

Reincarnated With A Summoning System

Chapter 501 – 512

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[Boss, we have received word of a strange event on the Northern Continent. A giant raiding party showed up out of nowhere, then just took a handful of Gnomes from a warehouse and left. There were no reported damages and they didn't bother any of the other Gnomes in town, or injure anyone.] Nila reported when word reached the other Wave Rider Captains offshore.

[Could they be looking to rebuild their council? Or maybe they think the Gnomes know what happened?] Cain had been watching on the Ley Line device when the event happened, so he knew that the Gnomes were involved already, even if he didn't know all the details.

[The other Captains think they blame the Gnomes for what happened. There have been other reports of them becoming enraged when they see Gnomes, but what they are blaming them for remains unclear. It would be a pretty big leap for the dimwitted Giants to make between the changes in the world and some new Gnomish technology.] Nila pointed out.

[We should find the time to talk to some Giants then. Maybe we can find out what is going on without a full-scale war against the Western Continent.] Cain decided.

At the very least, they might find out why the Demon Kingdom was being targeted as well as the Northern Continent.

[Talk to the others. I think we should head for the West, if we can talk to the Giants we might find out what is going on there and report it back to the Wave Rider Council. Depending on what the answer is it might make a huge difference to their plans for war.]

That logic was hard to argue against. The Wave Riders were Pirates, not a military force. They only engaged in battles that posed a serious risk to their own lives in the most desperate of circumstances. It was also possible that the Giants didn't realize that their attacks on trading ports had angered the Elves and triggered defensive treaties.

Without half their leaders, they might not even realize that they were causing much more trouble for themselves than a wave of scattered attacks would normally call for.

[The others agree and are ready to set out whenever you are.] Nila informed Cain once the short conversation was over.

[We set out immediately then. Wave goodbye to the Demons and let's get going before the Giants send any more raiders out.]

While the demons waved a happy farewell back at them, the Wave Rider fleet hoisted sails and turned to race for a large city on the coast of the Western Continent. They would need all day to get there, so the Council was informed of their actions and current intentions.

The response was that they were still mired in the battle planning since the only part that hadn't been contentious so far was the separation of the warzone into regions. Everything after that was a mess, from the placement of ships, the chain of command, and the allocation of loot. The standard allocation for a Pirate raid relied on the target having something worth taking, and that seemed unlikely in the event of a battle against the Giants.

They rarely traveled with anything of value on them, so attacking them wasn't worth the Wave Riders' time. That led to the two groups having relatively good relations most of the time, so the sudden attacks from the Western Continent against their fleet didn't make much sense to most of the Elves.

One thing that everyone wanted to know was why, and why now, so the Council was quick to approve a reward for finding information on the reasoning behind the attacks, even going as far as sending out a few more ships during the meeting to gather more intelligence.

The first group that tried to scout the Western Continent for military strength was finding all sorts of random information, but so far they hadn't managed to get a reason why other than that the boss told them to do it. No matter how far up the power structure they asked, the answer was the same, and the Wave Riders didn't have access to the senior Giant forces.

"Do you actually think that we can do better?" Mythryll asked once they were underway, coming up onto the deck while underway for the first time in days. Nila was very protective of her little wife, though she was quite capable of defending herself, so where there was a chance of combat she found multiple excuses to keep her below where it was safer.

"If nothing else, I'll transform into a Frost Giant and challenge the local leadership until we get our answers." Cain shrugged.

In most places, just showing up as an Ancient was enough to get people to do what he wanted, but the Giants might just attack. They were just as fond of battle as the Demons, but not quite as smart. That was normally a good time for Cain, but today they

needed answers, and the evidence they had wasn't adding up to anything that made sense unless the Giants really thought they could take over the other continents.

Fortunately, there was no news of further attacks while they traveled through the day and night to reach a city that the other scouting team hadn't visited yet. The idea was that the others would stay offshore, while Cain went alone in Ancient form first to ask the questions that needed answering. If he didn't have any luck, they would try somewhere else by infiltration.

[Boss, the city of Hygaar is just over the horizon, straight south of us. It's best if we remain this far out so that they don't see you disembark and they don't attack us.] Nila informed Cain, who was styling Cyrene's hair for the morning.

Once she was ready and presentable in a frilly red dress that matched his tie, Cain transformed into his smaller, three-meter-tall Ancient form and wrapped Cyrene back around his waist. Then he took to the air and flew towards the green stone walls of the Western Continent stronghold.

"Stop there. The city isn't accepting visitors that this time." The guard on the wall announced as Cain approached.

"I need to speak to your leaders. Someone from this area has been launching attacks against Humans, Dragons, and Demons. If we can't get answers it is likely going to turn into a war against the Giant Clans for betraying their agreements." Cain informed him and the Hill Giant looked enraged.

"No Giant would betray his word. Come with me, the Morrow Hill Clan's new Chieftain is here in the city." The guard announced, then yelled for someone to come and cover his station.

Cain was in luck, the Hill Giants were known to be more cunning than average, so they might actually be able to give him a proper answer to the questions he had if he could coax them out of the guard or his boss.

"When did the Clan get a new Chieftain? I have been traveling the Southern Continent and we didn't get any news about a change of leadership." Cain coaxed, and the giant's anger at accusations of betrayal turned even more furious.

"Those accursed evil beings, the Gnomes killed all our Chieftains a few months ago. They lured them all to the North and then burned them to death." The Hill Giant snarled, stomping through the city.

The Gnomes killed all the leaders of the Giant Clans? Forget how they managed that, Cain was somewhat familiar with the links that formed to the Fire Elemental plane, but how did they get all the Giants' leaders in one place, even if it was a trap? That didn't seem like the sort of thing that you could just ask a stranger though.

"The new leader is Schmidt. Make sure you pronounce his name correctly, he is a very proud Hill Giant warrior. If anyone here knows why there have been attacks on the not Gnomish species, he should." The guard informed Cain, then pounded on the door to a large office with no sign.

"This had better be important, I am busy." Someone roared from the other side of the door.

"Chief, there is an Ancient here to see you. He says Giants have been attacking Demons and stuff and they're pretty mad." The Guard explained.

"Crap, I heard about that, send him in." The boss called, then someone opened the door from the inside.

It was a young adult Hill Giant woman in a disheveled dress, who left as soon as the door opened. It seemed that the boss wasn't joking, he really was busy. That also meant that he wouldn't be in a good mood to be giving Cain extra information, so they would have to start with the business of the attack on the Central Continent.

"Greetings Clan Chieftain Schmidt. I am the Ancient, Cain. I have an alliance, on behalf of my forces in the Central and Southern Continents, with the Demon King Aggramor. He wants answers as to why his personal guard was attacked by a raiding fleet while he was at the beach, but none of the Giants we captured were willing to talk." Cain explained.

"You took Giant prisoners?" The chief asked suspiciously.

"No, we killed them when they wouldn't talk, but we did give them the option." Cain shrugged and the Giant nodded happily.

The Giants never betrayed their word. This meant that outsiders would never learn who launched an attack by capturing soldiers, they had all sworn not to betray their Clan and their Chiefs.

"What sort of Giants were they?" Chief Schmidt asked, wondering which Clan would be put on punishment for this mistake. Meeting this Ancient would definitely give him an advantage with the big boss Drakon. Boss said he didn't want war with Demons, he wanted to punish the Gnomes, so if Schmidt did this right he was sure he would be rewarded.

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"That's the strange thing, they were almost all Frost Giants, but none of them was the Clan Chief," Cain explained to the Hill Giant, giving a minor lie. There was a Frost Giant chief there, a powerful awakened one, but Cain killed him.

"Hmm, there are over twenty Clans of Frost Giants. I don't know which one it could have been, but I haven't seen any of them in a while. Big Boss Drakon is a Frost Giant, he might be able to tell us where they all went. But I can't bother him until I have more information." Schmidt explained.

"That makes sense. Nobody wants to bother their big boss with things he would want them to do themselves, especially if they don't have all the information he wants." Cain agreed.

"You're kind of short, but you seem to know about Giants. I like that." Schmidt smiled, making Cain laugh.

"I'm twenty meters tall in my normal form, but it is too large for most doors, so I shrunk it to this size while I was exploring the Southern Continent," Cain explained.

Schmidt was enthralled with the idea of being able to change his size. Of course, he would only go larger, even though he was the biggest of the Hill Giants already, but it was an incredible ability that any Giant would kill to have.

"You can be bigger and smaller? That is very impressive." Schmidt said, and Cain could see the plan forming in the Giant's eyes.

"How about this? If you can tell me who launched the attack on the Demons, and why the Northern Continent and the Dragons territories are being attacked, I will make you one whole meter taller." Cain offered, hoping that a bribe would be just the thing to get the Chief on his side.

"The Dragon territories? Oh, the ones on the shores of the North. We won't bother the dragons, but the Humans refuse to turn over the Gnomes." Schmidt offered.

"Why would they be hiding Gnomes?" Cain asked, confused.

"If I knew that, I would be the big boss. But they are all guilty of betraying the Chiefs at their silly science meeting, so they will all be punished." Schmidt shrugged, not realizing how much information he had just given away. It was common knowledge to every Giant, and Ancients were held in the same esteem as Dragons, nearly on par with other Giants, so the Chief didn't think to hide anything that every Giant should know.

"What punishment did they get for betrayal?" Cain asked.

"Enslavement of course. Death is too good for traitors, so they will work all their lives to make up for the betrayal by their Clan." Schmidt informed Cain with a solemn nod.

In the Giant's mind, Cain's question meant that the Ancient thought they might have gone soft with their leaders gone, so he was quick to assure Cain that the traditional punishment, the enslavement of the entire Gnome Clan, was followed.

"I have a list of places that have been attacked. Most of them are human settlements on the Northern Continent, but they didn't know why they were being attacked. Did anyone remember to send a messenger to announce the crime and demand that the criminals were turned over?" Cain asked.

"I don't know. We only just came to the coast when the big boss ordered it. The plans had already been made and the attacks had started." Schmidt dismissed the concern as not his problem.

"If you tell the big boss, I'll bet he will be happy. I know for sure that the Humans don't know why they are being attacked, and the Dragons think you're targeting them. Even the Wave Riders, the blue Elves, think the giants have gone crazy attacking everyone." Cain explained.

"Oh, the blue elves. I hear they taste really good, but I've never seen one." Schmidt sighed, then went silent as he thought through his options.

This process took him a whole fifteen minutes, but he did eventually come to a conclusion.

"I will tell the big boss, but I will tell him it is my idea, so I get all the credit." The Giant said in a tone that Cain interpreted as him thinking he was sneaky.

"Great idea Chief. I will let you meet with him, and I will meet you later. How long do you think it will take?"

Schmidt thought again for a few minutes. "If he hears me in three days, I can be back here in one week. I can meet you then."

"Perfect. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me. I will tell the Demon King that the Giants are looking for the traitors that would attack them, and you can tell the Big Boss that you convinced the Demon King's Emissary not to attack." Cain suggested.

"Oh, excellent. That will be a lot of merits. I might even become Chief of all the Hill Giants. I will see you soon Ancient Cain." Schmidt smiled, then waved at the door, dismissing Cain from his office.

Cain took to the air, flying back out of the city, and turning back towards the ships only when he was safely out of sight over the horizon.

[Tell the Council what I learned. I'm assuming you listened to everything?] Cain asked Nila.

