

Dimension Master

Chapter 46: 46: The Ring

"Thank you. Thank you for reminding me. It's not true. I don't believe it; they would never do that.... It was just another attack." He whispered to Chad. There was relief in Drake's heart. He believed what his friend told him. He knew Chad was right.

As soon as the words were out of Drake's mouth, the storm ceased. The clouds cleared quickly as if it were a movie played on fast-forward. The rain stopped, the wind became a gentle breeze as the twin suns poked through the fading clouds, warming the clearing once again.

Drake and Chad looked up toward the roof, noticing the swift change in weather. Then at each other. They smiled; The storm was gone, and it had gone the moment he didn't believe in the vision.

Mike stood up slowly. "I'll make us some tea." He had heard what was said. He was just as close to Drake as Chad was. Although it was barely a whisper, he still heard it.

Mike went to the small kitchen and prepared the tea, filling the pot and putting it onto the hearth to heat the water. He didn't believe it either, but it left an emotional scar. If his father came for him, he wouldn't defend himself. Everything about the situation felt wrong.

He turned to Drake and watched as he desperately tried to calm his own emotions. He had created a scar in him, too. Looking at Chad, he saw the same thing. The three of them would never be the same.

When the water was hot, he carefully pulled it off the fire and made tea. He wished that they had coffee. Chad loved it. It was one of his weaknesses.

They sat around the table in silence, drinking their tea slowly. No one spoke. The silence was deafening. Finally, Drake stood. "We need to remember that nothing in this place is as it seems. We need to always keep our guard up, no matter who we come across. Those we meet might not be what they seem. Not even those we know. For all we know, we could be looking at a doppelganger or an illusion to trick us. We need to remember that there are forces at work that are attempting to stop us from completing this quest. We need to be prepared for anything."

Drake turned and left his friends sitting at the table.

Chad and Mike watched as the bedroom door closed behind him, leaving them in silence.

The two boys stared at their cups. They knew Drake was correct. Neither of them was the paranoid type. In the situation they were in, they had no choice but to act like they were. Every twist and turn of this dimension bombarded them with danger. It was this danger that could prevent them from ever going home. One slip-up, one wrong move, and they would die here. Neither wanted that.

Drinking the last of his tea, Mike stood and collected the empty cups. He and Chad cleaned up in silence before going to bed. They had a long way to go. A long and perilous journey lies ahead of them. They needed to rest and recoup from their day. It was, after all, one of the worst they had ever experienced.

After a good night's sleep, Drake made breakfast for his companions and let Renn outside to do whatever beasts do. He thought about what happened that night. It made him angry. Someone was still trying to mess with him.

He knew that his friend was right; it was some kind of mental attack. The only proof he had was how the storm stopped as soon as he chose not to believe the vision.

Just as he set the plates on the table, his friends exited the bedroom. As they entered, they looked up at Drake. "Everything okay?" Mike asked cautiously.

Drake smiled. "Yeah," he paused, then added, "I hate mental attacks. Someone is either trying to distract me from this quest or they are trying to pit us against our fathers. We can't let that happen."

Both boys nodded at Drake, then sat at the table. He had prepared breakfast of meat and eggs. There was surprise on Chad's face when he found his cup was filled with coffee. Real coffee. His eyes widened, and a huge grin spread across his face.

Before he could say anything, Drake spoke up. "I got up early, so I went through my storage book. I found a case of coffee. I also found a dozen water storage units, the same kind that are in the bathroom. The water storage containers are also all filled.

Chad's grin grew as he downed his coffee. He smiled as he refilled his cup from the pot that was placed on a cloth to protect the wood of the table. Coffee was Chad's weakness. He loved it.

As they sat around the table eating, a flash of light burst in the center of the table. It was a burst of bright green light; the color of Drake's energy magic. When the light cleared, a small box was in its place.

Mike was the first one to touch it. He attempted to open the box, but it wouldn't open for him. Chad took it out of his hand and tried to open it next, but it didn't open for him either. Remembering the box back in Draco Town, Chad handed the small box to Drake. Drake took it gingerly out of his hand and opened it easily. Clearly, it was meant for him.

Inside the small box was a ring with an emerald gem in the center. Small runes decorated its thin band. Drake stared at it, trying to figure out if he should trust it and put it on or not trust it, leaving it in its box. The fact that he could open the small box told him that it was safe. It was meant for him. After thinking about it for some time, he left the ring in the box and stored the box in his storage book.

