

Master 2811

Chapter 2811: Undead or Monsters...

"Sometimes I wonder what is going through both of your heads." Walker was shaking his head wondering why Onyx and Midnight had dragged a stone to them when they had gotten it from a pile of them.

Small vines and even saplings grew from between piles of collapsed rocks. There were even a few wild thorn rose bushes growing all around some of the larger boulders that had once been a part of this tower. Nature had taken back the area but the stones still lasted and would take quite a few years to break down enough to be called part of nature again still.

'Remnant of the stalwart earth tower

This is a ruin of the stalwart magic tower. It was a prime home of the various forms of earth mages in ancient times. Well known for being the home of those who trapped the ravager ant tide, they also were known for their various uses of earth magic to create a safe haven for the frosted oak mages when their tower was overrun.

This ruin holds various remnants of research and even the remains of ancient mages. It is still guarded by those mages in various forms of magic and undead due to their incredible attachment to survival and protection of their home.

This tower was destroyed by the wandering mountain shell elephant on a rampage...'

"This is the second time we have your appraisal mentioning the ravager ants, should we keep everyone informed?" Walker nodded to Su, if there was a dangerous colony of monsters with the name ravager it couldn't mean anything good. Even if they were extinct now, it was better to play it safe than sorry later. If there was a later for everyone.

"Mela, this is your turn again. You and Onyx are doing the scouting. Midnight and Walker will be moving the stones over there. Your dolls can fit in the cracks and figure out how much of the underground is left intact, right?" Mela looked at Walker but he just shrugged. Gil was right on the nose with what needed to happen.

However, she was somewhat scared when she saw Midnight take her full dragon form. The size and pressure around her was much greater than before. The cute antics now seemed to be a mask for the power of a proper true dragon champion before her eyes.

"Don't worry. Midnight is still our cute little sister. She can fight and likes to do so a lot. She also likes sweet snacks and playing with the younger hatchlings and children. She might not chat a lot because she prefers to watch and learn, but she is family and you are part of Genesis, you are someone she would protect without hesitation."

A few calm words calmed Mela before she released her threads and her small mouse dolls again. They darted off exploring cracks and crevices, searching for what may or may not be under the ground they currently stood on.

Everyone had caught on that what they were seeing was just the ruins of what had been the tower above the ground. However, what would make some naturally powerful earth mages with unique and efficient uses of earth magic a force that stood out from others? A force who could save and protect others in a place where everyone was fighting to survive on a daily basis?

They had found ways to use their magic to be able to protect their home, not just in the fact that they could make underground spaces that had dense stones able to keep out the monsters for the most part, but they made it lasting. Through generations of monsters fighting.

That was their key here. If anyone had protected the remains of what lay in their research areas or even materials they gathered, the earth mages of this ancient time would be the best possibility.

Now, Walker and the others understood there was a massive risk here. Not just in monsters which might have moved in to these areas underground, but primarily in the fact that the all around appraisal had warned of undead within these ruins.

Undead were not new to the party, but they were a risk that would come with a lot of danger for the guards and scouting groups moving to meet the party and sit where they could. This was also putting aside the monsters that might be dormant and awakening because of the world returning to the proper flow.

For all Walker knew, a larger portion of this continent had been the same as around Genesis. Shrunken due to the restrictions of space and unbalanced elemental manas.

While this was still hard to grasp in terms of the general public, it had been a point of repair since roads had been broken and needed expansion around Genesis. Yet, it was also a grand opportunity that allowed for the dungeons to return to the world along with monsters. Plants, and even elemental spirits to return properly.

The only issue was that manas could become unbalanced and even chaotic which led to issues needing experts with control over natural mana or balancing skills to ensure that everyone was repaired and working as it should be. If these things were occurring in this massive continent both above the water and below, it would present a greater risk of danger for anyone coming here.

This reinforced the need to understand ancient era existences while also pushing to have some form of mapping, monitoring, and exploration in this massive wilderness. If chaotic manas or corruption ran rampant, then it would present an illness to the very land itself without healing being available if left too long without repair.

"I can help appease any undead within these ruins." It wasn't surprising that alcie spoke up. Using her songs and light mana would be the best way to help remove the undead within the ruins. However, Walker also didn't want to risk losing anything associated with them.

"These are undead mages and craftsmen. We might cause damage to the items they still carry or cause damage to any rune formations or magic they are attached to. I want to try and capture them if they appear to be intricately connected to the ruins."

The perspective surprised everyone since Walker was the only one who had considered this. "They had a lot of magic and advanced skills we don't have because we do not have to fight constantly to survive. They did and it caused them to advance in very unique and potent ways. They did not have a choice but to advance or perish. They would most likely be the supreme power in the world if the elemental planes had not been cut off from the world causing the ancient monsters to run berserk."