[Of course. I've already informed the other Captains here, and they think we can wait a week while the Giants figure out what's going on. I will inform the Council now.] Nila responded in her all-business Captain's tone.

They were in a fairly decent spot to intercept additional attacks on the Northern Continent, and a single week of waiting while the Giants had a meeting about the attacks wasn't that big of a deal, even if they did miss an attack or two due to their position.

Sure, the Dragons asked them to look out for the Northern Continent, but they are long-lived creatures, they will understand that things take time.

An entire week of waiting at sea for the Giants to sort out who had been sending the attacks didn't sound like much fun to Cain, but with a lot of drinks and storytelling, courtesy of the Wave Riders the first three days passed quite quickly.

It was on the morning of the fourth day that they received unexpected visitors. A group of Giants was returning to the city, but their ships were light, the hulls riding high in the water would let everyone around them know that they didn't have full cargo holds, so, they were most likely a raiding party.

"Hail to the fleet. I am Ancient Cain, and I have a few questions for you." Cain called, flying over to the returning fleet.

"I am Gurr, leader of this expedition." An Ettin Mage informed him, stepping to the bow of the ship so no others were standing between them.

"I just have a few questions. The dragons have complained about Giants attacking their territory, where are you coming back from?" Cain asked.

"We came from the Dragon Territory, but we didn't attack anyone. The smart one found a new way, we just sailed up and asked for the Gnomes and they gave us some. So we're bringing them back to the Ettin forges to work." The leader declared.

"Excellent. Just one more thing, can I see the captives? There were reports that some of them were dying, and Clan Chieftain Schmidt was worried that it might not be an accident when he left to go talk to the big boss." Cain informed him.

"Grab the Gnomes." The Ettin ordered, and seconds later ten small figures were carried up to the deck.

"They are on quarter rations, once a day, but the big boss told us himself that it's good enough for them." The Ettin Mage told Cain, who flew over to check out the Gnomes.

They didn't look bruised, cut, or otherwise injured, just filthy in the way most of the desperately impoverished were. It seemed that the Giant's word was true, they were enslaving them for heavy work, but not mistreating them much.

"You, on the right. What was your profession before the Giants took you?" Cain asked.

"Well, you see, uh, we weren't the most noble of the noblest race. All ten of us were transferred from the prison when the Giants showed up. I was arrested for selling fake artifacts, Fazzba there was a prostitute and Felbin was a common thief." The Gnome explained.

"I'm not a thief, I was just hungry." The younger Gnome named Felbin complained.

"And you understand what situation you are in now?" Cain asked.

"We've been given life imprisonment and hard labor because the scientists killed a bunch of Giants, or at least I think that is what they meant. At least the food is better than it was in the Human prison. If I never have to eat one more bowl of watery gruel, or that rancid mash the humans pass off as a sausage I will die a happy Gnome." The first Gnome told him, and the others nodded in eager agreement.

Treatment of prisoners in other countries isn't really Cain's business, but it is valuable information that he can pass to the Dragon Riders and the Wave Riders, both of whom will be very interested in this development.

If the Northern Continent can keep the Giants happy by giving away their Gnomish prisoners a few at a time, they will likely do it. Knowing human nature, they might even help capture the remaining Gnomes to hold in preparation for the Giants coming looking for them.

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Cain let the fleet go on their way once he was finished with his questions, and they made no attempt to attack the Wave Rider vessels, a fact that wasn't missed by the other Captains in the area.

"Things are getting stranger and stranger, but if they really do blame the Gnomes for killing off their leaders, it does at least make a little sense. I've also noticed that the leaders don't tell their underlings anything but what they need to do next, so it might also explain why we haven't been able to find anything out from the attackers. They didn't know anything for us to learn from them, other than their orders." One of the other Captains suggested when Cain returned and transformed back into his Wave Rider form, nearly dropping Cyrene on the ground before she could tighten her grip.

"So all we can do is wait for a big boss to answer?" Nila asked, not looking forward to a long period of nothing to do.

"For now anyhow. If they don't answer us we can make new plans. We just don't have enough information to really do much at the moment." Cain's analysis wasn't popular, but the others all agreed he was probably right, and that making new plans without information would just cause more problems.

Without anything else to do, they settled in to do what the Wave Riders do best. Tell stories and play cards. The Elves had a whole set of their own games developed to kill time at sea since the business of a Pirate often involved a lot of waiting for the right opportunity, so there was never a point when you were sick of every game they had devised.

In the hills of the Western Continent, Chieftain Schmidt had run into a series of dead ends while trying to see the big boss. He wasn't holding court or taking visitors, and the Frost Giants said that the next steps in the efforts to capture the Gnomish criminals had been decided.

Schmidt had promised to be back in a week, so he didn't have long to wait, but he did manage to get a message sent to the Big Boss that informed him of the Ancient and the attack on the Demons, as well as the situation with the Dragons.

Most of that was information that Drakon already had, but knowing that the Ancient was here on the Western Continent was newsworthy.

Those creatures were dangerous and always had nefarious intentions. The only redeeming quality they had in Drakon's eyes was honesty, at least enough of it that they would happily tell you of the Horrors they had planned.

The giant decided that he would need to change his plans if the raids had attracted the attention of the Ancients and a Demon King. No longer would they go searching for Gnomes in small groups, they would take over the cities of the Northern Continent one at a time, making a Giant the Guardian of every city they captured until they controlled everything and all the Gnomes were found.

The Wave Riders were only upset about the attacks on ports, and the Dragons only controlled a small section of the continent, so if he went further around the shoreline

and took one city before moving inland where there was more snow it shouldn't bother the annoying ones.

"Tell Schmidt and all the Chieftains to gather here in two weeks. We will be starting the new plan." Drakon told his Youkai assistant, a small Snow Girl named Yuki who took care of all messages on his behalf.

What mighty Frost Giant could be bothered to send hundreds of messages anyhow? He would smash anyone who complained about him working with the Youkai.

Yuki didn't much care for humans, or really anyone who wasn't of the ice element, and only agreed to the position so she could keep the Giants away from her people's island, and the desert castle with the Tengu that they traded with.

She knew there were Gnomes there, but they had nothing to do with the ones from the other continents, so she didn't bother to mention any of that to the big idiots, as she called the giants.

For Cain, the next few days were relaxing ones, spent waiting around and swimming in the ocean. He even found ample time to work on the next section of his [Spell Crafting]. He was almost finished with the item enchanting section now and had advanced his efforts to attempting to imbue specific spells and abilities into items so that classes that couldn't use that specific ability could activate them.

It wasn't as easy as it seemed, and his first attempts all created class-locked items. They were still very good, but the idea was to let others use abilities well outside their specialty.

There was a chance that this wasn't possible anymore, with the influence of the System, but Cain wouldn't be able to know for sure until he had perfected the technique.

He was mostly working on defensive spells that would be useful to anyone who used the armor he was experimenting on, but he had made a few Wind Magic swords for the shamans among the crews.

The enchantment made the items Ancient Quality to match the spell he imbued and were regarded as heirloom Quality items by the shamans, a greatly appreciated gift from Cain, despite him viewing them as a failure.

The spells were both more powerful and more efficient than the Lesser versions that most shamans used, and would make the wielder a welcome addition to any of the Wave Rider vessels. Water Magic has more attack variations, but their primary duty was to move the ship, so Wind was more useful in their daily life, making it a priority for the Shamans, whose main duty was the movement of the ship.

Right on schedule, Schmidt arrived back at his home one week after he left and immediately sent out a scout to bring the Ancient back to the city so he could assure him that plans had changed and there would be no more raids in the Demons.

The guards were not in a good mood by the time they found Cain. They had passed by twice but didn't see the Ancient, so finally, they lowered their egos enough to ask the elves if they had seen him.

"You, little blue snack. Did you see an ancient? The size of an Orc with wings and Tentacles?" The scout navigating their ship yelled at the Wave Rider flotilla.

"Of course we did, he's right here with us," Nila yelled back, pointing at Cain.

"No, stupid Elf. Bigger, with Tentacles." The giant shouted.

"I am telling you, that's him. He transformed so he could fit in the hammock to sleep." Nila tried to explain.

"Stupid blue thing, I know what an Elf looks like." The giant scoffed, getting annoyed.

The commotion had awoken Cain from his nap, so he stood up and changed into his smaller Ancient form.

"Like this? I am the Ancient Cain. Did you have a message for me?" Cain asked, and the giants huddled together to decide whether this was really him.

The consensus was that an Ancient had no reason to lie to them, so it must be him and he was previously in disguise.

"The Hill Giant Chieftain Schmidt is back and wants to talk to you." They called over, then nodded to themselves and left, their orders to alert Cain fulfilled.

Nobody told them that Cain could change shapes, how were they expected to have found him when he looked like one of the Blue Elves? This whole mission must have been one big prank at their expense.

The scouts thought they might have been picked for this job because they lost favor with the new chief, making him send them on this stupid search for an Ancient that looked like an Elf without telling them about it. But they did find him, so the boss should be happy when they returned.

Cain shifted to a ten-meter tall version of himself and flew over, but this time the scouts saw him change sizes, so they weren't confused about who he was and led him straight to the boss.

"Ancient Cain. I have good news. The Big Boss made a new plan and there won't be any more attacks on the Demons or Dragons territories." Schmidt greeted him when Cain entered the office.

"That is excellent news. Can you tell me why they did it last time?" Cain asked.

"Nope, the big boss was too busy with new war plans against the Gnomes to talk." Schmidt denied.

"Where are they going to war? Aren't the Gnomes missing?"

"War plans are secret, sneaky Ancient. But the Frost Giants said they would move away from the Giant's territory." Schmidt informed him, certain that he could keep Cain from finding anything out.

"As long as it's not the Central Continent. That's my place and I own all five of the Gnomes there." Cain replied.

Schmidt smiled, thinking he had gotten the upper hand in the negotiation, and nodded his agreement. "Big Boss says you're not an enemy, so we aren't supposed to bother you or the Blue Elves unless they get annoying."

"That is perfect then. We will sail away and give everyone the good news." Cain agreed, turning to leave.

"Wait, Ancient Cain promised me a reward." Schmidt stopped him.

He was right, Cain did promise him. With one quick activation of [Modify], Cain made Schmidt a whole meter taller and slightly increased his modifiers so he would feel extra powerful.

"What do you think, Clan Chieftain? Did I keep my word?" Cain asked while the Hill Giant posed, checking his new muscles and the way his clothes didn't quite fit anymore.

"I knew Ancients were honest. I will see you again, today I need to inform my soldiers that I am back and even stronger." Schmidt said with a goofy grin. The Hill Giant was an easy man to please.

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Chapter 504 504 Spread The Word

The first order of business after they set sail, other than the messages to the Wave Rider Council that had already been sent was to head back to Assah and have a talk with the Dragon Riders. The information that they had now about the intentions of the Frost Giant led forces of the Western Continent would be of great interest to them and any other merchant sailor that visited the region.

The Giants hadn't said that they would stop the attacks, in fact, they said the opposite, that they were staging additional attacks on the Gnomes. They had only said that they would avoid the Central Continent and the area controlled by the Dragons.