"What is it?" Mike asked.

"It's a ring, but after what happened last night, I'm not sure I can trust that it's safe. I know the last box that was given to me that only I could open was safe, but after last night, I'm not sure I want to take chances," Drake explained.

Chad, the constant voice of reason, decided to give his own input. "Can your system tell you if it's legit or not?"

Pulling the box back out of the book, he set it on the table. "System, identify and explain the ring." He said in his mind, speaking to his system.

{Dimension Master Communication Ring}

{The Dimension Master communication ring has two functions. The ring allows the dimension master heir to communicate with the dimension master and vice versa. The second function protects the wearer from mind attacks and extends its protection to all members of the wearer's cohort.}

Drake smiled, then quickly put the ring on his finger. His first thought was that his father must have known someone out there was using a powerful mind attack on him, and felt the need to send the ring to protect him and his friends.

His friends were staring at him. They were waiting for him to tell them what he learned. Drake just smiled and drank some of his tea.

"You're not going to tell us?" Mike asked with a frown.

Drake smiled. "It protects the wearer and its cohort from mind attacks. My father sent it to me...I think."

Drake's father watched the screen as the boys ate their meal. He witnessed the flash of green light appear. He flinched. That was a dimension master energy signature, and it didn't come from him.

When the light faded, a small box appeared. It was a small ring box with intricately carved runes decorating its edge in a glowing green. He watched Drake open the small box, then study what was inside for a while. Drake did not pull the item out, choosing to

keep the contents inside. Closing the small box, he stored it inside his storage book. The dimension master felt relieved seeing him not trust the box's contents. He didn't either.

Then Chad said something that he hadn't paid attention to, due to feelings of relief. He had no idea what was said. His relief was quickly replaced by horror as he witnessed Drake suddenly pull the box back out of his book, open the box, and then put the ring on.

He knew the ring was not from him. He still had his tucked away in his own storage book. There were actually several rings with different functions. He couldn't see which one he had received. There was only one person who could have sent it, and he was sure it wasn't to help Drake. In fact, it was sure to be the opposite.

Chapter 47: 47: Incoming

The twin suns rose into the morning sky as Drake, Mike, and Chad walked down the long, winding road toward the mountain shaped like a massive dragon head. They needed to get there so they could complete their quest and go home.

Renn followed along in the thick trees, her gleaming eyes narrowing, seeing within the depths of the forest on the opposite side of the road. Due to her vision last night, she worried for her master. Her worried eyes scanned the area for danger, ready to defend Drake and the rest of the cohort.

It was a pleasant morning. Soft clouds floated lazily through the blue sky. The twin suns smiled down, warming the early morning air. A gentle breeze fluttered the leaves of the surrounding trees.

Drake kept his eyes glowing, sweeping the area for danger using his magical vision. There was nothing out there. There was nothing to see. There weren't even ordinary animals anywhere around them.

Leaves floated down from the trees as Drake looked up. The musical sounds of a bird sang their morning song, greeting the new day. Drake hoped that this was a good sign. The bird was the only sign of life. He wanted an easy day for once. The territory they were in was level 3 beast territory; they would be in level 4 territory in close to two hours. He didn't feel like fighting so early in the day.

Drake continued to walk, Mike and Chad following close behind. Even with the calm and pleasant morning, Mike had his sword out. He was ready to fight. Chad held his bow rather than keeping it attached to his back. Although they didn't believe the vision was true, it still made them uneasy.

They worried that they would have to fight their fathers; neither was confident they would even attempt to defend themselves. It felt wrong fighting with me to the death.

Drake had swept the thought out of his mind. His thoughts were solely on the quest in front of him. He wanted to finish it; this madness had to end. At every twist, every turn, danger lurked, death followed. He himself had nearly died twice.

As Drake watched their surroundings, bright dots appeared, approaching fast. The dots were white. There were three of them. They were a distance away, giving Drake and his cohort time to prepare.

"Incoming humans," he stated, letting his whip fall gracefully to the ground. He didn't want to fill it with energy just yet. Not until he discovered if these humans were a threat. "Renn, help us if we need it."

A soft bark-howl came from trees. It was Renn, letting her master know that she understood.

The dots were coming fast; they would be in front of them at any moment. As if it were second nature, Drake pressed his palm on the ground. Green energy rose, creating a wall. It was protection from long-range attacks. For all he knew, there was an archer with the coming group.

