

## Dimension Master

### Chapter 6: 6: Bandits

The bandits moved around the three friends, spreading out around them. Sinister grins plastered on their faces. Drake eyed the leader, who was looking at Chad. His hungry gaze on Chad's magic bow. It was clear what the man was after.

Drake, knowing they would need to act fast, lifted his hand; his focus was on the leader's chest. It was a wide target, which made it more difficult for the man to dodge. "Fireball!" he shouted. Fire formed in his hand, then shot toward the man. The man dodged the fireball. Instead of hitting him in the chest, it hit his shoulder. The man screamed in pain.

The fire spread. It moved down to his chest and up toward his neck. It was a giant plum of flames opening wide.

Chad shot his arrow and hit another bandit, hitting him in the head, killing him on the spot. The man burst into a cloud of light particles.

Chad turned, searching for his next target, lifting his bow, ready to aim for another.

**{A member of your cohort has killed a level 1 bandit}**

**{You have received mana +1}**

Drake's target was still alive. He knew this; the system hadn't said otherwise. Not to mention, the man was still screaming in pain from the fire.

As the man struggled, he screamed in pain as he tried to take out the fire that was quickly spreading. Drake used the man's distraction as an opportunity to burst forward, using the arrow he held tightly, and he slammed the sharp tip into the man's eye as deep as his meager strength would let him. The man screamed louder. His hand shot up to his face. It was out of instinct. Before the man's hand touched the arrow, Drake quickly grabbed it and yanked, pulling it out. The arrow came out of the man's head, his eyeball still attached to its sharp tip.

Knowing the man was occupied with the spreading fire, Drake turned his attention to another bandit.

Mike shot his bow, the arrow narrowly missing his target, hitting a tree behind him. He immediately notched another arrow. He knew he needed practice. Learning in a real fight to the death was not ideal.

Drake saw one of the bandits heading toward Mike from behind, who was occupied with trying to shoot the man in front of him. Drake lifted his hand. "Fireball!" he shouted. Fire formed in his palm and flew toward the man behind Mike. The man dodged to the side, grinning. With his hand still out, Drake shot another. "Fireball!" This time, the fireball hit its target. The man's head, turning into a torch.

Drake, turning to look at the bandit Leader. He watched as the man burst into light particles. Drake grinned.

**{You have killed a level 2 bandit. You have received a new skill.}**

**{You have received: Level 1 plasma ball}**

**{You have received mana +1}**

As the voice filtered through his mind, the second bandit burst into light particles.

**{You have killed a Level 1 bandit. You have received mana +1}**

Drake, looking over to Mike, who looked pissed. He had already shot three arrows, missing his target with all of them. Pulling the bow to his back, giving up, he football-tackled the man instead. If there was anything he was good at, it was football.

The man slammed against the hard ground, causing his weapons to fall from his hands. Mike started swinging, his fists hitting the man's face repeatedly. Blood splattered up each time Mike's fist made contact with the man's face. Mike was strong. He lifted weights nearly every day.

Finally, when the man fell unconscious, Mike gripped the bandit's head and yanked sideways, breaking the man's neck. The bandit suddenly burst into light particles and vanished. In its place was a shimmering sword.

The floated through Drake's head, not giving much time to remember what was said.

**{A member of your cohort has killed a level 1 Bandit. Your cohort grows stronger.}**

**{A storm sword has been received.}**

**{You have received mana +1}**

**{A member of your cohort has killed a level 1 Bandit. Your cohort grows stronger.}**

**{A storage ring has been received.}**

**{You have received mana +1}**

**{Quest 'defeat the bandits' has been completed: You have received a new skill}**

**{You have received: Level 1 Energy beam}**

Mike picked up the sword, holding it in his hand. "This will do," he grinned. His eyes were glued to the shimmering sword. It was not unlike the look Chad gave his magic bow the moment he saw it.

Drake watched Mike pick up the sword, then turned to Chad. "If you haven't already found it, look for a ring."

Chad circled where the two he killed burst into light particles. On the ground was an obsidian ring. One side of it was flat with a little hinge, indicating that it could open. It looked like a poison ring from the Renaissance era.

He tried to hand it to Drake, who shook his head. "It's rightfully yours since you killed the one who dropped it. According to my system, it's a dimensional storage ring."

This made Mike grin. "You have no problem with me keeping this sword, then?"