Schmidt didn't seem well versed in the alliances of the Northern Continent, but neither was Cain, so he couldn't say how their new plan might affect things, but the Dragon Riders should know. From what Cain knew, their clan wasn't large, but they often took on the role of Law Enforcement for cities and nomadic regions of the Northern Continent, so they should have a pretty good idea of what was going on, and might well be the Guardians of their areas already.

Most Guardian rewards linked the Quest Completion reward to the region it was awarded for, so whoever it was wouldn't go far from their home base these days, making the Guardians the best people to ask when you had a question about recent occurrences.

The Wave Rider Council was still working on their final decisions, but the news that they might not need them if they decided to mind their own business and let the North fend for itself was a relief to a lot of the Captains. They were Pirates, they weren't getting ready to go to war out of some noble sense of justice, but to protect their alliances and trade agreements with the Port Cities.

If they had known that the Giants would only be attacking a single Port, the Council would be dancing in the streets right now, and suggesting that the target evacuated all the civilians from the city before the giants arrived.

When they deactivated Nila's fast travel spell off the coast of Assah, the Dragons were already patrolling the sky around the city, keeping watch for attacks and vessels in distress. Cain had sent a message to Earl RhickJaymz to be expecting them today, so the patrols weren't alarmed at the sight of the Elven raiding fleet, only apprehensive about the news that they might be bringing. If it was too serious to be explained over a text message, it must be a big development in the situation on their home continent.

It also wouldn't be about an imminent attack, or the Wave Riders would have sent them an alert without the explanation of what was going on, so they could get home to defend their people.

"Greetings Captains, and Ancient Cain. The human summoner is waiting for you." One of the dragons greeted them, flying low near the fleet.

"Greetings Broil, Eldest of Nahar and Third wing of the Bronze Dragons. We come bearing news of the Frost Giants." Cain replied in the Dragon tongue and the Epic Bronze mount snorted happily.

"Oh, I like this Ancient. So polite. Why can't the other two-legged ones be so polite?" The dragon chuckled, having easily noticed Cain's mental intrusion while Cain was looking for his name.

"Because none of the rest of us can speak Dragon or pronounce your name?" One of the Captains asked, ignoring the fact that the question was rhetorical.

"In the language of the Elves, my name is Broil. Elves should have no problem pronouncing that. But did any of them ever ask? No, they speak to the rider, like I'm some horse or a camel." The dragon complained, flying alongside the ships.

Each of his annoyed breaths sent out a wave of superheated sand, the breath attack of the Bronze Dragon, and a formidable one as well. He wasn't aiming it at anyone, but like the other elemental Dragons, a bit of it tended to slip when he was annoyed.

"Is the news good or bad?" Broil's rider asked, shouting to be heard over the wind.

[It could go either way at this point. But I have the word of a Clan Chieftain that they aren't planning to attack the Central Continent or the Dragon-controlled regions the next time.] Cain called back, using the mental voice of an Ancient to project it straight to the minds of the patrol flight, Dragons included.

"Well, that is a good start. Who cares if the Giants want humans for dinner?" Broil asked when he heard the news, causing his rider to give him a light swat.

"They might still be allies of ours, don't dismiss them as a snack so fast." The Dragon Rider reprimanded his unruly mount.

That didn't change the Dragon's mind much though. Broil was never an agreeable sort, and he had become somewhat fond of the taste of humans during the raids that other clans had mounted against the cities where he was stationed over the years. The trick, he found, was that you had to very carefully wash them first, or you baked in the outer coating of filth, and the taste was ruined.

There was a large welcoming party waiting for them on the docks when they arrived. Some with provisions for the ships, some with trading goods for the floating city that had been ordered by the Council, but most were either city leaders from the desert region or Darklight Host Guild members come to welcome them.

Word had spread very quickly about the training tower that had been erected in Blood Sands Castle, and every city in the desert wanted one of their own. It wasn't going to happen, since Cain wasn't willing to put them in places where his subordinates couldn't

directly monitor them for errors and misuse. He wanted them to be training resources for the masses, not the exclusive luxury of a small elite group that bullied everyone else away from them so they could reign supreme over the region.

He had explained the same thing to all of the Watchers when they built the extra towers, so there shouldn't be an issue with his own Guild doing the same, even if they took up most of the duty shifts to man the security for the lineups that never seemed to end.

The smaller towers could take fifty at a time, but somehow that still wasn't enough. Many of the dungeons didn't see that many people daily, but the safety features of the towers had bred an unexpectedly high level of enthusiasm for people to better themselves.

"First things first. Thank you all for the warm welcome, but we should talk about the situation with the Western Continent before we get to anything else." Cain called, noticing the number of people who wanted to talk to him directly about other topics.

"Of course Guild Master. Welcome home to you and Lady Cyrene." The Guild Members responded in unison, with some of the others joining in as well.

That seemed a bit odd to Cain, did they prepare a specific greeting just in case he had an alternate order before what they had planned on? Cyrene seemed very pleased though, and Cain petted her head as he looked through her thoughts, seeing that it was a standard reply in the etiquette section for "Outreach Workers" in the manual that she had been handing out and having all the members trained on.

There were a lot of things in her thoughts, and that manual, that they were going to have to sit down for a long talk about, but that was also a problem for later.

The Earl and the Dragon Riders Wing Commander led them all to a large warehouse since the banquet room in the city hall wasn't big enough for this crowd. RhickJaymz usually entertained outdoors, since his city had a temperate climate and only a few rainy days a year.

"I'll be blunt. The Giants are planning a large-scale war to capture and imprison the Gnomes. They have found the entire species guilty of killing the Giants Clan leaders at some event on the Northern Continent, and they are treating it as treason." Cain began.

,m "For those that don't know, the Giants' punishment for treason is enslavement, since they view death as too good for traitors, but they seem to be treating the gnomes as unpaid workers, and giving them decent living conditions, at least for prisoners.

They promised not to attack the Dragon-controlled coastline or the Central Continent, but that was the extent of the war plans I could get out of them by deception. It seems that the leader isn't telling his subordinates anything at all beyond their immediate mission, to prevent information leaks. I don't know if that is intentional, paranoia, or just

a lack of long-term planning, but it was effective at keeping me from prying with my mind reading abilities."

That relaxed some of the guests present but made others much more nervous. They did a lot of business with regions that weren't under Dragon control, did that mean their ships were in danger? Or that the Giant army might wipe out their trading partners, leaving them penniless with a surplus of goods and no buyers?

The few answers that Cain had managed to provide so far didn't do much to help their confidence level, only giving them more things to worry about, and an outline of likely future events for them to plan around. They could cut off trade to keep their vessels safe, but if their partners weren't the ones attacked, they would take long-term reputation damage that could ruin them. But if they kept the shipments up and were attacked, they could lose ships and the allies that crewed them.

It was not an easy call, but it was at least a little better than the unknown.

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

Chapter 505 505

While the Central Continent leaders were discussing issues with the giants, Cain got bad news from the Southern Continent. Someone was building up an army to try to take over the furthest inland areas of the continent.

They had already received two reports of Guardians being assassinated right before a city was attacked by unknown forces. Then, the morning after the attack a Demon named Morgeth had come into town announcing that he was the new Guardian and that the entire city had been drafted into the army of his alliance.

How many cities it currently occupied, Cain and Cyrene did not know because the trade routes had mostly closed so the news wasn't spreading like usual.

They were still a ways from the group allied with Cain, but they had been expanding in his direction, which would naturally lead to conflict with this Demon Alliance.

For now, Cain had ordered the Echoes to have the candidates start looking in other directions to solidify and expand, but something would need to be done about the Demon alliance if they were going to be drafting an increasingly large army.

Now that the world was in chaos, Cain wasn't the only one who had thought of building strength and establishing their presence. But not everyone had the same plan on how they would do it.

The Darklight Host was the kindest of the expansionist groups currently active, thanks to Cyrene using her visions to interpret the best ways to accomplish their goals without loss of life on their side.

Most often that has led to there being no combat at all, but they had gotten tough with a few other Guilds and City States.

The Lamia was Currently trying to use her combat visions to see what cities would be the most likely target of the new force on the Southern Continent. If she focused on sending Guild Members to various cities to become Guardians it gave her a good idea of what cities were available and what ones were taken.

Surprisingly, she saw quite a few visions where the people would welcome them, but the Guardian and his team would viciously attack before they even had a chance to make their intentions clear. In some visions they even managed to capture the Candidates, leading to a full-scale attack by the Echoes to retake their allies and punish those stupid enough to attack them.

p She had thought at first that every city was doing things roughly the same way, but it looked like a lot of them had been unwillingly Championed or captured by force. But Cyrene didn't know enough about the Continent to know if things had always been that way.

"Boss, the best spots to go are east of where your forces are now, and then slowly have the Candidates start extending your influence toward the mountains. Most of the smaller villages in that direction don't have a Guardian yet, because the Youkai are still discussing it, but some have Guardians they want to get rid of." Cyrene whispered into Cain's ear when she had gotten enough short visions to give her an idea of the situation.

"That's great news. I'm looking for a Librarian who is in that direction as well. I put it off because the book I need is about Ancients and their children, but she also has many others that will be incredibly valuable to us." Cain answered, giving the white scales of her Serpentine lower body a gentle rub.

Now that he had that information from Cyrene, he could give it to the Echoes and they could get started on the new instructions right away. Cain intended to rejoin them soon, since things seemed to be mostly taken care of around here for the moment, or at least they would be if the Wave Riders didn't want to go to war since the Dragons had been assured that they weren't going to keep getting attacked by the Giants.

"I propose we begin traveling in groups. The less scattered our merchants are, the lower the chance of running into the Giants." One of the merchants from near the border of Landis was suggesting when Cain decided to pay attention to the negotiations again.

"And if we convoy, how exactly do you propose we deal with the fact half of us sell the same products?" Another merchant countered, concerned about being muscled out by the larger fleets and losing his customers.

"You could just sell everything to us and we would make the deliveries." One of the Wave Rider Captains suggested, becoming increasingly bored with all the pointless arguments.

It was a legitimate offer, the Wave Riders would gladly do it, but none of the larger merchant groups would ever accept, even if the city they were going to was blockaded they would not give up their routes to the Blue Elves. Some of the smaller ones might though, the safety-minded merchants would prefer to take a small margin from their customers and let the Wave Riders do the dangerous part.

The suggestion made the meeting more lively though, even if it was now filled with threats and shouting.

The Wave Riders had formed this suggestion into a new game and were doing their best to argue even with the large fleet merchants that they were the best option, using the theoretical losses of a large-scale attack by the Giants to suggest that their services were actually more affordable than shipping the goods out themselves.

Earl RhickJaymz already used the Wave Riders to bring Assah their high-priority orders, so he sat the argument out, taking a seat beside Cain and bringing out a bag of candies to share.

"They will be at this all day, but it would be rude to leave, even if it didn't directly involve us." The Earl said softly so he didn't interrupt the argument.

"Unfortunate but unavoidable. How are things in the library? I heard it was popular with my Guild members lately." Cain answered, watching as the Wave Riders started drawing pie charts to make their point.

"Busier than ever. Though the demand that we find higher quality spells is growing as if they just appear out of thin air and people willingly give them up to a library." He sighed, shaking his head at the impossible request.

"We will help you with whatever we can. I've sent some Ancient Grade abilities to the Guild that they have made extra copies of. My inscription isn't anywhere near high enough to write Mythic Books though."