Drake's thoughts briefly wandered to the dagger that had been thrown into his back, nearly killing him. An energy wall would surely protect them from something like that. At least he hoped it would. It had not been tested yet.

"There are no towns anywhere near here," Mike stated. His brown eyes focused on the area Drake had indicated. "If they're coming fast, are they running from something or trying to get to us quickly?"

Drake shrugged, not sure how to answer. He scanned around them, his green eyes glowing brightly, looking for other dangers. There was still nothing. The only beast around was Renn. She was keeping a safe distance from them, still hiding in the trees, yet close enough to protect her master if the need arose.

Mike suddenly stiffened. "Could it be our fathers? You said there are three energy signatures." He was worried that perhaps the vision was true after all: A warning for what was about to come.

"It's not them. If it were, one of them would have been green. These three are all white," he stated, then thought about it. "If they look like our fathers, they aren't them."

"How do you know?" Chad cut in, watching the area where the intruders would arrive.

Drake, keeping his eyes on the incoming intruders, answered his friend. "Because, you two may have white energy signatures, but there is a thread of green light that binds us. I see nothing binding the three humans coming our way...Besides, if our fathers are like

us, they would have something binding them together, and one of the energy signatures would be green. It's not them."

"Could they be coming from Storm Town?" Mike asked. "Isn't it in that direction?"

Drake stared in the direction of Storm Town. "Maybe," he offered. "Regardless, keep your guard up. Even if they act friendly, don't trust them."

Leaves rustled. The sound of heavy footfalls slammed onto the packed ground. The humans were running. Heavy breathing was heard through the trees; they were getting close. Clearly, they were in a hurry.

When they finally arrived, the three figures stepped out of the trees, making a sudden stop. One man bent over, grasping his knees, trying to suck in air. He was out of breath, so were the other two.

Chad pulled his bow, ready to shoot. Renn had stepped forward out of the trees. Mike's grip on his sword tightened. Drake, however, lowered his energy wall.

"You are looking for us," he stated simply. "Don't mind my friends. We do not trust easily. Why are you looking for us?" Drake asked in a deceptively pleasant tone.

When the center man regained his breath, he stood up tall. "We need your help."

Drake raised a brow. "How did you know where we were? You seemed to have pinpointed us rather well. Explain that."

The three men looked at each other, clearly trying to come up with something to say.

Drake continued. "I've been watching you. You ran from pretty far away. You ran straight to us, without deviating as if you knew exactly where you would find us."

The man swallowed, then pointed up at the singing bird in the tree. "We have a scout."

The second man held his arm up. There was a leather sleeve with thin buckles that held it in place. The bird dove down from the large branch of the tree and landed gracefully on the man's protected arm, singing softly.

Drake stared at the three men, not giving them any sign of emotion. "Renn," he said softly.

Branches cracked behind them as Renn stepped out of the trees. Her glowing green eyes narrowed at the men as she walked over to Drake, stopping to stand beside him.

The men froze, panic in their eyes, their faces turning white.

Drake spoke again, his voice soft, a sweet melody. "Tell me, what purpose have you sought us out. What help do you need from us?" He asked calmly. There was a small smile on his lips as he watched the three men try not to panic.

While he waited for the men to speak, he spoke to his system. "System, can you detect lies?"

{Yes, lies can be detected.}

"System, notify me when a lie is detected. Keep lie detection on until I ask it to be turned off."

The system remained silent, waiting for one of the men to tell a lie. They hadn't even spoken yet, so there was nothing for the system to detect.

Finally, the man in the center spoke. "Storm Town is in danger. We need help defending it."

Chad stayed quiet, watching the conversation. He kept his bow ready.

Mike looked at the man, staring at the panic in his eyes. "What can we possibly do that you can't. Don't you live in a level 4 beast territory?" he asked. There was a touch of sarcasm in his tone. The town was in a powerful area. Far stronger than the three of them. He couldn't help but wonder.

Drake waited for a few moments, but the system hadn't responded to their words. "What is the danger?" he asked calmly. He knew the words were true. If it weren't, the system would have notified him.

The man looked relieved, but not by much. "Monsters," he breathed out.

Mike started to laugh, making everyone turn to him. "Those assholes. Large winged guys, right?" he asked.

All three of the men nodded.

Drake waited for the system, but it remained quiet. "Can you send the bird to Draco Town to find out if it's being attacked as well?" he asked. He was still calm.

