

Leveling up the World #Chapter 841: Embodiment of Void - Read Leveling up the World Chapter 841: Embodiment of Void

Chapter 841: Embodiment of Void

One look from Hannah was all it took for March to remain silent. Despite being banished and un-awakened, she remained a captain with traits close to a hundred.

You could have told me who she was, Adzorg, Dallion grumbled in his realm. I could have unsealed her.

Youve done a lot of remarkable things, dear boy, but unsealing a noble wasnt within your reach

There was no arguing the facts. The greater the level of the sealed, the more difficult it would be to unseal. It was only recently that Dallion had matched her level. Maybe once he had repaid his debt, he might do that before continuing south.

The walk to the combat arena was full of tenseness. Initially, half the Icepickers wanted to come along for support, but in the end only three did: March, Spike, and Hannah. Spike was the last person Dallion would have thought not to have debts. Then again, he led a simple lifestyle: working, drinking, brawling.

What does he have on you? Dallion asked, the fury leading him.

The lack of answer suggested that he was one of the many bought and paid for servants the general had. Before the war had broken out, it looked more like a hobby than anything else. Now that the vast majority of fury mercenaries were engaged in patrolling the skies, their value had skyrocketed. It wouldnt be past the general to exchange some of his servants for something of greater value.

Upon entering the arena, Dallion found that he had been correct. Gone were the host of fury servants there before. In their place, there were a few simple metalins standing by most of the entrances, like ominous statues.

I know the way from here, Dallion attempted to go directly along the corridor leading to the generals office, but was abruptly stopped.

The general is at the arena, the fury said, firmly. This way.

Im not one prone to panic, but I think you should be prepared for the worst, Vihrogon said. Delaying your debt payment tends to get him agitated.

He wont do anything. Even as he said that, Dallion mentally prepared to cast a few spells. *Hes far too smart for that.*

The stands were completely empty. According to the many seat item guardians, it had been a while since anyone had come here. That didnt stop the general from giving into his megalomania. Two sets of sculptors were working tirelessly on shaping giant blocks of glass into the shape of the general. While they were doing so, the general himself stood in a dignified pose in the middle of the arena, guarded by a dozen fury mercenaries.

What a nice surprise to have you drop by, he said, maintaining his stance. It has been a while, baron.

Of course, hed know as well.

And I hear youve brought some friends.

I wasnt sure how long Id be staying, so we decided to make the best of it, Dallion replied calmly. Never waste a moment and all that.

The general raised his hand. Immediately, the sculptors stopped working and obediently made their way to the far exits of the field. A few moments later, the general turned around to face Dallion.

Noble artisans, he said. Some of them used to work for Dreud a few years back. Now, they were lucky to get an item repair request.

But you agreed to help them, Dallion said, each word drenched with sarcasm.

Im known to help many people. The general remained unfazed. I helped this city, if you remember. I also helped you.

Help is a generous term. We came to an arrangement.

Quite. The confident smile on the generals face suddenly vanished. And youre yet to abide by that.

Here it comes, Dallion thought.

Ive been more than reasonable. When Countess Priscord asked me to give you some space to find the phoenix, I did. When you entered the Academy, I allowed you to adjust. Even when you joined the imperial capital, I let you be.

That was an interesting way of putting it. The general very specifically avoided clarifying that Dallion had become a member of the imperial family. In the past, Dallion coming to visit at all would have been a week of celebration. The Nerosal Festival would have

been restored, possibly a new palace would have been constructed specifically for his stay. Things had definitely changed.

I know, I know.

Dallion cast a summoning spell. Half of the furies reached for their swords, ready should it come for a fight.

Your new guards are quite jumpy, Dallion summoned the gearwheel. This is what you wanted, right?

The general's eyes lit up. Ever since Dallion had known him, the snob had rarely shown such a strong desire regarding anything. Artifacts, materials, even magical creatures, were only viewed as a trading currency. This was clearly different.

An air thread took hold of the item and gently floated it to the General.

You brought it, the general said. After everything, you managed to do it.

I had to, Dallion frowned. Moon vow. Are we square now?

Yes, yes. All debts are paid.

Finally! Dallion thought. He had been trying to escape from the general's clutches ever since he had rented the armadil shield. Now, what seemed like an eternity later, he was free. And still, there was something that made him uneasy.

Now that's settled, are you open for transactions? Dallion asked.

The question made the general look up from the item he had acquired.

No vows, no debt, Dallion clarified. A direct exchange of items.