"That sword is called 'storm sword,' which means it can do something. If I were you, I would figure out what it can do, so you know how to use it against beasts. The fact that it's a storm sword suggests it has something to do with storms or lightning. It's your sword, so it's something you need to figure out for yourself. For the record, I have no problem with you keeping what drops from your kills."

Mike stared down at the sword he had received, his grin growing wider as he slowly walked to Chad. With one hand, he pulled the bow and quiver off his shoulder and handed them back to their owner.

Drake looked around, seeing the arrows stuck in various trees and on the ground. After retrieving them, he handed them to Chad as well. He still kept the one he had been holding. He was happy to see that the eyeball had vanished with its owner. He refused to give the arrow back. He had skills but no weapons. His mana was low; he knew he would be defenseless if his mana ran out in a fight. "You can put your bow in the storage ring to protect it. I'm not sure how that ring works. You will have to test it out for yourself. If you figure it out, we can store our water bottles in there. They're heavy, and it's a way we won't lose them."

Chad was staring at Drake. He hesitated before speaking. "Did you at least receive anything?" Chad was worried that Drake was left empty-handed.

"Yeah. I received a skill for killing the leader and a skill for completing the quest. I received a Plasma ball skill and an energy beam skill. No weapons. I think I will still

have to be careful how I use my skills, though. It requires mana points, and assuming I counted right. I should have seven mana points. Since I don't have any type of screen or way to see what I have, I have to try to remember everything." Drake paused for a second before continuing. I think we can store our stuff in your ring so we don't have to carry it. Not just the water and your bow. We don't have much, and protecting what we have is important. Do you mind holding our stuff until we find another storage ring?"

Chad opened the small hinged door on the ring. With the intention of putting his bow in, he attempted to put it in. It magically vanished inside. A portal sucking the bow inside the small ring. Doing the same thing in reverse, he took it back out.

"I think I figured it out." He grinned widely. "Yeah, I can store our stuff."

Everything was stored in the storage ring, including their backpacks. Drake looked around the area, seeing if the bandits had dropped anything. The sack that one of them was carrying was sitting next to a tree. All their weapons were gone. Drake picked it up and looked inside.

Inside were two loaves of bread, a wheel of cheese, and what looked like a large amount of beef jerky. He handed the bag to Chad. "Put this in your ring. There is food inside the bag. Bread, cheese, and jerky. Food is valuable to us since it's hard for us to get more of."

Mike looked troubled. "Is it safe?"

Drake thought about it for a bit before he answered. "I think it is. I noticed that all the weapons they were holding vanished. Even the weapons that were dropped by that guy when you tackled him. The only thing that didn't vanish was the bag of food they had with them. I can try to be optimistic and say that this dimension is feeding us on purpose. I can also say that we just got lucky. We may never know which is correct."

"I sure hope that's the case, because it will make it a little easier to survive here until we get home. Everything we kill vanishes, which means we're not able to hunt for meat," Mike grumbled. "If you're wrong, I think we're screwed."

## **Chapter 7: 7: Draco**

With the bandits gone and loot collected, Drake led his friends down the road. Up ahead loomed the giant mountain that looked like a dragon's head.

Although they had been in the game-like dimension for one full day, none of the friends were tired. Being in an unfamiliar dimension, they were on edge. Every shadow made them jump, afraid they would be attacked at any moment.

It was still unclear what would happen if they died in this game-like dimension. Would they die for real, or would they be transported out of the dimension as particles of light and back home? They didn't know, and they were afraid to test it to find out.

As they followed the dirt road toward the mountain, they went around a bend. A small village was seen in the distance. Drake stopped, then looked down at his clothes, a frown on his thin face.

"I wonder if we can blend in. After seeing the bandits, I know we look out of place," Drake commented. Worried that their appearance would cause problems.

The boys stood in the middle of the road. Their eyes were glued to the village. The three boys weren't sure if they should proceed to the town or come up with a plan before they went any further.

"I don't think we have much of a choice. The mountain is on the other side of the village. We need to get to it so we can complete the quest. We could always go around it, but I think there are fewer beasts if we pass through the village," Mike stated, his eyes still on the village up ahead.

Drake looked back at his friends. He had been thinking of the possible reaction of the villagers. Then he remembered the bandits. "I don't think it's going to be a problem. The bandits we fought didn't seem to notice we were dressed differently. We should pass through the village. Maybe we can learn something about this place. There are a lot of people who live in a village. We can gather information while we pass through."

"We need to be careful, though," Mike stated. "We don't know if we will have to fight off the villagers. For all we know, it could be a village infested with goblins or something like that."