The man with his bird shook his head. "I can't communicate with her like that. I give her a command and she follows it. She sings to let me know where she's at. That's all. There is no way for her to tell what she is seeing."

{A Lie has been detected.}

Drake smiled. "You're lying." He stepped forward, eyeing the man. "Speak the truth, or we don't help you." His tone was still pleasant. Mike and Chad wondered what was going on. Clearly, Drake was up to something.

The man swallowed. He had been caught. "I...I can see through her eyes."

Drake's smile widened. "Send her to Draco town. We will head to Storm Town. You will notify me if they are being attacked. If I need to, I can send them help. Now...Lead the way."

Chapter 48: 48: Don't Die

The large bird flew off toward Draco Town, while Drake and his cohort headed toward Storm Town with the three men. They had to go slow at first, letting the three men catch their breath enough to be able to run again. It was apparent that they had run all the way to them to ask for help.

Renn followed, still eyeing the men as if she didn't trust them.

"I kinda wish Protector could fly us there," Chad muttered. It was loud enough for the three men to hear.

"Protector has his own duty. He won't leave the bridge unprotected," Drake stated calmly.

The men glanced at each other in confusion, wondering what the heirs were speaking of. 'It couldn't be the beast at the ravine, could it?' they thought.

Drake and his cohort followed the men through the forest, passing through a massive clearing. They had been following the men for hours. The sky was already darkening, the twin suns making their way into the horizon.

The man with the arm protector suddenly froze. His eyes turned a milky white, his pupil barely seen through the milky haze. "The town of Draco is clear at the moment, but they appear to be preparing for something."

"That would suggest that they are being attacked as well," Mike growled. "How the heck are we supposed to protect both towns?"

"We can't," Drake stated evenly. "We're too far. We would never get there in time. We need to continue to Storm Town and deal with them there. Hopefully, my father is watching and will go to help them." Drake turned to the birdman, his eyes narrowed. "Send your bird to Chadwick, I want to know if they are being attacked also."

The man only nodded, then closed his eyes, presumably directing his bird to go to the next town.

They continued through the large clearing. In the distance, tall walls could be seen, complete with turrets and tall brick guard towers. It looked like a medieval city from afar. A large gray castle could be seen looming over the city.

"You have that kind of fortification, and you can't protect your city from monsters?" Mike asked in disbelief. There was a subtle sarcasm in his tone. "Draco Town doesn't even have walls, and they protect the town from those monsters pretty well."

The men's faces paled, "We fight beasts, but the monsters aren't beasts."

"We know... We already know the monsters are gargoyles. We fought them before, so we are fully aware of their capabilities. So, tell me, why can't you protect the city from them when Draco Town can?" Drake asked, his voice firm. Then, as if it were an afterthought, he asked, "So, tell me... Is this a trap?"

"No," The man said simply. His face was still pale. All three of the men's faces were pale.

{A lie has been detected}

Drake laughed. "Really?" he asked sarcastically. He had received the warning of being lied to. He didn't really care; they were even closer to the mountain than before, so it wasn't that much out of their way. "Tell me, why are we going to Storm Town? Don't lie to me again. I already know this is a trap. I just want to know why."

Hearing Drake's words, Mike and Chad stiffened. Renn growled, green saliva dripping from her large fangs.

The men's faces paled further. They had been caught.

Drake came to a stop, not going any further toward the medieval city. Mike and Chad stopped also, Renn went straight to Drake, her eyes not wavering from the three men. Low growls came from deep in her throat.

The men stood silent, not willing to speak. Their eyes kept turning to the large beast, which was growling at them with hunger in its glowing green eyes.

"If you're not going to speak, we will be on our way," Drake stated pleasantly. He smiled widely. "It's just one last town we have to protect when our ascension quest is complete." He shrugged, then looked out at the large fortified castle, then back at the pale men and smirked.

Drake was acting like he didn't care. It was all an act. He knew he would be responsible for the entire dimension, Storm Town included. He just wanted the men to fess up and tell him what was really taking place.

The leader spoke again in a shaky voice. He was trying desperately to keep his composure. All three men were looking at Drake in horror. Without the dimension masters' protection, the town would be as good as destroyed.

"Th...the monster king..." the leader started, but Drake cut him off.

"Gargoyles. The monsters are called gargoyles," Drake cut in, still smiling.

The man swallowed before continuing. "The gargoyle king has our town hostage. He won't leave us in peace unless we bring you and your cohort there."