Not many of Walker's party, let alone the leaders of Genesis, had taken this in to consideration. That this continent had a risk they could far outweigh the benefits if not treated properly. Not that he would breed panic by saying so. He would make sure he put everything he had to guide it to the best possible future for everyone.

The slight spark in his eyes was more than just his desires being realized. It was the flicker of time mana resonating even more with him while Walker subconsciously looked at the potential of these ruins and the effects they would have on the people.

"One of the dolls was destroyed." A single thread was pulled back frayed and with bits of wooden splinters on it. Mela also seemed to have some tears in her eyes since she had been deeply connected to the small mouse doll before it was crushed.

"So there are monsters or undead?"

"Undead. It used something to move the rocks in the hallways and smash everything." Mela seemed even more unsettled as the rest of the mice dolls were pulled back.

"So we have some traps controlled by ancient undead earth mages. That sounds super safe. When do we go inside?"

"Really Gil? You just want to rush in?" The lecture that Gil was about to receive from Su was stopped as Midnight started to move some of the larger rocks and ruined boulders. She didn't hesitate to use her size to make space for everyone to enter. They knew the way and there would be an established camp as soon as the first three squads of guards got here.

Why should they hesitate when they were the best equipped to handle the threats within the ruined earth magic tower?

"Brother, sister and I will take the lead if you do not want to come just yet. Gil and Su can argue here without us." Everyone stopped and began laughing as they realized that Midnight and Onyx had lost patience. They wanted to explore and that was what they would be doing!

Chapter 2812 Dangerous Undergrounds

Before the pair had fully cleared the way, Walker sensed the arrival of a few guard squads. He had a few papers with them detailing other landmarks being found by scouts and a small report from those exploring the islands and the underwater.

"They found underwater volcanic vents. So there is magma under the water on the bottom of the ocean, it's just not dangerous enough to poison the water or heat it too much to be unlivable. But the larger island and the smaller islands near it are not safe for the merfolk to set down some roots."

It was technically bad news, however, it was also partially some good news in Walker's opinion.

Just knowing that the magma was still flowing in this underwater mountain range turned island proved enough to him that they would need to always have a close eye on this area. If there was any volcanic activity, the entire area could change. They had already been present for similar events where islands collapsed or grew due to these sorts of natural happenings.

Besides this, he also saw that the notes sent to him referenced that there was a high density of monsters living around the volcanic vents. Since the water was not poisoned by them and the water was not devastatingly hot, these monsters were in high numbers. The ecosystem created would provide a valuable food source.

Besides just food, the materials harvested from monsters could prove even more valuable as the merfolk tried to make their home in these waters. Yet, it also added to the fact that they would need to travel from water to shore more often so that they could trade. Making the desire of some Genesis leaders to establish a city here one day even more popular if Walker were to speak out now.

He just didn't want to push that forward since he knew that it would change the wilderness here. Preserving it as a place where people could explore and hunt forever would be more valuable. But it was a long run versus what was working now battle.

The second city that Genesis was building was producing jobs and a consistent need for materials through all the systems Genesis created for its people and growth. Simply put, it was expansion that fueled the creativity and growth of skill. If this was lost in some way, then what would happen?

Stagnation?

That was the argument set forth by some and it was not hard to accept that as a justified belief for the future. Yet, what everyone should focus a bit more on was what would happen if every land was hunted and controlled like the Genesis territories.

Would there be monsters left that couldn't be tamed or kept on farms? What about the herbs that couldn't grow anywhere but specific environments out in the wilderness that were impossible to replicate or nearly impossible to achieve overall?

The argument had happened and not reached a full conclusion just yet. Walker just had to dwell on it for a longer time as he gathered information about the new lands.

"Sir, before we set a more solid camp, we should let you know that they have also found remnants of what we believe to be a dark affinity magic tower. It is a cavern with clear evidence that stone was built up to block the cavern. There is a dense amount of black and purple coral growing there and it can not be approached since the coral has venomous barbs on it."

Raising his eyebrows and realizing that another ruined tower had been found Walker tried to understand how exploring a place like that would go. "It might not be accessible for a long time. If a coral started growing there and feeding off the remnant mana, then it could be through the entirety of that cavern. It's too dangerous to risk until we have countermeasures. If it is flooded, there may not be anything left we can utilize. It has a lower priority."

The guard captain nodded and sent off one of his assistants to send a message through communication crystals. They would make sure that no one took unnecessary risks exploring such a place.

This did make Walker think even more.

"All guard captains!" The sudden announcement halted the recently arrived squads who began making a camp. Some were adventurers and they were prepared to explore right now if they hadn't been stopped.