And what items would those be, Baron? The smile on the general's face widened. There isn't much I can offer that the imperial capital can't.

You can find some of the things faster, Dallion continued. Nymph weapons.

Nymph weapons? The general whispered. You definitely have extravagant tastes. After the glut of artifacts, nymph objects remain at a premium.

Do you think there's anything I can't afford?

It's not as simple. Some things cannot be simply sold for money. The General let go of the gearwheel. It was gently taken by a pair of air currents, slowly floating away. The

item you brought, for example. How much money do you think it costs? Nothing? A simple copper coin? Or all the glass in the glass mounts?

Fears formed in Dallions mind. They were impossible, absurd even, but the more he tried to disprove them, the more likely they became.

What if I have something similar to offer? Dallion asked. Something unique and invaluable?

One mans treasure can be another mans trash, the general replied in a mocking tone.

Then you be the judge.

Dallion split into two hundred instances. Each of them did precisely the same action: taking the Elazni emblem ring and showing it to the general. In a hundred and ninety-nine instances, the snob showed no interest. In one, though, Dallions suspicions were confirmed. A single black thread shot out of the ring, going right into the general. However, it didnt end there. For the fraction of a second it made contact with his body, the entire man transformed into a homunculus of void. This wasnt a mere chainling, nor was it even a cultist. During that brief flash, Dallion recognized the characteristics of something he had seen at the top of the vortex towersa voidling.

Spark! Dallion summoned his harpsisword and did an instant line slash. A thin line of devastation flew forward, passing through the general, the upper parts of the statues of him, and the top stands, slicing off a massive chunk of the arena before continuing into the sky.

Then all hell broke loose. Air currents filled the area, as the fury guards engaged in battle. March and Hannah drew their weapons as well. It was only a matter before the whole arena exploded, sliced and diced by line attacks, taking part of the city with it. Of course, Dallion had no intention of letting that happen.

AREA AWAKENING

REALM INVASION

The city of Nerosal vanished as Dallion pulled everyone within the arena into its realm. Now he wouldnt have to limit himself.

Dozens of line and point attacks followed, slicing through everything in sight. The vast circle of mountains that represented the arenas stands broke up into giant chunks, filling the air like confetti. March had already dashed to engage two of the furies, pushing them back with such ease that one would think they were children. Yet, her actions paled to Hannahs. Just like in the memory fragment Dallion had seen, the innkeeper dashed from group to group, leaving red rectangles in her wake. Four had already been killed before they could react.

Gleam, deal with the guardian! Dallion rushed right at the general. Despite already receiving a spark infused line attack, the voidling didnt seem hurt in the least.

Not willing to take any chances, Dallion summoned his aura blade and performed a series of spart and aether line strikes in his direction.

ATTACK NEGATED

Your attack has been sliced in two by SPIKE.

Attack has no effect.

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Attack has no effect.

What? Dallion cast a series of protective spells, surrounding himself with several layers of aether.

Standing between him and the general, Spike did the same, although covering himself with void matter.

That changes things, doesnt it? The general smirked. How did you guess?

Instead of an answer, Dallion charged forward. The Spike he knew had been a close friend whod helped him in several tough spots. Yet, that wasnt Spike standing in front of him now, but a blob of void matter given form.

CRITICAL STRIKE

Dealt damage increased by 200%

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Dealt damage increased by 200%

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Dealt damage increased by 200%

Each attack struck a vital area, yet there was no apparent effect. It was almost as if there wasn't anything there to wound.

Shifting gear, Dallion's combat split again and summoned the armadillo shield.

Spark! Releasing the aura sword, Dallion grabbed hold of the shield. Expand! he ordered, combining athletics with combat, performing a point attack.

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage increased by 1000%

Spike splattered into droplets of black goo. Before they reached the ground, though, they were pulled right into the general.

Music spark attack! Dallion unsummoned the shield, playing a chord on his harpsword.

Dozens of music threads attached to the void of the general. The attack was strong enough to wound voidlings, and yet its effects in this case were negligible.

MINOR STRIKE

Dealt damage increased by 10%

A small black stain appeared on the general's gold shirt. As it did, one of the fury guards fell to the ground, splashing like a water balloon upon coming into contact with the hard surface.

You. Dallion felt a cold chill run down his spine. You're the void!

A layer of blackness shot up from the ground, splitting the entire realm into two. It was more than a wall, slicing the sky itself. Even in his startled state, Dallion had the strength of will to do a spark-infused point attack.

