

Reincarnated With A Summoning System

Chapter 281

The troops are slowly divided into groups: ordinary soldiers, officers, and nobility. The first question raised by the loyalist forces is how to treat this. There are three basic methods under Skyview laws. As a civil war, an attempted Coup by the Nobles, or an insurgency.

The third is out very quickly since they find no evidence that the Anti Monarchy army had any outside forces in it. So that leaves them torn between civil war and an attempted coup.

A civil war would typically lead to reconciliation efforts to settle the root cause of the uprising and some form of punishment for the leaders. An attempted coup would end in many executions and every rebel noble's entire extended family being stripped of all properties and assets.

To the commoners, the difference is slight; to the Nobles and those who directly do business with them, it is massive. Roughly a fifth of the country's Nobility were involved, by best estimate. Initial fears were a third, but many of the Nobles who were swayed by King James stayed home, not supporting either faction.

[I want you to propose an adjustment. For Nobles stripped of lands and wealth, instead of the Crown claiming it all, as is customary, I want one of you to suggest that a loyal commoner who has proven themselves should inherit. That will let us fill the vacancies with loyalists as well.] King James sends directly to both Cain and Duke Chen.

This mess is too big to settle indoors, so the two sides are assembled near the palace walls, and tens of thousands of civilians have come to watch the aftermath of the battle, and the trial was announced across the city.

"With evidence from multiple witnesses, and careful deliberation, the crown has determined the intent of this attack to be one of ending the Royal Lineage. We cannot find a way to view this as anything but an attempted coup." The King declares, and the Nobles look devastated.

Duke Chen steps forward and bows to the King. "As your loyal advisor, I would plead for leniency on behalf of these treacherous Nobles. I ask that they are spared their lives and instead stripped of their titles and all wealth held within Skyview."

That is already a significant concession towards reconciliation, and many in the crowd feel they don't deserve it. The murmurs start to turn into angry shouting when the King lifts his hand for silence.

"Without our Nobles, who will manage our lands, pay our guards? Will the crown take everything?" An officer from the defeated side shouts.

The accusation that King James might use this chance as a power grab for himself, claiming a large portion of the country as Crown Land, doesn't sit well with anyone, even the loyalists.

"Your Majesty, If I may. There was a precedent in my previous life that might be relevant. Instead of the crown claiming the vacated lands and title for itself, might they not instead be allocated to those of the commons who have performed an outstanding deed or commendable service for the nation?"

It would prevent power from becoming too consolidated and elevate those of great character to the nobility, citizens who would work to better the whole would gain wealth and rank."

Duke Chen smiles as Cain's suggestion spreads through the crowd. King James has in the past worked for the commoners, so there is hope that this might be accepted.

"Heroes are hard to come by. Where do you suggest we might find so many worthy candidates, Duke Cain?" James asks as if skeptical of the plan.

"Some might come from the border forces, Captains and Champions put forth by their peers as worthy in deed and character. Others by the citizenry. They could be children of Nobles who have personally worked to improve the lives of those around them, or lower Nobles who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, even commoners in vacant territories who have shown great loyalty and results for their communities despite a lack of noble leadership. Let their peers and your loyal Nobles put them forth for you to consider as you wish."

That way, the consideration can be done in private, and the King can choose anyone he wants for specific positions. There will be a lot of spaces to fill once the trials are complete, after all.

"We have considered your proposals, noble Dukes. An official announcement will be made within the week declaring how an applicant who is deemed worthy by their peers might be put forward for our consideration. Might anyone else have a compelling reason not to strip these traitors of their wealth and titles?"

Not a single voice sounds in their defense, everyone recognizing that the sentence was incredibly lenient. Only the Nobles involved have been punished; those whose children have independent assets have not. During the succession wars that were largely

ended just this year, entire families were routinely annihilated to prevent revenge attempts or inheritances by their kin.

For most noble families, that means they're all losing everything, as property ownership requires wealth and business relationships are often long-standing, so everything is in the family name. But still, some few will escape with a decent amount of assets, and the rest will at least survive.

They'll never hold title here again, but they might be able to rent a shop and continue doing business if they can convince the King not to banish them.

King James has moved to the far north end of the line of Nobles, ready to begin the questioning for the actual Royal Trials to determine their fate.

"State your name and defense of your actions."

"Your Majesty, I am Count LeapingPupper. My actions bear no defense; I still believe the nation better served with a Beastkin on the throne." The Young Wolf Kin transfer states proudly.

"The Crown admires your dedication to your cause, misguided as it is. Your assets are forfeit, as are your titles in the Nation of Skyview. You have until dark to leave the territory; transport will be provided if necessary."

So it goes down the line, with roughly one in three rebel Nobles presenting an argument to remain and being granted leniency.

Just passed the halfway mark, when the refreshments are brought for the King by a bodyguard that Gwen Summoned, the lineup reaches Earl Millsap, who the other Rebel Nobles are glaring at in disgust.

"Your Majesty, I was wrong to have considered treason against the throne. My loyalty may have come late, but I hope you can accept it."

"Earl Millsap, your change of heart was brought to our attention near the beginning of the battle. Our understanding is that your current holdings are that of three adjoined Baronies plus two stores in the Capital?"

"Yes, your Majesty." Millsap nods solemnly, wondering where the King is going with this. He arrived with the Rebel army and expected to be punished, but he hoped that the King might forgive him.

Initially, six others were to join him and attack the back lines, but they all turned on him when the time came, killing almost all of his loyal forces, plus his wife before the Seraphim arrived to rescue them. His wife, a swarthy human woman with arms the size

of most men's legs, was resurrected and sits behind him now, but very few of his men are among the survivors.

"For your part in keeping news of the rebellion from us, the Crown demotes you to Baron, reclaiming two of your three adjoined territories. Arise and rejoin your peers."

Millsap looks stunned as the King moves on, and Cain oversees those around him as the Baron and his wife get up to join the loyalists, making sure he doesn't get assassinated where he kneels.

That was better than Millsap had hoped. They get to keep their home, most of their assets, and even their businesses, just with a reduced title and a mark of shame on their names. Very few of any others will be so lucky.

After every noble has been judged, the King turns to the ordinary soldiers and officers. "Return to your homes. Your Lords have paid for their rebellion, and the crown grants you leniency. News of changes in the nobility and a transfer of border guards to understaffed areas will arrive very soon."

The loyalist forces, as well as Cain's summons, see them out of the city, most leaving in large groups for home, but others are heading for the city's public transfer circle, which currently isn't charging the usual fee.

The disgraced Nobles are being tracked, with City Guards assigned by Duke Archibald to follow them to their homes and report back if they have indeed left the country by nightfall.

When only loyalists are left at the palace, King James turns towards Duke Archibald. "Our friend, it seems We have overworked you. Karrack City Administrator and Defense Minister at the same time is too much responsibility for one man to manage and still take care of his family.

As such, we will lighten your load. The position of Defense Minister shall be split into a Defense Council, which I will name in the morning. Each shall be responsible for a region's safety, ensuring nothing is overlooked, and our ministers are not so overworked."

Pretty words, but a severe demotion to Duke Archibald, who takes it with relative grace. He still has oversight of the capital, after all, and that's the only region that ever mattered to him to begin with.

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

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With so much going on, Cain, Chen, and Archibald are invited to stay in the palace guest quarters for the evening, along with their entourage.

Packing seems to be going smoothly for the evicted Nobles as far as the reports that have come so far are concerned. Only a few Nobles got home and immediately started loading valuables and gathering troops. With input from the observers sent by the King, Cain is taking care of that using a locked transport circle within the Palace to send Oath Breakers to assassinate the ones trying to steal the confiscated assets and the few who killed their observer.

It's a messy business, so he and Duke Archibald, who is taking the incoming messages from the observers, are pretending to be in a meeting alone, using the office where the circle is hidden. Nobody would question them needing a strategic meeting, and it's better not to publicize that they're killing off former Nobles who didn't fall in line; it might cause another uproar.

Done correctly, with discretion, assassination is just a hazard of life in the Palace. Fortunately, most who are still thinking revenge are thinking long-term and plan to leave the country with what they can carry in their inventory and return later, if at all.

Shortly after dark, everyone expelled was either gone or making their way out on foot. That meant Cain and Archibald could end their supposed meeting and return to their visitor suites for the evening.

[If anyone is awake, I will need a coat of arms reasonably soon. I will be sending out summons on patrol, and people need to be able to identify them.] Cain sends a Guild message as he walks, getting an immediate response.

[How about the flag we made for the castle] a young recruit named Trevor suggests.

[No good. It's too specific to Blood Sands Castle. What about that one we rejected. With the mismatched wings and the shield?] Char suggests.

The fact they've made flags for the castle is news to Cain. When Char puts one of the rejected samples in the Guild Bank, though, it's close to perfect. One angel and one Demon wing behind a shield with a blood drop in the middle on a golden background.

[That's pretty good. Do we have a tailor awake to make more?]

[I'm still up. I'll make a bunch for you. Will two dozen be enough?] Misha sends from inside the suite.

[That's plenty. Thanks for your hard work, everyone, and good job on the designs.]

Misha is already hard at work, using a Trade Skill ability to dye the cloth into flags and pennants. They'll be able to add one to the mast of Queen Rose now as well.

With a territory secured and the canals dredged for cargo ships, Queen Rose doesn't need to stay at the docks in the Capital either. Cain directs the copy of Nila that is on board to head back up the canals to Long Fang Valley in the morning and tie up at the docks there. At home, Svetlana and Damien can watch over the ship, saving Cain the summons that are currently on board as crew.

He plans to send even more pairs of Kone clones out with their summons to deal with the Gnolls and other monsters. Flying the flag of a Duke, they should be safe from attack by the locals, and they can clean up anything they're likely to find except the strongest of Commanders if they're traveling in pairs.

"What will you do if they run into something they can't fight alone? Just drop what you're doing and go yourself, or leave it to the locals?" Misha asks as she finishes making up his pennants.

Cain shrugs, then smirks at Misha and kisses her. "It is technically their job, but if it looks like the locals won't be able to deal with it safely, I'll send one of the Primal Echoes. They've got all my abilities at half power, so with Merger, they should be just fine."

Misha frowns at that idea. One Cain loose in an area is bad enough. If he keeps the Primal Echoes active, it will be chaos, especially if they're left without supervision.

With the essentials taken care of, the two can finally head to bed. The day of a battle is tiring, but the day after is always worse. Their only saving grace is that they don't have any official duties this time, so the Nobles like Duke Chen will bear the brunt of it.

At first light, an announcement is sent to every noble. [An Emergency Session of the Court will be held beginning at noon, followed by a banquet beginning at sunset. All family members of Nobles are invited in semi-formal attire.]

"If you two don't want to attend, you can stay home, and I totally wouldn't blame you," Cain tells Misha and Mythryll after explaining the situation.

"I for one would much rather explore Long Fang City. I got attacked enough times yesterday to earn a day off." Mythryll states flatly, and Misha nods in eager agreement.

"I'll send you by Dark Phoenix from the balcony. The travel circle in the palace is locked, and Duke Chen has the key. Plus, I'm not sure the city is safe enough to go to the public portal." Cain agrees, not wanting to be here himself. But King James needs the

allies today, and Cain made a spectacle of himself yesterday with the whole Seraphim transformation thing, which is guaranteed to be a topic of discussion.

Duke Chen arrives along with his two favored students and the breakfast carts only a few minutes later, looking especially bedraggled today. They finished their tasks before midnight, so it must be stress built up from this morning.

“Good morning, Cain. Young ladies. I had hoped you hadn’t left yet, and I see you didn’t upgrade classes yet either.” Duke Chen says in a cheerful voice that doesn’t match his looks.

Both Misha and Mythryll chuckle at his attempt to lighten the mood, and Misha replies first. “We were going to do it after breakfast, the last thing before we leave. I’ve still got some skill point I wanted to decide about, and I believe Mythryll was saving a bunch of points for after her advancement.”

“Excellent timing then. We’ve got an hour or two before the King is ready to face the day. He’s still holed up in his rooms, and nobody but the cook can get in.”

Cain asks Gwen what happened yesterday in the Royal Suite, and his mind fills with laughter. “I’m sorry, boss, but I promised him I wouldn’t tell anyone anything. I hope you understand. But right now, he’s sleeping.”

Cain focuses on Gwen’s thoughts, seeing a flash of either memory or current events that only shows him the Beastkin slave maids giggling in the dining room. Not particularly helpful, but he’s not going to pry any further.

“My palace insider says he’s still asleep, probably mentally exhausted,” Cain informs Duke Chen, who nods.

“Expected. He was sheltered through most of the wars; this was the first large-scale battle he’s been in command of. It takes a lot out of you.” Duke Chen agrees, then turns back to the ladies.

“Eat, eat before it gets cold. It’s all from the King’s kitchen and tested for poison.”

To be safe, Misha uses [Cleanse] on it anyhow, before digging into the meal Duke Chen so thoughtfully brought. Both her and Mythryll are looking over their options as they eat, a few minutes in the interface, then a few eating, back and forth.

The extra delay proves to be a great benefit for Misha, but also Duke Chen’s downfall that morning, as continued messages start to pile up, and eventually, someone is sent to request for him to go down to the common areas of the castle to take care of business.

The one who comes to get him is a Royal Inscriptionist, a man with a wealth of knowledge about the system and how to tweak it to get specific progression paths that you want. Exactly the sort of person they needed right now.

His suggestion is to add at least one more holy flame type skill to her repertoire to get a more exciting class out of her unique class token.

To pick something mundane would be a waste of a unique artifact. Still, with a sufficient level of specialization in her chosen field, he's confident she can get an actual Third Advancement class from the Unique Class token and not just a Second Advancement option that compliments her existing abilities.

His idea is to get her a book of [Second Life], a resurrection spell that requires level 200, and a Cleric book Affinity. It's rare but not greatly popular, as most cleric types get it inherently at level 200. Misha doesn't; her class is more of a combat priest.

That leaves them with just an unholy fire ability to add to ensure that she can pick something amazing. Since becoming a Dark Apostle, she's gained Summoning abilities and an increase in Summon Quality, but nothing outstanding for her holy flames, just a variety of ways to use it.

When the inscriptionist leaves to find her the [Second Life] book, Mythryll puts forward the idea that Misha could take a modification as she did. Not to make her durable, since Misha has a Merger for that, but to increase her damage output.

They now know it can be nullified if it leads to an undesirable mutation, so there's not much to lose, and Cain Merges with a Record Keeper to borrow its skills with Holy Flames.

Among its myriad abilities with the Holy Flame of the Dark Gods is a Demonic equivalent of [Judgement], the area effect holy light of the Seraphim that both heals and damages and applies Cleanse.

The Record Keepers' ability doesn't Cleanse. Instead, it applies that random buff that all Holy Flame spells grant to allies. The effects are outstanding when they're compatible with the person getting them, though, so it's a decent tradeoff.

The spell is called [Balance], which seems odd for Demonic magic but is still a reasonably accurate description. Misha has skills similar to the Record Keeper's other flame attacks already, and that's what the Inscriptionist thinks she will need to get a truly unique class, so Cain applies it to Misha and watches as the change settles into her body, making the skill innate and semi-permanent.

Unlike Mythryll, she doesn't get off with zero noticeable physical changes. She has gained a pair of feathery wings in the same blue tones as the record keeper that shimmer in the light as if they've got pink flames dancing below the surface.

Cain inspects her Status, finding that she is still technically Human in species but has gained an additional line of description.

[Name] Misha

[Level] 201

[Class] Dark Apostle

[Race] Human

[Unholy Blessings] Wings of Flame

Misha and Mythryll disappear into the bath to check her whole appearance, as Misha doesn't want to be interrupted while nude, and Cain knows he will have plenty of time to examine her features later.

"Well, what's the verdict?" He asks when they come out a few minutes later.

"Just the wings and a pair of feather earrings growing from the bottom of my ears. But now, when I'm in the Magic type [Apostolic Transformation], I look just like a tiny Record Keeper."

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

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It doesn't take long for the Inscriptionist to return, and if he's surprised by the new wings on Misha's back, he's not saying anything.

"One book of Second Life. Grade S, Cleric compatible classes only." He says with a smile, setting it on the table.

"What do I owe you? I can pay in coin or possibly materials if I have them." Cain, thanks the helpful old mage.

"I had something else in mind. I've got a photo of sorts, created by a skill. Could you alter my body to match that person?"

“That shouldn’t be a problem,” Cain responds before actually taking a look at the picture. While the inscriptionist is a frail-looking human man in his later years, the image is of a young and slender half Orc female with pale green skin, stunning purple eyes, and long braids of black hair.

“Are you certain this is the right photo? There’s only one person in it...” Cain lets his voice trail off at the end, wondering if some mistake had been made.

“No, that’s correct. A change of that magnitude is extreme but should be possible for your class. The book should cover the cost, though; level 200 Rank S books are far from cheap.

“As long as you understand what you’re getting into. After this, you’ll no longer be human. That extensive of a change could well alter your status with the interface.”

Only Cain has seen the picture, but the Companions in his head are giving him a variety of suggestions for the modification, from more muscular thighs to night vision and perkier breasts. He tunes them out to avoid getting distracted by their nonsense and focuses on the Inscriptionist.

Mythryll gasps as the older man’s body transform, leaving behind a slender and nubile Orcish woman barely into adulthood. As is typical for green Orcs, her body is Exquisitely toned under the black mage robes.

The Inscriptionist looks herself over, then laughs and does a lively, spinning dance that leads her to a chair in the corner of the room. She seems in a hurry to sit before her eyes go vacant, and then a few moments later her robes change to a flaming red and gold.

The Inscriptionist held off on his second advancement, having been a mage and then a pyromancer. According to the system, the older man has become a young woman named Nyxx and a Flame Matron. Cain records the form, finding it to be a variant of the Flame Sisters, an exclusive racial class from a subspecies of Orc that usually doesn’t get transfers and that Cain usually records as Golems.

Nyxx, being a transfer herself, recorded as a supporter unfortunately, and she’s beyond ecstatic with the change.

“This is more than I could have ever hoped for. I was holding out for an advanced class that is female exclusive, as well as a more beautiful body. But this, this is far beyond what I thought a Flesh Crafter could do. Even better, when it changed my species it Unlocked this even more amazing racial exclusive class. I’ll bet I’m the only one in the entire Kingdom.”

How Nyxx will explain the change to her coworkers is her own problem. Changing Gender and species, plus class, will likely cause serious confusion when the overjoyed

spellcaster goes back to work. Fortunately, she's got the badge of a Royal Inscriptionist still linked for her use, and her name didn't change. It works well as a neutral name, it's not very Orcish, but it's not a terrible match.

Nyxx runs out of the room to celebrate with little more than a wave to the stunned transfers, vanishing down the corridor but leaving behind a trail of hysterical giggling.