Drake studied the man, waiting for his system to tell him if it was a lie. It never spoke up. What the man had just said was the truth. He turned to his cohort. "Prepare for battle." Then he turned to the bird man, "Call your bird back. We may need her help."

They continued walking toward Storm Town, but much more slowly. They wanted to give the bird time to get back. She would be a good pair of eyes during a battle.

"How many gargoyles are there?" Drake asked the leader of the group from Storm Town. He wanted to get a good idea of what they were walking into.

The man scratched his head in thought. "I think there's about two hundred," he said, fear blooming in his eyes. That was a lot to fight.

Drake waited for his system to respond, but it remained silent. Again, the man was speaking the truth. Drake turned to his friends. "He speaks the truth. Make sure you have everything you need ready." Then he paused for a second, scanning his cohort, including Renn. "Don't die, and I want you to kill any gargoyles you see."

Drake looked up at the darkening sky, then closed his green eyes, as if in prayer. He had suddenly stopped walking, not notifying the others of his intentions, causing them to stop as well.

Chad wanted to ask why he had stopped, but chose not to. He didn't want to interrupt his friend.

Drake opened his eyes and looked behind them, scanning the area with his glowing green eyes. There were no beasts other than Renn. When he looked at the compound in front of them, he saw glowing white and grey dots. Those were humans and gargoyles. This he knew.

The white dots were all herded inside a large room in the castle, the grey ones surrounding them. There were no sentries on the walls. Drake smiled. He glanced up into the sky using his sight, then turned to the men. "How good is their hearing and their smell?" he asked.

"As far as we know, it's just like ours," the leader stated. Drake looked at the others for confirmation. One by one, they spoke. "It's the same." "Nothing special. They are strong, though."

Drake waited for his system to respond, but it said nothing. There were no lies from the men.

"Good to know, but we need to act as if their senses are superior. I have a plan, so let's not let them know we're here.... not just yet."

Drake's father watched the screen, his green eyes flashing in anger. The gargoyle king was attempting to trap his son and his friends. When the man from Storm Town stated the number of gargoyles in the city, all three men watching had paled.

Mike's father's fists clenched. "Isn't this a time when we can intervein?" he asked, his jaw clenched so tight, it was close to shattering.

Chad's father was staring at the screen. He couldn't say anything. Fear for his own son spread through his bones. He looked at the dimension master, fear, and horror in his eyes. There was pleading as well...pleading for the dimension master to intervene.

The dimension master stood up stiffly, pulling out his storage book. He quickly took out a box. When he opened it, it was a softball-sized crystal that shone faintly with an emerald-green hue.

"Place one finger on the crystal ball. Have in your mind what we are asking. We're asking for permission to intervene in this situation. Focus on the situation clearly in your mind." Drake's father stated, then placed his pointer finger on the glowing crystal.

Chad's and Mike's fathers did the same. They waited. At first, nothing happened, then suddenly, the glowing ball grew brighter, the green fading, and then began to flash a bright red. They were forbidden to intervene.

Mike's father gritted his teeth in anger. "Clearly, the gargoyle king is trying to kill them. I don't understand why we can't help. The rules state that if someone is trying to kill the heirs to stop their quest, while they're trying to complete it, we can help."

The dimension master shook his head. His hands balled into tight fists; his eyes narrowed in anger. "I think it's the gargoyle king's intention that prevents us from intervening. If he's just trying to kill them to kill them, then it's not something we can help. The ability to intervene is only if he is trying to stop the quest from being completed. If that's not part of the goal, then there is nothing we can do."

Chad's father sat heavily in his chair, worry on his beautiful face; fear for his son in his bright blue eyes.

Chapter 49: 49: Dealing with a Trap Pt 1

As the twin suns melted into the horizon, Drake led the men out of the clearing and circled the large fortress. He kept his eyes glowing, watching for stray glowing grey dots.

There were still no beasts in the area, which was unsettling.

The gargoyles were staying in what Drake figured was the throne room. It would be the only room he could think of that could hold so many humans and their captors.

Beasts in their current location were supposed to be level 4 beasts. If the gargoyle scared even them away, then whatever was going on at the castle was dire.

Inching their way toward the tall protective walls surrounding the city, the men led them to a hidden entrance, once used for evacuating the citizens when the town was under attack. Drake wondered why they hadn't used it when the gargoyles came.

The leader of the three men who were escorting them pressed his large hand on the wall and slid it along the bricks, looking for a particular spot. Once found, he pressed it firmly, then pushed it to one side, sliding the brick into a hidden hole in the wall. Once in place, he pressed the wall. A large brick door swung inward, revealing a tunnel several steps in front of them.

