to eat with unless they're absorbed in another activity.

Reading at the breakfast table seems to be a popular pastime, and Vala has gone to join what looks like a book club. The rest of the ladies, plus Sven, are planning on a swim in the ocean today, followed by a nap, food, and another visit to the hot springs.

Cain had learned that there's a level 200 dungeon here, so he's planning to visit there at some point today. According to the locals, it's filled with Dark Fae, and Cain can always use more forms to add to his collection of summons. Dark Fae are Nila's faction for Summoning and improvement, and he's gathered a lot of them already, even more than the types of Beastkin he's found, but there's still a long way to go until he can make her Legendary.

Next to Vala's new book club friends, a group of Elves is deep in a discussion about the evolution of Dragons, and that gives Cain an idea. They're debating what exactly a Proto Dragon would have looked like, and not only does he already know, it could help him complete the dungeon more quickly.

"If you would love to know for certain, I have a Golden Proto Dragon among my transformations. Give me a moment to head to the local dungeon first, and then I can show you for certain."

"Thank you so much. We can wait for you to finish your morning dungeon run; not a problem. Do you know where the surf beach is? It's big enough for Dragons and away from the anchorage. Could we meet you there?"

Nemu turns to give the group an eager look. "Did you say surfing? Is there somewhere we can get boards? I want to go surfing."

"There's a board shop near the beach, next to the smoothie shop. You should try that too, the smoothies are way too good to not know about. It's run by a transfer that uses Ice magic to make slushy drinks out of fruit juice. The good boards are a little expensive, but they've got some rentals if you get there early."

The ladies discuss the options between themselves for a few seconds before Nemu announces they've come to a decision. "We will all go surfing, then relax on the beach. Misha wants to go with Cain, so you two can do the dungeon together and then meet us at the beach to show the Dragon researchers what a Proto Dragon looks like. I'll bet the sun will feel perfect on the scales."

The dungeon is on the way to the surf beach, so they all go that far together, assuring the Elves that the two of them can handle a level 200 dungeon together. Mythryll adjusts her plans and decides to go with them at the last minute, not wanting to miss out on the experience gains, exchanging her beachwear for armor, and following them in.

[Laura, merge with the extra clones when they appear. I'm going to do this one in Dragon form.] Cain warns his companion, who gives him a sloppy salute in return.

Once they're inside, Cain calls a half dozen clones of Kone and transforms into the Golden Proto Dragon, activating Ancient Resistance to triple the copies of Su and their Drakes.

The Dark Fae in this dungeon are geared up for war, heavily armed, and prepared to be attacked. Even with the sudden appearance of so many Dragons, they're not deterred. Within seconds they're sending a flurry of arrows towards the intruders, forcing Cain to shelter Misha and Mythryll under his wings.

As the arrows fly, the troll heavy front lines charge, reaching the grounded Dragons only a second after the first volley lands.

The fighting style of the dark nymphs that follow the Trolls reminds Cain of the Dark Elven sword techniques that he learned. Their preference is dual blades in a very graceful, flowing attack pattern. Most of them were stopped at the first rank of Drakes, but a small group charged past, recognizing Cain as the most significant threat in sight

and desperate to get to him before he takes to the air where he'll be almost impossible to kill.

Unlike other dungeons they've visited, these are hardened veterans of the Great War, and they've faced armies of other species before.

As the Dark Nymphs charge, they're joined by a group of black barked Corrupted Treants which hurl their shields forward in front of them as they run, expertly intercepting the first wave of Cain's fiery breath with no visible damage to themselves. Cain surges forward to meet them, claws ringing against branches and steel blades while his jaws snap at the nimble forms of boggarts and Dark Nymphs as the Fae work as a group to keep him from rampaging.

Misha and Mythryll are shocked at this turn of events; in the past, their enemies have mostly been feral and incompetent. But these Fae aren't driven mad by the dungeon; they're still a cohesive army. Or perhaps they were expecting Dragons, and Cain's tactic caused a moment of clarity?

There weren't enough Dark Fae near the entrance to hold the Drakes for long, and Cain's army had started to spread out, the healing Auras of Kone and Su slowly mending wounds and repairing crushed scales of the survivors while reinforcements are Summoned to replace the fallen.

Mythryll's Vines grab the fighters attacking Cain, pinning them in place as enormous claws and Misha's Holy flames end their lives. Bark, scales, and fur fly and burn as the Dark Fae make one last desperate attempt to fell the mighty Proto Dragon, but it's ultimately in vain. For the moment, the area is clear, and Cain calls back the two out of six Kone clones that the first wave managed to take out.

"Well, that was unexpected. Calling Dragons just pulled everything in sight. They're good too; the Elves probably use stealth to grab a small group at a time." Mythryll mumbles, looking around at the carnage.

Misha glances over at the ongoing battle, where the snarls, growls, and roars draw more opponents over to where the fighting is most intense. Every few minutes, Cain calls another supporter to reinforce the lines as one after another falls.

Like this, they're able to clear the Beastkin army slowly. It looked like a small number initially, but most were hidden in the forest or in underground bunkers, and the numbers never seemed to dwindle until the very end.

They're just beginning to clean the stragglers from the tunnels and bunkers with Dragon Fire when a bright light appears in the distance, and a System message comes in.

[Class Quest: Spread the Gospel] Eliminate target to prove the might of the Dark Gods.

[Quest Reward: Random]

“Spread the Gospel? That’s got to be a quest for you, right, Misha?” Mythryll asks, looking at the notification.

“Yeah, it’s me. But where is this enemy?” She’s still speaking when Cain’s claw suddenly streaks past her face, intercepting the blade of a green skinned Dryad with a crown on her head.

“Right here, human.” The Dark Fae Queen laughs, rapidly launching attacks, trying to get through Cain’s defenses to kill the Healer.

Mythryll tried to bind her, but the Vines were dismissed with a flick of the Queen’s fingers. The Holy Flames Misha sends her way do a better job, but she can’t keep them up long before needing to stick to healing Cain, who has the Dark Dryad on his back, attacking his wings and his head, where he has trouble reaching her.

Fortunately, Cain is very durable, and her efforts haven’t gotten his health below two-thirds, but even that much damage is incredible by any reasonable standards.

The blood has made Cain’s back slippery, and the Queen stumbles as she dodges a swipe of his tail, sliding down Cain’s side to be pinned by his claws and repeatedly brutally scorched by the combination of his breath and Misha’s Holy Fire.

[Quest Complete]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

Mythryll pokes Misha, who looks distracted by whatever notification she got from the quest completion. “Well, what was the Random Reward?”

It’s another ten seconds before the Dark Apostle answers. “It was a giant spinning wheel. I’ve never seen anything like it. But I got a new Skill [Apostolic Form] that I think is like your Demonic Transformation, Mythryll.

[Apostolic Form] the Dark Apostle has pleased one or more Dark Gods. Enables a physical transformation to represent the Dark Gods Favor better. Available forms: Magic, Obsession. Unavailable Forms: Wrath, Plague, Destruction.

“Obsession? Is that the system’s official name for Lust demons like Succubus?”

Cain and Misha both shrug at Mythryll’s question before Cain answers. “Going by the options, I think it is. But we won’t know for sure until we see the transformation.”

Misha sighs and activates the Skill, choosing Magic. She gains blue and pink feathered wings, a bird-like head, and long claws with dark blue feathers extending up her elbows.

The Cleric robes she transforms into are dark blue, form-fitting, and sleeveless, showing her figure is essentially unchanged from its normal curvaceous state, and where it's not feathered, her skin tone is the same olive as usual.

[Aura Effect: Spell Power +50%]

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