"I doubt we could find the materials for them even if you could reliably inscribe them anyhow. Once you're moderately strong, it's really on the system to deem you worthy of that last step. Though I heard there are some more reliable ways to get awakened skills on the Southern Continent.

We have been considering sending the more ambitious transfers there to look for their opportunity to awaken, but these days that's really high risk. The Awakened beasts are everywhere, and without a guide, there is too high of a risk of immediate and gruesome death." RhickJaymz explained.

"In a little while, once we have a stable set of allied cities and trade is working properly again that could work. Right now we are working on replacing the old system of farmer's markets with Awakened traders that travel between cities.

As you said, it is too dangerous for random unawakened people to be wandering around alone when awakened monsters appear every night and nobody knows where they will show up.

They can even show up inside the cities, though that is rare. All the Guardians are on watch at midnight though, just in case they appear somewhere that puts people in danger."

Cain's explanation didn't paint a very comforting picture of the situation on the Southern Continent, but that was the essence of how things were going in the wilderness that used to be the Awakened area right now.

The only reason the Central Continent was in better shape was that the Darklight Host was everywhere with a number of powerful summons to bolster their combat abilities.

"Are we going to reach an agreement, or can I leave for dinner?" One of the Dragon Riders finally asked the squabbling pirates and merchants.

"Let's gather again tomorrow. There is still some distance between our positions." The Captain in charge of negotiations for the Wave Riders didn't seem upset about the delay. The fact that the merchants were still negotiating meant that there was a chance she could get the merchants to agree to let the Wave Riders take over North Sea trade entirely.

Not only would it be an incredible amount of money, but it would make an entire Continent a little more reliant upon them. That was a big thing for a nomadic group of sailors. They had always done some legitimate business, but it was only a small part of the total, and Piracy was used to make up the difference between what they needed and what they had.

If they could get a deal this big and hold on to it, they might not need to put in the effort to actively Pirate anything anymore. They could just do legitimate business, then scuttle

and loot anyone who opposed them. That seemed like a much more relaxing lifestyle to most of the Wave Riders, with the exception of a small handful of battle maniacs who preferred that every encounter ends in a good fight.

With the meeting adjourned, Cain returned to the beach house here in Assah for the evening, finding that it was getting a bit dirty and lacked maintenance. He could have sworn that he left Puppets here, but there weren't any here now. A quick thought showed that they had all followed the Guild Members' orders to assist in other locations and simply hadn't been returned, leading to the empty state that the house was in now.

Some of them had duties in their new locations, but a few were entirely idle, only filling in when someone asked for something directly, so Cain ordered those ones back and added an order to return to their posts when they were finished with any task that brought them away from the house. That should at least keep the place clean and stocked.

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

Chapter 506 506

While Cain was enjoying his sleep, Clan Chief Schmidt of the Hill Giants was having a very frustrating day.

The spot that the majority of the Chiefs wanted to attack was clearly still in Dragon territory, and they had been arguing against him and the Big Boss all day. He couldn't understand why they didn't see what the problem was.

"If we attack Dragon Territory, the Dragons and all their friends will attack us. They are bigger than us, and they breathe fire." The Big Boss tried explaining again.

The Chiefs didn't understand the problem, thinking that it would only be one or two Dragons in town. The concept of more Dragons than two just wasn't getting through to them.

Schmidt tried a new approach, hoping to convince them. "Dragons eat Gnomes, just like giants do, you bunch of idiots. There are no Gnomes there. The Dragons ate the ones there, and Ancient Cain already captured all five of them on the Central Continent, so the only spot left with Gnomes is over here, where the humans had them ready for us to pick up."

The Hill Giant chief thumped on the map where the last prisoners came from and the rumbling in the room started to turn in his favor. Now he just needed to make the final move.

"The sneaky humans must be hiding more Gnomes for themselves." Schmidt wasn't sure when his fellow chiefs got so stupid, but it worked, they were ready for war with everyone in agreement.

Maybe it was the blessing? The Ancient made him taller and stronger, he must have made him smarter too, so the Hill Giants would have the best Chief. That Ancient really was a good guy, Schmidt decided.

With every Chief now ready to go to war with the same plan, the Big Boss ordered them to wake up their troops. Half the warriors of every clan would be going on this raid and they wouldn't return until they were sure they had all the Gnomes.

As the Chiefs left the hall, the Big Boss, Drakon stopped Clan Chief Schmidt. "You did well today. Did you get an item to increase your intelligence?"

Schmidt shook his head. "Ancient Cain offered to make me a better Chief if I sent you that message from the Dragons and Demons last week. He said I would be a whole meter taller, but I think he made me smarter too because I don't remember the others being that dumb."

"That happens when you get smart. Stay near me during the battle. Two smart Giants are better than one, and the humans have always been tricky with their walls and catapults." Drakon ordered him, making Schmidt his right-hand man and second in charge of the Giant army.

The Giants were all gathering near the beach, ready to start heading out the moment the order was given. With the Frost Giants leading the attack they didn't need boats, they would freeze the ocean and walk the army across it to their destination, two days away, so the only concern the Clan Chiefs had was getting everyone moving.

Two days was a short march for the giant army, but keeping them all together could be hard. Only the presence of a powerful leader was forcing the Clans to cooperate this long, and Drakon intended to let them split into groups once they were on shore and had captured the first city. That should minimize the infighting and give them the best chance of finding any Gnomes that were hiding.

Schmidt and his force shifted over to be near the Big Boss and the order was given to freeze the ocean, having the Frost Giants take the lead, with the Lesser Ice Giant Clans on the perimeter to keep the water frozen until everyone was through.

Their procession was pretty hard to miss, and the Wave Riders had sent scouts out to keep an eye on the troublesome Western Continent. Within an hour the message

detailing the Giant army's movement had reached the Council of Captains along with their estimated destination, a human city on the Northern Continent that didn't allow the Wave Riders at their dock.

"That's all the news we need. Now we need a vote of Captains. Who is in favor of not telling the humans a damned thing?" The leader of the Elders asked, happiness with this idea clearly visible in his movements.

"Point of order. I would like to propose an alternative." One of the Captains called.

"Speak it now and we will consider it if the first motion doesn't get enough votes." The elder agreed.

"I say we send spies to all three cities in the region, informing them of an imminent attack further west. The more soldiers they send to their ally the faster they will fall." The captain suggested.

"Too risky. What if they fortify instead?" Someone else shouted, and insults began to fly back and forth between the Captains.

"Shut up you lot. Stand to vote for not telling them anything." The Elder shouted and an easy eight out of every ten Captains rose to their feet.

"It is settled then. The scouts will watch the giants in case they change course, but none of us will warn anyone about their movement." The Elder called the decision.

This would change their war plans a little since the army was in an unexpected location, but it was looking unlikely that the Wave Riders would have to get involved in the affairs of the land dwellers at all.

Back in Assah, Cain was brought up to speed on the affairs of the Wave Riders by Nila, who the Captains recognized as one of their own. It was good news for him, and for the Dragons who also didn't seem to be under attack, but he had other issues this morning.

Cyrene had been exceptionally restless all night and was in her second shower of the day already. If this kept up Cain would just read her mind to see what was bothering her, but for now, he was giving her some privacy, in case it was a personal issue. He had already cast both healing and cure spells on her, but they had no effect.

That meant whatever was happening was not an illness or injury. It might be a problematic shedding since Lamia shed their skin the same as most snakes.

"Boss, help." Cain heard her call from the shower and rushed over to see what he could do, only to be tackled by a flying Cyrene.

"What's wrong? I can call for a better healer if you need." He asked, not sure what the problem was.

Then the scent reached his nose. Pure arousal. Lamia didn't often go into heat, but they were also a female-only species of obsession demons and all obsession demons went into heat at some point to prevent their obsession from ending their species. It was a small evolutionary detail that had proven to be essential for most obsession demons to break away from whatever they were obsessed with and remember that children were needed to continue their work into the future.

Lamia were one of the species that weren't usually known to deny their urges, which normally prevented the heat cycle from triggering. Cyrene, on the other hand, had zero experience with men or women in that sense, and now her body had decided that it needed someone immediately and urgently.

"I am hot everywhere, and I itch, and I need you. Please?" The Lamia begged, writhing on the floor trying to alleviate the effects of the hormonal change that was tormenting her.

Cain briefly thought about calling a Summon to take care of things, but this was Cyrene. Not only is he her obsession, but it is also her first time and that should be special. More special than going into heat in the beach house, but there's not much to do about that now.

At best he could move them both quickly to another house, but he didn't know how occupied the others would be, and the scent would draw every male human, Elf, beastkin, and demon near her into a lustful frenzy.

It was a good thing this didn't happen in Long Fang Valley, it would have been a disaster of epic proportions.

Nila and Mythryll ran in, having heard the commotion, just in time to hear Cyrene begging in a most unladylike fashion, which made both elves smirk and turn away from the scene in the bathroom.

"We will be busy downstairs. I will have the travel circle blocked for a while and I'll send a Guild Message to avoid Assah for a few days." Mythryll informed him, biting her lip.

Nila just winked and followed her little elven wife downstairs, locking all the windows they passed.

"I didn't realize that an Obsession Demon heat was that powerful," Mythryll whispered, giving Nila a kiss and pulling her down onto a couch.

"That's nothing, it's not even aimed at us. Just make sure the house is secured before we get distracted." Nila smirked, mentally ordering the Puppets to take care of it. One small perk of both her and them being Cain's summons.

"You know you might end up like Misha if it turns out that you're going to have a litter of Ancients," Cain warned Cyrene, who only snuggled into his chest and mumbled a response.

"What was that?"

"A clutch not a litter. Lamia lay eggs." She quietly corrected him, doing her best to keep herself together.

"As long as you know." Cain smiled, gently placing her down on the bed.

Through a viewing spell, Misha watched the scene from her bed in the Ancient's stronghold while snacking on cookies.

"She held out longer than I thought. I don't know if you've been watching our pet snake girl, but she's totally in love with him, in a crazy obsessive way.

Maybe now that she's finally getting some action she might calm down a little. Probably not, but it might help." Misha told Nyarla, who was watching the scene with very intense interest. Scenes like this, replayed from other worlds were the Ancient's equivalent of Soap Operas or Daytime Dramas, a guilty pleasure for the bored and idle.

"You're not worried about your position?" The Ancient asked and Misha slowly shook her head.

"She's as safe as any competition could be. She actually wants to be his pet. You might want to collect the eggs though before they hatch on that world and let baby Ancients loose."

Nyarla smirked and patted Misha on the head. "No need. Ancient genes aren't that dominant. They will be a Primordial Obsession Demon, like Oath Breaker, but with a Lamia's serpentine lower body. The species was actually quite cute when they were still around."

Misha and her self-assigned watcher, and new best Ancient friend settled in to watch the scene play out, with Nyarla initially trying to cover Misha's eyes at some of the more intimate moments, declaring that she was too young to be seeing such things. But as Misha pointed out, it was nothing that she hadn't seen before, and she didn't have anything better to do. Nyarla did change the destination of the spell not long afterward though, checking in on the rest of Misha's friends.

It took five days for Cyrene's heat to fade and by the end she was too exhausted to even hold herself up, just laying on the bed in a stupor. Even the smile on her face had almost faded away, taking too much effort for the energy that she had left.

"Are you alright now?" Cain asked gently, casting a long-duration healing spell on the nearly comatose young woman.