The attack struck the blackness, then stopped.

Damn it!

The void had successfully isolated them from the others in the realm. March and Hannah would no longer be able to help.

It's such a bittersweet experience. The general continued in his usual fashion, not even bothering to change his appearance. It's a bit of a pity. I liked being this puppet.

I should have seen it! Dallion cursed himself mentally. It was the generals pettiness that had tricked him. Seemingly there was no way that someone so greedy, petty, and arrogant would be focused on destroying the world and the Moons. Looking beyond that, the clues had been there all along. The general was able to find artifacts that the Academy couldnt. He had made it possible for Dallion to find and enter the Stars hidden stronghold. He had provided the means with which to affect the level of Moons minion. He had been the one Arthurows was indebted to all along.

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Chapter 842: Extreme Measures

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage increased by 1000%

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage increased by 1000%

Red rectangles stacked up as Dallion slashed through the generals neck. He had been doing so for several seconds now, without any apparent result. To make it more irritating, the void was using a very different way of fighting. Hardly bothering to avoid the attacks, the general simply scattered void matter.

Combining his attack and carving skills, Dallion bombarded the void with a series of slashes. Both of his weapons were infused with spark and magic, as well as covered by a layer of water to avoid direct contact with any void matter.

Interesting precaution, the general smirked. Thats the thing about you, otherworldersnever leaving a dull moment. And always overlooking the smaller details.

A series of void blades emerged from the ground.

MINOR WOUND

Your health has been reduced by 5%

PERMANENT EFFECT LIFE REDUCTION

Your maximum health will be reduced by 5% percent until the status is removed.

The status continues to be in effect in the real world.

Even with a hundred instances, was unable to avoid the attack. Void matter crept up his foot all the way to the ankle. Dallion quickly filled himself with spark, but it was only able to loosen the tar-like substance.

Lux! he ordered.

The firebird emerged, surrounding him with blue flames. The heat made the void matter sizzle, though at an extremely slow rate.

Once again, Dallion changed approach, combining athletic, acrobatic, combat, music, and magic skills in another strike. The force was enough to tear the generals shoulder right off. Moments later, though, a new one re-emerged.

Its impossible to kill me. The generals new hand regained its previous texture. Even the torn clothes were restored to their previous state. Nothing can, even the Moons.

Dallion waved his aura sword, leaving dozens of spell circles in its wake. Aether shards, ice, and lightning struck their target, still unable to pierce its skin.

If youre indestructible, why are you hiding? Dallion asked.

Several spells combined, launching a massive spike of raw aether straight through the generals chest.

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage increased by 1000%

A massive hole gaped open. For a few moments, it seemed that Dallion had managed to deal some actual damage. Sadly, within moments, black tendrils spawned within it, filling the space up.

Its like fighting liquid, Dallion thought.

Fighting copyettes was similar, but they suffered the damage they were dealt. Also, the void tended to corrupt everything that tried to kill it. If Dallion hadnt covered his harpsisword with water and infused her with spark, she might well be hurt at best and corrupted at worst.

Was that how the weapons had originally become corrupted? Everyone would jump at the chance of killing the void not knowing that it was nothing like the Star. The general never tried to attackhe didnt have to; all his opponents did that for him.

Youre like the abyss, Dallion thought, lowering his weapon.

The abyss? the general asked, amused. When you look into the abyss, the abyss looks back. Im flattered. But youre right. I dont have to fight. Ill win in the end. Its inevitable. All I have to do is wait and leave others to stumble on their own.

STATUS REMOVED

Live reduction no longer in effect.

Dallion looked at his foot. The black goo had completely melted off. Soon enough, Lux would heal his wounds, restoring him to full health. In a battle such as this, though, health didnt matter.

You made the Star, Dallion said, waiting for the skill markers to settle down. Normally, they would catch up to his speed after a while. Now, they kept on appearing and disappearing erratically, as if they were trying to lock on an entity that didnt exist.

Quite the opposite, actually. The first Star made me.

The general took a few steps forward. With each step, his outfit changed. When he stopped, it was the same design as the clothes the people in Aethers memory wore.

Im what dripped in through the Moons barrier. Initially I was, what you would call, feral. My only goal was to consume all that wasnt me. Then I was given through.

Youre a parasite.

I was that too. The general laughed. Parts of me were. Some still are. People couldnt never grasp that. I am the void and every part of the void is me.

Dallion didnt say a word. In his mind, he was going through options of what to do. Normal attacks were pointless. Spark and magic attacks had little effect. What was left then?