"Sir, are you alright? We had reports of a madwoman running through the visitor's quarters with a stolen staff pass." A guard huffs, running after the noise.

"She might be crazy, but the pass isn't stolen. Inscriptionist Nyxx paid me to turn him into an Orcish woman with thick thighs and large breasts." Cain explains, and the guard freezes, unable to do more than try to process that absurd bit of news.

Two more guards come seconds later, getting the rundown of the situation from Misha with amused looks on their faces.

"And exactly how long should we expect him to be in that form before he returns to normal?" The ranking palace guard asks.

"Oh, it's permanent. He would need to visit a Flesh Crafter to become a human male again." Misha laughs, and the man's face goes pale.

"So it's not an illusion then?"

"Nope. One hundred percent real physical changes through the well-paid skills of a Flesh Crafter. I did it so well even the system recognized the change."

The three furiously send messages to the other guards, informing them of the situation before excusing themselves and running after the sounds of Orcish laughter again.

"Wow, now I understand what Duke Chen was talking about with the third advancement classes. Flesh Crafters are on a whole other level, and changing me wasn't just a one-time fluke." Mythryll giggles hysterically, still in shock after seeing what the older man wanted to be done to his body.

"And they still don't know that you can add abilities to people. You're likely going to be very popular among the Nobles either way. A little nip and tuck is standard procedure for the rich even in this world, isn't it?" Misha adds, wondering if it's going to disturb them at home.

She has a point; life skills and utility classes are often more in demand than pure combat classes, even healers. Especially high-ranking ones, as most life skills sorts of transfers, either don't gather enough experience to advance or pick combat variants with their Advancement so they can better defend themselves and adventure for money.

Just like in his past life, Cain decides. In demand doesn't always equal well paid at the lower levels of the totem pole. But it's time for Misha to use the Second Life book and recheck her class options.

A new option has appeared. Infernal Arbiter. It requires a boon or blessing from the Dark Gods and is marked as unique, replacing the previous Unique healing class on her list of options. It must be the option from the token.

It's a support class, with basic class abilities increasing the quality of [Apostolic Transformation] to Epic, granting her increased spell power and damage reduction while in Demon form, as well as a passive skill that doubles the effect of all buffs active on your party members.

The skill tree is a mixture of buffs, with a few damage and healing spells added in. If it weren't for the book of [Second Life], she still wouldn't have had a resurrection ability with this class. Now that she does going full buffs sounds like a good option.

Especially when traveling with Cain and his XP increasing ability.

She spent almost all her skill points on the previous class, as the skills were so good she wanted them all, but there are a few leftovers, enough to get a single skill.

[Spell Aura] Rank 1 increases spell power by 5 percent.

There are 4 Ranks to that one, capping out at 20 percent more spell power for the group. There are also physical damage, armor, and damage reduction in the first row of options. After those are done, Construct Damage is in the second tier, along with an [Infernal Gateway] that can be used for travel to a marked location. It requires an item to mark the spot, but she can have two separate areas marked. A skill further up the tree increases that.

Misha celebrates the completion by activating the spell power buff and then her upgraded [Apostolic Transformation]. No longer does it just give her feathers and a bird head; she is now a full-blown Record Keeper. She has to kneel and lean forward to fit in the room, so she quickly changes back to her human form, finding that she can hide the [Wings of Flame] blessing if she wishes.

They're pretty tough and soft, so she leaves them active. Cain hugs her and strokes her wings in congratulations on the class advancement, and Misha feels her body go limp in pleasure. Wings are amazingly sensitive appendages, and Misha decides she will only hide them in emergencies, just on the off chance they might receive affection like this again.

Cain wraps an arm around her and gently rubs her wings as she speaks, forcing Misha to stifle moans continually. "So, my class is now Infernal Arbiter, a support class with

lots of buffs and some new damage and healing skills later. It upgraded [Apostolic Transformation] to Epic by default, which changed it into a Record Keeper.”

Mythryll nods her understanding. “Record Keepers are Epic Quality Magic Type demons, so it somewhat makes sense that you’d become one at Epic Quality.”

“Are you up next? Or do you need some skill books for better options still?” Cain asks the Elf, who smiles back happily.

“I’ve got the class option I want already. I was waiting to use it.”

Her eyes go blank for only a moment before she returns to them. The moment she does, an aura of protection falls over them, the buff showing that it can absorb one percent of HP in damage every 5 seconds. It doesn’t heal, but it will cut down the incoming damage taken.

[Name] Mythryll

[Race] High Elf

[Level] 201

[Class] Eldritch Guardian

“Eldritch Guardian is a Forest Guardian type class. It starts with an extra wide area of Plant Manipulation, 2 meters radius per level. I can Summon Dark Nymphs from trees in the area, one per tree as a class ability. Most of the skills are plant-based. Faster growth, more seeds, some combat abilities, and regeneration of plants, animals, and forest-type dark fae.

But up towards the top of the skill tree, I can activate a [Forest Army] and turn every tree in my Plant Manipulation range into Treants until I run out of mana since it has an upkeep cost per Treant.”

In the courtyard of the Manor alone, there are hundreds of trees, all within her range. Her class is essentially specialized in living in the Long Fang Valley. She can even help with the crops, and the locals will love her for it.

“That is amazing. Not just powerful but beneficial to others in so many ways. I am starting to feel selfish with my class options now, going for personal power.” Cain jokes.

Their reverie is cut short by a knock at the door; one of Gwen’s Summoned assassins has come to inform them that the King is on his way here and wishes to meet with them.

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

Chapter 284

“Come along everyone, we’re going on an adventure today.” Kone calls cheerfully to the kitchen full of Guild Members.

“I know Dimnys and Auntie Char said we needed more materials, but do we really need them at five in the morning?” Marco, a green haired Gnomish warlock sighs as he sips his juice and tries to wake up. No matter how long he’s been in this Guild, he still hasn’t gotten used to Kone’s perpetually cheerful disposition. Nobody should be that happy before the sun comes up.

“Not really, but do you recall how bad the lines were the last time we went at nine in the morning like you wanted? We were there for longer than it took to do the dungeon, just trying to get through the crowd of miners.”

“She has a point. The sooner we get there the more we can get done today. Plus, I’m coming along today, along with Leafen for ranged support and Reggie the Earth Mage to help us clear rock faster than the Dolls can.” Symbia the Doll Witch points out.

“You’re a life saver Sym, but don’t think I don’t know that means Kone is going to make us go through multiple times to empty out the Stone Giant Dungeon.” Marco laughs.

“The Tradesmen need materials. They made you that new Alchemy set just last week after you blew your lab up again and didn’t complain.” Kone teases him. They didn’t complain, but they did make fun of the inquisitive Gnome for the number of times his experiments have failed.

He’s trying to make a new battery for the moped that Kone found in Muzz. It’s a very delicate procedure and only becomes stable when it’s complete. So, over the course of the last month, he’s blown up his lab 4 times and needed healers to save his life twice after poisoning himself. But he’s managed to make half the cells for a new battery pack successfully, and he’s getting much better at it.

With breakfast finished the odd group takes the travel circle in the Guild House to the city of Assah, and begins their early morning journey to the Stone Giant Dungeon. No longer do the Mining Guild Members give them trouble, they’re a regular feature here, and despite her tiny size and apparent youth, Kone is a fearsome fighter.

She uses her Guild Summons to keep a pair of Lords of Decay, a Plague type Epic Demon merged with her at all times. The Merger grants her increased healing done and taken, as well as a lot of mana regeneration and HP. Compared to the Oath Breaker or the Record Keeper, the Lord of Decay is a veritable tank.

When Summoned, it is an enormously fat being, further bloated with disease, that relies on its sheer mass to become nearly indestructible, clocking in at forty thousand HP to the Oath Breakers twenty thousand at her level. When merged it is a silent companion, only occasionally expressing amusement or concern.

But it's the Dragons that most everyone fears. Kone prefers all nature type Dragons, and their breath and spit attacks are corrosive. Not a pleasant way to die.

There is no lineup at the dungeon, as expected this early in the morning. With the threat of attack, and the dungeon being outside the city walls, traffic has really slowed since the wars in Landis began.

Kone started living at the guild castle, their most vulnerable location once that news spread across the desert. Nobody has been stupid enough to attack yet, but it's better to have more capable people on hand just in case.

The Drakes called by Su, who has shifted into her own small humanoid form are less than impressed to be back in this dungeon. There's lots of room to walk, but it is an underground complex, with no plants and no natural light. To compensate, the giants have hung magical touches, leaving deep soot stains on the limestone walls.

The basic design remains the same, but the dungeon changes a little every time you enter, so the group sends the drakes to scout, while Kone calls the Snapping Turtles that they'll be using as tanks to stay near the group.

The first thing Symbia does is collect a handful of chalk out of the limestone, a ritual she performs every visit, because someone is always running out. All the crafting rooms have blackboards on the wall now, making calculations and design schematics less wasteful than using paper, so the simple gesture is actually much appreciated by the members.

Marco is hoping to get a book drop today. The Guild Library has been slowly expanding and they've gained a skilled Inscriptionist, but materials for warlocks books are a real pain to obtain. Some come from the Demon dungeon, which is fine and accessible, but the rest come from various Elemental dungeons, and neither the beginner valley nor the desert really has any, except if you get lucky here in the Stone Giant Dungeon.

The drakes have found the first group, so they start moving forward to engage. They're all well over level 100 now, and Kone is getting close to level 170, making this a fairly easy fight. But still, Marco has a good feeling about today.

The Drakes fire their corrosive spit at a giant with a shield, who bashes it back towards Marco, forcing the Gnome to roll away, cussing at his luck. The corrosive attack has puddled in a crack between rocks and begins to bubble, causing an angry burning noise.

That's new, usually it's silent.

A huge Shadow Elemental bursts from the ground under the puddle, enraged at being attacked while it slept and immediately attacking the closest living thing to it, which is, of course, Marco.

"Mama no! Help." The Gnome screams, before running behind Kone as if her healing aura will get stronger as he gets closer. She sends a pair of Turtles to attack the Elemental, smashing it apart into wisps of smoke with the help of some well placed curses by Symbia and Marco while Leafen and Reggie focus on the Giants they were already fighting.

"Reggie, I see a glimmer from underground. When you finish up there, come split this chasm open for us." Kone calls back to the Dwarf.

They've found a Shadow Elemental Gem and iron deposit, Dimnys will be very pleased with her results today. So much that she might even take it easy on her group and let them go home after just one clear.

Maybe.

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

Chapter 285

King James and Cain both had the same thing in mind this morning, to send out patrols to help clean up the kingdom.

James is hoping that Cain can spare enough summons to cast a wide net over the kingdom and that they can operate autonomously while they're that far away from him. The nation just got even more shorthanded, and replacing the Nobles will take time. Until then, someone has to keep the attacks in check, or they might well face the Wrath of the commoners.

In Skyview, Commoner doesn't mean weak; it just means broke. Either by poor choices, greedy landlords, or a simple lack of monetary motivation, many citizens climb through the levels without amassing a fortune. Then there are always those who do have a fortune but don't want any questions asked about where they got it, so they don't apply for Knighthood.

The Queen Rose is already at the docks in Long Fang City, and Svetlana has explained to Damien that this is the Duke's vessel. That lets Cain dismiss the sailors, leaving a clone of Nila with a dozen puppets on board and freeing up the Supporter Spots.

With only the Spider Queen and one pair of Kone clones that are already out hunting Gnolls active, Cain now has fourteen more Supporters to send out. Enough to cover a lot of ground looking for trouble spots.

Kone and the Dragons are the optimal choices here, as they come with the twin copies of Su, plus the fact Su is a Companion type Dragon who gets a Bonded Force and that Kone is a Summoner herself which multiplies the body count.

King James agrees with that, having seen them in action with their Drakes and Snapping Turtle tanks just yesterday. The sight of nearly thirty Dragons flying away from a balcony above the Palace Guest Suites displaying unfamiliar flags causes a short panic in the city, fearing another attack.

That's not a new feeling for residents of the capital, and once the Dragons are out of sight, the residents quickly relax, deciding it was just some extra flashy noble going home.

King James has a map with him for them to study, showing the extent of each Nobles holdings, as well as all the lands that are currently vacant. Among them are a number of very recent looking updates, so he must have struck off the ones that he stripped of their property yesterday.

"Many of these territories aren't in good shape, so I've sent the Nobility allocation notifications again today, fearing that some of the Rebel Nobles might have hidden it from their people yesterday. I'll need you at court right away, as I wish to appoint you to the Defense Council. Then there's the banquet this evening, and I'll need someone to rescue me from eager suitors." King James explains.

"No offense, Your Majesty, but in the end, I'm still a foreigner. I've got holdings in several different locations, and I'm not certain I can attend a council regularly." Cain points out.

"You can send a proxy if you like; many of the Nobles do. But if you'd prefer a less formal role, that's fine."

Cain takes a long while to consider what might be the best outcome here. He could send a Puppet, a Guild Member who likes politics and strategy, or even a Supporter to fill the role. Then he considers the abilities of his new class, he can grant an ability to a puppet, and it should be permanent if the Puppet is created with it.

"Let me test out this theory I have about my new class. If I can imbue a skill into a Puppet, they would be perfect for the Defense Council."

The King nods impatiently while Cain sorts potential summons in his mind. High-quality Administration type skills, specializing in strategy. That gave him less than a dozen, and one was King Aggramor. He's classed as a Legendary Summon, so Cain calls him into Merger.

To say the Demon is less than impressed is an understatement. But he calms a little once he realizes he's a clone and hasn't been forcefully Summoned in person.

[I need a skill that will make a mediocre Puppet a suitable Defense Advisor for a King.] Cain explains.

[Then make it a Succubus, they've got natural affinities for giving proper advice, the innate skill that lets them see what will please a target also works in the council rooms to guess the best outcome for the majority. Then add my skill of [Cunning Strategist], and they'll be an advisor that few Kings would ever deny.]

Cain follows the Demon King's advice, creating an almost entirely human looking Puppet with the mandatory Succubus Tail. Forming it with the [Cunning Strategist] skill makes it smaller, and the Demon King laughs in Cain's mind.

[What Succubus needs the most to execute a brilliant plan? One who doesn't have the bouncy breasts and swaying hips to distract and delight her target.] It makes sense, but that doesn't make it any less amusing that the optimal form for a military advisor is a loli Succubus.

[Puppet Created, species Succubus, Skill Cunning Strategist Permanently Imbued.]

The Succubus is wearing black plate armor with a gold cape trimmed in red fur, looking to all the world like a very short blonde human, unless you happen to see her tail, which is currently wrapped around her body under the armor. Even her eyes are a gray-blue with no hint of Demonic nature.

[Thanks for the help. I'll let you go now.] Cain informs the clone of King Aggramor, then wonders why he did that. It's just a Summon, after all.

"According to the Demon King Aggramor, this is the optimal form for a Military Advisor. She's got an Affinity for picking the option that will make the most people happy and a particular skill for creating military plans and strategies."

The Puppet bows, and King James teaches out a hand for her to shake. "Greetings. Oh, I didn't catch your name."

The Puppet looks confused, then forms to Cain for an answer. "Do I just pick one? Is there some criteria I don't know?"

"Sorry, Your Majesty, I forgot that puppets need to be named and don't come with one. Would you like to choose? She'll be assigned to advise you after all." Cain explains.

"I would like to see what she comes up with," James suggests, and the Puppet thinks deeply for a moment. She's clearly going through a list in her head, but neither man understands what she's looking for.

"Then my name will be Maria." She finally announces, and King James laughs, getting confused looks.

"Our Royal Mother was named Maria. Your skill is impressive; the most suitable advisor for a Young King will always be his mother." James laughs with tears forming in the corners of his eyes, and Maria smiles back at him before gently rubbing his back.

"Then we can announce Duke Cain as a Defense Council member, with Maria as his appointed proxy. I'll find you a set of rooms before the official announcement. You'll need space for plans, paperwork, and designs, but there's currently no Defense Ministers office assigned."

"I can create more advisors if you run out of acceptable candidates," Cain suggests, but King James waves him off.

"Too much reliance on one person is a bad thing. I'm sure we will find enough loyal Nobles. I made a shortlist of ones who deserve to be promoted to take over some of the territories already.

A great number of suggestions were sent to my quarters last night. That should help the mood before the banquet and encourage the Nobles to attend."

"If you don't mind, your Majesty, we will be heading back to the Long Fang Valley before the meeting and leaving Duke Cain in your care," Misha says, her new feathery wings spreading a little as she curtsies.

"Of course. Nobody likes unnecessary meetings, and all you would be doing is standing around getting bored or annoyed by the unwed noblewomen who want to take your place. I'll lead you to the locked portal, and it should take you directly home."

That's a much better option than sending them by Dark Phoenix, and it's just down the hall, in the Royal wing on the same floor as Cain's guest room. In only a few minutes, they're gone, leaving Cain, James, and Maria looking around the office, one of many on this floor.

"How about we use one down the hall from here as the Defense Minister's office? The two beside this office are bricked up to prevent eavesdropping, but ones further down might be a good choice for the Defense Councilors. A three-person council, one Duke,

and two lower Nobles should be sufficient, and I have two Knights in mind already. Let's get you settled before the hearing."

The room he has in mind ends up being a small suite. There is an office in front, but a door in the back leads to a small bedroom and bathroom for use when the ministers need to sleep at work.

King James provides Maria with a necklace that proves her identity and allows access to parts of the palace reserved for ministers and upper nobility. It's a simple thing, more like a golden military dog tag than jewelry, but it's got the Royal emblem and serves the purpose. Plus, it fits in well with her outfit, making Cain wonder if the design was intentional.

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

Chapter 286

Maria seems impressed with the variety of cabinets and drawers available in the office and makes a quick outline on a piece of paper on the desk, detailing what she intends to put where. She seems to be under the impression that there will be a transfer of documents when she takes over the post, but Cain suspects that Duke Archibald didn't keep any at all.

The map that James was using this morning does end up under a sheet of glass on her desk, though, and she uses a collection of paperweights to detail where the pairs of Supporters are heading to. Summons can easily communicate with each other over any distance. They prefer arguing with each other out loud only because it's much more satisfying.

Having gotten off to a late start, they're now rushing to get to the meeting on time, while being forced to stop every few dozen meters to talk with various Nobles while maintaining the appearance of organization and control.

Most are hoping for a promotion or appointment, but King James intends to reward loyalty and competence over connections and cronyism this time. For the most part anyhow, as the upper nobility absolutely needs connections to keep their businesses running.

Even with the loss of the Anti-Royal faction decimating the ranks of the Court Nobles and removing a number of the Business Nobles, the throne room is still packed for today's emergency meeting. Everyone wants to hear the changes firsthand, and if

others happen to have nominated them and caught the King's attention, it simply won't do to blow their chance by not being here for the first round of announcements.