"Yes, everything will be alright. I had a vision of me telling Misha what happened, and she already knows and isn't mad at me. Wherever she is, the Ancients are letting her watch our world. There is something strange about the flow of time though, but I couldn't see what it was in the vision."

Cain smiled and brushed Cyrene's hair from her face. "So how dead am I?"

Cyrene stuck out her long, forked tongue at him. "Sorry, I didn't see that part."

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

Chapter 507 507

A lot of things had changed over the five days that Cain was holed up in the beach house and not checking messages. First and foremost was the fact that the Giants had made landfall on the Northern Continent and had captured over a hundred gnomes in the first city, confirming their suspicions that the Humans were hiding the species within their borders.

That had solidified their intentions to push inward, and the majority of the army was now somewhere inland, hunting for the remains of the species.

The second was that the Wave Riders had taken over the majority of the trading to the North, with only a few large trading groups still challenging their monopoly on the North Sea.

The Elves had sent dozens of ships out to make contact with the cities that hadn't attended the summit in Assah to see if they were interested in making themselves a stop along the newly forming trade routes and they were getting a very solid response.

The war in Landis and the Great Desert had a huge impact on merchant's vessels, with many being sunk, so every region of the planet was short on them at the moment, leaving the Wave Riders a perfect opening to muscle into the market with global trade routes.

The rapid power increases caused by the towers should have been the third, but they had been completely overshadowed by the news that the Prophetess Cyrene was going to have Guild Master Cain's children.

The followers of the Outreach Work Doctrine were insanely protective of her as their leader, and the abduction of Misha had deeply rattled them since there was no way at all to prevent it or recover her. Many of them assumed the children of Misha to be lost to this world entirely, unlikely to ever be able to return, and they simply couldn't accept that such a thing would happen to their Prophetess, who guided their expansion with such grace and benevolence.

After all, with the power to level a continent at her disposal, what other leader would have used her visions to lead them to the least violent way to expand their influence? Surely it was the will of the Guild Master that they had reached such heights with so little conflict.

By the evening of the fifth day, Cyrene was mobile again, having rested enough to be functional, while the opposite was true of Nila. The Wave Riders had been using her as their go-between, since all the other Captains were in a rush to get to new customers, while dozens of city leaders were still in Assah, working out the finer details of alliances and trade agreements between each other, for the Elves to deliver for a fee.

The method was similar to the old method, only the buyer and seller were directly negotiating instead of going through the trade group who struck the deals.

What they found was that many of them had been getting ripped off, with the merchant groups doubling the price of goods between pickup and delivery, since the destination market had a higher demand.

The Wave Riders didn't care, they did it on a flat fee, payable in advance, and the risk of loss was on the seller. Under the old system, the merchant bought the goods from the seller and would collect payment from the buyer, with neither having direct contact, which led to this situation where many goods were at vastly different prices between continents.

Everyone had been taking advantage of the state of things for years, even Cain and the Darklight Host had done the same thing, marking up goods from Long Fang Valley when they got to Port Neffheim, which had a food shortage in the region.

The buyers would likely still mark it up to local prices, and the average person wouldn't see any difference, with only the middlemen missing out.

Cyrene was a bit lethargic, even after her extended nap and a hearty meal, but she was ready to take her position as Cain's belt again, so he started making plans to head out. The only place with an ongoing crisis that involved him was the Southern Continent, so

he would be heading back right away while allowing Nila and Mythryll to return to the sea.

"Is there anything you need in the South?" Nila asked as she made up a list of stops for her next journey.

"Nothing that the Guild doesn't make I think. Most of what they are short on are armor and weaponry to deal with the Awakened beasts. Some regions are short on food as well, but the farm is importing a lot and making some more, as well as what the hunting teams sell. I will have some Juice based potions for you to sell soon though. The supply is growing beyond what our current buyers need, though with new cities being added in the South it will take a while before there is more than a small daily supply left over." Cain answered, trying to think if he was missing anything.

"The Echoes have a nest ready for Cyrene already, though it should be nearly two weeks before she's ready to lay eggs, depending on what day they took," Nila informed him since she had actually been paying attention to the hyper summons.

There was a very lengthy and heated argument about which of the watchers would get to be in charge of the eggs, with the Echoes winning in the end, since the mana density was higher in their location than anywhere else that the Watchers were stationed, which would lead to more rapid growth and a better end result. At least, in theory, it would.

"I'm off then. Let me know if you need anything. We will stop off at Long Fang Valley since everyone there wants to congratulate our favorite snake on finally getting laid." Cain joked, making Cyrene blush.

Now that the heat was over, she was having a hard time accepting the things she had said and done to the object of her obsession. It was like a naughty dream coming to life, and her brain was having a hard time accepting it as reality. But she could feel the eggs forming, so there was no doubt that it had actually happened, and that Cain was finally willing to bring her along with him again.

Her hard work to be worthy of his attention had paid off in the most unexpected way.

As soon as the three elves headed out, Cain transferred himself and Cyrene to Long Fang Valley, where a grand party had been planned to welcome them back.

"You're trying to break me aren't you? I'm certain that you're doing this on purpose. The last lot are already running roughshod through the castle." King Aggramor complained the moment that Cain appeared through the circle in Long Fang Manor.

"You're not enjoying the Blood Dancers? I thought you were eager to get them back?" Cain asked, checking the King's thoughts to see the chaos that ten adolescent demons were causing.

It was really quite impressive. They were smarter than Cain had expected, and their pranks and mischief had risen to a truly commendable level. They had come with him today, not wanting to miss a party. Aggramor knew it would be nearly impossible to keep them in the Castle with his grandfather helping them out, so he had reluctantly agreed to let them come with him.

They had vanished the moment that they arrived, but he had a proper tracking spell on them all now, so they wouldn't escape for long if he needed to find them. The spell showed them exploring the shopping district right now, in a group. That was the best outcome he could have hoped for. They had a limited amount of spending money, so they would argue and shop for hours without causing any trouble.

He had thought Neffie caused a lot of mischiefs, but these ten seemed to live for it, defying their categorization as wrath demons. Unless he was being punished for something and he simply misunderstood their wrath? No, he was pretty sure they just enjoyed the chaos.

The girls sensed Cain arriving and came running back towards the courtyard in a large pack, bumping into people with loud apologies, but not slowing down.

"En, we need to get over the wall." Cain heard a young voice call only a moment before the Blood Dancers came hurtling through the air one after another.

They couldn't fly well at this stage in their development, but with the huge bear throwing them over the wall, their wings were enough to slow their fall and land them in the general vicinity of Cain, with only a few people hit.

"As good as it is to see you all again, you need to work on your aim if you're going to have someone assist your flights. You can't just go landing on people, at least aim for an open area of grass." Cain admonished and the girls gave him a group salute.

"You got it, Dad. Uncle Aggie said the same thing, but he always gets mad when Carnage helps us fly back into the Castle." One of the girls giggled, winking at Cain.

"Don't let them fool you. They had him throw them into an empty tower three hours after curfew, so they could pretend they had returned and were exploring the Castle." King Aggramor whispered to Cain.

The girls looked shocked that he knew, even though they had been caught red handed and the Demon King smiled and patted the heads closest to him. "When you plan an outing, don't forget that I can identify every single demon in my Castle in an instant. Even if I can't find you right away, I know whether you are home or not."

"I'm headed back to the South tonight, but you're all welcome to stay a while if you like. I bet the Guild would be happy to show you the joy of a full spa day." Cain suggested.

"Spa Day! I bet they have all the good nail polish. Carnage only has red and black and Uncle Aggie doesn't have any at all. The Castle needs a woman's touch I tell you." The girls complained, making the other demons in the area laugh. The castle was decorated by the Demon Queen, but her tastes ran more towards black gothic architecture and dramatic sculptures than the brightly colored and warm tones that the girls preferred.

Carnage telling them bedtime stories of slaughtering Princes in castles had given them a taste for the fashion of human Princesses, and King Aggramor feared that it might be incurable. If nothing else, it had changed an entire wing of his castle into something unrecognizable, with bright silk curtains and pastel dresses on the servants, who were all too happy to submit to the whims of the Royal Family's newest charges.

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

Chapter 508 508 Tiny Butchers

While the Blood Dancers ran into the house to inquire about the location of the Spa Day that they were promised, King Aggramor gave Cain a long-suffering look. "If I had known they were going to be that uncontrollable I would have told you to raise them yourself and bring them to me later."

That made Cain and everyone around laugh, knowing just how much chaos ten identical demon children were capable of causing, especially when they were already as strong as most raid bosses. The Mana level had been rapidly increasing their level, with their body trying to drag their level up to match its requirements at Ancient Quality.

"They will calm down eventually. Remember that though they are half grown, they were Puppets, so they are only a few weeks old. Everything is new to them, they haven't personally experienced anything at all, so every second that they are sitting still feels like torture to them." Cain explained, but Aggramor didn't look too relieved.

"If it was just that it would be tolerable, but the combat skills they have are crazy, and they're learning even more from Carnage. If they decide to do something I either need to step in myself or have one of the Generals do it because nobody else can stop them by force. Plus, Carnage is Carnage, he only loves fighting, so as long as they're up to no good, he's all in. They spend ten hours a day in the tower and it isn't enough to wear them out."

The Demon King was just whining at this point, so Cain escorted him inside and brought out a selection of the Mythic fruit juices for him to sample, as well as some Frost Giant Vodka that he had 'obtained' during the attack on the Demon Kingdom's borders.

"The girls will take care of them for a while. Just sit and relax. You can bring them to visit as often as you want, but I think you would do well with a babysitter."

Cain stopped and thought about that for a second. He still had a [Commander] summon that he could call. Surely, a Commander and two Lieutenants would be enough to take care of the girls most of the time? It should be enough to give King Aggramor a bit of a break anyhow and alleviate his worries about the little hellions getting loose and causing chaos in the city with Carnage at their side.

"I still have one more Commander that I can call for, a permanent summon at my level and Mythic Quality. I was going to have it oversee the Southern Continent, but it looks like I need to start taking responsibility for the children that I have set loose on the world, so I will grant her to you to help with the Blood Dancers.

I will also have a small clutch of baby Lamia, or Lamia hybrids anyhow, coming in not too long. Miss Cyrene here had a successful heat, and they will also need the assistance of an experienced demon at some point, though Cyrene will likely want to raise them through the baby phases." Cain offered up a solution that would help everyone involved, with the caveat that the Commander would be a very busy demon.

"A baby Lamia is adorable. They're the size of your finger, and thirty centimeters long. They love to give hugs and sleep while wrapped around wrists, I think we can find more than enough demons willing to take care of them, as long as they don't come out Ancient Quality and bloodthirsty." King Aggramor joked, thinking of all the baby demons he had seen over the years.

Cyrene was asleep around Cain's waist, something she had been doing a lot lately, as her body worked to adapt to growing eggs. Thinking of her schedule, Cain decided that maybe he shouldn't leave for the South just yet. They had issues that needed to be taken care of, but the Echoes could do a lot of it, with the assistance of the Transfers there, so he could hold up here in Long Fang Valley until Cyrene had recovered and decided where she wanted to set her nest.

The sound of cheering reached their ears from across the house, and then a frantic shout to close and lock the doors to the spa.

"I thought they wanted the Spa Day?" Aggramor asked nobody in particular.