Chad and Drake nodded as the group of boys continued slowly toward the small village.

Taking only a couple of steps, loud growls sounded from the side of the road.

Drake stiffened, looking toward the direction of the sound. He was worried about what he might find.

It was one of the wolf beasts. The wolf had a long, thin tail that resembled that of a rat. The glowing yellow orbs of its eyes were fixed on Drake as it slowly stalked forward. Glowing yellow saliva dripped from its long fangs.

"I guess it's time to test out my new skills," Drake smirked.

Holding up his hand, Drake focused on the wolf beast in front of him. "Plasma ball!" he screamed. A ball of green plasma formed in his hand, then shot toward the beast. It

landed in the beast's face, producing a burst of green light. There was little to no effect of the beast. "Damn it," he grumbled. "Nothing!"

Mike pulled out his new sword, ready to defend his friend. He wanted to test out his sword's skills, too. Chad had his bow raised; he was preparing to shoot.

"Don't shoot unless you have to," Drake shouted to his friend. "I want to try to kill this thing myself," he added as he lifted his hand again. "Energy Beam!" he yelled, focusing on the beast. A long beam of green energy shot from his hand, hitting the beast.

The beast screamed in pain. Blood dripped from the beast's head. The beast growled louder, its yellow eyes narrowed in anger. It leaped toward Drake, its claws extending.

Drake rolled out of the way, narrowly avoiding the beast.

The beast turned quickly, focusing again on Drake. Leaned back, then it prepared to pounce.

Drake extended his hand once again. "Fireball!" Drake yelled, using his final skill. The fire hit the beast, flames exploding. Flames burst around the beast, causing small explosions each time the hot flames touched the glowing yellow fur that traveled along the beast's body.

The beast roared. It leaped again, claws extended; it trailed flames behind it as it leaped toward Drake.

"Energy Beam!" he yelled, aiming another beam at the beast's head. The wolf was only a foot away.

The energy beam mixed with the fire, turning it green, and ignited an explosion of green flames and light. The beast's head exploded. Bursting into a cloud of energy particles, the beast vanished. There was a pile of green fabric in its place.

A soft voice floated through Drake's head.

**{You have slain a Level 1 Beast}**

**{You have received "mage robe"}**

**{Manna +1}**

Drake grinned widely before picking up the soft green fabric. This was the first time he received something that wasn't a skill.

Chad lowered his bow, Mike replacing his sword. They waited for Drake to explain what the fabric was. It was lumped in a pile. A band of leather was attached. Etchings of

vines and runes could be seen. There was a shining clasp attached that glistened in the light of the twin suns. The intricate detail made the two boys curious about what Drake had received.

Drake shook the fabric out, then slid the robe over his head. There was a belt attached that he clasped closed. He looked down at himself, inspecting his new robe before looking at his friends. "I got a mage robe," He smiled. "I can only guess I got it for killing the beast with my skills. It makes sense; they kind of look like magic to me. I didn't even use that arrow as a weapon like last time." He looked over at Mike. "I think you should try to kill the next beast so you can figure out your sword's skills. We can back you up. We won't intervene unless we have to."

Mike nodded, liking this idea. He was itching to try his magical sword out. "That's okay with me," he said, grinning widely. His hand was resting on the hilt.

Chad looked between his friends, studying their attire. His eyes rested on Drake. "At least one of us looks like we belong here. I'm hoping the people in the village don't notice that two of us look out of place." He paused for a second, then continued. "I had another thought. What if we need gold or coins of some kind? We haven't received anything like that yet."

Mike shrugged, "Maybe we have to sell something we receive when we fight beasts. Right now, though. Everything we received so far, we need."

The other two boys nodded in agreement.

"We should also figure out how and where to make camp. It's going to get dark soon. We don't have coins for an inn, if that's needed. The place we find needs to be safe. We don't want to be attacked by beasts while we sleep," Chad stated. It was clear he had been worrying about somewhere to rest for a while now.

Drake gritted his teeth; he didn't know how he could have forgotten that they needed to find a place to camp. "Great, just another problem to add to the list." His tone was sarcastic, similar to Mike's when he had commented on the current problems.

Continuing down the dirt road to the village, Drake thought about what Mike had said. There was always some random treasure dropped or found in his games. It was usually in the form of coins or jewels. Treasure was either dropped by his foes or found throughout the landscape of the game. He hadn't gotten any yet. None had been dropped with the beasts or the bandits, and they hadn't found any random chests of gold anywhere. What if they needed coins to stay at an inn somewhere? That would be the safest choice. They didn't have anything yet that they could sell.