The meeting starts with the Herald announcing all the Nobles deposed yesterday. Cain doesn't miss that it includes those arrested inside the Throne Room, so their fate has been mostly decided.

After that, six commoners are called into the throne room. Among them is the Avian Paladin that Cain fought yesterday, but the others all seem to be life skills classes.

"The Crown has received an overwhelming number of petitions for these six loyal commoners to replace the treacherous Nobles they used to serve. Today, they will be elevated to fill the first of the vacancies that Plague the land of Skyview. First up, and taking over from Baron Cohen, the Paladin Salkoo. Speak your pledge, and the assets and title of your former Lord are yours." King James announces.

It is a bit shocking to Cain that a rebel champion would be chosen for that honor, but the avian Beastkin looks prepared, so he's been informed, likely also thoroughly interrogated, and had time to prepare for this.

"I, Salkoo, do swear my loyalty to King James and the land of Skyview. My Sword is yours; deploy it as you wish, my liege."

It must not be a lie, as King James accepts it, and a moment later, the man's title changes to Baron.

"Arise, Baron Salkoo. The Crown believes you will be a great asset on the front lines of the border battle. Starting early this morning, a mission departed the capital to begin removing the Gnoll threat from the regions near your home. We hope you find them to your satisfaction."

"Emmeline of Ferdinand City, step forward." The Herald calls, and a human woman of the Historian class. Cain guesses that the class name is self-evident and that she has skills related to memory and historical knowledge, but that's as much as he can tell.

"Emmeline, as a Military Advisor to the deceased Archduke Ferdinand, we would appoint you to the role of Military Councilor and grant you the rank of Knight, with assets in your hometown commensurate to your rank. Do you accept?"

"It is my honor, Your Majesty. From this day forward, I shall be a loyal Military Councilor to King James." She declares, with happy tears in her eyes.

"Rise, Lady Emmeline, and join your peers."

The new Councilor moves to join the lower Nobles, but the Herald points her towards where Cain, and the other advisors are standing instead. One of the perks of being on a Royal council.

“The Crown has also appointed Duke Cain as a Military Counselor, a role he will be serving by proxy, with the Councilor Maria taking up the active role.” Maria steps forward and bows to the crowd of Nobles, who give her an enthusiastic round of applause. The councilor is not a noble title, but it’s more politically powerful than most of the lower nobility present and even some of the less favored Upper Nobles.

The others in the group are announced as Barons, taking over small territories. Still, some are missing, or the King reconsidered some choices at the last moment, as he appears to be looking around for faces he doesn’t see and leaving some of the areas he marked as having new Nobles on the map they reviewed this morning unattended.

After yesterday’s battle, the barriers in the throne room have been left up, a small safety precaution that nobody realizes is causing significant problems until a nervous guard breaks in.

“Your Majesty, emergency message from the Outer Territories, a force from the Niman Territory has attacked, razing villages and enslaving our people. All nearby forces have moved to intercept, including local militia.”

“Dammit, the barrier blocks messaging functions, they’ve likely been trying to get ahold of us all morning, but every noble they knew is in this room.” Duke Chen whispers to Cain.

Being an emergency, Cain deploys both of his Primal Echoes off guard duty for the ladies. He instructs them to go through the travel circle at the Manor to the village closest to the Niman Territory or at least the closest one whose name he recalls from the map.

Either way, they’ll be near or at the likely scene of the battle in seconds, with orders to merge for added strength while assisting the local Defense forces and any rescuing any citizens the Nimans have captured as slaves. The easiest way to free a freshly captured slave is to kill their master, since the authority can only be passed to another in close physical proximity.

He then opens his interface to see if he’s missed any new notifications. The scroll on the left side of his interface races through lines of summons being called, dying, killing humans and Gnolls over and over until he finally gets back to yesterday’s messages.

From the look of it, one pair of Kone clones is in the area of the Niman attack, and it feels to his admittedly vague sense of their location like two more teams aren’t that far away. Cain orders them to find and engage the slavers, a task the Spirit Folk Beast Lord will likely enjoy.

Kone has a strong sense of justice and a love of soft things, so saving Beastkin children should be exactly the sort of thing she enjoys.

“Duke Cain, as an advisor, how long until the first reinforcements can arrive?” King James asks, formulating a plan.

“The first of my forces are already engaged, two more wings of Drakes will be in combat within fifteen minutes, and one Summoned Battalion will be at the Bhopal village within the minute to begin looking for the Niman invaders. Beyond that, we should have forces from other territories ready within the hour if necessary, though many are depleted and exhausted from yesterday’s battle.”

That’s a problem every noble here understands. Beyond the battle at the palace, running fights occurred all over the city as loyalists and rebel reinforcements met each other on their way to the main battle after arriving at the various private travel circles throughout the city.

“How is the state of the Royal Army? What do we have close?”

Cain turns to Maria for that answer. “Two thousand mounted forces on standby, and ten thousand infantry. However, as the Niman forces are a raiding force, they will be too fast for infantry to catch, and we don’t have their location yet to set up an ambush.”

Numerous Nobles who live near the Niman Territory, but not close enough to have been under threat of attack this morning and remain at home now excuse themselves to gather their forces and move outside the room to get messages.

King James lowers the throne room barrier for ease of communication, and within minutes it is determined that five different Baronies are currently under attack or missing citizens.

The Nimans have sent elite forces, most of them close to level 300, and the locals have stood little chance of preventing them from taking the their non combatants and killing those who resist.

The Primal Echoes have encountered their first slave caravan, though, one that was headed back East towards the border. It came from the closest town to the river that divides the two nations, so there is hope none of the others have yet left the country.

The information is passed to King James, and a unit of Cavalry is deployed to each of the surrounding villages with the hope to intercept more of the raiders.

The government of Niman never takes responsibility for these attacks, calling them the work of lawless bandits. Still, the people they enslaved can be found all over the Territory and even across the nations that are further inland.

With Skyview and the other nations around them in a perpetual state of turmoil, they have been free to do anything they want to the commoners of their neighbor states. Today, both Cain and King James intend to change that.

[Send as many groups of summons as you can. I want to eradicate this force and reclaim all our people today as proof we're serious about helping the border territories.] King James sends as a private message, and Cain gives him a wink and a nod, excusing himself from the room and grabbing Duke Chen to open the door to the locked portal room for him.

"Care to explain?" The Duke asks as they run through the corridors.

"We're sending the Seraphim to every village near the Niman border that doesn't currently have my Dragons in it. The King wants everyone recovered as soon as possible."

A wide grin spread across Chen's face, before he pulled out a small map. "I'll send my students to take care of one of the villages further west. If they're still safe, we can move East along the border until we find them."

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

Chapter 287

Neffie sat in front of the mirror in her room at home in Sunnybrook, admiring her handiwork. This transformation was the perfect disguise, nobody would suspect she was sneaking out the house this time.

The Young Demon Queen realised at only a few a few months old that her Mimic class was good in combat, but much better at blending in with a crowd. So today she was going to play in the city instead of doing her schoolwork.

Larkin, a Spirit Folk Paladin whose room was only two doors down from hers was sick all night and certainly wouldn't be doing anything active today. Disguising herself as him was a piece of cake. He was a kind person with a neutral accent and no really obvious habits. She'd been studying him all week to pull off this act. She just has to make it through breakfast as him and she's free.

She even prepared a set of gear that matches his, since he's recently graduated from Char's tutelage and started to run dungeons with others his level without her

restrictions. She makes her way down the stairs, armor gently clanking , and past her mother.

“Good morning Mrs Lickity.” She greets her, the same as Larkin does every morning, then turns the corner into the kitchen and runs full on into herself. Or, more correctly the real Larkin.

“Good try Neffie, but he woke up early and had Jenna heal him. Now transform back and eat your breakfast.” Lickity laughs, patting her wayward daughter’s head.

“That’s what two for twenty seven?” Larkin laughs, picking Neffie up as she turns back into herself, now looking more like a five year old than an infant still waiting on her first birthday thanks to the rapid growth of her species.

“Three for twenty seven. The trip to the candy store was a success, even if Auntie Char was there when we arrived. We still got the candy.”

From across the table Char laughs at the little Demon. If her and Lickity hadn’t set a pin on her location using the system that number would be much, much higher. She really is a master of disguise.

“Behave for the rest of the week and I’ll take you for a run through the Raids this weekend. You’ve gotten high enough level now thanks to a certain someone.” Cixelcid, her father tells her, making Neffie forget all about breakfast and fly across the room to hug him.

“Thanks Papa. Mom never lets me do anything fun. If it was up to her I would still be level 7.” Neffie praises her father, who hides behind her wings to escape Lickity’s wrathful glare. Succubus really shouldn’t be able to glare like that, it’s not fair.

The raids that Cixelcid leads run every Friday morning, only two days away. Neffie is certain she can behave that long. After all, she’s supposed to go to Uncle Aggramor’s house this weekend, as she calls the Demon King.

His interference is most of the reason she’s managed to reach level 55 so soon. Auntie Char takes her along on dungeon runs once a week during her day off from schooling, but Uncle Aggramor secretly imbues quests into the candies he brings her, so she quietly gains levels just after he leaves from each of his random visits.

The two get along incredibly well, like they were an actual uncle and niece.

“Alright, we’re off.” Char says, standing from the table and leading the morning group of level 40 somethings out to the dungeon.

Neffie sighs, heading to the school down the street for her lessons. Who needs to know at that stuff anyhow? Writing is boring and history has already happened. The only class

she really likes is mathematics. Knowing exactly how many Demons it will take to properly fill an area with hellfire is important to efficiency after all.

Maybe this weekend she can trick one of Uncle Aggramor's maids into bringing her a skill book for history and writing. He also thinks she should study normally, saying it builds character and interpersonal relations skills. Whatever that means.

Once she reached level 20 Neffie discovered she had a racial skill called [Authoritative Aura] which makes others more amenable to following her directions. But the Demon is still too pure to abuse that ability, instead convincing her classmates to play her favorite games at recess, she she's too strong and fast for tag and red rover. Plus, Hide and Seek was always a superior game anyhow. Even if no skills are allowed.

By some miracle, she manages to finish the week without getting in trouble. She didn't even get caught cheating on this week's history test. She studied all evening the day before to pass that test and she was quite proud of herself.

The Naga Raid they're going to do is level 70, fifteen whole levels above Neffie and she's certain it's going to be great experience. Everyone in this week's raid team is gathered in the kitchen, wearing their Guild Issued Blue Quality gear waiting anxiously for Cid to finish his morning coffee so they can go to the dungeon.

The Naga Raid also drops all sorts of good things, and shiny things. She has a particular fondness for the opal stones and pearls that litter the beaches and brought a small bag tied to her belt to load up with stones.

"Who are you Cosplaying today Nef?" Larkin asks, polishing his armor as they wait.

"Auntie Kone for sure. I don't have high enough stats to use all of Guild Master Cain's skills yet, plus she's prettier isn't she?"

Larkin has a huge crush on the Spirit Folk Beast Master and he's been working day and night to get stronger since he graduated training so that he could one day go on a dungeon run with her and impress her instead of being seen like a little brother. He's the older one after all, it's just not fair.

Unfortunately for him, Kone has only recently started to develop an interest in boys, so his youthful crush has long gone unrequited.

He's so preoccupied thinking of her that he almost screams when the transformed Neffie whispers in his ear. "Are you daydreaming again? It's time to go."

That has to be the longest Raid of his young life, seeing the energetic and friendly Neffie in the form of his beloved Kone, using her signature Snapping Turtle Kin as tanks to fight beside him. By the time they're finished the Naga Raid Neffie has a whole bag of opals and Larkin needs a cold shower.

Neffie doesn't really get the concept of attraction like that, and the rest of the raid group, who are fully aware of Larkin's crush on Kone took great joy in watching him suffer. Especially because Neffie and Larkin are normally partners in crime, trying to sneak out for candy or playing pranks together, and she's blissfully unaware of the effect her disguise has on him.

Neffie might look and try to act grown up, but the Guild Members all know she's really not, and there's an unspoken rule that nobody is allowed to tarnish the mind of their pure little Demon Queen.

The next morning King Aggramor comes to pick up Neffie for the weekend, promising he's got an excellent surprise waiting for her. If they ever actually manage to leave that is.

After three rounds of hugs, kisses and tearful goodbyes, it's decided that Lickity and the other two triplets will also be coming to the Demon Capital for the weekend. Two days away from one of her children was too much for her to handle.

Once Lickity is all settled in to a guest suite in the Demon King's castle, with one of Cid's Lieutenants assigned to help her, Neffie sneaks out to go visiting. As expected, King Aggramor is just around the corner waiting for her with a big smile.

"Neffie my girl, good job. Now, I know how you like shiny things, and I've been worried about you, with all that talk of war on the eastern side of the continent, so my present will help with both of those at the same time." He whispers, rushing through the halls with the little Demon in his arms.

"Can you tell me what it is, Uncle Aggie?" She begs, but he just smiles and continues to jog until they get to a wall of assembled Demons in full armor.

"Not many know this, but there is a Beastkin Raid Dungeon in the basement of the castle, and it's chock full of gems and precious metals. That's where we're going shopping today."

Her smile and childish giggle are contagious, and the whole party of elite Royal Guards is grinning ear to ear by the time they enter the instance.

Moments later, the helpers assigned to help Lickity settle in to her rooms finally crack under the intense weight of a mother's guilt trip and tell her where her daughter has gone with the King.

Lickity is both relived that she's safe, and livid that he's taken her into a level 230 dungeon when she is certain she specifically told him not to level Neffie up. Again.

"I swear, this time he's gone too far, that evil, low down, no good Demon. He'll pay for this." Lickity mutters and both Neffie and Aggramor feel a shiver up their spines as the Succubus curses at them.

"I think mommy called you a Bad Uncle again Uncle Aggie." Neffie laughs, and the Royal Guard gets to work "shopping" for presents.

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

Chapter 288

The easiest way to remove a slave collar like the Nimans use is to kill the one who owns it. Since the authority can only be transferred to someone in direct contact with the current owner, that should still be someone in convoy.

Following that simple logic, by the time they have killed everyone who is not enslaved, the collars should have just fallen right off. The Merged Primal Echoes are thrilled to get to test that theory, mangling bodies to ensure that none get resurrected. Only half the escort force is dead when the collars come free, and the commoners of Skyview join the fight.

The enraged people of Skyview, mostly Beastkin in this convoy, tear into their former captors. They prove to be much more innovative than the Echoes had expected, and the merged pair simply stops fighting for a moment, letting the summons do the work while they take in the truly innovative ways these seemingly ordinary people have thought up to give the slave drivers a truly horrific death without having any specialty tools on hand.

The escorts aren't a full raiding force; they're just there to bring the enslaved people to the market. Once the collars are on, they can't really fight back, and they can only use class abilities with permission. Even running away requires exploiting a loophole in directions to go somewhere, most often an order to get out of a room that was given without a set destination.

The Primal Echo and the summons it calls are coated in an inky black haze, giving them an unnatural feel. Not Demonic, but just as terrifying with a hint of the [Existential Dread] aura emanating from every Summon, as well as coming full force from the Primal Echo.

The primary aura doesn't affect the freed commoners, which are seen as allies by the Echoes, but the unease from the summons isn't easy to ignore. By contrast, the Drakes and Dragons of the Kone clone-led wings are being hailed as heroes by the villages they've been battling in.

The Army Cavalry unit has just arrived at the Bhopal Village and they are sending back an unbelievable tale of a ten-meter tall horrific tentacle monster in the distance, shredding the escorts of the slave convoy.

The news causes confusion in the Throne room, tempered by satisfaction that the rescued villagers have begun returning to the town square, as the beast and its summons are said to have things well in hand at the attack scene.

[Did you send a giant horrific monster to attack the Slave convoy?] King James sends to Cain, who bursts into laughter, startling Duke Chen.

"Sorry, sorry, the Cavalry came across one of my summons, which is a little scary looking and panicked."

[Yes, the Giant tentacle beast with wings is mine. Don't worry; it's friendly, but it will likely be on its way soon; I ordered it to find the convoys.]

Calming the throne room is much more complicated than settling himself, and King James is about ready to start slapping people when the ruckus finally dies down.

"As I've been saying, it's a Summon, a terror tactic designed to panic the slave convoys; of course, it's scary looking. But it's on our side. Now, which Nobles present here have their forces assembled?"

While Maria and the King work out troop deployments, Cain has sent the four Ancient Seraphim he can Summon without transforming through the portal to various villages to look for the main raiding force.

They shouldn't die quickly, as an Epic Summon is equivalent to a Dungeon Boss their level before being buffed by Cain. Legendary summons takes a Raid party of twenty or more to deal with safely. Still, Ancients are on a different level, especially having started as Legendary, with their higher quality skills.

In an entire hundred-person group, there should be enough firepower to take them out if the group has good coordination.

The real problem with getting to kill them is their skills. In this case, the army of Seraphim, in the case of the melee-oriented Legends, the problem is that they one-hit kill everything in range of their weapons.

The Seraphim are best for group battles, but one of the Legendary Demons in the Census Cain gained from the Demon King is essentially a Legendary version of the Wrath Bringer, twenty meters tall with an ax the size of a small house. If that thing gets you, you're dead. Dead dead, mangled beyond reconstruction slow. Plus, it can fly and use fire magic.

After considering that, Cain decides he's being kind to the Niman forces by sending the Seraphim.

The villagers that are saved by the Seraphim refuse to believe they're summons, their deeply ingrained superstitions lead them to believe that it was a divine intervention that saved their lives. Once the news of multiple groups saved by Seraphim armies starts to spread, commoners from all over this corner of the continent begin to believe that King James and the Skyview Commoners have the favor of the gods.

With the troops sent out, Cain and Chen can return to the Throne Room, catching up on the latest news. The neighboring territories forces caught a wing of the Raiding party and are engaging with the help of a pair of Kone Clones. The Dragons and Drakes are herding them to the infantry, who were having trouble keeping up with the mounted forces, and it is reported to be going well.

But they have also found the cause of the attack; multiple rebel Nobles are with the raiders. According to a captured Slaver, they've been promised every Beastkin in the lands they help the Rebels reclaim as their own, newly independent country.

They're taking most of the Humans too, but that's really of no concern to the Nimans or their allies, just a bonus. The Rebels planned to have their loyal followers join them in the captured lands, not to keep the locals.

That news had the loyalists in an uproar, and it wasn't the least bit hard to get them to assemble their armies anymore. Many had to be left behind to deal with Gnoll and Goblin attacks and various local concerns, but it didn't take long to gather a large army to go clear the borders.

The banquet scheduled for tonight has been moved to tomorrow in anticipation of ending the battle successfully, so the Nobles involved in the mission are all taking their families home or to a safe location and getting ready for action.