"Oh, they do. They wanted to try out the herbal baths, and well, you know, they're in the common area of the Spa." Cain explained the scene he was seeing through the eyes of the Puppets that worked at the Spa.

"I see. At least they're enjoying themselves. Now, I need another drink." Aggramor laughed.

It took three whole hours for the Blood Dancers to be finished in the Spa, and they came out in brand new Princess dresses, each one slightly different from the others. Their hair had been trimmed and styled, and their nails were freshly polished on both their hands and feet.

"Check it out Uncle Aggie, don't we look great?"

"You all look amazing. The dresses were a nice touch. A gift from the Guild's tailors?" The Demon King asked and the girls nodded.

"Now, if you will excuse us, we must attend to our subjects. Or, go loot the brisket that we smell smoking somewhere nearby." The one in a light yellow dress with silver trim declared with great dignity, right before they abandoned all decorum to run out in search of food.

"See, all they need is more distractions. Nothing will hurt them here, and they can explore all day and still keep finding new things. Plus there is a training tower, in case they get bored with exploring and want to go for a fight. Neffie is in love with the one we built for her." Cain laughed.

"Oh, don't I know it. She has been complaining that I don't come to visit often enough, even though I was there twice last week. I should bring the girls with me next time, so they can harass the dinosaur cavalry, I'm sure they would love it."

"If you want a new generation of Blood Dancers, you will have to let them meet some boys eventually as well. I know I made them young, but they're going to grow up fast thanks to the extra mana, so they will be looking for boys soon. Well, most likely. Wanting them to want a family life doesn't guarantee anything, for all we know they might all go for girls and you'll be spending ages looking for the spell to help them conceive." Cyrene woke up just in time to hear Cain's last remark and burst into laughter.

"What did I wake up in the middle of? Is Nila looking to start a family?" She asked.

"No, just teasing Aggramor about the Blood Dancers. They're a bit of a handful, but they seem to be doing well here in Long Fang Valley. But what you woke up for was mentioning that if there was going to be more of them in the future, he would first have to survive their dating phase." Cain explained.

"That should be easy enough. As soon as they find a handsome young Demon who can actually beat them in a fight they will change their mind about them." Vala joked, bringing in a round of drinks and barbecue with her.

"They have found the smokehouse, by the way, so don't expect to see the girls anytime soon, they're up to their elbows in grease eating ribs while trying not to get their princess dresses dirty." The second copy of Vala added, bringing the side dishes.

That should be enough to keep them distracted for a while, Cain thought. If he was lucky they would wear themselves out exploring the city and King Aggramor would get an evening off.

"Vala, I'm thinking of calling the last Commander to help with the kids. Both these ones and Cyrene's once they hatch. Can you keep the girls in line, as an Elder Blood Dancer? Or is there another type of Demon that could? Aggramor here is about at his wit's end.

"Any Wrath Demon stronger than them should do it fairly well, though an Obsession Demon like the Succubus Maids would enjoy the job more. But as we saw with Neffie, they're not infallible and they can still give their guardians the slip if they're confined and bored. You're thinking of the theory that Kone has that focusing on what you want helps shape the summoning spells even when they say they are random?" Vala's estimation was spot on, that was exactly what Cain was thinking.

"Why don't we try in the morning, right about the time that they are at their most energetic? That's about the time that they will want to go to the tower for a morning fight, so it should help influence the spell to give a strong and capable Commander?" Nemu suggested, unwinding the sleeping Cyrene from around Cain's waist and slinging her over Vala's shoulder so she could steal the spot in Cain's lap.

"You're going to make a babysitter? How about another Carnage, but cuter, and not busy with other stuff, so he can play with us all day?" The girls asked in a jumble of words as they entered with what looked like a quarter hog carried on a platter.

"We realized that people were busy inside, so we're bringing everyone meat. See you soon." They called, continuing through the house while King Aggramor shook his head.

"At least their heart is in the right place." He sighed.

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

Chapter 509 509

Cain waited until later that evening when the Blood Dancers were safely tucked into bed, sharing a large spare room upstairs, to begin the process of summoning his final Commander. Unlike Cixelcid, who was a transfer, and Svetlana, who was summoned alone because Transfers weren't cloned by the system, leaving the second half of the spell to be completed on its own, this Commander would come as a pair.

That made it even more important to Cain that he got this right the first time. Each of the Commanders would get to summon two Lieutenants of their own, and it would likely take all of them to keep the kids in line. At least until they settled down and got into a routine it would.

Almost all of the Companions, save for Nila who was out at sea, had gathered around, along with King Aggramor and Svetlana, who was carrying a small wolf pup for some reason. The system showed that it had a name, so it was likely either a werewolf or a Wolfkin with a more bestial form, but that didn't explain why she had it so late at night.

Cain focused on the need for a Commander that would be good with Demonic children, strong enough to keep them contained, and lively enough to keep them from getting bored and trying to run away.

He could feel a sense of amusement building from something in his mind as he focused, but he couldn't tell if it was the thoughts of his Companions, someone he was Merged with, or something else. When the amusement turned to a sense of revelation, Cain knew it was time, and he activated the [Commander] spell for what might be the last time.

The forms that were slowly coalescing from the gathering of black mist weren't particularly large, only about 170cm tall, and seemed rather slender. As they coalesced, the bodies started to turn pale violet, but the mist at the back was staying a deep black, as if there was an important portion of the summon, more than just a cloak, behind the main body. Perhaps it had wings?

Cain watched intently, along with everyone else, as the bodies formed into an identical pair of violet-skinned demon girls in truly scandalous outfits consisting of a spiderweb pattern bodysuit and gloves that Cain suspected were actually made from their own silk. Their hair was as white as the Dark Elves, and their eyes were strikingly green. Eight jet black spider legs adorned their backs, ending in glowing pink spikes that seemed to have a hollow tube that ran back to the chitin that covered their backs and wrapped across their breasts to cover what the skimpy bodysuit did not.

It also extended up the back of their necks, ending in a pair of large black horns above long pointed ears, giving a demonic feel to the twins.

[Name] Tasha

[Species] Spider Acolyte (Demon)

[Level] 436

[Class] Void Mage

[Cain's Commander]

Cain looked over their stats with a smile. Demonic Mages that specialize in webbing and spatial magic? They just might be perfect for keeping rambunctious little demons under control. If nothing else, they should be able to slow them down.

As they activated the blessing that the Spider Goddess gave Cain some time ago began to glow, matching the runes carved into their horns. The two Demons gained an even more powerful presence and Cain noticed that they got two new status lines.

[Quality] Mythic

[Blessed of the Spider Goddess]

"Greetings Master. The Dark Goddess sends her best wishes to you." They greeted Cain in unison, making him smile.

"I do hope she is well. I will introduce you to everyone in just a moment, but I hear ten sets of small footsteps trying to escape the building. Would you kindly bring them back here, unharmed?" Cain gave them an order, and both Commanders vanished, coming back seconds later with ten Blood Dancers dangling from webbing cocoons and giggling.

"Excellent work. Demon King Aggramor here has been having trouble keeping these lively young ladies entertained, so I thought that I might ask you if you were interested." Cain informed them, and the girls gave the new arrival an interesting look.

"How did they just appear out of nowhere? It's like we're flying without wings, and the cocoons are actually really comfortable. Are there snacks?" The girls said all at once.

"We are void mages, and I'm sure there are snacks somewhere, but shouldn't you all be sleeping, so that you're not tired for tomorrow?" Tasha asked in unison, making the girls laugh again.

"Probably, but we have a lot of extra energy you see." They explained to their new Commanders.

"We can fix that in the morning. Or we could go burn some off now, but I think that Master Cain has more to talk about." Tasha informed them, still not letting them down from where they were being suspended at the end of the spider leg appendages.

"Just one last thing. You will each be able to call a matched pair of Lieutenants. They might be the same or they might be different, but they will all be what the System decides that you need to help you complete your duties. It will usually be something related to yourself, though not always." Cain explained, then waited for them to summon their helpers.

The clones of Tasha looked at each other with great interest and then nodded, before summoning their Lieutenants.

Four identical Demons appeared, and at first, Cain thought they were smaller versions of the Spider Acolytes. But then the mist formed into white and pink dresses and long white hair, with no back appendages. Long white ears extended from the frizzy mass of hair a moment after it became defined, and then short bronze horns, forked like a deer's appeared in front of them. Four gentle-looking tanned faces, with glowing red eyes, looked around the room with great curiosity, before landing on the girls in the cocoons and stopping, as huge smiles formed.

[Name] Tamii

[Species] Devil Jackalope

[Level] 436

[Class] Vorpall Berserker

[Quality] Mythic

[Tasha's Lieutenant]

"Greetings ladies. As you can see, we brought you a number of playthings today, and they insist they simply have far too much energy to sleep." The Spider Acolytes greeted their Lieutenants who beamed at them as if they had just found out that today was both their birthday and Christmas.

"Oh, yes, we can take care of that. There is nothing like a good spot of training to settle down energetic children." The antler-bearing bunny girls declared.

"Ack, it's those things again, but outside the Tower." En, the large black Bear Kin bounty hunter declared when she saw the new Lieutenants.

"You know this species?" Cain asked.

"They're the devil bunnies, the same species as the ones that eliminated me from the tower trial the first time I went in. Are you sure it's safe to send the girls with them?" She asked, always concerned for those around her.

"Of course, they're my new Commanders' Lieutenants. They won't hurt them, just help them wear off some energy before bedtime with a vigorous training session." Cain explained and the big Bear Kin suddenly looked smug.

"Well, if that's the case, we should see just how far the girls have come along in their training shouldn't we?" En asked, pointing toward the back of the house where the path outside led to a large training area with a stone floor.

Tasha carried all the Blood Dancers outside before dissolving the webbing and setting them all on the ground with gentle grace and straightening their hair a little before deciding they were presentable enough.

The girls all looked excited to see that the clones of Tamii were all in pink fancy dresses, though they were slit up the leg for a greater range of movement and ended mid-calf so they wouldn't get stepped on.

"We will try it this way for today. Pick four of you at a time to go up against Tamii and they will spar with you in waves while we school the others on more combat techniques that you will need to know to fight mages and other nonwarrior classes." Tasha decided to usher the girls into groups.

Four Blood Dancers separated off, all in outfits closest to pink, matching their opponents as well as they could. As far as methods go, it wasn't a bad way to decide who went first, and the two demon species looked equally excited to be fighting.

The Mages started the majority of the girls on training for a charging slice to close the distance with spell casters while the other four took combat stances with wooden training blades in their hands. The wood was from the Eastern Continent, and wouldn't easily shatter, but the weapons were blunt, so they wouldn't leave more than bruises unless someone went truly overboard.

"Ready and Go" all the clones of Tamii called at once, rushing the Blood Dancers with a frenzy of bloodlust in their eyes.

Wooden blades collided at ever-increasing speeds, and Cain could see that the Berserkers were holding back to slowly work on their opponents' skills. The rattle of wooden blades was almost constant as the two groups fought, with the Lieutenants pushing the girls back constantly as they desperately tried to get a hit in.

That went on for fifteen straight minutes until the girls started to slow down, then Tamii put one blade away, giving the girls false hope that they could land a blow, but only leading them to eventually collapse in exhaustion as the others practiced a new skill.