Thinking about it further, he figured that Mike could be right. If they needed coins, they would have to sell something that they received while slaying beasts, assuming they found something that they didn't actually need too badly not to sell it. There was a large



possibility that they would have to hunt beasts intentionally to gather items to sell. They would deal with that issue after they determined coins were required in this place. He didn't want to sell anything if there was no reason for it.

After a while, they entered the town, and a small sign declared that it was the town of Draco. They stopped at the sign, staring at it for a moment.

"Fitting," Drake laughed. "I guess if you have a town near a mountain that looks like the head of a dragon, you call the town Draco."

## **Chapter 8: 8: Unexpected Hospitality**

The boys stepped into Draco town with Drake in the lead. They had only stopped after a few steps to take in the village. A soft breeze blew gently around them, causing dried leaves to flutter.

The small town was filled with villagers going about their business. They all looked to be in a rush. Drake and his friends were on the main street. The dirt was packed firmly from constant use.

Drake smiled faintly. "We haven't been noticed yet. Let's pass through as quickly as we can."

The boys nodded as they began to walk down the packed dirt road.

They were strolling through the main street and taking in the sights around them. There were citizens everywhere going in and out of shops, and sitting on long benches by the doors of establishments. The street was filled with villagers walking up and down the road as they rushed to their destination.

Finally, noticing the boys walking down the main street, all the citizens who were out and about turned to the newcomers as they passed; their eyes fixed on Drake's intricately designed robes. Most were giving slight bows of respect.

"Why is everyone staring at me?" Drake whispers so that only his friends can hear. "I don't understand what's going on."

Mike and Chad shrugged, not knowing what was going on either. This dimension was like a game. It could be anything.

The twin suns were beginning to set. The villagers would glance up in worry. It was clear that these people were afraid of nightfall. Drake didn't know why. He wondered what would happen when the twin suns fell and it was night. The way the villagers kept looking at the darkening sky worried Drake.



Drake looked around him; everyone was watching him, their eyes gleaming with excitement and reverence. They seemed to ignore his two friends who stood beside him. All their attention was on him.

A short, fat man came out of a large building and was now rushing down the street. Those in his way quickly moved to the side. He was heading straight for Drake. The man resembled someone's grandpa, with grey hair and a scruffy beard. He looked to be in his late sixties. His five-foot-tall stature and round belly gave him a jolly appearance.

The little man waved the villagers away, saying something to them that Drake couldn't hear. Whatever he had said caused the villagers to rush to leave. Their gazes kept going to the horizon as they went.

Stopping only a couple of feet in front of Drake, the man's smile widened before he bowed deeply.

Drake studied the man for a moment. The silence stretched as Drake tried to think of what to say or do. People didn't bow to each other where he was from. This was like a role-playing game. What would the person he seemed to be playing say to this little fat man?

The decision was taken from him as the fat man, uncomfortable with the silence, his smile faltering, spoke. "I am Ivan Scuttle, the mayor of this town. We are delighted to have you here, Master."

Drake stiffened slightly at the man's words. "Master?" he asked in confusion.

Behind him, Chad and Mike looked at each other, flabbergasted at what the man was calling Drake.

"My name is Drake, not Master," Drake continued, as the little fat man looked confused, his smile faltering a tad more.

The man nodded. "Yes, yes, Master Drake, we know who you are. Our town was named after you, after all. This is Draco Town, named after the great dimension master, Master Drake."

"I thought the Draco town was named after that," Mike stated, pointing to the large dragon head mountain.

Chad stood beside his friends, watching the little man intently.

The little man chuckled, "Yes, yes... that was a happy coincidence," he said, looking at Mike. The man turned back to Drake. "We have been expecting you. I had a room prepared for you and your companions, Master," the man beamed. He was clearly

proud of his planning and preparation. "We knew you would arrive here late, so we made our preparations."

Chad frowned, Mike had his mouth open in shock, and Drake stood tall, his emerald gaze piercing the man. Drake had something to say to the man, and didn't know how to say it. Sighing to himself, he finally spoke.

"You may have been prepared, but we are not; we did not bring coin," Drake stated, his gaze not wavering. "We do not have the means to pay. We are also unaware of how you were able to know of our arrival."

The man looked relieved, which made the boys even more confused.