Duke Archibald has territory not far from the border, so he's going there to motivate his tired troops for the next battle of the succession wars, but Duke Chen opted not to take a large territory, and Cain doesn't have a standing army, so they're both remaining with the King for the day.

Currently, the discussion is if the King should stay in the palace; as with the ongoing battles, assassination has become a serious threat again. With Gwen and her Bodyguards, he's feeling reasonably confident, but the danger is still there.

Letting the Rebel Nobles leave the country was likely a mistake, but the act of compassion was appreciated by the soldiers, who will have told their families and friends of the benevolence the new King showed even to defeated enemies.

Image is vital to a King looking for reforms that benefit the commoners. There's no point in making changes if they don't trust you enough to accept them.

The final decision is to stay in the Palace so that the Rebels don't occupy it in his absence and use that as a claim to the rightful rule of the country. With the history of troubled succession in the nation, simply holding the Palace can be considered solid proof of the right to rule by many.

Cain sends an update to Misha and Mythryll, who volunteer to come back in case of a fight, but Cain instructs them to stay home. If Rebels or the Gnolls they've displaced with the latest attacks enter the valley, he's worried Svetlana alone might not be enough of a guard.

The visit to Long Fang City was a resounding success for them today. They got to meet a lot of people, explain who they were and the plans for the valley, and they even managed to find several rare Alchemy ingredients that the Guild had been looking for.

Mythryll also managed to find a good excuse to try out her new class abilities, regrowing the herbs they purchased and repairing and ripening the crops in a number of damaged fields they passed by.

Gnolls haven't been easy on the land, and even with the reduction in taxes and rent, it was looking to be a lean year for some farmers who took the brunt of an attack.

After Mythryll visited, that changed, immediately making her a local folk hero. So much so that even while they're stopped for lunch at a local diner, she is still swarmed by Wolfkin and Werewolf children.

The plan is to go to the City Park after eating and let the kids play until they tire themselves out. The parents of her new followers think that's a great plan, it gets the kids out of the house all afternoon, and they'll come back exhausted. There's no downside for them.

The park is primarily a grassy field with a few benches and barbecue pits, but walnut trees give shade to most of the sitting areas. Long matured and nearing the end of their annual growth cycle, the trees are full of nuts, with more than a few falling to the ground that the local kids like to roast on the barbecue pits using the fallen branches they have collected to keep the park clean.

On the stone bench, Mythryll picks a few of the grapes growing up the back, which have been mostly picked clean this late in the season, though they do find a few late fruits.

Since the nuts only fall once a year, the kids have a pretty good collection of branches ready for when they are all ripened in a few weeks.

For now, some of the werewolves are teaching Mythryll how they use their claws to get the raw ones open to snack on while Misha has begun a game of tag using scraps of cloth from her inventory as proof of a tag.

Red team versus green team, whoever gets all the flags first gets the point; then they're handed out again.

With food everywhere, snacking seems to be the local pastime. Berries, nuts, and leafy greens grow all over the city in such abundance that the locals don't even think that simply grabbing berries to eat as you walk is strange, as it would be anywhere else.

They keep the kids busy until the first calls for dinner are shouted from kitchen windows, the sharp hearing of the werewolves and wolf kin makes sure their parents can easily reach them with a raised voice even from blocks away.

The first call to dinner is the kids signal for everyone to head home, and the ladies can barely stand under the weight of hugs bestowed upon them, promising to come over and play again when the nuts are ready.

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

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Over an hour after the news of the invasion came in, ten thousand troops were finally sent out to intercept them. As far as they can tell, none of the convoys have made it to the border yet, though nine different groups leading prisoners are being tracked.

Since the Primordial Echo was mentally scarring the locals, Cain decided that it would be better if they went on the offensive instead. Heading East into Niman Territory, they split apart to cover more ground before transforming into Primordial Demons, or Demon Progenitors as the surviving members of their species are more commonly known.

The first Echo turned slightly north towards where they detected civilization and called forth an entire army of Wrath Demons, including the Axe Wielding Legendary Quality Demon known simply as Carnage. The second followed the road southeast, hoping to find a larger city to compete with its twin, using an army of Succubus and other Obsession-type Demons.

The Demons they called were just as thrilled as the Primal Echoes to be able to let loose in combat, and a faction on faction competition gave them an extra dose of motivation. The only sad part of the Echoes day is that they couldn't clone themselves

again to get armies of Magic and Plague Demons in on the fun. Instead, they'll switch factions tomorrow if they're still allowed to run wild.

The first to arrive in a populated area was naturally the Wrath Demons, smashing walls out of houses and tearing apart public buildings to get at the people inside. The location they found was a small slave market village made up of quickly packable Yurt-style tents in bright colors and pens full of enslaved people from a variety of species set up in a hollow between hills along a well-worn path.

Almost all the defenders who would typically be here are out in Skyview on the attack right now, leaving them with no effective defense against an army of angry Demons.

They didn't come here to beat up weaklings. They came looking for a fight. It's not long before the village leaders notice that the Demons are ignoring the slaves unless they're attacked and try placing inactive collars on themselves in an attempt to escape a brutal death. The Wrath Demons aren't stupid, though, and this feeble attempt at deception only makes them angrier and the deaths more brutal.

The Echo, enjoying its time in the form of a Demon Progenitor, put its mind to hunting the leader of the camp, as it had become obvious no good fights were to be found. At first, it searched tent to tent, then a flash of inspiration struck its mind.

"Tiny slave, where is your master?" It asked a Beastkin child who pointed directly at a haystack, following the camp leader's longstanding direction, to lead potential customers to him.

The Echo doesn't even bother equipping a weapon, though it can use what Cain himself currently has equipped. Instead, it just transforms its own right arm into large tentacles and smashes the haystack until the straw is all red and the slave collar falls off of the helpful child.

"Thank you, little one. Tell the others that Duke Cain of Skyview sent us here to free you, and they should know where to go." The Echo says, patting the boy's head with the one remaining humanoid looking hand.

It's getting quiet; they must be running out of targets, it thinks, tasking the Demons to find the last few and then follow it down the road looking for a better fight. They might have struck out at the first stop, but they are not giving up on the competition already. They've got until morning to find more targets.

To the south of the rest stop along the trail, the Obsession Demons are in luck. An actual town, of sorts, has come into their view. It has a 2-meter tall low wall of local stone, a dozen or more guards along the walls, and over a thousand nonslave residents.

Perfect.

The competition wasn't to free slaves, it was to kill slavers, and this border fortress was full of them. They have some slaves around for cooking, cleaning, and other purposes, but almost everyone inside is a trained soldier.

"Oath Breakers, you go up and clear the guards from the walls. Once they're down, the rest of us will move in." The second Echo directs their troops.

They chose Lesser Succubus, Succubus Pain Bringers, a whip specialist with incredible speed, Oath Breakers, and a Legendary Demon called the Mistress of Pain. She's a Lamia-type Demon with a variety of cruel-shaped blades and barbed whips in her arsenal, as well as an Affinity for mental magic that is well known to break minds.

A short stone wall is no obstacle for any of the summons present, and within seconds of the order being given, the guards are all down. The Demons charge into sight and enter the village, brutally killing everything that moves.

The slaves, for their part, are too terrified to do even that much. Teleportation and Demons mixed were well beyond their acceptable risk level, and they've all opted to hide and hope that being perfectly still will make them invisible.

The sounds of Demonic laughter almost drown out the screams as the defenders form into a circle in the middle of the fort. Many were caught off guard by the fast-moving Succubi and killed before they even got out of bed, much less understood what was going on, but now they've had enough time to prepare for a good battle.

"Why are we under attack by Demons? The Demon Kingdom is over a thousand Kilometers from our borders?" One officer shouts as if someone will have an answer.

"Mercenaries, they've got to be Skyview Mercenaries. One of the Dukes must have sent them." Another calls back, firing off arrows that drop Lesser Succubus one after another.

In a circular formation with a shield wall forming the outer ring, they're well guarded against the whips and blades of the Lesser Demons. Still, with the Oath Breakers just appearing, tearing their chosen target apart, and then vanishing for random lengths of time, their next victim is almost impossible to predict.

The defenders are not entirely done for, though; they outnumber the Demons by ten to one even with their losses. Their mages trap a pair of the Oath Breakers, and the others kill them. They repeat the process as the Succubus infantry dashes in and out, placing vicious attacks against their ranks and retreating to avoid retribution.

For now, they can heal through that, and the attacks by the Oath Breakers are slowing, as most have been killed. The Mistresses of Pain, as well as the Primal Echo, are just waiting for the perfect moment, the time when the defenders believe there is hope, to move in and crush them for maximum satisfaction.

A cheer goes up in the defenders as the last Oath Breakers fall, and the outer circle expands to take the fight to the Succubus warriors. That's when the Mistresses of Pain attack, sending a cloud of crippling poison from a half dozen directions at once, filling the central areas of the camp.

The poison does very little damage. Instead, it paralyzes the target and leaves them in incredible agony while it slowly increases the sensitivity of their pain receptors. It's not from the poison that they get their name, though. It's from what comes afterward.

As the defenders fall to the ground, unable to move, the snake-bodied Demons move forward, barbed whips targeting fingers, nipples, and faces, tearing flesh and appendages free in a flurry of sensory enhanced agony. Then when they finally reach their fallen foes, they either crush them with their bodies or inflict a fatal strike and put them out of their misery.

Usually, they wouldn't be so abrupt, but they're on a mission, with things to do, people to kill.

A group in the center still has an active Healer and has dispelled the poison cloud, doing their best to fight off the new group of Oath Breakers. The fear and desperation are nearly an aphrodisiac to the Demons, who circle the last living defenders to watch the show.

Most of the slaves of the fortress are already free, the Commander and most of the officers had fallen in the early stages of the battle. They're mostly still too terrified to move, hoping that the Demons will kill everyone else and then go away.

But when they see the form of a Demon Progenitor wander across the courtyard eating popcorn, all sense of restraint flees them, and they make a break as one group, running out the gates and down the hill towards the Skyview border.

"Oh, very good. They're even running in the right direction." A Mistress of Pain commends the Echo, who offers her some of his recently pilfered snacks.

"Excellent work, everyone. I don't see or smell any more living people hiding in the area, so we must have gotten all the leaders. Make it quick; we've got things to do." The Echo instructs.

The last few defenders break at that announcement, charging wildly at the Demons in a glorious last stand. Mighty blows rain upon the Demons before the brave defenders are cut down from behind, leaving only one single mage standing.

He raises his dagger, blade to his chest, and thrusts, before finally wailing in despair, as his hand is caught in a large bronze skinned one with golden rings on its fingers.

“Oh no, little mage. We’ve got a pretty new collar for you, and the Mistresses need a plaything to keep them entertained as we travel.” The light of hope fades from the mage’s eyes as the words of the Echo sink in.

Life as a pet to the Obsession Demons is a fate far worse than death.

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

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The Obsession Demon army has traveled half an hour looking for more targets and finding nothing when they finally catch a whiff of unwashed bodies carried by the wind. Moving closer, they begin to smell blood and hear the signs of battle on a large scale. Their opponents, the Wrath Demons, must have beat them here.

This is no fortress. Instead, the Wrath Demons have found an actual metropolitan city. Tens of thousands of people, a standing army that is currently sending a Cavalry charge at the Demons known as Carnage, and a palace in the middle. They’ve practically won the lottery. Even if most of the civilians flee, they’ll be lucky to Cleanse this place tonight.

The Axes of the gigantic Demons leave a wave of broken bodies in their wake as the Cavalry charge vanishes. But before they can move forward to attack the infantry, the Oath Breakers are already in the defenders officer ranks.

“Party Foul. Foul, I say.” The Echo who is leading the Wrath Demons calls.

“All is fair in love and war, brother. Don’t worry; I’ll keep good count.” The other taunts back before both armies charge. The Wrath Demons towards the soldiers, the Obsession Demons towards the barracks and buildings near the edge of town.

Back in the Skyview Palace, news is trickling in from the battles scattered all along the border regions. All of the caravans seem to have been stopped, though that’s not yet confirmed as it will take days to verify their total losses in battle and those who were lost to capture.

The raiders are reported to have turned tail and run back towards Niman Territory, abandoning their prisoners and their employers alike in their haste. Preliminary reports suggest that an attack on a border city is the cause, as many of their guards were currently in Skyview.

Neither Cain nor the King intends to let them escape back home, though, especially not before they've been searched for the missing Skyview Citizens. The flights of Dragons have been arranged along the border while the Skyview Nobles' armies and the Seraphim hunt the raiders.

The raiders split up for maximum effect earlier, and it cost them heavily when retaliation came, but the details sent from the hunting parties indicate that there are still thousands of them active. They usually arrive as a Cavalry-only force, but the tracks show many are on foot now, so either they've got prisoners, or they lost a significant number of mounts during the previous battles.

Then a very different message comes in, not an emergency, a letter from the former Archduke Ferdinand's territory that a new Duke has arrived to claim the region, but without transfer papers. He's been housed in the guest quarters for the evening until the confusion is cleared up, and the Administrator is requesting a copy be sent to them to transfer the ownership in the system.

"That Duke, he's one of the banished Rebels. What's he playing at?" Duke Chen wonders out loud.

"When I took over the Long Fang Valley that borders that land, the paperwork was already done. Perhaps he thought the administrator would have the document in his files and not question a Duke, giving him system rights over the area?" Cain suggests.

"That's a possibility, but what should we do about it? I won't send the papers, but if he's invited a bunch of Rebels and Niman Slavers there, they'll have a good defensible position." King James adds.

"Why don't I go say hello and introduce myself as the neighbor?" Cain suggests.

"When everything settled, I was going to designate that property as an inheritance for the Crown Prince, as it currently belongs to the Royal Family and had been passed down in the family for generations. A Duke should know that, so this one may be an impostor entirely and just picked a rebel name accidentally."

Duke Chen has one of the assistants draw a picture for Cain from the paintings of Dukes on the palace walls so that he will know if that is the person they claim they are.

Cain messages Misha and Mythryll, telling them the situation and to prepare for a 'Friendly Visit' to their new neighbor. The ladies are happy to oblige, getting freshened up for a welcoming battle as soon as they see the message.

The travel circle brings Cain to the Manor in Long Fang Valley, where the ladies are waiting with their hair done and wearing fancy evening dresses with their functional jewelleries. Cain is already in a suit since he was at the Palace, so he doesn't leave the circle and simply invites them to join him.

The landing pad for the Transport Circle in this territory is also on the the grounds of the Manor but on a large stone platform surrendered by pillars. It looks like it used to be a pavilion but got damaged and never repaired. The Administrator runs out a few seconds later, having been alerted to the new arrival by the system, and welcomes them with an anxious voice.

“Welcome to the Manor in Ferdinand City. Might I ask who has come calling?”

“Duke Cain of Long Fang Valley. I’m informed that you have a visitor. Does he look like this?” Cain says, holding up the drawing, and the man shakes his head.

“No, not at all. I checked the identity of our new lord with a clear vision ability. The name, class, and title match what’s on the Noble Registry. If that’s an impostor the King has been looking for, we’re fortunate he’s not here.”

“Excellent, thank you. Is he still up? The king asked that I take care of some other paperwork with him right away, as we have had a bit of a situation in the Palace.” Cain says with a smile, and the Administrator motions for them to follow him into the Manor.

They only make it a single step when two dozen armed men step out of the shadows, and a barrier falls over them. Much like the one in the Palace; it blocks skill activations inside the area of effect. The Administrator looks shocked and backs up toward Cain while the men laugh.

“He told us that if we waited, they’d send someone to finish him off. But the King sent us a particularly good catch, didn’t he?” The group leader, a warrior in blue-tinted plate mail with a black cloak over the top, laughs.

“Now, just put on the collars like a good little slave, and nobody has to die.”

He throws four slave collars at their feet, and Cain begins to laugh. “Did you honestly think he’d send someone defenseless into a trap? I know the Rebels are not too bright, but surely the Nimans aren’t that naive?”

“Big talk, but you can’t do anything about it.” The warrior laughs while Cain releases Laura from the Merger.

“Kindly freeze these idiots.” Ice Fog Breath is not a skill granted by the system, it’s innate to her species, and the two tiny Dragons fill the area with fog before transforming to their full size, deactivating the ability that makes them small.

Cain then releases Vala, as the life-on-hit stats on her gear should still work inside the bubble. The two cups of Vala, followed by Cain, lunge forward at the attackers, forcing them back out of the effect of the barrier.

Misha and Mythryll follow close behind, as the other attackers circle the restricted area, and the Administrator retreats to the transport circle, desperately trying to activate it and run away.

The fog is their most significant advantage today, not only can the opponents not see, they're not exceptionally high level, and the breath of an Ancient Dragon does a lot of damage. Cain Merges with a group of Oath Breakers and lets the other Companions free to fight as he drives his spear into the neck of the warrior he's engaged with.

The armor barely manages to hold, but it has collapsed, squeezing his throat, and the impact nearly broke his neck. The area damage from the near decapitation drops all the attackers below half health, and the Oath Breakers laugh in Cain's mind.

[Let us out. We want to play too.]

[Fine, but not all of you.] Cain replies, keeping only one merged with him while the others joined the battle.

"They were right, almost all his summons are out hunting right now, and he can't call anymore. Bring them now." One of the mages calls, and the area floods with the smell of the undead.

Unfortunately for them, that's a weakness of the Necromancer, not the Puppet Master. Once their undead army is out, they need to be destroyed before more can be Summoned. The Necromancer can dismiss them from a few dozen meters away, but any further than that, and he's out of luck.

What Cain called was plenty to deal with this group, though, if the Oath Breakers can get to the Necromancer.

Misha and Mythryll have both transformed for battle, and Mythryll is bringing a load of Lesser Golem level Dark Nymphs from the surrounding trees, while the whole area becomes razor grass and vine whips sprout from random locations.

Misha bathes the Transfers in Holy Fire, the skill boosted by her Merger with the Record Keepers, whose appearance she now mimicks while in her Apostolic Transformation. She follows the flames up with a group of Lamia Scourge Casters and some Wrath Bringers for good measure.

The attackers panic, not having expected a second Summoner to be with the group who was sent to deal with them, but it's too late to regroup; they're caught between the undead and the Demons, unable to back away.

The undead horde is mindless, they don't understand retreat, so they make no effort to clear a path for the doomed group, even as the fearsome Axes of the Wrath Bringers descend on their heads.

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

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Two of the warriors managed to survive the onslaught of the Demons, while the rest are shredded by Scourge Casters and then cleaved into pieces by the Wrath Bringers.

Through sheer weight of numbers, the Necromancer appears to have the upper hand unless Cain calls the Seraphim or the Supporters back from their battles near the border, but none of his summons except the Bone Dragons were high quality.

He hasn't called them today, so either they're on the ability to cool down or require a reagent that the Necromancer doesn't have with him.