The tunnel had a brick staircase that led into the depths of the ground. One by one, they stepped onto the wide first step, then began to descend. Renn could barely fit. When the last person reached the fifth step, the secret door closed on its own, sealing them in. At the same time, above them, a hidden platform sealed the hidden staircase, preventing anyone from above from knowing it was there.

Drake kept watch for glowing white or grey dots.

Although he had his whip out, he affixed his bow to his back and his sword to his side. He wanted to be prepared for anything. Mike had his gauntlets on, and his sword held tightly in his grip. Chad's sword was at his side, his bow in his hand.

Drake stopped suddenly, pressing a finger to his lips. One of the grey dots was leaving the confines of the room where the humans were being held. Fear washed through the men's features. Drake looked unbothered. He was still watching the gargoyle as it moved through the town. It was heading toward the wall where the clearing was visible.

Drake smiled, turning toward his friends. "Stay here. I won't be long."

He disappeared down the tunnel, his eyes glowing faintly as he followed the tunnel, twisting and turning as needed to ensure he was going toward the gargoyle at the wall. All the other gargoyles were remaining in the castle.

{Quest detected. Defeat the gargoyles 0/267}

Drake smiled. He was still scanning the area on his way. A second gargoyle left the castle and headed toward the one on the wall. 'That's two away from the horde. Easy picking...I hope.'

With one last scan of the area, he ran toward the wall, coiling his whip around his wrist and taking his bow off his back. There was a smirk on his lips as he ran.

The tunnel was dark, but his eyes saw with nearly perfect clarity. His magical sight showed him everything as if it were daylight. He made his way to the wall, keeping his bow in his grasp. He had to keep watch for others. He didn't want to be seen. That would dampen his plans, forcing him to fight too many gargoyles at one time. Drake knew he wasn't strong enough if that happened.

After finding the way out, he followed a narrow street along the wall. Once close enough to see the two gargoyles looking out into the clearing, their backs turned away, he gripped his bow, raising it to aim. He knew he had to hit them one after the other, without pause. If they had time to warn the others, it would not be good. Not good at all, in fact.

Drake took a deep breath; he pulled then fired, pulled then fired. Two glowing green arrows flew through the air, heading toward the two gargoyles on the wall. The arrows hit nearly at the same time. Their heads exploded as the enhanced arrows collided. Both gargoyles were dead in an instant, then swiftly turned to light particles, all evidence disappearing.

{You have slain 2 gargoyles 2/267}

Drake scanned the area, looking for more. No more had exited the castle. 'Two down, 265 to go,' he thought, then headed back to his friends. After taking only a few steps, two more exited the castle.

Drake watched as they climbed the stairs. He needed them to get closer to them, making it easier to shoot them with his bow.

Once they reached the top of the wall, they looked around, looking for their friends. Drake raised his bow, took a deep breath, then pulled and fired, pulled and then fired in rapid succession. The two glowing green arrows found their mark simultaneously. Just like the others, their heads exploded, killing them on the spot. They turned into light particles, erasing that they had ever been there. Drake smiled.

{You have slain 2 gargoyles 4/267}

Scanning the area once more, he found no sign of more. He wanted to get them before they realized that he was even there. Drake silently called his familiar, telling her to lead the others to him before moving himself closer to the castle.

He looked around for a place to hide. One large enough for all of them. He knew if the gargoyles saw those that were sent after him and his friends, the gig would be up. He needed to take out as many as he could before then. Everything told him that their lives depended on it.

Finding a narrow alleyway, he scanned his surroundings. No one in the city remained outside the castle. The only ones he could see were his cohort and the three men all inching toward him, following Renn.

As he watched the castle entrance, he waited for more to break away from the group inside the castle and come outside. When the two finally did, his cohort was nearly to him. Sending a mental order to Renn, he told her to hide. If they didn't, two gargoyles about to exit the castle would see them.

The large doors finally opened, and two more gargoyles stepped out. As soon as they started heading for the wall, Drake lifted his bow, firing two more glowing green arrows, hitting them in the head, killing them. As they burst into light particles, he quickly scanned the area for more. There were no more.

{You have slain 2 gargoyles 6/267}

Drake frowned, realizing how long it would take to defeat all 267. 'Well, slow and steady,' he thought to himself sarcastically. 'This may take a while.'