The man turned, motioning for them to follow. "Come, come. The inn is this way. A meal will be served for supper and one more for breakfast. It's getting late, and it will soon be dark. It's too dangerous after dark," he chuckled. Then, covering his unease, he coughed as his eyes swiftly glanced up at the darkening sky. "If you need additional men to scale the mountain, we can provide them. The innkeeper will supply you with anything you need for your journey."

Drake looked back at Mike and Chad. Mike mouthed, 'What the hell is going on?'

Drake just shrugged, confused.

When they reached the inn, it was cozy. A warm glow came from the fireplace. A short woman was spreading out a meal on a small table. Four places were being set. The woman stopped what she was doing, seeing the mayor and the three boys enter. She looked at Drake and smiled, bowing deeply.

"I am the innkeeper, Mary. Your rooms are ready," she beamed, then pointed at the meal. "I know you have just arrived, but our mayor wishes to speak with you. I will show you to your rooms after supper."

Drake bowed slightly, then nodded, acknowledging her words, and then led his friends to the table. As Mary quickly finished preparing the table before disappearing into the kitchen, Drake and his friends sat down.

"So," Drake began as he filled his plate. "How did you know of our arrival?" He placed his elbows on the table, staring at the mayor. His emerald eyes narrowed. "And how do you know my name?"

The other two boys were wondering the same thing. They stopped filling their own plates and looked over at Ivan.

The mayor, taking a bite of a chicken leg, grinned. Grease dripping from his scruffy beard. The man set the leg back on the plate, wiping his face quickly before looking at

Drake. "We knew you were coming because the previous Dimension Master told us his heir was arriving soon. He told us that when the portal opens, he will arrive that same night. Since we felt the portal open, we knew you had arrived."

Chad and Mike didn't say anything; they just watched the conversation between Drake and Mayor Ivan.

Drake frowned. "Who is the previous Dimension Master?" he asked, still watching the old man.

Ivan grinned. "I'm sorry, sir. Strict orders have been given to us not to reveal that information to you. We were told that it would distract you from your quest. He did leave you some things to help you, though. They are in your rooms."

Chad looked at the mayor, his eyes narrowed. He didn't say anything.

Mike crossed his arms. "What did the previous Dimension Master leave for Drake?"

Mayor Ivan looked between the three boys, then smiled. "I have no idea. He left everything in a box that only the Dimension Master's heir can open.

Drake frowned, thinking. As he listed what he knew in his head, the others ate their meal.

'We end up in a dimension that is identical to the I just game. We're in a town that knows my name and is giving me the title of heir of the dimension master. There is a box that only the heir can open that the current dimension master left for me. They seem to know I have a quest that requires me to scale the mountain. The town we're in is supposedly named after me, and no one will tell me who I am the heir of. And last, what is going to happen when it gets dark out?'

"Hey Drake," Mike asked, bringing Drake out of his thoughts.

Drake looked between his two friends. The mayor was stuffing his face with mashed potatoes, the gravy dripping everywhere.

"Yeah?" Drake responded, taking a bite of his own meal. He found the food was delicious.

Mike just chuckled. "You zoned out. I was trying to bring you back without snapping my fingers in front of your face. I didn't want to seem rude."

After taking another bite, he looked over at Ivan. "What can you tell us to help us? We are new to this dimension, so we know nothing."

Ivan wiped the gravy from his beard before he spoke. "I can't really tell you anything except to warn you about being out at night. You should be fine after your quest. During the day, it's much safer."

"You can't tell us more than that?" Mike asked.

Ivan shook his head, picking up another chicken leg. "We have orders. We are forbidden to tell you anything further."

## **Chapter 9: 9: Special Gift**

Drake sat on his bed in his room in the inn. His friends were sitting on a small, tattered sofa in front of him. There was a small box in his hand. It was the box that was left for him by the unknown Dimension Master. He caressed the soft leather, wondering how something so small could help him.

As if Mike was reading his thoughts, he leaned forward, eyeing Drake. "How can there be something in that box to help you?" Mike asked. "It's too small to hold anything."

Chad was twirling his dimensional storage ring around his finger. His thought was perhaps that the small box was something similar to his ring. Although he thought it, he didn't say anything. He was waiting to see what the small box was after Drake opened it.

Drake shrugged. "I don't know... Hey, I want to see if it's true that only I can open it," Drake said, handing the box to Mike.

Mike took the box and tried to open it. His large hands were gripping the box tightly. Nothing happened. Using all his strength, he tried again to pull the small lid open, but still, nothing happened. Frowning, he handed the box to Chad, letting him try.