The combination of Dragon Breath and area damage is taking a lot out of the Undead, but the combination is even harder on the Necromancer. They can absorb a Summon every so often to heal, but the actual healers working with the group are dead. Cain watches as the Oath Breakers time their strikes to hit their larger undead targets all at once, killing the black-cloaked Necromancer in a single shot with the area damage.

The undead army disappears, and everything goes eerily silent until a shrill scream splits the air, and Laura returns with a gaudily dressed nobleman in her claws. This must be the Rebel Duke.

"Misha, could you or your Record Keeper dispel all illusions on this man? I would like to see who it is for real."

The effect is instant; the body changes to that of a much plumper and older man that closely matches the drawn picture in Cain's pocket.

"That is his real appearance, and as of yesterday, he was banished from the kingdom for treason," Cain explains to the Administrator, who is still hiding behind the pillars of the travel platform.

"You don't know who you're messing with; we've got strong backers. Harming me will only bring about your death." The former Duke declares as if confident Cain will let him go.

"Strong backers like the Elven Royal family or the Demon King? That strong?" Cain asks with a smile, and the man goes pale.

"The Demon Mercenaries in Niman Territory, it was you?" He stutters.

“Not was, is. From my message feed, they’re at some large city right now, competing over who can kill the most of its residents before dawn.”

The man sighs and flicks his fingers, throwing a pill from his inventory into his mouth. With a single crunch, his face begins to turn black and melt, killing him beyond hope of revival—a poison pill designed for a world where resurrection is a thing.

Explaining to the Administrator that he had been tricked wasn’t hard; he guessed that much from the start. But the news of Nimans this far into the country scares him. Many of the nations on this side of the continent practice slavery in one form or another, but only one country is known as the largest supplier and breeder.

Now that the threat is temporarily dealt with, they’ve got time to breathe. Cain is still in a Raid group with the King and can see the encouraging messages other Nobles are sending about the improving state of the Northern and Eastern borders.

The mountains are to the east of Skyview and are home to the Gnolls and other hardy monsters. Niman Territory is technically the northeast of Skyview, claiming the foothills and a portion of the rugged mountain range as their hiding spot, using the treacherous terrain to hide slave movements.

Both had spread widely into Skyview lately, though, and the cleanup of the Gnolls is taking much longer than finding the Niman invaders. The Nimans want slaves and are on a schedule; the Gnolls are content to hide until they’re hungry or see an opportunity to claim a portion of land as their temporary home.

Cain informs the King that he will be at the Manor for the rest of tonight, but Maria will be at his side and able to contact them at any time for an immediate return.

That leaves the three traveling Companions time to go to the Manor and eat a proper meal, free of Nobles, pretentiousness, and stress. The Puppets are cooking today, saving them the effort, so Cain checks his status while waiting on what they have picked for dinner.

[Name] Cain

[Level] 210

[Class] Ancient Flesh Crafter

[Race] Ancient

[Stats] +210

[STR] 225

[DEX] 225

[CON] 225

[INT] 225

[HP] 3600

[MP] 4500

From level 200, he has been receiving ten stat points per level, a great benefit to him in the long term, as many hidden and special abilities seem to be linked to status points.

That's how his entire first hundred levels in this world went, gaining skills the class could have started with when he finally got enough points into the relevant stat.

Keeping them balanced seems best, so Cain distributes out two hundred of the points and checks his new HP and Mana levels

[Stats] +210->10

[STR] 225->275

[DEX] 225->275

[CON] 225->275

[INT] 225->275

[HP] 3600->4400

[MP] 4500->5500

That's a nice, reliable boost. Sure, most of his effective stat levels during combat come from the user of the Merger skill, but the damage, durability and other abilities of his summons are still determined by the base Stats.

He's also now got ten skill points available to him. [Living Art] and [Greater Merger] are still too expensive, but he could get two out of four ranks of [Ancient Wisdom], letting his entire party use a skill he picks from his Greater Golems, or he could get [Useful Dolls] making all his puppets match his level.

Both are immediately useful skills to him since his Summons are always considered part of him and would benefit from [Ancient Wisdom]. Still, level 210 Puppets that he can create to have a single skill are also a rather impressive addition to the security of the Guild Properties.

With the ongoing attacks, Cain decides to favor combat utility and picks [Ancient Wisdom] x2 for five skill points a Rank. When he gets the final rank into that skill, it should let him grant an ability from the Legendary summons to his whole party.

The very idea of it is utterly broken, though Cain suspects there will still be some restrictions, like not being able to use exclusive racial abilities.

Having the Primal Echoes go to battle within Niman Territory was a great idea; they have all his skills; the only one he knows for sure that they can't use is Primal Echo, but it seems they do get his experience bonus passive. The amount of experience they're pouring into him is staggering, so Cain decides they could use just a little extra help.

Laura's Fog Breath saved him just a few minutes ago, so he grants the party the closest thing he can to it. Ice Drake Breath from one of the Drakes Kone has active.

[Include Raid Party?]Y/N

No. That might be a bad idea right now. As funny as it would be to see most of the Upper Nobles of Skyview with Dragon Breath, that would raise a few questions tomorrow.

The mental cheer that goes up in his mind at that ability is deafening. The city the Echoes were sacking just got reinforcements of a much higher level, and they were slaughtering the summons faster than the Echoes could recover mana. With the ability to freeze, they've slowed their losses.

The higher level Transfers still resist most of the freeze effects, but every little bit helps their competition. At the rate they're going, neither will last until dawn, running out of mana and either being forced to retreat or getting themselves killed.

At the dinner table, Misha puffs a little bit of ice until the air, catching it and placing it in her drink. Mythryll giggles, and the Puppets get an excited look before running back to the kitchen. Sounds of banging and grinding follow while Cain enjoys the meatloaf dinner the Puppets created, and he can hear that whatever they're doing is making them happy.

The meal is his ultimate comfort food in this world. The mediocre and generic meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and mixed vegetables you would expect from any roadside diner. The Puppets only have Apprentice 1 cooking skills unless they've been active long enough to naturally obtain better, but that's enough for the standard line cook.

Their meals are never bad, just predictable, they're precisely what you'd hoped they would be. If you were hoping for food from a greasy spoon diner.

The Pub in Graska has been using them for the same reason, the place is always busy, and with so many to feed, plus the Guild Members, the actual chefs were overwhelmed.

The Puppets he left make most of the meals, while the chef makes the unique and complicated dishes.

The grinding noise turns out to have been them making a bucket of ice to freeze yogurt to a soft serve ice cream consistency. Blueberry Frozen yogurt that is entirely made from the Long Fang Valley, or so the Puppets inform him.

If they're going to be treating him this well, Cain decides it's only fitting that he finds them a better skill book. If there's one to give them all Apprentice level skills, Cain is certain he can find one to provide them with Journeyman level skills without replacing them with custom-built Puppets.

They don't have the most vibrant personalities, even now that they're intelligent, but the Elven Puppets are very kind. Which reminds Cain to find out what Maria is actually like personality wise as a Puppet. He did leave her alone with the King, after all.

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

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With the extra damage and control ability granted by army wide use of Ice Drake Breath, the Echoes manage to hold on for almost two more hours before finally needing to flee from the city, which has received continual high level reinforcements.

Unable to escape on foot, they end up Summoning Dark Phoenix to escape through the void where they're harder to track, coming out a half-hour later with full mana and plans to attack outlying villages instead of big cities. As much fun as it was, it did not succeed in obtaining their primary objective.

Even with the two of them, they were brutally outmatched by that army of Second Advancement transfers. The Area Fire Abilities and turning the very stone of the buildings against them were a nightmare to fight against.

The worst part is that a only one hundred kills separate them in their personal challenge. That's way too close to call a definitive winner.

Attacking in broad daylight seems too risky now that they've seen what the Niman cities can muster for defenses. Instead, they'll wait for the dark and find more slave caravans and transfer stations to attack, working together to follow Cain's instructions to eliminate slavery in the Niman Territory by virtue of mass slaughter.

Well, at least that's how they interpreted his instructions.

In the city of Hannaford, still reeling from the vicious attack of what they assume to be Demonic Mercenaries, the council has gathered to assess their losses and the damage to the city.

"Do we have a solid lead on who hired them? I want him found and killed. Tonight, no later." The Mayor demands, slamming his meaty fists on his desk, making the fat on his arms ripple.

"There are no definitive leads, but they first appeared inside Skyview and attacked our slave convoys during today's raids. It's safe to assume that one of their Oligarchs hired the Mercenaries as a warning, but even with the payment from the Rebels, I directed them not to touch any properties owned by an Upper Noble." A stout Beastkin with only a pair of longhorns on his head breaking the illusion of humanity informs him, seated at a desk marked Acquisitions Manager.

"Did they reassign properties without us knowing? If they now have some of the border territories being managed by the Dukes and Earls, it will be a disaster. They are the biggest nation, but their Beastkin population is also in high demand with our northern customers. We need them to overlook our activities." The mayor moves past confusion into full-blown anger that their informants didn't catch something that might be vitally important.

"News from Skyview, My Lord. The last of the Raiding Parties has fallen, and none of the convoys made the border, except the one that the Demonic Mercenaries wiped out just inside our Territory." A young soldier who is taking notes from a conversation with an informant he is grouped with calls to the assembled council members.

"Well, that's that then. Do you think they'll continue to attack? With that large of a hired force, they could well decide to invade before their mercenary contracts expire." One of the Councilors asks.

"I don't think so. After tonight they'll likely call back their troops. Skyview is hardly stable; they nearly lost their King again yesterday to a coup attempt. They'll have to regroup, and then we can move in. Give it a couple of days to bring over another raiding party, and we will get our prizes." The Mayor sneers confidently.

The others don't have much optimism, but they've made big promises to their clients and taken extensive deposits to match. If they don't deliver, there might not be a Niman Territory next year.

To the west of the Niman Territory is the Nyanko Confederacy, a loose organization of villages populated mainly by Felians. Though they have a strong army, their citizens too are frequent victims of the raiders, and their spies are most intrigued by the recent developments in Skyview.

“Chief, have you heard the proclamation of the new King of Skyview? He will be taking Beastkin into his harem. My uncle is a Knight of Skyview, and he said the proclamation declared any Noble’s daughters had a chance. A niece is close enough, right? Do you think I could land a king? I’ve heard he’s a big lover of soft things and even keeps a pet Kitsune.” A young girl named Giselle rambles on to the Chief of her village, an old Felian woman called Finder.

“First off, you’re three whole years from marriage age. Secondly, Kings look for power and alliances for their harem; it will be hard for a Knight’s children to get anywhere in the selection process. You’re beautiful and very cuddly, but don’t lose sight of reality.” Chief Finder admonishes.

“What about Khali? She’s a Chief’s daughter. Could she get a King?”

Finder considers that for a moment. Khali is the daughter of the only human Chief in the Nyanko Confederacy. As such, she might be open to a political marriage. An alliance with Skyview would be an excellent benefit for their small Confederacy, should the new King’s rule survive this test.

“We shall see, little one. We shall see.”

To their north sits an extensive open grassland. Nearly a desert with a harsh dry climate, very few would freely choose to live there. Was it organized as a country, the steppes would be the largest on the continent, rivaling the Great Desert in sheer size, though also sharing its low population.

With hundreds of small kingdoms and city-states on the continent to its west and the Demon Kingdom to the north, the steppes provide a comfortable buffer to Demon King Aggramor, separating his nation from much of the volatility that the region is known for.

One of the many nomadic groups upon the Steppes is known as the Tungsten Nomads, a hard-living group of barbarians and exiled criminals from an assortment of races. Fate has been particularly unkind for them lately, and they’ve lost most of their women and children to battle and a harsh winter hiding in the mountains to escape their enemies.

So, they gathered what resources they had and placed a large order with the Niman Territory to procure them new families to keep their band going. But news from the city of Hannaford in Niman Territory is not good. It says that they have utterly failed to fill the order and lost most of their raiding team.

Niman isn’t a large country; they only have a few cities but numerous small outposts that serve as transfer stations, if one of their major cities can’t even organize a raid, it’s not a good sign for the future.

The Chief of the Tungsten Nomads is in mental turmoil; they need those enslaved Beastkin to have hope for a future. But Skyview has become fearsome. If they dare to attack entire cities of slavers in broad daylight, very little must be able to scare them.

But for now, he will hold off on taking action. He will give the Nimans a chance to fill his order, and if they fail, he will take his Tungsten Nomads into Niman Territory and fill the order himself from their women.

That night brings chaos to the Niman Territory. The attack on Hannaford wasn't the last of their troubles for the day; the Mayor had just received an emergency call from a fort fifty Kilometers away, near the border with the Nyanko Confederacy. They've been besieged by Demons just as the sun fell, the Mercenaries taking advantage of the twilight to invade their camp.

To the Echoes, this camp is even better than the first one the Obsession Demons found, holding nearly two thousand defenders. Unfortunately, it's also crawling with enslaved Nyanko Confederacy Beastkin after a recent raid. So many that it is hard to fight properly without risking injuring them. But to the Echoes, that's just another difficulty level in their challenge.

Now that Cain has activated Ancient Wisdom, they can use it too, and they've put it to good use. One has given his Demons the teleportation ability of the Oath Breakers; the other chose the flaming Axe of Carnage. Their only complaint is that the multiple uses don't stack.

Scaled down for the lesser Demons, the axe looks a bit less terrifying, but the effect it has is no less deadly. The Axe of Carnage leaves a blazing trail in its wake and causes the ground to shudder if it strikes a solid object, creating an earthquake that can topple most buildings that somehow survive the brute force of the blow.

Giving them to everyone in his force made the interior of the fortress ripple like the ocean's surface during a storm; dirt went flying everywhere creating a hazy cloud as buildings toppled, and living beings were thrown around like rag dolls.

The current phase of the competition is in who can swat more of the flying humans to death, the brute force of the Wrath Demons, or the speed of the Obsession Demons. The tactic favors the Obsession Demons in actual kills, but the hysterical giggles of the Wrath Demons let everyone know that they don't particularly care.

The Echo who chose Wrath Demons turns to his clone with a smile. "I think you've won this location, but that has got to be the funniest thing I've ever seen. Did you see the air time that guy with the whip got when he mistimed his jump?"

"That was way better than expected. Be sure to inform Cain. With a third player, this could be even better." The other Echo agrees.

[The Axes of Carnage cause Hang Time if everyone uses them. You must try it out later.]

What in the world are they even talking about?" Cain mutters when the message arrives, distracting him from petting Misha's new wings as they lay in bed.

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

Chapter 293

That night the Demons got to six locations throughout Niman Territory before vanishing as the sun came up. Their final total favored the Wrath Demons by six kills, though the other Echo disputed some of them.

Cain heard of the commotion they were causing from conversations in the King's raid group chat. The Demon Mercenaries' rampage in Niman Territory was the talk of every one of Skyview's neighboring nations that night.

The goal was to disrupt their attacks and keep them from returning to Skyview, and they did that, hitting every target they could easily take and freeing thousands of enslaved people.

They did so well in fact, that an Envoy from the Nyanko Confederacy came to the Palace this morning to request an audience and officially thank the King of Skyview for returning their abducted citizens.

King James knows already that the culprit wasn't a mercenary group but Cain's Summons, but he's not about to turn down an alliance with a nation known for its skilled warriors.

In the late morning hours, King James schedules a meeting with Chief Kahlil, the emissary sent by the Nyanko Confederacy, to meet with him. As a lunch meeting, the chief is invited to bring his companion with him, a short and dainty raven-haired human girl named Khali.

She's relatively quiet through the early stages of the meeting, simply sitting and listening as the two men share pleasantries, but once the refreshments arrive, she becomes much more lively.

Not towards the humans. No, she is bound and determined that she will be able to lure Gwen off the King's lap with snacks. With her status hidden, the girl hasn't realized that the Kitsune is more than a pretty pet fox, and her efforts aren't going as well as hoped.

"If you want to play with her, just ask." King James smiles at the girl, amused by her antics.

Finally, she gets to a square of pumpkin pie, and Gwen looks to King James for permission before hopping in her lap to eat the snack from her hand as Khali strokes her fur.

"I knew I just had to find the right snack. All foxes love one particular food; you simply need to learn what it is to become their friend." She informs them in her gentle voice.

She seems to be a kind person and certainly is very lovely, so James looks at her status to see what class, if any, she has chosen.

[Name] Khali

[Race] Human

[Class] Bard

[Level] 17

[Age] 15

A Bard is a good choice for a noble daughter; they're often asked to perform for audiences regardless of class. Being a bard turns a necessary skill into a helpful trade. What surprises him most is her age.

Yes, she's pretty petite, but her single-minded fascination towards making friends with Gwen made her seem much younger than he would have guessed by appearance, which can be deceiving with heavy makeup.

A grand victory banquet is scheduled for tonight, with all Nobles and their families invited, the first of the meeting events to select potential harem members in advance of his coming of age birthday in a few weeks.

King James invites the pair from Nyanko as his guests of honor this evening, exactly as the emissary had hoped. His instructions when we was sent here were to attempt to form a long term alliance and military aid agreement with Skyview. Finding a Royal husband for his daughter does both those things at once.

Khali keeps Gwen in her arms as they finish their meeting, promising to have her back before preparing for the banquet.

“So, I see you’ve made one new friend here already, but what do you think of the King? The Council wants to propose an alliance, but if you’re not willing to become part of a Royal Harem, I very much understand.

There is a chance you could be Queen, but a much better chance that you never would be more than one of many women who share a King’s bed.” Kahlil informs his daughter, making very sure she understands the situation.

“One of many means more time for fluffy things like Gwen here. Perhaps he will choose a nice soft Beastkin, someone to cuddle like Giselle.”

Her father shakes his head at her notion. “The chances of a Beastkin might be high, but competition among a Royal Harem is intense. The women are more likely to be cutthroat competitors for the throne than a new cuddle buddy for you. Keep that in mind.”

They’ve reached their assigned quarters, so the two separate, with Khali taking Gwen into her room to relax until the banquet.

The Chief’s daughter and the Kitsune settle on the plush blue velvet divan song the wall under the window and Khali takes out a brush designed for fur from her inventory, offering to groom Gwen, who is happy to get the attention as she observes her target for the afternoon.

The girl constantly talks as she brushes and pets the fluffy Lieutenant, slowly revealing personal desires and national secrets. “I’ll tell you a secret little fox since you can’t understand me. A Royal husband seems to me like far too much work.”

Gwen giggles at her assessment, and Khali continues with a smile. “Pleasant evenings in bed are one thing, but I’ve never cared for banquets, politics, and formal events. If we could play the violin in the woods right now, I’d be much happier than wearing all this makeup and the fancy dresses and jewels. Seriously, they’re ridiculous. I can barely walk in this. It’s to weigh twenty kilos and it’s got these stupid high heels.”