"Next group, you are up. Girls in the first group, you have five minutes rest, then you're on to skills training." Tasha called out, and the first sign of panic crossed the Blood Dancers' faces. They had finally found a group of opponents with as much energy as

they had, and the Summons were Cain's level, not something that the girls could defeat in a fight and earn themselves a break.

They were happy to get more fight training though, so they weren't going to argue, but they began to suspect that their days of running wild around the castle were coming to an end. Especially with the teleporting mages chasing them with spider webs. That was going to take some serious planning to overcome.

Not that they were giving up, far from it, they would overcome these new caretakers sooner or later and prove that the Blood Dancers were the superior Demon species.

What they didn't know was that Cain could read their minds, and through him, Tasha and Tamii knew exactly what escape tactics they were planning to try the moment they got back to the Demon King's castle and were prepared for their antics already.

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

Chapter 510 510

Having the Spider Acolytes watching over the Blood Dancers was starting to show results already the next morning. The girls were almost subdued when they came downstairs for breakfast. Sure, they were hyper and chatty and looking forward to morning training to perfect the skill that they had started learning late last night after they were caught outside their room after lights out, but this was significantly less chaos than they usually caused.

"How long do we have? Can we check out the tower here before we go? It's way bigger than the one at home, and I want to see what it's like to hunt targets with that much space." One of the girls asked King Aggramor as she finished eating and got ready for her morning training schedule.

"Of course. It's only a short hop through the transport circle from here to the Castle at home, so there's no reason you can't train in this tower today." Aggramor agreed, reviewing the morning documents that his assistant brought him.

Cain was immensely glad that he had Svetlana for the actual upkeep of Long Fang Valley. She was also already hard at work with the day's paperwork, in her office in what passed for downtown Long Fang City.

Cain was just getting ready for a relaxed day around the house when an emergency notification from Cixelcid in Port Nefheim came through over the Guild Chat. They had

been studying the distribution of dinosaurs and other monsters on the Eastern Continent, with the help of the local hunters, and had found a very disturbing trend.

Unlike before, the distribution of the daily spawns was not random. Both the numbers and power levels of the monsters in a region were directly proportional to the population in a region.

The more reclusive elven cities with small populations and lower power levels were seeing relatively few and weak daily arrivals, whereas the areas around the Capital cities, and Port Nefheim itself were either seeing many more magical beasts or much more powerful ones. Port Nefheim had a lot of Mythic Awakened residents and visitors, largely due to having the only training tower on the Eastern Continent, and this morning they had seen their first Mythic Beast spawn.

It was an Albino Snow Leopard, and only half grown, but it was Mythic Quality.

Kone had been visiting, so the monster wasn't killed, it had been subdued and captured as her [Bonded Beast], which caused her to undergo the Mythic Awakening herself, so they were expecting to see this level of threat again in the future.

They were on the stronger side of the Eastern Continent, but many other areas had called in Mythic Awakened guards from the Southern Continent where they could, and if Cixelcid's theory was right, their very presence on the Continent would encourage the world to balance the daily arrivals to account for their existence.

More disturbingly, there were now an awful lot of Mythic beings on the Central Continent, thanks to Cain. It was possible that eventually, they would be seeing the same thing. The Eastern Continent was between one and two hundred levels ahead of them before the change, so by Cain's estimate, they should have at least a year before the slowly advancing power level reached the point that the Central Continent could support such powerful creatures.

What was more concerning was that the power level of the Southern Continent was already very high, so the chance that they would see a Spirit Beast as a random spawn in the near future was a very real threat.

A large part of the continent was already in chaos, fighting for power, and someone was assassinating the competition while others tried to consolidate and Cain's allies tried to expand. Unless it happened to spawn near the farm where the Echoes could tag team it with summons a single Spirit Beast had a good chance of taking out any small city it encountered, where the guards couldn't take it with the pure weight of numbers.

The expansion was going well though. They had gotten six more Farm Residents appointed as Guardians over the last week, and gained ten more allied cities through their Guardians joining the Guild for the benefits offered. They were at over thirty villages and cities now, covering hundreds of square kilometers, so the alliance could

rightly be called a Kingdom of its own, though they weren't that closely affiliated, and had more of a mutual defense pact.

The news was spreading in the Guild Channel, and slowly, confirmations were coming in from across the Central Continent of the same phenomenon, but on a lesser scale. The Desert was almost empty, as it had no real residents, but anywhere between five and ten beasts in the level one hundred to one hundred fifty range were appearing near the Castle every night.

They had originally thought it was just the ones from the desert coming to them, as they were the only source of water and food nearby, but the travelers had noticed that there were even fewer monsters now than there were before. The new arrivals often killed the naturally existing ones for territory, reducing the overall numbers.

For the Castle it was great news, their source of free experience and food was coming to them. For places like the Skyview Capital, Landis City, and the Demon Kingdom, it was terrible. They all had a lot of higher-level noncombatants in their territory, which would mean more powerful nightly arrivals and more danger.

The Blood Dancers thought it was incredible news though. Tamii loved to fight, they loved to fight, and there were more monsters to fight, how could it be a bad thing, right?

King Aggramor informed his guards of the news so that they knew to position themselves so that the higher population areas got better guards, instead of the current random rotations, which kept everyone cycled home on a more regular basis.

Tanya dragged all the Blood Dancers out for morning training, wearing them down a little before she would allow them to go to the tower and burn off the last of their energy so that they could be calm for the afternoon. They had attracted a crowd today though. The combat skills that the Blood Dancers and the Commanders had weren't something that you could find just anywhere, so a lot of local residents wanted to join in.

Ever since the tower went in, training had become a favorite pastime among the farmers with a system and the townsfolk. They could do the quest daily, which not only helped them in their daily life, and provided a small sum of money, but also had a chance of giving useful items that they could trade or use at home.

So, the training session went from ten young demons to a hundred assorted beastkin and ten young demons, led by two Commanders and their four Jackalope Lieutenants.

There was some disappointment that Tamii was a Jackalope though. The pronged horns got in the way of headpats, preventing a smooth pattern from front to back, the way that was customary with a normal Bunny Kin.

Of course, Tamii had no idea that patting bunnies for luck was a thing, until Cain explained it to her, and attacked the first few people who tried, causing mass confusion,

and some suspicion that certain villagers had bad intentions. None of them had ever heard of a Bunny attacking someone who tried to pat them before. Eventually, Cain had to come out and explain that Jackalopes weren't quite like Bunnies, and the tradition didn't normally extend to them, so you had to get permission first if you wanted to try, and it probably wouldn't bring you luck.

The people of Long Fang Valley weren't sure that Cain's explanation was correct though. Shouldn't the hard-to-pat Bunnies give more luck if you could get them to let you actually do it? That seemed more logical to them.

All ten of the Blood Dancers went into the tower at the same time, immediately after their morning training, and repeated the process no less than five times, despite only getting quest rewards for the first one. The problem was a simple one, they all finished on floor seventeen. It wasn't until the fifth run that one of the girls made it to floor eighteen and won the competition and they all collapsed, exhausted, and curled up on the floor for a nap before being brought back into the Manor by Tamii.

"Do they do that a lot?" Cain asked, watching the exhausted girls being carried back inside.

"That's actually the first time I've seen them take a nap. Usually, they are 'all go all the time'. Things might really be looking up for me at home." King Aggramor laughed, noticing how cute they were when they weren't making him want to pull his hair out.

They were awake again an hour later, but much calmer, and more interested in playing games in the house or swimming in the lake at the other end of the valley than causing trouble.

"Why don't you head home and the Commanders can bring them back when they get bored of playing here in the Valley? There is a lot more room for them to explore here than in a proper city, so they won't bother anyone if they head out for a day-long excursion to look for monsters or play in the lake." Cain suggested as the King's assistant came with more work.

The unfortunate demon looked more and more stressed as the day went on, but that was normal for him. Everything that the Demons thought should go to the King went through him, and he had to sort through much more than just what he brought to Aggramor, and the position couldn't be entrusted to just anyone, so he hadn't found an assistant of his own to help out.

"I think I will take you up on that. Grandpa will likely come by at some point to give them bad ideas and reprimand them for the mistakes they made implementing the last round. I swear he's no better than they are sometimes." King Aggramor informed Cain, making all the Companions in the room laugh, and Cain smirked at the memory of all the records of the former King and his Gnomish Queen sneaking away to the Ancient City for evenings alone.

Hopefully, they could still do that with the city now partially inhabited. He had left puppets there with instructions not to mess with certain buildings though, so it should be fine. Cain was starting to realize that there were a lot of things that he should be doing, but he really had no motivation to do them himself. That's what subordinates are for, right?

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

Chapter 511 511 Too Important To Study

While everyone else was busy with something productive, Cain decided to sit down with a nice hot cup of coffee and the [Spell Crafting] book and see if he could learn something new today.

There was a great spot in the library on the second floor from the top of the pagoda tower of the Manor, where it was open to the outside, but protected from the elements with a magical barrier, so the wind and rain couldn't damage the books and furniture inside.

It was a favorite of Vala when she wanted to be alone and read, so that is where Cain headed when he wanted to learn something new. He was slowly making progress on the second half of the enchanting section. The first had covered enchantments to put on items, and he was getting quite good at them, but the second half covered turning a regular item into a magical item or upgrading a magical item's quality.

First up, was upgrading quality, which was supposed to be easier, due to the fact that there was already a base level of enchantment on the items. What he needed to learn to do was to strengthen the existing enchantment and reinforce it, then add additional layers to it. Not of a new spell, like a regular added enchantment, but an extension of the existing abilities.

Done correctly this would bring the existing enchantment to a whole new level, and possibly add a secondary effect to the existing abilities, which would be directly related instead of adding something random like you got when you reforged an item using blacksmithing skills.

The two techniques were somewhat related, only with a reforging attempt, you wiped the enchantment clean, and started over. What Cain wanted to do was keep what was there, but make it better. If an item had the skills you wanted, but it was a low-level item,

or they rolled near their minimum values, this was exactly what you wanted, and didn't introduce any element of randomness into the equation.

Cain was sure that was somewhat vexing for the Laughing God, but [Spell Crafting] was supposed to be related to the God of Magic, so it only made sense that the others' thoughts on the matter were only minimally considered.

Cain brought out a level 105 magician's staff from the Guild Bank to practice with. It was almost the perfect item to work on, having Spell Damage, Ice Elemental Damage, and a bonus to the [Hailstorm] spell.

This was his first attempt though, so Cain set that one aside and grabbed another item. He would upgrade that one once he knew what he was doing. The second item he randomly picked was a single-handed ax with a bleed effect and added physical damage. Not bad, but nothing rare or difficult to replicate.

It was a bit better than the first item, at level 195, so it wouldn't be as extreme of an upgrade, but Cain started on the process anyhow.

Upgrading an enchantment was both incredibly simple, and incredibly frustrating at the same time. You had to upgrade the lattice of the spell in the same order that the veins activated when the weapon was enchanted, which was easy enough to follow, Cain could see what they were just by holding the weapon and letting it activate. The problem was, that there were hundreds of them and you needed to keep them all at precisely the same level as you increased them.

If you got them unbalanced, it would either fail and reset to where you started, or you would blow the item up with an abundance of mana in one area that the material wasn't strong enough to endure.