Chad tried to open the box. His slim fingers cradled the box as he attempted to pull it open. It was as if the lid was glued on with a strong adhesive. Shrugging, he handed the box back to Drake.

Drake took the box and easily opened the lid, making Chad and Mike frown. Inside the box was a wrist cuff sitting on electric green velvet; the same color as his energy beam and plasma balls. It looked like a wide, thick bracelet.

Drake looked between his two friends. How can this help?" he asked, baffled. The cuff was four inches wide and made of a slick, dark metal. If placed on his wrist, it would stretch from his wrist and cover a wide portion of his forearm.

"Maybe it's some sort of armer to protect your forearm?" Chad offered.

Sighing, Drake put the cuff on his left wrist. His dominant hand was his right, so it was instinct to put it on the opposite side. As soon as he did, the cuff magically adjusted to the correct size, and a soft voice floated through his head.

**{You have received a Dimension Master Storage cuff}**

**{You have received a skill}**

**{You have received sweep storage}**

Drake smiled, then studied the cuff after receiving the messages. He noticed an ink etching of a book inside the top of the cuff. Using his instinct, he swept his hand with the intention of taking out the book. The book inside the cuff materialized in his hand. The etching was no longer in the cuff. Drake's grin widened, then he looked up at his friends. "I think I can use this."

When he opened the book, he found it had several pages filled with items. He didn't just get a magical cuff and skill. It's just that the other items were stored in the book. Sweeping his hand again, he took out the first item in the book. It was a little leather pouch that matched the belt of his robes. Loops in the back were present. He could easily slide it on his belt if he wanted to. Opening the pouch, he found it was filled with gold, silver, and brass coins. None of them were from the real world. This told him that they now had coins to use in this dimension.

Drake set the book on the bed and used his hand to sweep the pouch back into the book. Disappearing, the pouch materialized back in the book.

Chad and Mike just watched, their eyes wide as they saw what their friend was doing. Neither could believe what they were witnessing.

Drake took the book out again, then swept the small box into the book, storing it. He didn't want to lose it.

"I figured it out," Drake told his friends. "It's called a Dimension Master storage cuff, and as soon as I put it on, I received a skill. The skill is called sweep storage. Just from the little experiment I did, I can store things in the book and the book in the cuff," he explained. "The first few pages already have items in them. The first thing I pulled out: the pouch. It was filled with coins. At least one of our problems has been solved. We don't have to sell anything. I don't want to use the coins unless we have to, until we figure out how to earn more. Basically, I don't want to waste them."

"That is so cool!" Mike grinned. "I never thought I would see magic...real magic."

Chad nodded, agreeing. "So what's the plan for tomorrow?" he asked changing the subject. He knew they would need to be up early.

Drake thought about it for a second. "Well, we need to head to that mountain as soon as possible. If it's as dangerous at night as Ivan said it is, we need to get there as soon as we can and find a safe place to camp in case we have to sleep out there for the night. I'm hoping we can find that cave and finish the quest and be back here before it gets dark, though. Did you notice how nervous everyone was when it started getting dark?"

Both boys nodded. They, too, had noticed the villagers' reactions. They kept looking up at the sky while they rushed to get inside.

"It's getting really late, and the innkeeper, Mary, said that breakfast is early. If breakfast is as good as dinner, then I don't want to miss it," Mike stated, as he got up, yawning loudly. "Besides, the faster we get out of here in the morning, the faster we can finish this quest and get home."

Chad stood up and stretched. "Mike and I found sets of clothes in our rooms laid out for us. There was regular clothes and a long nightshirt to sleep in. She said we could take them with us when we leave. Mary told us that the Dimension Master left them for us and that they should fit us. It's late, I'm going to wash up and go to bed."

Mike nodded in agreement. "Yeah, me too. I have a feeling it's going to be a long day tomorrow."

Drake watched his friends disappear from his room. Each boy was given a separate room that was next to the other. He knew they all needed sleep, but he couldn't. He wanted to check out what else was stored in the book.

He didn't tell his friends, but there was a set of clothes on the bed for him, too; it was meant to go under his robes or in place of them. The reaction he received when they came into town made him believe that it was possibly a better idea to keep his robes visible.

After washing up and changing into the nightshirt he was given, he took the book out of the cuff and started to study each page.