The fashion of Nyanko is what Cain would call Victorian. Multiple layers, corsets, large amounts of jewelry, and full makeup. Even a Geisha would be dismayed at the sheer amount of costume and makeup that go into their daily apparel, and for a Royal Banquet, it will be even worse.

Gwen takes pity on the girl and informs Cain of her impending issues. Misha and Mythryll have just the solution for her, so Cain heads back to the Palace with them earlier than intended, looking for the emissary of Nyanko.

Kahlil is found in his assigned room, going over documents he hopes to present to the King tomorrow, when a butler announces that Duke Cain, head of the Defense Council, is here to see him.

“Please, bring him in. We have much to talk about. Welcome, Duke Cain. I have been told that you arranged the military action that caused such an uproar in Niman yesterday. The Nyanko Confederacy is in your debt.”

Cain nods politely to the emissary as he enters. “Think nothing of it. Everything I did, I did for Skyview. But I’m here on another task tonight. My sources say the young King is quite taken with your daughter. If you don’t object, I had thought that my people might help her get ready for the banquet in a manner suitable for a Skyview Noble? The fashion of Nyanko is exquisite but somewhat stuffy for a young lady in this heat.”

Her father considers the proposal for a moment, noticing the elegant and somewhat modest dresses of the two women with the Duke, before agreeing. “Just don’t go too overboard, I’ve heard rumors about some of the Noblewomen of Skyview, and Nyanko values modesty.”

That’s good enough for Misha and Mythryll, who head next door to get everyone ready, while Cain details all the targets the Echoes attacked that are public knowledge from the raids last night. Nyanko is an ally, and pointing out that Skyview is capable of defending many villages simultaneously is beneficial for their image.

The emissary Kahlil is a court noble through and through, with his brightly colored clothing, while Cain goes as Duke Chen suggested a Defense Minister should, in a polished black chest plate with gold decorations. In the Roman style, it is fitted to his torso, showing exaggerated pecs and abs. It is worn under his suit coat in place of a vest and tie.

Maria wears a similar armor in gold over a blood-red gown with open shoulders and long sleeves, coming to meet Cain just before the banquet. Kahlil looks impressed, and the Succubus looks very formal in her armor and gown that the palace staff procured for her.

The ladies meet them outside Khali’s room, having dressed the Emissaries daughter in a champagne-colored satin evening dress with a matching lace shawl. It covers much more than usual for Skyview, but in the eyes of a protective father, even the hint of cleavage is scandalous.

“Trust me; she will be comfortable and not overdressed. The young ladies of court always look much older due to their makeup, but the King is still weeks away from his coming of age birthday. The mid-twenties look they go for is nearly Ancient in his eyes.” Cain says quietly, and the emissary finally gives in.

Internally, Khali is celebrating. There is no corset, no layers upon layers of petticoats, and no caked-on makeup. If this is the life of a Skyview Royal, it is more suited to her.

The Herald introduces them all as they enter the gardens where the banquet is being held, finding many lower Nobles have already assembled on the lawns.

Kahlil can see that Cain was correct; despite the two very different fashion themes, fancy Victorian Royal Court versus elegant evening gowns, almost every young debutante brought here in an attempt to woo the King has her makeup done to look older than she is.

There are a few notable exceptions. The cat folk girl that Duke Chen brought wears no makeup at all, and Cain can see calluses on her knuckles from martial arts training. He's not sure they're related, but with her dark hair and vaguely similar facial features despite the difference in species, she might be a granddaughter of his.

The other notable exception is an Elf that arrived with a delegation from the Serrah Woods. She had chosen an Elven traditional leaf-styled knee length gown with only a hint of makeup. Despite her looks, Elves age slowly, so she is probably older in actual years than half the parents of the other candidates.

The three fresh faces hit it off immediately while their Guardians talk shop. Misha, Mythryll, and a few guards escort the girls away from the center of the gathering to find a comfortable spot to talk, without all the noise and the crowd of bodies.

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

Chapter 294

The King enters the gardens without any announcement, the crowd only becoming aware of his presence once Gwen escapes his grasp and darts away, a well-staged plan to find the girl he met with this morning.

He finds her with Duke Cain's usual two Companions, plus two other lovely young ladies, a cat girl, and an Elf. James briefly considers that he might have been set up, but judging by the way they're positioned and how they noticed Gwen long before seeing him following behind her, it seems more likely that they have simply begun to get along.

Two of the three are quite dainty, but the third, the cat girl, is the tallest of the ladies present. Even though her dress is designed to hide her figure subtly while still showing her feminine curves, the fact that her prodigious chest entirely shields Gwen from above when she hugs her is clear to the eyes of the teenage King.

If he's going to keep holding these events, he will have to do something about the hormonal reactions, he decides. Maybe a skill to help him focus? There are a few early

in the Crusader skill tree, and he saved a bunch of points, taking only the healing and offensive sections of the Paladin tree and none of the Crusader tree's skills yet.

King James quickly allocates a few of the points, getting the skill [Inner Peace], which, when activated, calms his emotions and desires, letting him think objectively while around temptation.

"Thank you, ladies, for catching Gwen. She's quite the escape artist when she wants to be. Are you enjoying your evening?" King James asks with his very best smile.

"Yes, thank you, Your Majesty." The five answer in unison as Duke Chen steps forward, accompanied by the Elven Emissary.

"Ah, I see you've met my granddaughter. Your Majesty, might I present to you Adalynn, the oldest daughter of my fifth son."

"May I present Luann, sixteenth daughter of Prince Galt of the Serrah Woods." The Elven Emissary adds, moving his ward forward, making the Elf blush at the attention.

"And, of course, this is Khali, Daughter of Chief Kahlil of the Nyanko Confederacy, who you met this morning," Misha says with a slight curtsy, as her father isn't here to greet the King yet.

"You all look stunning tonight. I'm honestly a bit lost for words seeing so many beauties in one place. I do hope you'll forgive my lack of elegance." The genuine smile of the King brings a matching reaction to every face, with Duke Chen and the Elven Emissary sharing a look of amusement over the botched attempt at smooth-talking.

He's saved from trying to recover when Gwen yips and hops into his arms, pointing her nose towards the treeline. She's not growling, so she doesn't see it as dangerous, only undesirable or annoying. Communication is limited with her in fox form unless she sends him a chat message, but he's gotten good at guessing.

This one is obviously about the number of debutantes gathering in the trees, looking for a chance to catch his eye.

"Time to get to business, I suppose." He sighs to the girls with mock sadness before turning away towards the treeline.

"Oh, and do try the spiced lentil sandwiches." He says as he leaves, getting swarmed by potential suitors when he is finished with the conversation.

Duke Chen turns to all three young ladies with a smile. "As we now have the King's permission, I would like to formally invite you all to the King's coming of age ceremony. He would be delighted if you could attend."

“All of us?” Luann, the Elf asks with a bit of surprise, expecting only to have spent a moment here in her search for a suitable husband.

“All of you. It seems the young King has a type, so I wouldn’t be surprised if he makes some time for each of you between now and then.” Duke Chen confirms, and the girls share a shocked glance at each other.

Does that mean they’re now rivals? Or are they still friends first? None of the three are willing to place rivalry before friendship, and with the arrival of the highly recommended sandwiches, they manage to put the awkward moment behind them.

While the King was chatting with the ladies, Cain found himself cornered by several very chatty Nobles with interest in the crops of the Long Fang Valley. They’re all Knight and Barons, without much territory, but run at least one produce stall. For them, getting a variety of fresh produce is a matter of financial survival. If they can’t get their shelves filled, customers will turn elsewhere.

The growing season is a year round for many things here, with a second and even third crop possible for fast-growing vegetables. Some farmers use greenhouses for cycling their products to be ready for market when other regions have none, but Long Fang Valley typically uses magic to ripen crops early, thanks to their high number of transfers.

Cain eventually turns their questions to his administrator Damien, who no doubt will be swamped tomorrow, and they all go away happy.

The border Barons who want to talk military matters aren’t as easy to get away from, and many have brought their daughters. Not just to meet the King, but to meet the various new Nobles.

For a moment, Cain wishes he’d brought the Companions with him instead of letting them relax at the Manor, but on second thought, that would have only made things worse as he would have to field and politely decline marriage proposals from noble sons.

Preferably without greatly offending anyone, as impossible as that might be.

The distraction when everyone breaks off as the dinner announcement is made leaves Cain standing next to one very panicked-looking Beastkin girl in a blue sequin dress. Cain waits a moment, giving her time to see where her Companions went, then realizes that sight is the problem. They ditched the blind girl to go flirt with the King.

Cain coughs to grab her attention before approaching. “Hello, miss. I’m Duke Cain, head of the Defense Council. Would you like an escort to dinner? If seems your Companions have forgotten you.”

“Thank you, Duke, but I should go. My sisters resent dragging me along to these functions at the best of times.” The girl sighs.

“Then you might as well join my table. It’s no burden, and it’s not far from here.” He says softly, guiding her with a hand on her shoulder towards where Misha and Mythryll are seated.

Duke Chen and a handful of his family are at the table on one side, with the Elven and Nyanko Emissaries sharing a table on the other side, everyone engaged in conversation with their neighbors.

Duke Chen’s older granddaughter has joined Cain’s table so that she can talk with the other young ladies from earlier, and Cain leads his blind charge to the table, getting her safely seated before taking the chair between her and Misha.

“I see you’ve met Dufas’s daughter, Cyrene. She was born an oracle, the sixth of eleven girls and the youngest of a set of triplets. I can make sure she gets home safely if you’d like?” Duke Chen introduces them.

“That’s alright; knowing that she’s an oracle, I’d love to have a conversation with her later. The skills of an oracle aren’t something I would underestimate, and I don’t have one in the Guild.”

“We don’t get much. It’s a pretty crappy trade compared to most classes. I get random visions and premonitions occasionally, but there isn’t even a skill to make them reliable or help me navigate without sight.”

“Don’t worry about that; we’re happy to help you get around,” Misha says, holding Cyrene’s shoulder.

“Oh, it’s you. I know that presence; we will be great friends; I have seen it.” Cyrene declares, giving the startled Misha a big hug and petting her wings.

“Yes, it is you for sure. If you didn’t have the wings, it would be one of the other possibilities, but it’s this one. I like this timeline.” She’s not making sense, but Misha returns the hug as Mythryll smirks at her.

“You think I’m the weird one, but I’ve seen what you do with the Sailor.” Cyrene says vaguely, looking at thin air.

Cain laughs out loud at that; there is no way he’s letting this one go. Plus, with her father looking to do business with him, he should be reasonably amenable to anything Cain suggests regarding the burdensome middle daughter.

Cain had expected the man to come looking for her before dinner, but even after the dessert course, when the Dukes had gathered around to meet the Emissaries and sip

coffee, Dufas still hadn't come looking. He might be a Count and a bit reluctant to approach a gathering of Dukes, but surely he'd come for his daughter?

When the Nobles have mostly cleared out, and it's time to go home, Cain helps Cyrene to her feet. "You're coming with us. Trust me, I've seen it in a vision."

That makes the oracle burst into laughter. "If you steal my lines, what am I supposed to do all day? Transmute pain?"

"What is that? Is it like absorb pain into an object, or turn pain to pleasure or something?" Mythryll asks, confused.

"It can be either. I can create vision gems with the suffering around me that can grant a vision to someone else, or I can share their pain to try to trigger a vision of my own, or I can turn it into pleasure, but that doesn't trigger visions."

"So the suffering of your lack of vision triggers your visions?" Cain asks, curious about her powers.

"Yes, any suffering. But breaking my bones isn't recommended; I heal very slowly." She jokes, sticking her tongue out.

"You really did get the oddball class roll. Stand still; I will carry you to the transport circle." For once, Misha didn't get jealous of Cain touching another woman; instead she seemed lost in thought about something her new self-declared best friend had said earlier.

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

Chapter 295

"If you can find me a room near other people, I'd appreciate it. The sound helps me orient myself inside a building." Cyrene informs Cain once he sets her down in the garden of the Manor, looking a bit embarrassed, not knowing there's nobody around that might have seen her in the arms of the local Lord and misunderstood.

Her sense of propriety is a great relief to the others, who have become used to the rather blatant shamelessness that seems to have infected half of the Upper Nobility. Though it's mostly due to her class and the obstacles it has caused in her life, Misha feels she's much more like a lost puppy they've taken in than a Noble's daughter.

“That’s not a problem. I can also assign you a maid if you’d like. Someone to escort you wherever you need to be. We can talk about the details in the morning, but I’d like you to join my Guild, the Darklight Host.” Cain offers in a light tone, trying not to offend her by offering too much assistance.

“Thank you. I already know I’ll accept, but I appreciate the offer of time to think.” Cyrene smiles back, only a third turn away from actually looking in Cain’s current direction.

“That’s perfect then. Will there be any issues with your family? I can likely work out a business deal that involves you joining my guild as a sign of trust.”

“No, I’ve got it all sorted out. I told my sisters I found a home for the blind, and they took out a great deal of money to help me move away from the family home. I only need to drop in for the important holidays so grandma doesn’t get upset.” Cyrene smiles, content that she’s managed to set herself up for an easy life.

“What happens if we level you to the first advancement?” Misha asks curiously.

“I have no idea. I can’t see most of the effects of my own choices. But I should get to choose a new class, though I would likely still be blind unless it’s a class that fully overwrites the Oracle class.”

[Is there a dungeon in the valley?] Cain asks Svetlana and then sends a Guild invitation to Cyrene.

[Cyrene has joined the Darklight Host]

While he waits for Svetlana to answer, Cain sends out a Guild message. [Do we have a nonvisual navigation skill that an oracle can use?]

Svetlana answers first. [There is one, level 200, in the hills by the dam. I believe Damien said it was full of Ogres.]

Ah, Ogres. That brings back memories. If it’s a level 200 dungeon, it should be easy enough to complete without recalling any of his summons and safe to bring Cyrene through.

Hopefully, at level 100, she can get a class that eliminates her blindness, but if not, there is bound to be an option to help her get around independently. They’ll just need to find it.

Giving her a full-time attendant is no problem, and he intends to do it anyhow, but it would really help her self-confidence to at least get around the Manor on her own.

[There’s a copy of Sonar in the Guild Bank now. A duplicate from our library, and Red says she should be able to use it.] Kone sends a few seconds later.

[Sonar] sensory skill usable by all classes. Rank C. Range 5 meter radius from the user in all directions.

That's close to perfect, at least indoors where things at a further distance won't matter much. Cain withdraws the book and sits down to make a copy at the inscription desk he keeps in his inventory while Cyrene explains some of the strange visions she's had over the years to Misha and Mythryll.

They learn that an Oracle's visions rarely have anything to do with the Oracle herself and instead usually focus on important national or regional events. During the succession wars she gave a lot of warnings about ambushes and attacks, hoping that someone could interpret them and pass them along. How successful she was, nobody bothered to tell her.

Once the short-term duplicate skill book is finished, Cain pokes Cyrene in the side with it.

"Use the book." He says as she holds it with a confused look.

The book vanishes, and she gets a startled look. "Sonar? That's a great idea. But where did you find a skill book? My sisters said they're super rare and almost impossible to copy."

"They really don't like you, do they? They're fairly rare, but Cain made that copy for you while we talked. The Guild had an original copy in the Library. It's not the best since you can only detect objects less than five meters away, but now you should be able to safely walk around the house without help." Misha's speech makes Cyrene cry again and hug her so tightly that the Oracle lifts herself off the ground when Misha moves.

"I'll station a puppet maid in your room tonight. If you get up first, she can give you the grand tour or bring you breakfast." Cain informs their newest member.

"I appreciate it. This place seems lovely. But it will be interesting living as an oracle here; now that I have Sonar, I'm not lost all the time, and it's not so bad being blind. Plus everyone is happy, so I might not get another vision at all." Cyrene jokes.

"Well, if you need one, just ask. I'll give you a spanking or something." Cain laughs, and the Oracle turns bright red.

"I'll keep that in mind."

Misha wraps an arm around Cyrene and whispers something that makes the oracle laugh before pointing at the window that makes up most of the wall, starting at knee height. "Now, let's go see my room."

“That’s a large window. I’ll guide you around tonight, but be sure to ask the maid for help tomorrow, so you don’t fall in the hot tub or something.” Misha says, shaking her head.

“Sonar isn’t as easy as I expected. I only know everything by shapes and feel, and that is shaped like a door.” Cyrene apologized while turning to follow Misha.

“I know it will be a steep learning curve, but it’s better than nothing. I still can’t believe your family hid the fact that this type of skill exists. I mean, it’s not as great as seeing, but you could have been using it to navigate since childhood.” Misha mutters, angry about the injustice on Cyrene’s behalf.

The Oracle is overjoyed at the room in the Guild wing that she’s brought to. Being the unwanted one among many siblings, she has always had to share a small space. Now, she’s got a full-sized bedroom all to herself.

Cain summons another of the maid type Elven Dolls, and sets her besides the oracle. “This is Cyrene, who is adjusting to her new vision skill [Sonar]. Escort her around the house when she asks and help her with anything else she needs, like making it to breakfast on time.”

If they’re going to wake him up every morning for breakfast, the Puppets can wake everyone up for breakfast.

Cain notices during breakfast that Mythryll seems to be in a much better mood than usual the next morning, coming skipping down the stairs with Nila, both of them still sporting hair damp from the shower and joking with each other.

They’re the last ones ready, he and Misha got up when the maids came to inform them of breakfast, and Cyrene got up before the sun, getting an escort around the property to learn more about her new home.

According to her, having the diverse gardens and the Spa at the entrance to the residential wing is actually beneficial to the blind. The change in smells lets her know exactly where she is, so even when she’s having trouble interpreting the information from the Sonar ability, she can tell what part of the estate she’s in.

The oracle turns out to be quite energetic when she’s around people she is comfortable with, a significant change from the shy and reserved girl Cain first met yesterday, lost at a Royal Banquet.

He has the day off from actual duties today. Maria says they’ve got the security situation under control with her and the King guiding the wings of Dragons and Seraphim around the border regions to clear the Gnolls and any other remaining threats.

With the day off and an unexplored dungeon in his territory, Cain’s plans are set.

“Cyrene, would you like to accompany me and Misha, plus whoever else wants to join, in exploring the Ogre-filled Dungeon in the hills?” Cain asks.

“Oh, that sounds fun. But can I bring my maid? Being in dungeons tends to trigger visions.” She half-jokes.

That makes sense to Cain. Suffering causes her to have visions, and dungeons have a pretty high death toll, even if they’ll all be back tomorrow.

“I can make you a larger bodied escort for the dungeon if you prefer? The Puppets are pretty strong for their size, but they’re still based on Elves.” Cain suggests, but Cyrene waves him off.

“We will be fine, It’s not like I’ve got any combat capability, so I’ll just be standing back while you fight. It should be exciting to see it with [Sonar], though. I never understood tactics because I could never see what they talked about. I don’t even know how big an Ogre is.”