Giving a mental order to his familiar, Renn, he told her to continue bringing the others toward him.

After several moments, Renn arrived with the others. "Hide, don't let them see you. I have already killed six. There are two hundred and sixty-one left. They're all in a large room surrounding the humans of the town."

"The throne room," the birdman stated.

Drake nodded. It was the room he was expecting it to be. It was too large for him to think of something else. Moving his attention to the castle, he continued to watch, briefly scanning the skies and around them. The only ones he could see were those inside the throne room.

"We need more to exit," Drake stated. "But not too many. If we can take them out one at a time before the others realize it, the latter battle will be easier since there won't be as many to fight. Right now, there are too many."

A gold breeze suddenly washed through the streets. Drake scanned the area. He didn't see anything. He frowned. It shouldn't be that cold. He turned back to the castle. Four gargoyles were coming toward the exit, heading toward them. "Four gargoyles are about to come out of the castle. I'll take the ones on the left, you take the ones on the right," he told Chad. "Wait until the castle doors shut completely and for them to walk away for several feet before shooting. We don't want to alert those inside."

Chad nodded, taking out his bow. Both he and Drake raised their bows, ready to fire. The doors opened, and the four gargoyles exited, then headed toward the wall. Chad glanced at Drake, who held up three fingers, counting down. He was trying to tell them that they needed to fire their arrows at the same time. Mike understood and whispered the countdown.

"1...2...3...Shoot!" Mike whispered.

Simultaneously, Drake and Chad shot two arrows rapidly; all four arrows hit their targets, the gargoyles' heads exploding, then turning into particles of light.

{Gargoyles defeated 10/267}

Drake turned to the others. "We still have two hundred and fifty-seven inside," he warned, a grim expression on his face. His green eyes glowed faintly as he watched those inside, hoping that more would come out. He worried that they would notice too soon that no one was returning once they left the castle.

Chapter 50: 50: Dealing with a Trap Pt 2

Huddled in the alleyway, Drake watched the wide doors of the castle, waiting for more to come out yet praying that only a few at a time would exit at once. If the gargoyles inside realized that no one was coming back, they would send a larger team to investigate. He wasn't sure if they could handle more.

The clouds were moving in, hiding the moon, letting the darkness overtake the city. It was both a boon and an inconvenience for the group. The darkness made it easier to hide. Yet the biggest issue in the dark was Renn and Drake's glowing green eyes, which were easily spotted in the dark city streets, even from far away.

Drake stared at the doors, waiting for more to come out, but none came. "We can't stay here all night waiting for more gargoyles to exit. We need a plan that we can survive," Drake mumbled. "Even if we go inside the castle, they're all in one room. If some were wandering the halls, it would make it easier to pick them off. I'm open to suggestion," he added.

Mike thought for a second while Chad scanned the area for danger. "I agree, we can't just go in there. It could put the people inside in danger." Mike looked at the castle for a moment, then smiled. "Or we can, but lock the gargoyles inside so they can't escape."

Drake frowned. "What about the humans locked inside?"

Chad turned to the three men. "Is there a secret entrance into the throne room? Maybe behind a painting or tapestry?"

The leader of the three men nodded. "It's there for evacuating the castle in times of need. If we go through the servants' entrance, there is an entrance in the basement that will lead to the stairs that take you to the inner halls. We can easily travel through the castle unseen."

{A lie has been detected}

Drake frowned, looking at the man who spoke. "Tell me the truth...are you still trying to betray us? I know you just lied to me."

The man's face paled.

Drake continued. "I happen to know that our fathers are watching and listening. If you do anything that goes against the laws of this dimension, he will most likely never extend his protection to you." Drake folded his arms, seeing the bird coming toward the city. "Is your bird going to alert the gargoyles that we're here?"

The man shook his head, "No."

{A lie has been detected}

Without warning, Drake lifted his bow and shot. Moments later, the bird burst into light particles.

{You have slain a scouting bird}

{Mana +1}

Slowly lowering his bow, Drake stared at the three men coldly. "Tell me the plan. Let me give you a fair warning. I can tell when I'm being lied to. It comes with what I am."

The man who owned the bird stared in shock at the spot it had burst into light particles. He swallowed, his eyes glistening with unshed tears. He cared for his scouting bird.

It was the leader who spoke. "The people inside. It's all a ruse. They don't need saving. The gargoyle king is waiting for you. I'm sure he already knows we're back."