The first page had the coin pouch. He decided to keep it inside the page. Highway robbers couldn't get to it if it were stored in the book. The second had a bow similar to Chad's. Pulling it out, he gently pulled the string. The bow worked the same way, only the color of the energy arrows was different. Chad's bow produced white energy, Drake's produced green. Aside from his fireball skill, all his skills produced something green.

After putting the magic bow back, he inspected each page one by one. The pages contained sets of leather armor for each of them. The intricate carved patterns on the breastplate of each set of armor easily identified who owned them. Chad's had arrows and beautiful vines while Mike's had lightning bolts, swirling patterns, and claw marks. Drake's had the same vines and runes as his robes.

As Drake studied each page, his smile grew. There were indeed plenty of items to help them on their quest. What shocked him the most was the cabin on the last page. After the cabin was a green ribbon that was placed where the first empty page was located. He couldn't take the cabin out to check it out, but he saw an entire cabin nestled inside the page. There was even a large woodpile, stacked up, covering one entire outer wall.

Drake smiled. "It looks like we have a safe place to rest each night." He knew he needed to start thinking outside the box. The rules in this dimension did not apply to the real world. Magic here was real, and he was able to use it. He needed to remember that.

After putting the book back in his cuff, he yawned again and got ready for bed. He fell asleep quickly. His last thoughts were that yes, everything they needed was indeed inside the book.

## **Chapter 10: 10: Dangers Ahead**

Mike and Chad were already at the small table when Drake arrived for breakfast. The smell of bacon and eggs pulled him to the small table where his friends were waiting.

Ivan was sitting with them, gorging himself on a tall stack of pancakes, a thick, glossy syrup dripping from the fat man's scruffy beard. When Drake sat down, the man grinned, giving a short bow to show his respect.

The innkeeper, Mary, quickly brought out a plate filled with eggs, bacon, and pancakes. A little crock filled with maple syrup was set beside it.

Drake looked up at the innkeeper, smiling, and then thanked her before starting his own meal.

"I already packed everything for us," Mike informed Drake. "Mary gave us a large supply of food and water and a tent. We can leave whenever you're ready."

Chad nodded, stuffing his mouth with food. His cheeks filled, making him resemble a chipmunk. He was enjoying the innkeeper's cooking. His mom never cooked at home, so he was taking advantage of a home-cooked meal.

Mike continued. "Ivan here, says we can take some men with us to help us scale the mountain and to help protect us from the beasts. It's supposed to be dangerous on the road to Dragon Head Mountain. That's its name, by the way. Fitting right?" he said, grinning widely.

Drake nodded to his friend, then turned to the mayor. "We need to get to a cave. It's called 'the cave of valor.' Is there any chance you have a map that can point us in the right direction?"



Ivan thought about it for a moment, a puzzled expression on his chubby face. It was clear by looking at him that he had never even heard of it. Drake's suspicions were confirmed when the man began to speak. "I don't think I have ever heard of that cave. It's not on any of our maps."

Drake frowned. If the mayor didn't know about the cave of valor, maybe it was something that the average person wasn't supposed to know about. It might be one of those things that only those on the quest were supposed to know.

Sighing heavily, Drake put his fork on the table. "We don't need men. We need a map of the area. It needs to include the mountain and the area surrounding it. We also need as much information as you can give us on the dangers on and around Dragon Head Mountain. And lastly, we need to know what to expect when it gets dark."

Ivan scratched his beard. "We don't have a map. As for the dangers, there are beasts and bandits all along the road. During the day, there are usually only Level One beasts, but the closer you get to the mountain, the stronger the beasts become."

"Are there any relatively safe places to stay for the night on the way to the mountain?" Drake asked, still trying to figure out how to get to their destination safely.

While Ivan appeared to be thinking, Drake continued to eat his breakfast.

Wiping his scruffy beard, Ivan cleared his throat. "There are several small clearings on the way. It would be a good place to sleep for the night. You should know that it will take several days to get to the base of the mountain. Once you get there, there should be a trail that leads onto the mountain, but stops after only a few feet. No one has ever scaled the mountain that we are aware of, so there is no trail that we know of that is on the mountain itself," Ivan explained. "As for what to expect at night, you have to worry about the monsters that hunt at night. They aren't beasts, and they only come out at night. During the day, the monsters turn to stone. At night, they hunt. You have to be wary of the sky because they fly."

"So, these monsters are what everyone is afraid of at night?" Drake asked. He was trying to confirm that the danger at night was these monsters and not something else entirely.

Ivan shivered, "Yes, it is the danger we face at night. Our entire town goes inside as soon as the sky is dark; before it's dark, really."