This trip is going to be quite the learning experience for her, so they set off on foot, leaving Mythryll at the Spa to relax for the day and get her nails done by the Puppets, who seem intrigued by the prospect, having never done it before. The tools and supplies are all there from the previous owner, though, with instructions, and they’ve hopefully got a skill that applies to the work of a beautician.

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

Chapter 296

Cyrene is left in awe by Long Fang City. With Sonar, she can see the whole outline of buildings and small trees; then there’s the scents of the herbs and fruits that are growing all over the city.

She grew up in a Manor in the Capital, well away from nature, so every bit of this is a new experience for her. It was rare that she was brought out in public at all, and certainly never to the countryside. But the banquets for the King were to be the last of her likely chances at finding a suitor of any sort, so her sisters begrudgingly brought her along, then ditched her at the first opportunity.

“Can we...” She begins.

“Take the long way around and explore the city? Of course, we can. Let us know if you want to explore something or if your oracle senses detect something that needs our

attention. This whole valley is my territory after all, so it's my responsibility to make sure the people are doing well." Cain agrees with a smile that the Oracle can't see.

Unless she concentrates, fine details like facial features are smoothed out by the skill, making everyone featureless mannequins of various sizes. The general shape is enough to tell a lot of people apart though, so even without facial features, Cyrene is learning to recognize people around her.

Cyrene reaches for a raspberry bush before anyone can stop her, pulling her hand back with a pained nose. "Something bit me."

"Raspberry bushes have sharp thorns. I'll pick you some; you have to be careful or wear gloves to pick them safely." Misha explains, knowing that a sheltered, blind city girl couldn't possibly be expected to know about raspberry bushes. She likely just smelled the berries.

"Thanks, these were at breakfast, and they're perfect. Tart and juicy. Do they always grow along the road?"

"It's a unique feature of Long Fang City. There is food planted everywhere. Most people would have to go to a berry farm or market to buy them, but if they're ripe, we can pick them from the plants in public areas to eat." Misha explains, handing Cyrene the berries she just picked.

They are about to pass the park when the Oracle suddenly stops and turns towards the trees. "Someone is hurt. Can we help? I carry bandages with me because I run into stuff all the time."

"Misha is a Healer. Where is this hurt person? Lead the way, and we'll fix them right up."

A group of teenage Beastkin kids flee when they see the group coming, leaving behind a battered-looking puppy, or more correctly, a werewolf child lying in the grass.

"You'll be alright little one. I'll heal you right up." Misha says softly, and Cyrene moves to pet the werewolf, which climbs into her lap and cries in its half grown light brown wolf form.

They give the pup a while to calm down after it has been healed before Cain signals Misha to ask the questions. She's much less intimidating than he is, especially with the pretty blue wings showing.

Cain could change that, of course, pick a friendly-looking or small and cuddly form, but it feels more right to have someone naturally approachable do it instead.

"Are you alright now?" Misha asks the boy as the sniffles slow.

The pup nods and shifts back into a teen boy, who equips a pair of shorts but stays on Cyrene's lap.

"Do they always pick on you?" She tries again.

"Just today. I activated my class, and they said it's stupid and useless." The boy whispers.

"There are no useless classes. Why did they think that?"

"My brother and his friends dared me to random roll, and I was stupid enough to accept. They said it was a girly class and that it meant the system knew I was too weak to be a warrior."

[Name] Percival

[Race] Werewolf

[Level] 1

[Class] Mixologist

Cain internally curses the system yet again. Some things shouldn't be in the random class options. But still, it's far from a useless class.

"What does it say about special ways to gain experience?" Cain asks, forming a plan in his mind.

"If people like the drinks I serve, I get an experience bonus based on the complexity and quality of the drink. I'm a waitress." The boy sighs.

"You're a bartender. Your skills should be for making new and special drinks, right?"

"Yeah, some can even add buffs, but the warriors don't care about that since I don't get any fighting skills."

"I know just the person to help you. Can you walk, or do you want me to carry you?" Cain says, looking the boy over carefully.

"Why not this one? I like the smell of this lady. Oh, sorry, I didn't mean it like that. I can walk since the Lady Misha healed me." The boy's answer takes a hard turn when he realizes that not only did he just suggest the blind woman should carry him, but also that his comment might make her think he's a weirdo.

He ends up walking hand in hand with both Misha and Cyrene as Cain leads them to the nearby local tavern, run by a female werewolf in her early 30s. Cain had to check

her status to know her name, but the face is familiar and he's sure he saw her at the farm defense the first day he was here.

"Mary, do you have a moment?" He calls from the door as they walk into the empty tavern, his boots thumping on the rough wooden floor.

"Be right there, hun. Oh, Duke Cain! It's a pleasure to see you here; what can I do for you? We brew the finest herbal mead in Skyview if you're holding a banquet."

"I will take a cask of the mead, but I've found you a potential Helper. He activated the mixologist class today, and you've got the biggest tavern in town."

"A mixologist, is it? That will be very helpful once he grows up. You've got a talent for drinks; make us each something from behind the bar. If they're good, you're hired."

Percival is in a much better mood as he looks for ingredients and mixes drinks for everyone. He's going all out; they've all been created to give a mana regeneration buff when imbibed and come in various fruit and liquor flavors.

Sweeter for Misha and Cyrene, tart for Mary, and a slightly sour mix of apple and Rum with a hint of cinnamon for Cain.

They each take a sip and pass them around, trying every flavor before finishing the one they started with.

"Very good. If you want the job, come back here after school. You can make the evening punch for the buffet and mix drinks until dark. I'll work out the schedule with your mom, so you don't fall behind at school."

"Thank you so much. She's going to be so happy that I got a real job. My brother says he will be a Royal Guard, but he's seventeen and still level nine."

"Don't they have training dummies at the local school for kids to practice and get their level up?" Cain asks, confused. If they don't, he can donate a bunch.

"They do, but Hon and his friends are all lazy. It takes a lot of work on the dummies, six hours a day or more, if you're going to cap out at level 40 before you finish school at fifteen. Especially if you activated your class late."

That makes sense. Given the option, most people will do the bare minimum to get by, and some even less than that. Plus, six hours a day of hard physical training isn't exactly an easy process even for the motivated.

"What's their plan then? Just stay low level forever?" Misha asks, curious.

“They met a patrol guard the other day who said he could get them into the capital training raids. They only need to pretend they’re new transfers to get the pass and enter the raid to get leveled up enough for the city guard. After that, they think they’ll be recognized as geniuses and inducted into the Royal Guard.” Percival shrugs, recognizing that the idea is idiotic. Even if they get through the training dungeon, the Royal Guard are elites.

“Oh, I know the leader of the training raids. Kandi. She’s a Holy Avenger now, but she transferred in as a Crusader. She used to work for my dad.” Cyrene says brightly, and Cain laughs, confusing Percival.

“You can’t lie to Crusaders. They detect falsehood as a passive skill. They will never even get into the group.” He explains, and Percival smirks.

“Now I feel better. I’m not telling them that. Let them try to weasel out of their lies.” The boy chuckles.

“We’re on our way to the dungeon. Is there anywhere else we should see along the way?” Misha asks as they stand to leave.

“If you’re willing to carry some hard workers, there’s a pair at the flour mill along your way. They shouldn’t be hard to find.” Mary suggests.

“Yeah, a Red Goblin and a Turtle-type Beastkin. They’re always together. You can’t miss them.” Percival agrees.

They make their way across town, frequently stopping to investigate various plants and talk to locals, making sure all is well in the valley. Many people avoid them, not wanting to annoy the Duke, but almost all of them at least give a smile and a wave as their group passes.

It’s silent, so Cyrene had never noticed it before, and the friendly greetings make her almost giddy with joy at being welcomed by so many people.

“I almost feel like a princess, with everyone being so nice everywhere we go.” She laughs, skipping down the street. Cain and Misha share an amused look, but follow the Oracle as she wanders, not wanting to let her get lost.

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

Chapter 297

The bartender was right; the two are impossible to miss. They're practicing sword work in the yard of the flour mill during their break when Cain comes around the corner. One small female Red Goblin and one Dwarf-sized leatherback Turtle Kin. Both are wearing plain gray tunics with brown leather pants and boots to train in, and the red skinned Goblin has her black hair pulled back in a single braid to keep it from getting in the way.

They're both level 44, so they must have kept working hard after they stopped getting experience training on dummies. Low-level green Goblin attacks were common before Cain arrived, so they've likely also had at least some actual combat experience.

The Turtle is a warrior, a good match for the durable Beastkin. But the Goblin is a Paladin, which makes Cain wonder just how many people are brave enough to leave their future in the hands of the Random class generator. Maybe the strange things it comes up with aren't common knowledge, and are simply dismissed as rumors?

The interface says their names are Gilly and Snoo, interesting choices to say the least, but they're nonarrival species, so unless they are transfers who went full random and somehow both got hidden rare species rolls and spawned here in Long Fang Valley, those should be the names they were given by their parents.

"Good morning. I see you two are as hard-working as we were told." Cain greets them, drawing their attention away from practice.

"Greetings, Duke Cain." They answer with a polite bow, then wait to see what he wants.

"We've got room for two more to go to the dungeon. It'll be a load of levels for you if you want to go. I can even speak to your boss." Cain offers and the two hardworking fighters give each other a high five.

"My dad runs the mill; he should be alright with it. Just let me talk to him." Snoo says, running inside.

His father clearly doesn't believe him because he's quickly escorted out by a 2.5-meter-tall version of himself, who suddenly stops when he sees Cain and the others.

"I told you. Maria, the bartender, recommended us. She must have put in the good word as thanks for carrying all her deliveries downstairs." Snoo says, feeling vindicated.

"Alright, I believe you. You're not ditching work to practice your sword techniques with your girlfriend." The older Turtle Kin laughs.

"Duke Cain, it's a pleasure to meet you. Please do take care of my boy." He says politely, then abruptly turns and goes back inside.

“Don’t mind him; he’s like that when he’s working.” Snoo laughs, equipping his armor for the battles ahead.

Not that he’ll be doing anything but getting notifications, since he is 160 levels below the dungeon, but he doesn’t know that yet.

Bringing low-level Transfers through high-level dungeons is one of the small joys of Cain’s life. They benefit immensely, but he also gets the entertainment of watching them go through it.

“So, he thinks we’ve been practicing ‘sword techniques’ all day, does he?” Gilly giggles and wiggles her eyebrows as they fall in to head towards the dungeon.

“Yeah, you know how much we, no wait, not like that. I’m sorry about her, Duke Cain. She says whatever comes into her mind.” Snoo says, beginning to panic.

Cain looks back at Gilly with a wicked smile. “The only way to improve is practice, right?”

Snoo sighs, seeing that he’s outnumbered here and Cyrene chuckles at the noise. “You get used to them. Adventurers are a bit different than other people.”

“Will we even get to adventure, though? In such a high-level dungeon, we three will mostly hang back so we don’t get killed.” Gilly points out.

Cyrene shrugs. “That’s what I do anyhow. This is the first time I can even tell where we’re going.”

Misha was going to make a retort, but suddenly the Oracle stopped dead, and her eyes closed while she started muttering. She was having a vision of some sort, so the group stopped and waited for her to finish while her maid held her upright.

“Well, that one made very little sense. Horse riders from a number of species are attacking a mountain city with a blue stone wall, but I don’t know where the city is or who the horse riders are. I haven’t seen either one in a vision before. It was a premonition of a great change that’s about to happen. Though, I don’t know exactly when or who.” Cyrene explains.

Cain sends the information to Maria, who promises to look into it and find out if the city in question is one along the eastern borders of Skyview. Some of those cities are built into the mountains, and it would be great if they could get a warning of an imminent attack.

The entrance to the dungeon is in a field next to a farmhouse surrounded by a wall of stacked rocks, so nothing accidentally wanders inside. The Fox Kin family who works that land is happy to tell them anything they want to know about the dungeon itself.

The younger adults are in the mid-level 200s and have gone along with a number of groups in the past. The father is a Bulwark Class tank-type warrior, while both his wife and his mother, the family's matriarch, are Arch Clerics.

Upon reflection, Cain recognizes the older silver-haired Fox Kin; he's confident that she too was at the battle with the Gnolls, healing the wounded farmers after the attack. The younger woman he doesn't recognize, but with very young children, she was likely home keeping the family safe during the battle.

The dungeon seems straightforward. Two warrior-type bosses and one fire mage type Ettin. The dungeon is arranged as a series of camps through the valley, which at the time the dungeon was formed was mostly grassland with a river running through it and a few surviving trees scattered through the area.

"Alright, when we enter, I'll call my summons forward, and Misha can call hers on defense. They'll keep everyone safe while we clear the dungeon one encampment at a time." Cain explains their tactic for the day, and the others prepare themselves, not entirely sure what to expect.

Workout having seen them in action, it's nearly impossible to envision or anticipate how Cain and Misha work together inside a dungeon. The first thing Cain does once they're inside the dungeon is to call all his Supporters to him except Nila, who is busy with Mythryll.

The others were either napping or reading, nothing that it would bother him to interrupt. They all call their Bonded Forces while Cain calls out a force of Lamia Scourge Casters, Wrath Bringers, and Lords of Decay.

The giant Plague Demons are a change for him, but against Ogres, more large bodies will help keep groups under control better than the agility of the Oath Breakers.

The others follow him inside, and Cyrene steps forward hesitantly, looking at the Lamia. "What exactly are those? A snake-type Beastkin with a half-snake body?"

"They're Lamia. They're technically a type of Demon, not Beastkin, but they're very friendly. Reach out your hand, and they'll likely come over for head pats." Misha says with a bit of laughter at the end.

The Oracle takes her literally, holding out a hand and moving toward the serpentine Demons. As expected, the affectionate creatures meet her to get their heads rubbed, loosely wrapping around Cyrene, in their usual show of pleasure.

Misha calls out a group of Succubus and Wrath Bringers, as well as her personal Demonic Summon, the Mysterious Acolyte. The feathery creature seems to care very little about any potential danger, and is instead looking enviously at the Lamia.

“Fine, come here, and I’ll give you some love.” Misha laughs, hugging the Demon and stroking its wings.

“You guys are a bit odd, aren’t you?” Gilly laughs while Snoo is staring at the Succubus forces.

“It’s Cyrene’s first time seeing them. Normally we’re at least a little bit more professional.” Cain says proudly.

“A little bit anyhow.” Misha smiles, nodding her agreement.

Without any further warnings, Cain sends the summons forward to attack the first camp of Ogres, while one of each supporter stays back to watch the show start. Both Gilly and Snoo immediately grab their heads in agony as the first wave of notifications and their accompanying announcement noises roll in.

Cyrene seems to be holding up better, though she’s slumped into the Maid’s arms for support. Cain isn’t sure how much experience the lower-level party members will get from a run, and he wants them to be comfortably over first advancement for their own safety, so he joins the battle to speed things up.

Pulling one of the Oath Breakers into Merger, Cain charges the leader of the Ogre Camp, a heavily armored Elite with a club that looks to be a stripped-down tree, roots and all.

As his spear sinks deep into the creature’s fleshy pink neck, the strike activates the weapon’s damage bonus and drops dozens of wounded Ogres with the area effect that is gained from being merged with an Oath Breaker.

Cain hears Misha begin to laugh and turns back to see what exactly is so funny.

“She tried to transmute the headache to pleasure, but I think it’s torturing her with a pleasure feedback loop because of the continuing notices.” Misha gasps and Cain sees a trembling Cyrene being entirely carried by her maid.

Well, that didn’t go exactly as expected. But there’s still a lot more dungeon to go.

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

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Not only Cyrene but also Gilly and Snoo need to be carried towards the first camp by the summons as the number of Ogres dwindles. Patrols routinely go from one location to another, so they will have to stick close to the main force unless Misha's summons take care of it on their own.

The group of Succubus she Summoned and the Wrath Bringers, plus the Mysterious Disciple that is her Supporter have all gone forward to fight. Leaving the Agility type Bodyguards and the magic type Sorcerors hanging out in the back with her, Nemu and Evangeline, as well as helping carry the disoriented newbies.

Today she picked forms of Succubus for both, expecting that they'd need to carry fallen comrades, but she overlooked the downside to using Succubus for the task. They're playful creatures and not above tickling the ones they've been instructed to carry; at least they weren't until she ordered them to stop torturing the children.

Back at the primary battle, Laura has transformed back into a dragon, and Cain has chosen his Demon Progenitor form to triple the number of Demon species summons they get.

Seeing six copies of Vala around is a strange experience for Misha, as the bookish Demon tends to be nearly invisible when not in action, simply hiding somewhere comfortable and taking in new knowledge. But today, the duplication of her healing on hit ability has made it almost unnecessary for Misha to do anything other than cast her holy fire on the Ogres with area heals to keep the random buffs active.

The increase in numbers was more than enough to match the Ogre Camp, and with a level advantage plus Cain himself in combat, they're dropping every few seconds, unable to withstand the onslaught.

He's not letting up, though, sending a copy of Vala to grab a patrol and bring them back to where they're fighting, keeping the number of enemies up until the very last moments of the fight.

No time is wasted once the numbers dwindle either, as Cain immediately sends half the force to the next encampment to continue the battle while he finishes this one before following them.

Misha feels he's in some sort of hurry today for no real reason. Until she sees him check his watch and smile, she knows that look, the smile that means he's planning something that most would find somewhere between cruel and outright evil.

[What are you planning? I know that look.] The private message from Misha makes Cain laugh as he fights.

[A few more skill points after lunch should be fine, too, right?]

The thought of doing this twice makes Misha hide a laugh. Maybe the second time, they'll all get to see what's going on instead of having half the group spending the entire run passed out from a flood of notifications?

Two patrols arrive at once as Cain is fighting the second camp, and Misha sends a bolt of Holy Fire over to grab the attention of one of them before calling a few of the Wrath Bringers she Summoned back to tank them.

With the Wrath Bringers keeping them off the spell casters, she and the Succubus Pain Witches she Summoned as Sorcerors have little trouble dealing with the two Ogre patrol. They're big and strong but only carrying clubs and not heavily Armored.

Every strike of magical fire scorched their skin, and every strike from the Wrath Bringers dug deep into their bodies, the damage enhanced by the curse effect applied by the Pain Witches.

They're not the most powerful of Succubus spell casters, but they compliment the random buffs and debuffs that her magic applies, giving a reliable source of increased damage taken in addition to whatever random effect Misha herself grants.

This camp had the first boss they would be fighting today, the fire magic Wielding Ettin. Currently, it is distracted by the Oath Breakers, but Cain is just waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

He's learned that Ogre and human physiology are very similar regarding organ placement, so when the opportunity presents itself, Cain hurls himself forward with a mighty thrust of his black feathered wings and drives his spear deep into the Ettin's heart from behind.