Everything beyond the barrier, and all the drops that leaked through, they are all me. It doesnt matter if you kill this puppet or not, there are others. A few of them youve already met.

Just like the copyettes.

Sort of. There was a thread of annoyance in his words. The Order stole that idea from me, along with a lot more.

Would a Moonstone kill him? Dallion asked.

Thats not an answer I can give, dear boy, Adzorg replied. *Were in uncharted waters on this one.*

What about two?

You'd just be wasting them, the general said. If you're set on using them, just give them directly and I promise I'll leave this part of the world. He laughed. Would be a waste to destroy such valuable items.

Initially, Dallion thought that the entity was mocking him. All his skills and perception told him that wasn't the case.

So, this is what you meant, Dallion said. You are the fragment of the void that is the general. Was this fragment also your grandfather?

Oh, it goes back a few generations more. Being your own parents was a messy experience, but necessary.

Did you want to make Nerosal part of the wilderness? Or was that Arthur's idea?

Poor Art. Always had a flare for the dynamic. It was his idea. As I said, I had only one true goal, but time was never a factor. And since it's inevitable that I win, I decided to have some fun, watching the world buzz. He cracked his fingers. Didn't we have this conversation before?

Dallion frowned.

Oh, don't be like that. The Moons do it all the time, and people seem to welcome it. An entire religion is based on it. Meanwhile, I have a cult of idiots whose only goal is to backstab each other to the top.

Sounds fitting to me. In each of his instances, Dallion cast a two-circle spell. There was nothing special in it. In most of the instances, it appeared to flicker out without any effect, but he kept on persisting.

You know that I can read your mind, right? The general mocked.

Only one instance of it. You're probably seeing bits and pieces that don't make much sense.

Hmm. The general scratched his chin. They were still engaged in combat, but on a different battlefield. In some ways it was almost like fighting an overpowered echo; the void could read Dallion's mind, but had troubles keeping up with combat splitting. If you become the next Star you can change things.

And destroy the world in the process?

How can you be sure you haven't destroyed it already? You already brought me part of the archmage's device.

It needs the rest of it to work. I don't have the knowledge, and neither does Adzorg.

I became aware of that the moment you dragged us into this realm. I admit, it's a bit upsetting, but time means nothing to me. Rather, its mere existence is something I want to destroy, along with everything else. I have a piece now. After a few thousand years, I'll have enough to complete it and this time, there won't be anyone to interfere.

The general sounded very convincing. On the surface, the logic was impeccable. With eternity at hand, there was no way the void would fail. And yet, Dallion could feel it was lying. The subtle, almost imperceptible fluctuations within his voice made it clear that the entity wasn't as confident as it appeared.

How about no? A hundred instances of Dallion completed the spell. In the real world, their actions would have canceled each other out, but they were in the awakening realm now, and magic was the trait of exceptions.

In the blink of the eye, a hundred pieces merged together, forming one massive spell that spread through instances.

You idiot! the general hissed, his face crumbling in anger. He had figured out Dallion's plan, but it was already too late the spell was complete.

A purple pearl of destruction formed in front of Dallion, falling to the ground. It didn't stop there, burrowing through it as if it were going through air.

Lux! Dallion leaped into the air, knowing what would follow.

The general did the same.

Suddenly, the entire realm cracked, shattered by purple lines.

The Moon's might be a tad upset that you used that spell in the real world, dear boy, Adzorg said from Dallion's realm.

Only if I lose, Dallion replied. In which case, it wouldn't matter.

The lines spread through ground and air like a spiderweb, then burst into fragments.

REALM DESTROYED

A red rectangle emerged as pieces of the local reality flew about. Interestingly enough, several wounds had appeared on the general's body.

So, you were connected to the arena. Dallion used his echoes to cast another combined spell, then performed a line attack. Directions no longer mattered, with the two of them

being the only entities that existed. They surrounded each other like two people in a hall of mirrors.

Massive black hands show out from the entity's body, blocking the attack from reaching the void. That meant to show one thing: the general was vulnerable; more importantly, he was afraid.

You're just an echo, Dallion said, intensifying his attacks. Aether and spark slashes were everywhere, breaking the darkness as they focused on the general.

MINOR STRIKE

Dealt damage increased by 10%

Red rectangles popped up, appearing with greater intensity around the entity. Having spent centuries as a puppet master, it had forgotten how to effectively fight. In the end, it was nothing more than an echo that refused to vanish from the world. While it was true that it was part of the void, it also had acquired its own personality.