The book recommended doing this in small steps until you were better at it, letting the enchantment stabilize and then starting again to slowly build the item up. Increasing the base level was the easy part, and went quite smoothly, bringing the item up to an even level 400, which increased the stats enough to make it a formidable item for most of the Guild Members. But it was only a Blue quality Magic item, and clearly a practice piece for a training blacksmith, so it could be much better.

Cain was just about to work on increasing the quality when he got a mental notification.

[The girls killed a Magical Boar at the lake and want to have a hog roast. Where do they do that in this city?] Tasha asked him.

[Town square, there is a large smoker by the edge of the park. Once they start roasting the pig, people will come out to say hello and see what the occasion is.] Cain answered, amused at their plan for the day.

The monsters in the area were appearing anywhere from level 170 to 280 these days, with those over 200 being all Epic quality and as tough as a dungeon boss, though most of them lacked any magic of their own and were simply ferocious beasts for some reason. It was almost like the region was granting them a steady supply of food, as long as they could eat it before it ate them.

Cain started in on the process of increasing the item's quality for a second time, and again he was interrupted by a messenger, this time in person.

"Guild Master Cain, there is a guest here for you. He calls himself Warlord Munez and he wishes to challenge you to a duel for control of the Darklight Host. Courtesy dictates that we allow you to deal with it in person." The Guild Messenger informed him nervously, his wolf ears twitching in fear of being reprimanded.

"Fine, I will deal with that right away." Cain sighed, following the wolf kin downstairs.

Warlord Munez was the man's actual name, not a title, he had called himself that when he transferred in. Cain could also feel that his Mythic Grade aura was unstable as if he had just advanced to a stronger point than he was previously, possibly becoming Mythic Quality and not just Mythic Awakened.

"Guild Master Cain, I have heard a lot about you. Do you dare accept my challenge, or will you do the right thing and turn over the Darklight Host without a fight?" Warlord Munez challenged when he saw Cain step out.

"Why would I give an idiot like you control of the Guild? And even if I did, what makes you think they would follow you and not simply kill you for trying to take the spot?" Cain asked.

"I consulted the oracle, and she told me the secret behind your power. You can control the masses, and you are using it to have your Guild dominate the Central Continent. Once they are free of your tyranny, they will see the truth of my benevolence." Warlord Munez declared proudly, and Cain had to use [Crushing Tentacles] to restrain some of the guild members from murdering him right where he stood.

"He shouldn't have used that word. That word is precious to the Guild, and has a lot of significance." Cyrene sighed softly, slithering up beside Cain, having woken up too late today to wrap herself around him before he left the bedroom.

"Fine, I will duel you, Warlord Munez, would you like to stop at a concession, or would you prefer that I kill and resurrect you?" Cain asked, and the man shivered in fear.

Everyone had heard the story by now of Cain resurrecting people into his puppets to ask them questions and then releasing them at level one to start their lives over and reflect on their mistakes.

"To the forfeit. Though you are a tyrant, I am too benevolent of a man to kill you outright." The challenger declared, placing his black metal helmet on his head.

He was a Crusader by class, so he knew Cain hadn't lied to him, but still, he wanted to fight this duel. There wasn't a good reason to decline at this point, so Cain transformed into his natural Ancient form, in all twenty meters of its leathery tentacled glory, and enhanced his tentacles with [Weight of the Earth] a simple enchantment he had learned from [Spell Crafting] that let you adjust the effective weight of an item. Cain increased his tentacles' weight a hundredfold, since he had more than enough strength, and whipped them all at the prideful young human in front of him.

One hit his shield, the same time one hit his right side, and the two together crushed his torso into a meaty pulp inside his now crumpled armor. Warlord Munez spat blood as he collapsed on the ground, his internal organs crushed beyond recognition, and then promptly passed out.

Cain signaled to Evangeline to go rescue the idiot, and the Seraphim strolled over, pulling his chest plate off before healing the dying Crusader back to one-quarter of his health. It was enough that his ribcage now looked like it should, though it was still covered in deep purple bruises, and he was no longer in imminent danger of death.

"The gentle Lady Evangeline was kind enough to heal you, please thank her properly before you make your way back out of my manor," Cain informed the horrified man with what he hoped looked like a friendly smile on his tentacle-bearded face.

"Yes, Guild Master. I apologize for my rudeness. Thank you, Lady Evangeline, I owe you my life. I swear now that if you ever call on me, I will do anything in my power to help you, even if it is to escape this monster at the cost of my life.

Evangeline just shook her head at his idiocy before patting him kindly on the head. "I accept your oath, young Crusader, now go, and help those who are in need."

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

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With the immediate annoyances taken care of, Cain gathered up Cyrene in his arms and returned to the library. He gently set her down once he landed, then transformed back into a human before heading to the comfortable chairs.

"I don't want to put pressure on you when the eggs are forming, so you can do what you like, or curl up in my lap and be a book rest." Cain teased her, but Cyrene thought that wasn't a bad plan.

That way she could read what he was reading, and might even gain a useful new skill if he was reading something she could understand.

She didn't know that the book was in the Ancient runic language, which wouldn't automatically translate for her, but his body heat was the best medicine, in her estimation, so there was no reason for her to be elsewhere.

When Cain picked his book back up from the table he placed it on to deal with the so-called Warlord, he found a new bookmark tucked into the pages he was reading.

It was clearly a spell diagram, and attached to it was a handwritten note in an elegant script.

[Ancient Cain,

You will need this spell to communicate effectively when you come to see us for the birth. I don't know how long that is in your time, it has been five days here and Ancient children come on their own schedule.

Nyarla]

'Well, that was unexpected and very minimally informative.' Max thought to himself, reading the letter for a second time. At least now he knows that they don't intend to keep him away from Misha forever, and that time is moving very, very slowly wherever they are.

Her spell doesn't seem to have a title or name, but from what Cain can tell it is a type of mental communication spell. It should let him mentally communicate with any other Ancient who is in the same world he is. It was a rather simple spell, only activating an aspect of his mind that should already exist, so Cain only needed an hour to memorize it.

The spell was written in the same arcane language as the Skill Books, so Cyrene read along, trying her hardest to memorize the spell at the same time Cain did. He finished first and set the piece of parchment aside before closing his eyes and focusing on how the spell should be cast, not noticing that his lap warming bookholder had been reading along and trying to learn the spell.

Cyrene picked the neatly written sheet up and worked on comprehending the complex symbols inscribed there. It wasn't easy, and she had never seen anything like this before, a spell that permanently enhanced the mind, but if it was that interesting to her master, it was interesting to Cyrene.

Cain activated the spell as soon as he was certain that he had it exactly correct, and the strangest sensation overcame him. His mind seemed to split in half with one half being himself and the other containing the thoughts of every one of his Companions, as well as the Echoes and Watchers. Surprisingly, it wasn't overwhelming, more like a conversation in a room. With a simple thought, he could tune it out or focus on the portions that he wanted.

There was no longer any need to focus on messaging each other, everything they thought was available to the others easily and clearly. Cain took a moment to appreciate the pure genius of the idea and work on becoming accustomed to the extra train of thoughts before an unexpected new mind appeared in the stream of consciousness.

[It's so nice here. There are people, and I know everyone. Ooh, we can gossip about Master Cain, this spell is great.] Cyrene's thoughts entered the stream.

[You do realize he can hear everything you think, right? The spell links every user's thoughts into a collective constant chat.] Vala pointed out.

p [Oh, that could be inconvenient. How do I deactivate it? I hope I can deactivate it. What if I think lewd things where he can hear me, what would be so embarrassing.] Cyrene's thoughts were so lively that they made everyone else laugh, Cain included.

[You are having his children, plus we are your friends and we have always been in his mind, including while you were together, so we know how lewd you are already little snake.] Svetlana joked, thinking of the night Cyrene went into heat.

[Is it possible to actually die of embarrassment? Because I think this spell might actually kill me.] Cyrene complained.

[Relax, once your thoughts settle it will be more normal. The more worked up you get the more you reveal. But you can block your thoughts so only certain ones get broadcast. I will show you how to do it later.] Victor the Echo consoled the panicking Lamia.

Once she calmed down enough to think rationally, Cyrene was much happier. Never again would she be alone in the dark the way she was as a child. Even in the middle of the night, there would be someone there in this part of her consciousness.

Cain focused back on his book of [Spell Crafting] and his thoughts faded into a soft murmur in the collective. That gave Cyrene her first clue as to the method of hiding her thoughts, so she got to work on not being the noisy one in the proverbial room.

She watched as Cain picked up a mace he pulled from his inventory and focused on improving it. The item level slowly raised until it reached three hundred and then as she watched, quietly listening to his thoughts as he worked, Cain brought the quality of the item up one rank at a time.

The level of mana control he was using hurt her head just to listen in on, so Cyrene decided that a bit more sleep couldn't hurt now that she was comfortably placed in his lap for the day.

The enhanced item was technically a success, at least up to Legendary Quality where Cain stopped for a break an hour later. But he still felt like he was missing something. Self-teaching was always more difficult than learning from someone who already knew how the task was supposed to be performed, but the book was a good one, so Cain was sure he would get it eventually.

His next thought was to use [Modify] on the item while he worked. It wasn't an ability intended for making magical weapons, but it could possibly allow the transformation to proceed more smoothly. There were things that were assumed during this section of the guidebook, one of them being that you understood blacksmithing techniques and the properties of the items you were working on, which was a very shaky subject for Cain.

[Imbue willpower on the enhanced item to create Sentient Blade Puppet?] Y/N

No, that wasn't what he was after, but it could come in useful later. He could stuff annoying people into weapons to create cursed weapons. The user would have to channel mana into the weapon to let the soul trapped inside use its skills, but in theory, the occupant would be Immortal if the weapon didn't break.

[You know, I think I understand why Ancients were viewed as evil. When you get to that level of power, morality no longer matters in the same context as it does for most people.] Cyrene's sleepy thoughts made Cain smile and pet her head as she started to wake up.

"You will get used to it. Everyone else has been in my head all along." Cain consoled her, stroking her scales.

She was getting noticeably thicker already and Cain began to wonder how many Lamia were born in one clutch. The red patterns on her white-scaled lower body rippled as she moved around so Cain could pet the itchy spots and he tried to count the eggs but failed, lacking the senses to detect them with a simple touch at this point in their development.

"I asked Oath Breaker one day and they said between one and twenty, but usually single digits," Cyrene said, turning his thoughts into a spoken conversation.

That was a pretty wide range, so they would have to wait and see.

"Should we order lunch? I'm going to need days to get this skill even advanced enough to be reliable. We might as well get comfortable." Cain suggested, picking up the book again to review the instructions.

"We might as well. I can send messages from here to handle anything that comes up with the guild that doesn't require one of us to attend it personally, and the others have been very careful the past few days not to let me do anything where I might injure myself." Cyrene agreed with a smile.

As they waited for lunch, Cain noticed that as he got used to the spell, it slowly became background noise. Like a radio, it was playing for you to listen to, but you didn't have to listen or interact if you didn't want to.

Cain spent another two hours trying to get the mace to advance from Legendary to Ancient Quality successfully, but without luck. The step in between the two was a big one, and the subtle shift that was needed seemed to elude him today, he simply couldn't seem to decipher what he was doing wrong, so he didn't know what he needed to fix to get it right.

At least the item didn't degrade between attempts if you stopped and settled it in at a quality level before trying to advance again.

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