"We are entering these ruins, teams of three to five should follow behind. Others should scout the area and beware of any evidence of sealed places. We know for certain that the ancient mages of this tower survived and thrived by sealing away certain monsters while assisting others trying to survive in this land. They were powerful and their enemies were also powerful."

One of the focuses on everything Walker said related to the sealed monsters that these mages might have left behind. Everyone knew full well that some of the dormant eggs and monsters in general could be awakened under the right circumstances. If people were not mindful... it was better not to think about it.

"Teams that follow us, be aware we are handling undead mages from ancient times. There appear to be traps set utilizing potent earth magic that they can also use. They may not have proper intelligence, but they can attack with the desire to crush and kill intruders." A small pause as Walker used his buffing

skills on everyone present. "They survived tooth and nail in their lives, no in their death they are still trying to survive. Everything should be an enemy to them."

The atmosphere changed even for those who were not entering the ruin. They all understood that Walker was serious because there was a real threat here. Enough to cause problems for everyone and not just the party who were taking the lead.

As if to reinforce this, the airflow from the opened ruins to enter the underground let out the ancient scent of decay and dry bones. It made everyone grasp the fact that they were more or less wandering in to a crypt instead of an established magical tower with the knowledge they needed to hunt down.

Turning away, Walker told Mela to remain here, she had already lost one of her scouting mouse dolls and he knew that it took a toll on her. She was still too inexperienced and weak to manage a fight against something like an ancient undead. She also needed to see what the guards did and how she could grow in her own way. It was better to take it slow. What she has seen from the party this far should be enough to guide her path at the start.

The party moved forward in their usual formation, but Alice was already humming a tune softly allowing the light to encompass everyone slightly. It was resonating with a few light ball spells that Walker created to light the area better.

It was one of the reasons that the scent of decay has somewhat lessened. It was also the very reason they could see that the dusty walls were covered in some spiderwebs hiding carvings. The intricate designs were some forms of rune formations too degraded to be used. But the walls themselves were solid enough that cave ins might not be an issue at all.

This made Walker even more interested in how the ancient earth mages could craft and condense walls so well making literal stone alloys. Things that didn't seem possible even though he had seen the appraisal of the stones they already found.

Some of the spider webs seemed to be old and falling apart, but what Walker noticed were the few here and there that appeared to be newer. Like a spider had walked through here leaving threads behind so that it could sense if anything changed. Like a monster patrolling territory but never finding anything different in its habitual movements.

This wasn't just noticed by him, Gil was taking a lot of focus on the threads since he knew all too well that if certain threads of spider silk were pulled at that the spider responsible for laying them there might notice they are touched. It was basically an alarm system.

Regardless, if there was a monster like that here, it could be handled. The danger they faced was that they had just entered in to a small chamber completely empty except for the dust and spider webs that had seven different tunnels leading away. All were holding up well and didn't have a sign that anything else was down them other than more mystery.

"I sense undead mana but I can't say it's just from one place. All the mana here has been stagnant because it sat too long. We will have to move slowly and mark where we are traveling."

Chapter 2813 Stop The Walls

Since Walker was the only one who could sense undead mana, it made it hard to get through the fact that he sensed it everywhere. It either meant that there were a lot of undead here or that the undead moved and spread the mana they radiated all around these ruins.

With the quality of the walls and the area itself, there were a lot of clear passages to move from what the party was guessing too. Therefore, they all understood that the wandering undead was a worse situation. The adventurer group and the guard groups behind them would find themselves struggling if the undead were able to wander in to them first.

Midnight and Onyx seemed like they would suggest heading down different passageways. If they were safe enough to travel through, then they didn't worry that they would struggle. Especially since Midnight and Onyx had taken dragonkin from and Onyx a smaller form already. They wouldn't cause any cave-ins even if they did manage to break the stone walls.

"We can split up, if you two encounter an undead you can deal with it or you can lure it to use. You can sense me." Walker saw Midnight and Onyx both give a slight look of affirmation before taking the right most passageway. Onyx marked it with his tail for the other groups to know to follow them too.

Su and Gil headed down another while Walker, Remey, and Alice took a central passageway. Splitting up hadn't been their main plan but it was just more practical right now with the fact that wandering undead was a very real potential for them. It would be better to have everyone spread out to handle the dangerous opponents than stay together and risk the weaker guards and adventurers.

Where things seemed to be more dangerous was that Gil already spotted a trap.

"It's just a small trip step, it's not a major trap but it's made so that someone who doesn't notice it will stumble and alert everyone else. If it was a monster heading down this passageway, then it would most likely stumble making a much larger noise." Everyone heard this warning before they got too far along. It was always good to develop sharp hearing.