MINOR WOUND

Your health has been reduced by 5%

PERMANENT EFFECT LIFE REDUCTION

Your maximum health will be reduced by 5% percent until the status is removed.

The status continues to be in effect in the real world.

A shard of void hit Dallion. In response, Dallion doubled the number of instances. It was a matter of speed now: who would be able to put in the necessary amount of damage before the other. The stakes were their very existence. If Dallion were to lose, he'd return to the real world as the new Star and no one would be able to tell the difference. He'd say the right things, make everyone believe that the general had been defeated, but deep inside he'd take control of the Star cult, changing it in ways that would make it grow and spread. If he were to win, the being known as the general would be removed from the world, along with all the debts associated with him.

The intensity of the void shards increased, forcing Dallion to fly about as if he were navigating a maze of spears. Awakened markers of various colors appeared and disappeared everywhere around, but he ignored them.

There was no way they would help. Right here, right now, both of them were within the space between realms. It was only the effects of Dallion's second spell that kept them here, though it was unclear for how long.

Yo, general! Dallion summoned the sack of clay pots he had gathered from the dwarven capital. I hear you like artifacts, so I brought you a few.

The pots scattered in all directions, inadvertently flying towards the general.

In a hundred and ninety-three of the instances, the entity avoided them, continuing its own attacks at Dallion. In three, it shattered them instead. That was precisely what Dallion was waiting for.

Welcome to my reality. He used combat splitting to force the one he wanted.

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Chapter 843: Dispersal

A portal emerged, instantly filling the space with water.

Back when he had gathered them in the hole created by the magic vortex, Dallion had taken the time to cast a spell within the structure of each. Some of the spells were more powerful than others, set to be cast once the item was broken. Dallion had made sure to use items that had no guardians, just as he had used the grafting method Harp had taught him for making magic potions.

Water filled up the space like a tap filling up a thimble. Before anyone knew it they were surrounded by water.

Water! Lux shouted. Of everyone present he was the one that disliked the substance the most.

Without waiting for an order, the firebird disappeared, returning to Dallions realm. Gripping the harpsisword, Dallion performed another line attack. Causing the generals movements to slow down was a good bonus, but there were far better spells still in play. For one thing, there were three aether echoes within some of the other pots.

Void matter spread from the general quickly surrounding the pots in question. The void had no intention of making the same mistake twice.

Simultaneously, millions of black threads, each the size of a hair, gently extended into the water, forming a web to catch Dallion in.

Still the passive approach? Dallion swung his aura sword, creating an ice wall in front of him. The spell was only meant to act as a shield, but in the current reality, it continued to infinity, surrounding Dallion from all sides.

That was entirely predictable, Adzorg grumbled.

There was a time when Dallion would have agreed. Right now, though, this was as much of an advantage as not. If he was surrounded by ice, it meant that the general was as well.

Concentrating, he was just about to do a point attack, when his opponent beat him to it with an attack of his own. A blob of blackness hit the center of all the ice walls within the cube, trying to break through.

Time stretched. Dallions mind had gone into overdrive. With Lux gone, he couldnt afford a hit of such strength. Even if the void didnt kill him outright, it would make him slower, gradually dragging him down like quicksand. Every instinct told him that he had to respond with a spark infused point attack, purging the void and with luck striking the general. From there hed continue with a multi attack and

Dallion stopped. He was looking at things the wrong way. The voidat least this part of itwasnt strong on its own. The general had shown that time and time again. His strength lay in making others do what he wanted. Right now, what he wanted the most was to transform Dallion into the Star, which could be achieved only through contact. Back, before the realm of the arena had shattered, the general was able to have void matter shoot out from the ground because he had corrupted the realm itself. But they werent in a realm anymore and, ironically, that had sapped the voids powers.

Youre desperate, arent you? Dallion thought, knowing full well the general could read his mind.

The black blobs disappeared, then a moment later struck the ice again, causing cracks to appear in some of the layers. Black substance trickled in, filling them, but it was still not enough to reach Dallion.

You cant breathe?

That was a laugh. Strictly speaking, the void didnt need to breathe. It didnt need to do anything, but the puppet it controlled did. As long as the entity wanted to keep that puppet, it had to follow the rules of the world and according to the rules, the general never was an awakened.

All that power, the talk of eternity, and I can outwait you.

The void matter pulled back, then struck with the ferocity of a dying being. Clusters of black tendrils shot from all six directions, straight towards their target.