Mike and Chad looked at each other, then at Ivan. "Ivan, if there isn't just one of those monsters, how many of these things are we talking about?" Mike asked.

Ivan paused from eating his meal. "There's a whole tribe of them. It's hard to say how many of them come to our town to hunt. I can't even guess a number."

There was silence for a while as they ate. Only the sound of scraping plates and chewing could be heard. Something was bugging Drake, but he was unsure what it was. In the end, it was Chad who realized what was off.

"You go inside at night to get away from the monsters, right? How is it that they don't break down the doors to get in? What's keeping them from doing that?" Chad asked.

Both Mike and Drake nodded. This was exactly what was bugging Drake. He just hadn't pinpointed what was bugging him until Chad asked the question.

Ivan pulled on his beard. "The monsters can't enter homes without being invited."

Mike scrunched his face up. "Are they vampires?" he asked. "Do they drink blood?" In their world, there was plenty of lore about vampires. As far as anyone knew, it was just a fantasy. Being in this magical dimension showed the boys that there was a possibility that they might be real, along with other fantasy creatures. One of the points in all the literature on vampires was that they couldn't enter a home uninvited.

Shrugging, Ivan pulled roughly on his beard. It was clear he was uncomfortable. "I don't know what a vampire is, but these monsters don't drink blood. As far as we can guess, they eat flesh. That's why they come to town. They hunt villagers who didn't get inside fast enough."

Drake knew of no other creatures in all of his games or fantasy literature that spoke of creatures that required to be invited. In everything he read, they didn't turn to stone during the day either. Only gargoyles did that. Nothing said that they had to be invited, though.

Chad was frowning; he seemingly lost his appetite. "What about tents? Do they count? If we bring a tent, will they be able to enter?"

Ivan sighed. "No, they can't enter. However, tents are made from fabric or beast skins. They can easily force you out. Wood and brick are different. For some reason, these monsters won't touch either."

"That's good to know," Drake said, then suddenly took another bite, a small smile appearing as he thought about the last page in his storage book. It was a perfectly solid cabin. All he had to do was be fast enough to bring it out, and for the three of them to enter it to be safe from the monsters.

Drake's friends turned to him, seeing the smile. Both stared at him, baffled. Drake didn't seem worried about these monsters. Mary had given them a tent along with their food supplies. If tents weren't safe, they had an extremely dangerous journey ahead of them.

Drake, sensing the two boys staring at him, smiled up at them. Shrugging, he ate another bite before he spoke. "I think we'll be fine. We just need to get inside before it gets dark."

"In a tent that can easily be destroyed?" Mike asked. His anger rose with each word. "How are we going to survive on the way to a mountain that's going to take three days to get to just the base. That's not even counting the time it's going to take to scale the damn thing!"

Chad was nodding vigorously at Mike's words.

The door of the inn suddenly slammed open, and a boy who looked to be around the age of ten rushed in, his small feet pounding on the wood floor as he raced toward Ivan. After stopping at the mayor, the boy wheezed, trying to catch his breath. "Sir, Nana needs you. It's an emergency."

The mayor stood. "This may take a while," he stated, then bowed to Drake.

After he and the boy disappeared from the inn, Drake turned to his friends. "Don't worry, we'll be fine when it gets dark." He held up his arm for them to see the cuff on his forearm. "There's something in here that will help us. Trust me," he grinned.

Mike looked at Drake, deadpan. "Coins aren't going to save us."

Chad was nodding in agreement.

Smiling, Drake took the book out of his cuff, found the green ribbon, and then opened it to the appropriate page. He turned the book around so that his friends could see what was inside. Pressing his finger to his lips, he gestured for his friends not to speak, revealing what they were seeing.

After the boys got a good look at the cabin, Drake replaced the book in his cuff and casually finished his breakfast. There was a smug smirk on his face.

Both his friends were in shock. Chad couldn't hold his tongue any longer. "How did that fit on the page?" he asked in disbelief.

Drake's smile grew. "Magic," was all he said.

After their meal, the three boys said their goodbyes to the innkeeper, Mary, and then headed out to bid farewell to the mayor. They figured it would be inconsiderate if they left Draco Town without saying their goodbyes to their host. Especially after Ivan gave them a place to sleep and gave them information about what they would find on their journey.

Passing one of the villagers, Drake asked where he could find the town's mayor. After being pointed in the correct direction, the boys went to say their farewells to Ivan.