Hearing his evaluation of the small trap and how it was set up intentionally to warn of monsters proved that every single thought was not to protect from other races and to protect from monsters. Not many people would make traps set up like this. However, as their group stepped over it, they saw some small wooden fragments.

"This is where the mouse doll was broken, I would guess that it made some sounds when it moved over this area. So we are going to have to worry about the walls and ceiling moving." Walker placed a hand on the wall and could feel ambient earth mana along with undead mana.

He was right, the walls had moved and smashed the doll that Mela used. She had puppeted it to scout but it had made too much noise in a trap that only a monster would have tripped over.

"I have a feeling that the undead are trying to protect the tower. They might not have proper intelligence and just act as they did in life to survive. That was the deepest will of people of their era from what we have understood."

"It feels like we are just breaking in to their home and trying to steal what they have left. But not really since they are literally undead monsters who want to kill us if they find us, you know?" Remy was still idly making a few potions using small balls of alchemy flame she controlled. She was even humming a little while doing this.

"I hear a noise ahead." Alice had stopped her own humming of her buffing songs causing the light to dim around them a little. But then, when the shapes of others ahead of them became clear, everyone fell in to battle stances.

"Did the passageway we went just wrap in to this one?" Su stood ahead of them with her shield prepared and now lowering. Gil didn't even take the arrow away from his bow that he had notched. Instead, he turned and released it in the opposite direction causing a racket of cracking.

When everyone looked at him, they realized he had just fired an arrow in to what seemed to be a glass sheet. "Sorry, but I saw movement and that wasn't natural."

There was a slight rumble and everyone realized that the passageways had been made this way for this reason. The idea had been to convince those who entered and didn't know the way. The response of attacking something oddly shaped ahead was more than normal for many people, especially unintelligent monsters.

Gil's move had been normal since seeing something that was not easily recognizable was exactly what he had needed to do if that was a monster. It made sense that he ignored the shapes of Su, Walker, Alice, and Remy's flames. So sending an arrow at the distorted shapes in the light would be fine.

But the fact that the walls were now shifting and seemingly preparing to slam together made Walker reach out to the white mana all around them.

He felt pressure immediately. He wasn't trying to take entire control of the earth mana but it was clear that he had to do that right now if he wanted to be able to get anything down. The walls were being

pushed with incredible control like the undead able to sense the changes and noises was more than just attached to the walls.

When this thought occurred, Walker stopped trying to control the earth mana and instead drew it to him. The sudden pull of mana made the undead mana shift as well before the wall rumbling stopped.

"I pulled away the earth mana from the source. I think that the undead we are sensing is not able to move when it controls the walls. That means that it is in contact with some remaining runes formations to be able to control the walls better and still manipulate earth-" The crackling sound of bones on stone came to their ears as a growl from Midnight ahead of them echoed.

Everyone rushed ahead to find a central passage with all the other tunnels meeting it and an undead skeleton in sparse rotting fabric being crushed to dust in Midnight's clawed hands. "This thing was trying to move the walls and trap his brother. We handled it." Onyx's cool response was also a little heated since it seemed he was very unhappy that this undead had attempted to cause them harm.

'Undead earth mage

This undead earth mage is an ancient undead able to use ambient earth mana to control rune formations and manipulate walls it created. It does so through extensive memory of its skills when alive. Despite losing its mental faculties, it is still able to manipulate earth mana with great control which is why it is able to maintain the remnant traps within ruins...'

Walker didn't pay much attention to the appraisal before the skull of the undead was crushed. The information was not enough to help them with these explorations but only to help them realize that the earth mages might be even weaker in their undead states due to the time that passed. So defeating them despite their earth affinity should be simple.

However, this left them lost since the main passageways seemed to stop right where they would have kept going ahead. There was no staircase to go up or down. Just a solid wall and confusion.

"I bet that the passageways are all blocked to look like they aren't here. Perfect way to trap monsters invading your home, right?" Everyone looked at Gil again. They had no idea why he was getting everything so on the nose but it was enough to keep everyone prepared and taking the best way they

could travel. Besides this, they also realized that Gil was crouching slightly and trying to remain in the shadows of the light around them. He was training his stealth skills!

Walker didn't say a word about any of it and focused on the stone around. Sensing the air mana on the opposite side of walls or the floor wasn't easy since he had to look for the wind mana, encountering the earth mana within the walls. But after a few moments he felt a slight shift of something moving underneath their feet.

It wasn't the stone moving, it was wind mana moving since something moved through the space below them. Wherever it was it was sure to be another undead. However, that was not their goal, they could fight it. They needed to move the floor somehow to be able to travel deeper in to the ruins.