A full stack of Might of Many, as well as the attack power buff from the Five Tiger Spear, is far more than the two-headed boss can handle, and the spear critically punctures the heart, dropping the mighty dungeon boss with a single strike.

[Cain has Received an Ability Book]

[Book of Superior Mental Domination] has dropped.

[Superior Mental Domination] Rank A. Usable by Ancients, Obsession Demons, Magic Demons, Kitsune. See or control the thoughts of any or all targets within 20 meters. Maintaining the effects requires 100 mana per target every 15 seconds.

Cain looks over the description and shakes his head. The first book he's gotten in a while, and it's not a combat skill. But there's still more dungeon here, and he's got a good feeling about this group. Someone is going to get something unique for sure.

He will copy the book later and put the original in the Guild Library, but first, he needs to check for patrols.

They've all been taken care of while he was waiting on his moment to strike down the boss, and Cain is about to move on when a quest notification comes through.

[Class Quest: Dominant Life Form. Random Reward for defeating targets under a [Fear] [Mind Control] or [Hypnosis] type effect. Quest completes when instance has no remaining targets.]

That's an easy one for Cain to accomplish. He only needs to change appearances back to his Ancient Form, and everything that he kills will be under a Fear type effect unless they resist.

"I'm going to change forms back to Ancient. Did you see the quest notice?" Cain asks Misha; the only noncompanion that is still coherent.

"I saw the notice. Go ahead; this should be very interesting to see." With her confirmation, Cain transforms.

Not into the human-sized version, but into the ten meter tall monstrosity best suited to fighting Ogres and other Giant creatures. He charges the next camp, the wings propelling the gigantic body at tremendous speed, while all the summons chase him.

In this form, he can only really use one weapon, so he keeps the spear out and leaves the Scimitar equipped on the side that is now a mass of tentacles. He hasn't really experimented with this form yet, but it lets him equip a weapon for that 'hand' despite it not appearing, so he's curious whether strikes with the tentacles will apply the debuffs and damage from that weapon.

The first swipe of his tentacles proves it does. The damage is incredible, mangling Ogre bodies and hurling them through the air, but it also applies an improved version of pestilence, as the Scimitar would. Even those only receiving glancing blows by the tentacles receive the debuff, so Cain wades into the heart of the battle.

The Ogres are beginning to flee, so for the first time in his Ancient Form, Cain uses an actual spell [Acid Rain].

[Racial Ability Active: Ancient]

At first, he isn't sure exactly what that means until he reads the buff description.

[External Spell Effects are cast at Ancient Quality]

Simple but devastating. The Area of Effect of Acid Rain has tripled, more than covering the entire camp he's fighting in, and the damage seems to be better than usual as well, though that's hard to gauge with how infrequently he casts attack spells.

Every raindrop causes a sizzling effect on the Ogre's skin, burning through flesh even as the summons charge into the fray. Ogres aren't all that bright, and many look up to see what's attacking them, only for the rain to burn their eyes, causing them to scream in agony as they're slaughtered.

He can see Misha is frantically writing something, using her wing to keep a notepad dry, and guesses that the pain of the acid on the Ogres caused Cyrene to have a vision.

The tank-type boss is in the next encampment, and the commotion has drawn his attention. They've begun sounding horns, causing even more Ogres to start heading towards the dark clouds and Cain prepares for the worst.

"Misha, move everyone behind me and get ready to be attacked. The Acid Rain pulled the rest of the dungeon all at once."

It is too far for her to get the others back to the safety of the entrance before the Ogres get to them, so Misha calls back her Wrath Bringers to protect the group.

Cain focuses on what his summons outside the dungeon are doing, finding that the Primal Echoes are simply playing cards in a cave and waiting for it to get dark so they can continue their kill count competition.

If they've got time for that, they can help out, then use the Dark Phoenix to fly back afterward, so Cain brings them both, adding two shadowy versions of his giant Ancient Form to the instance, as well as a mighty army of summons, as the Echoes call everything they've got. Magic and Plague Demons this time, for the next chapter in their contest.

The Legendary Magic Demon is a simple one, a two-headed version of the Record Keeper, but the Legendary Plague Demon is not at all what Cain expected. The Epic Plague Demon, The Lord of Decay, is a gigantic bloated creature taller than the Wrath Bringers. The Legendary Plague Demon is a human sized version of the Fallen angels.

The single pair of wings are still covered in black feathers, but the rest of the Demons' body seems to have withered and dried out to a mere husk of their former glory. Some are male, some are female, but all look more like mummies than living creatures.

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

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The Aura that comes off these Plague Angels is incredible, though. Forget Pestilence; even at twenty meters away, Ogres are beginning to wither and die simply from their aura effect. The only ones that aren't visibly affected are the bosses and the Ogre Shamans, who have enough resistance to fight it off.

They carry rusted two-handed swords with them and fly into the enemy with surprising grace even as the two-headed Record Keepers light everything up with magical fire, unwilling to lose this round of their bet.

They might only be half Cain's power, but they're Legendary and under the effects of a full suite of buffs. Then Misha casts an area healing spell on them to refresh the damage done by an Ettin's fireball, and a Spell Power bonus takes effect, sending a cheer through their ranks and causing a redoubling of their flames, making the best of the perfectly matched random buff.

Cain activates his Mana Flood totem, throwing it back to Misha to hold, as she's near the center of the spell casters, and returns to the fight.

The battle is entirely in their favor now; the summons outnumber the remaining Ogres and are about evenly matched for losses, with the Echoes regularly calling in new waves of Demons as the Ogres wipe out sections of their force.

Cain and his forces have taken the center of the wave of attackers, with Plague Demons to his right and Magic Demons to his left, but back a little to stand closer to Misha.

The Plague Demons have Blighted Paladins among them, who can heal their putrid comrades, and the Lords of Decay increase healing and Mana Regeneration, so they're in no real trouble. They're also incredibly durable, which is an advantage over their competitors in a scenario like this when there is hand-to-hand combat with Ogres.

Thankfully, none of the recruits can see this, though Cyrene may see it in a vision. She did say she often sees massacres after all. A sight like this might cause lasting trauma for the young transfers.

Cain steps back from the battle, letting the summons do the work so he can see how the others are doing. Misha is staring at him open-mouthed, and he wonders if she's ever actually seen his Ancient Form before, as he so rarely uses it. The others are still lost in their sea of notifications, though.

The Echoes have personally engaged the two bosses, racing to see who can bring theirs down the fastest. In the boss race, the Echo that is being assisted by the Magic

Demons has a clear advantage, even this early in the fight. But in the overall kill count, their team is getting crushed by the area damage of the Plague Demons.

As the number of Ogres dwindles and their levels rise closer to the dungeon level, the three intrepid volunteers start regaining coherency. The first back is Cyrene, who has a lot more practice with mental overload thanks to her visions, but with only a five-meter range on her Sonar, she still honestly has no idea what is going on other than a vicious battle.

Gilly and Snoo begin to return to the land of the living, so Misha gives all three of them the most crucial bit of advice for this situation. "Wait until we're all done to pick your new class. You want a clear mind to decide, and you need to put points into your old class before you change, or you'll never get any decent upgrade options."

The two youngsters look utterly baffled by what they see, hordes of summons, some very real, some cloaked in shadows, and three enormous Horrors. Snoo, having never been good with horror stories, promptly passes out again, while Gilly stares at Cain with an intrigued look.

"What do you think they taste like? Will it be calamari or something entirely different?" The Goblin ponders, giving Misha ideas for later.

'Surely Cain can make a smaller version of that form?' She decides, throwing a few more area heals to keep the random buffs up.

It's only a few seconds before the last of the Ogres falls, and the Magic Demon team celebrates their consolation victory of having burned down their boss more quickly than the Plague Demons.

Cain shifts back into a human form, and the Echoes shrink back to human-sized for comfort, keeping their natural Ancient Form. Cain is curious about just how well things went for each team since it's valuable information to him as well. Knowing what's best in every situation is essential for a Summoner, even if overwhelming force would still get things done.

"So, what's the final score?" He finally asks the Echo that led the Plague Demons.

"I'm up 194 kills to 102 in this dungeon. The Ogres have a bit of magic resistance but nothing against disease and very little armor. A definite win for us, but they did burn the boss 19 seconds faster, so the Magic Demons still have the edge in single target damage."

That's a more significant margin than Cain thought it would be. Pestilence was already good against large numbers with its insane rate of spread. Still, their Legendary level Demons are also winners against the residents of most dungeons without cluttering the place up like the Seraphim would have to do to keep up.

“Alright, noted. Now, you can fly back to your cave and finish your card game or whatever you had planned for the day. I’ll leave you both to your mission in Niman Territory. The other teams should be finished with their mission to the border regions soon, and I’ll call them back, so keep an eye out once the news spreads for the Nimans next attempts to raid both here and into Nyanko Confederacy. When they do, they should be easy targets.”

It’s almost like he gave a child a puppy the day before their birthday; these two are incredibly excited to hear that they get to continue their mission. Mostly, Cain isn’t sure what to do about the Nimans, so he’s having the Echoes haunt their border regions until someone comes up with a better plan or they do something that makes urgent action a necessity.

The three lower level group members are all functioning again and no longer quite so under level. Even though the Echoes didn’t go way overboard with the summons calling summons, there were still a lot of Demons in this dungeon. Gilly and Snoo have made level 178, while Cyrene is at level 176.

Cain guesses she’s very close to leveling up, the experience difference between levels is enormous at that point, and the others must have just barely advanced.

[Quest Complete. Three hundred ninety-seven targets were defeated under qualifying debuffs. Claim Random Reward Now?] Y/N

Cain decides to hold off on the reward so that he’s not zoned out while the others might need assistance or advice. They just gained an awful lot of levels in a short pperiod, and picking the right skills is imperative to their First Advancement.

“What class are you going for, Snoo?” Cain asks the Turtle Kin, who has flopped out on the ground with Gilly sitting on his leathery shell.

“I want to be a Tank Type. So if I pick all the defensive skills and the toughness buffs, I should get something good I think. I got a skill book too. [Shield of Wrath] but I don’t think it’s good for me. It’s a damage skill that uses a shield, though, so maybe it is?”

Cain sees from his link in party chat that it is a very ordinary D rank skill, nothing too exciting, but Gilly seems happy to see it.

“If you don’t want it, I’ll take it. Paladins always need more damage skills.” She says happily, sliding off his back to stand in front of him.

“How about I buy the original from you and make you both a copy?” Cain offers, intending to add it to the Guild library.

“That works for me. As long as I get to learn the skill.” Gilly declares, making Snoo thump her on the head.

“Don’t forget, I’m the one that got the book drop.” He sighs, used to her antics.

Cain brings out the Inscription desk, and the two younger transfers begin to examine it with great interest.

“You’ve got a Legendary Inscription Tool? And it looks ancient. I’ll bet this thing is older than my dad.” Snoo says, amazed.

“And it’s inscribed in Dark Elven. I told you, adventurers do get the coolest stuff because they look where nobody else does.” Gilly agrees.

Snoo hands over the book, and Cain quickly makes two copies, handing them back along with a few gold coins for the original. Being a low-ranked book, it is little more than a pamphlet with a cover, so he’s done in only a few minutes.

The Superior Mental Domination book he got will have to wait, since that one will take time, and there’s no guarantee he will succeed on the first attempt.

It’s not a rush; he’s got [Noble Command] for issuing orders and making sure they’re followed; group mind control isn’t on his itinerary for today.

Cyrene looks lost in thought, then asks an unexpected question. “Can you do for me what you did for the Royal Alchemist?”

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

Chapter 300

“You want me to turn you into a big, buff Orcish girl? I mean, yeah, I could do it in theory. But why?”

“Oh, not that. I just meant a change of body. If I could only get something to set myself apart from the way I was born, I’m sure I could break off the Oracle path. I’ve only got one class option, Vestal Virgin. It’s much better with the predictive skills, making visions targeted and reliable, but I would still be blind, with no combat skills.”

“I would be happy to help you, but it might take some trial and error, so let’s do that after these two finish their skills. Gilly, what sort of class are you going for?”

“Out of the options I have available, Arch Paladin all the way. I’ve heard that Goblins can get some cool special classes, but I haven’t learned any skills that might unlock one.”

Cain thinks back to the Goblin Mole Dog Riders and all the varieties they came in. One of them should have something. Cain looks through them a moment, then finds a Goblin Chevalier. That's promising. Their skillset says they can Summon their mount and have healing skills, so they're likely an exclusive Red Goblin version of an advanced Paladin.

[Summon Goblin Steed] is one of the skills that all the versions he has recorded are equipped with, so Cain Merges with one and quickly writes out a copy of the skill. It's Rank C but relatively simple, and it only takes him ten minutes to finish while Misha guides the others through their skills to get their desired classes.

"Gilly, take this. It's a Goblin Exclusive skill book, and I think it might unlock something good for you." Cain says, offering her the copy he just made.

Gilly grabs it happily, learning it before Cain might have a chance to change his mind, then cheering and dancing as she realizes what it is. She focuses intensely, praying for luck before going into the Class selection screen for a few minutes, then returning and giving everyone in the vicinity a big hug. Mostly around their thighs.

"I'm a Goblin Chevalier now. A whole new class of Goblin Paladin. But what do Goblins even ride? I couldn't ride a horse; they're huge."

She remembers that she can now Summon her personal steed, calling forth a Long-nosed Mole Dog with plate armor. It's coarsely furry, dark brown, and almost the size of a bear.

Snoo is in shock at the sight of such a creature, but Gilly is ecstatic, and the Mole Dog is incredibly excited to meet her, jumping on her and licking her face until she tickles it under the chin to get it to let her up.

Gilly hops up in the beast's back, settling naturally into the saddle and reaching out to hug Cain again.

"This is amazing. Her name is Wendy, and she's a Mole Dog. I can hear her in my mind when she's Summoned. Did you know what it would be?"

Misha laughs at the excited red-skinned girl, who is practically bouncing on her new ride, long ears flapping with the motion. "Of course he did. We faced an army full of goblins mounted on them, and the skill is from one of their Paladins."

"We don't have these beautiful creatures in the valley; I've never seen one before. I know of Mole Dogs in theory from school, but are they supposed to be this big?" Gilly gushes, petting her new friend.

"The Summoned ones are. The ones that the average mounted soldier uses are half that size." Cain shrugs.

“Now you’ve got an Armored steed, and you don’t need to run everywhere to keep up anymore,” Snoo adds his thoughts, and Gilly laughs.

“No more yelling at you to slow down. Turtles are supposed to be slow, but you’ve got long legs.”

“Alright, time to show your families what you’ve accomplished today. After Snoo picks his class, or did you need another skill to get a good option?”

“Nope, I’ve got Defender. It’s one of the better tank-type classes, and it can transition into the Second Advancement forms of Shield Bearer and Bulwark if I can get the skills between now and then. But with this high of a level, we should be able to get into a group with no problem. Especially as two tanks. Raid groups always need tanks and healers.”

Snoo finishes his class upgrade, and the maid finally releases Cyrene after much poking back and forth with the Oracle, who didn’t realize they respond best to verbal commands.

The whole walk back to the flour mill, Cain wonders what to give to the Oracle that might help her out. He’s got a bunch of Demons recorded from the Census skill that the Demon King used that have foresight and vision-type classes. Maybe a Voidseer?

They’re a type of Magic Demon that looks very human but can use their skills to see the future, the past, and distant places. He’s unsure what skill and form might allow Cyrene to trigger a similar class.

Snoo’s father looks utterly shocked when the boy returns from his excursion over a hundred levels stronger and shows off his new class. There are tears in the giant Turtle Kin’s eyes, but he looks happy.

“My baby boy is growing up so fast. It seems like just a few days ago that you were an egg warming by the hearth. Now look at you, you’re a first advancement fighter already, and a reliable Tank class at that.” He snuffles, then runs inside and brings his wife out to see.

“You’ve worked so hard, baby. Mama is proud of you. I knew that Goblin girlfriend of yours was a good influence.” Turtle Kin can’t actually blush, but if the gray-green hide on his face could, Snoo would be bright red to match Gilly’s natural tone to go along with his embarrassed fidgeting.

“Thanks, mom. Thanks, dad. Um, we were thinking of trying out for the Capital Guard. Long Fang Valley is much safer these days, and that captain that passed through said that King James had ordered the old patrols brought back again, so they need more reliable fighters to work the capital region.”

His parents are about to cut him off, so Snoo stops there to let them answer. "Have you outgrown our little city? That's normal for a boy your age, especially a leatherback. We need to travel; it's in our blood. But you're strong now, and I'm sure you'll do fine."

Snoo expected that they would resist, but they didn't, so all he could do now was hug them in joy. Gilly looks just as happy as him, hopping down from her mount to play with its fur.

"Should we go see your parents too?" Cain asks the little Goblin, who shakes her head and continues to pet Wendy, her Mole Dog.

"They didn't have classes, and without a class, a Red Goblin only lives twenty years. They grow up, have children as soon as they, then leave them whether they want to or not." Gilly explains.

Cyrene runs forward to hug the little Goblin, who smiles and wraps her arms around the Oracle. "It's fine. I'm all grown up now with a class and over a century worth of years waiting for me in reserve."

Snoo pulls Gilly into the conversation with his dad about what they have planned now, about the Karrack City Guard or the Capital Guard as they're better known, so Cain and the others make their departure, waving goodbye to mama Turtle as they leave.

There are far too many things to do once they finally get back to the Manor, but Cyrene is tired from all the walking, it's been a highly unusual amount of exercise for her. The maid leads her to her room for a nap, and Cain gets to work copying out the Superior Mental Domination book.

He wants to learn it before he goes for the random spin since he's getting the feeling that if he doesn't, he might end up with another very similar ability. The system calls itself randomized, but in practice Cain finds it very single-minded once it decides it wants you to have something.

The book creation process goes smoothly, and Cain has the skill book in hand when Misha comes back with snacks.

"You look concerned; what's on your mind?" She whispers, curling her wings around him as she settles into his lap.

"Right now? You. But before that, I was trying to find a physical change or skill that would help Cyrene find a better class."

They both fall into silence for a while, curled up in a comfortable chair in the common areas of the central wing. Both of them are thinking of ways to help Cyrene, but their ideas are taking very different paths.

Cain is thinking of finding a specific skill to let her pick up the class of a Summon he has recorded. Misha is thinking of various species that don't need sight to navigate.

"I wonder if she'd like to be a Lamia? They have excellent thermal vision, but they can also tell where everything is even with both eyes blinded." Misha suggests.

"I was thinking more along the lines of a voidseer, a class with a specific skill that lets them see while blind. The problem is that particular one's specific to one species of magic type Demon."

"You've thought that much about ways to help me?" Cyrene's cheerful voice comes from the entry to the residential wing, and the Oracle starts making her way over to where Cain and Misha are sitting.

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