"And why would you work with the gargoyles to trap us?" Mike asked angrily. "What do you get out of it?" Mike was angry. It was clear this town was named after his own family. He didn't know how he knew, but he knew his father had the same lightning, storm, and energy powers as he did.

The leader took one step back. He clearly didn't want to answer.

Seeing his step back, Drake held his hand out, filling it with fire. "Either tell us or I burn the city down. Clearly, you're all working with them." Drake wasn't sure if he could actually do that. He needed to scare the man so he would tell them the plan...or at least what exactly their end goal was.

Renn, understanding the issues, stepped toward the leader, her low growls ominous in the dark street. Her eyes glowed brightly, narrowing in anger. She was pissed.

The birdman stood next to his friend, the third man following. "You're going to have to kill us; we won't say anything."

Drake chuckled wickedly. "You think I'm going to kill you? Oh...no...killing is too good for traitors. I don't need to kill you." Drake stepped closer to the man as Chad and Mike prepared for a fight. Drake was less than an inch from the man's face. "First," Drake smirked. Then, quick as a cobra, Drake's hand shot forward, and the fire he was holding slammed into the man's mouth. It burned him from the inside out. The man tried to scream but couldn't. His tongue had been disintegrated, burned away by the magic fire. "If you won't speak, you never will again." Drake's gaze turned to the other two. "Do either of you want to talk?"

The two men ignored him and tried to help their now mute friend, but Renn growled louder, vibrating the ground where they stood.

Out of the three, there were two swordsmen and the birdman who had daggers. Mike saw this, and since this town betrayed him, he was pissed. He moved quickly, without warning, and swung his sword down, slicing hands off with the swing. When he was done, he reversed it, cutting upward, cutting through the remaining hands of all three men. "You can't fight if you don't have hands," Mike stated sarcastically; His dry sense of humor rising to the surface. He had managed to remove their hands in only two strikes.

Blood dripped onto the street as the men fell to their knees in shock.

"Are you going to tell us what the gargoyles want with us, or am I going to have to remove more of you?" Mike asked. His eyes were blazing. "I don't mind removing one piece at a time."

Drake bent down, yanking their blunted, bleeding wrists forward. With one hand, he cauterized the wounds one by one so they wouldn't bleed to death. He still needed to

know what was happening. He couldn't let them die just yet. "What is the purpose of this trap you all set up? He asked, his anger beginning to seethe.

They backed away, knowing what was going to happen. They still refused to speak. Mike came forward, holding the first man still while Drake slammed condensed fire into the man's mouth, turning his tongue to ash.

The second man tried to scream to alert those in the castle, but Mike held his hand over his mouth, preventing him from alerting those inside. Drake formed more fire, then used it on the third and final man. "If you don't want to speak, then you never will again," Drake repeated what he had told the first man.

Letting his eyes glow, he scanned for gargoyles. They were still in the throne room surrounding the humans.

Pulling up the three men, Drake began dragging them toward the castle. Chad and Mike pulled the other two and followed. Renn was following behind, making sure they weren't followed.

The dimension master and his friends watched the boys deal with the men who had betrayed them. It was brutal. He wasn't expecting the boys to go so far. He didn't care, though. This town betrayed its protectors by luring them there for the gargoyles.

He could tell that Drake was trying to force information out of the men who seemed determined not to say anything. He was trying to use scare tactics, but it didn't seem to be working. The young heirs were now hauling the three men into the castle. Drake had burned the other two men's mouths, making it so they couldn't speak either. He didn't want them to go screaming, alerting those inside the throne room that they had entered the castle.

Drake's father could see what his son was doing. Drake was taking the men into the dungeons where they couldn't cause trouble. Renn was following behind, covering their backs. Drake kept his eyes glowing, watching for gargoyles.

"What do you think the gargoyles' goal is?" Chad's father spoke as they watched the boys handle the three traitors.

The dimension master frowned. "It could be one of many reasons. For one, the gargoyles might be trying to get us to intervene, breaking the pact our families have with the dimension. Killing the residents of one of our own towns would break the pact, also. The boys are lucky that they didn't kill the men. There is also the possibility that they are trying to use the boys as bait to get back at us for going into their lair and killing some of them...I don't really know...It could be anything."

Mike's father stood up, staring at the screen as the boys walked away from the dungeons. "Perhaps the dimension refused our request to go help them because it would inadvertently break the pact or get the boys killed. The dimension wants the boys to complete the quest just as much as we want them to."