Dallion felt no fear. With perfect calm, he combined his acrobatic and guard skills, avoiding each of the attacks. In the real world, this would have been treated as one strike, but here, it was sixenough for him to take advantage of the guard skills bonus.

The ice walls shattered at reduced speed, as more spikes shot out of the tendrils, trying to pierce Dallion. It was already too late, though. Unsummoning his weapons, Dallion evaded the second wave, slowing time even further.

It had been a while since he had resorted to something so simple, making him almost feel nostalgic for the time he'd used the method to fight item guardians.

Three sequences. Four sequences

Time kept on slowing down until it came to a complete standstill.

Locked in a moment within a moment within a moment, Dallion thought. This was an event worthy of an achievement. Sadly, none such appeared. Regardless, the guard bonus had granted him with an incredible advantage: the ability to perform any action he chose without fearing a reaction. Dallion could easily attack with a spark infused point thrust right in the general's head. He could cast any spell, or even leave the realm and hope that the general remained trapped until suffocating. However, there was an even better option.

I know you can hear me, he thought.

Extending magic threads from his body, Dallion proceeded to draw a magic symbol.

I finally figured you out, he continued. *There were so many times you could have stopped me along the way. Even with the Moons protecting me early on, you didn't need to give me the armadil shield, but you did. You helped me defeat Arthurows during our first encounter. You used Spike to unlock the door for me in the guildhall so I could enter the realm of the aura sword. Heck, you helped me outright kill your Star.*

Steadily, the symbol gained form, glowing bright purple on the general's head.

You really were changed by the thing you wanted to destroy. You liked seeing people squirm and fail, but even more you liked to watch them succeed a final show before your inevitable victory at the end of eternity.

More magic threads layered onto the symbol, increasing its strength.

You had managed to infect me and so many others. I've no idea how many of the corrupted will become free when I kill you. I don't know how many other puppets you have in the world, but I know that you won't be able to save this one.

Dallion snapped the thread.

Darude attack, he added.

The magic symbol came into effect, breaking the time freeze. Time continued as normal for Dallion, though for the general, it was amplified a hundred times.

The entity blurred, struggling to take down Dallion while it still had air in its lungs. Sadly, even with a time boost, its speed remained slower than Dallions.

YOU WIN THIS TIME

A black rectangle appeared in the darkness.

WELL TALK AGAIN

Im sure youll try, Dallion thought.

VOID DISPERSAL

(+5 Awakening, +5, Body, +5 Mind, +5 Reaction, +5 Perception, + 5 Empathy, +5 Magic)

You have dispersed the embodiment of void. It wont go after you again, at least for a while.

Not the most optimistic achievement, even with all the boosts it provided. Unlike the previous enemies he had vanquished, this one couldnt be destroyed. The web of corruption and deceit the general had spun throughout the empire and beyond was likely destroyed. As the void had said, there were other puppets out there. In time, they would grow to hold the position the general had. Hopefully, it wasnt going to occur in Dallions lifetime.

*Just take the win, dear boy, Adzorg grumbled. Sometimes I think theres just no pleasing you.*Nôv(el)B\jnn

Sometimes, youd be right, Dallion replied mentally. After a few moments of hesitation, Dallion summoned the emblem ring. To his relief, there was no void there.

Not to ruin the mood, but I think the Order might be a bit upset with you after this, Adzorg said after a while. *More upset than before, I mean.*

That I killed the general instead of them?

No. Because of the way you killed him.

It took several minutes for Dallions spell to wear off, returning him back to the real world as a result of the realms destruction. Upon arriving there, the answer became obvious.

Half of the arena structure was gone, reduced to sharp rubble.

So, thats what happens when a realm is destroyed. Dallion bent down and took a piece from the ground. It had sharp edges, as if it were shattered glass. With enough time and effort, someone maybe would be able to fit all the pieces together and restore the arena. It definitely wasnt going to be Dallion, though.

A total of three people had emerged from the realm: the innkeeper, March, and Dallion. There was no trace of the furies Dallion had taken into the realm or, for that matter, Spike. Of all the things Dallion had to explain, that was the trickiest. No one would bat an eye if it turned out that the general was involved with the Star cults, or worse. Admitting that a well-known guild member and friend actually never existed, but was one of the embodiments of the void that would be difficult to swallow.

I see youre fine, Hannah said, looking at the devastation rather than Dallion. Its a safe bet that the Order will be here soon.

Out of everyone, the innkeeper was the only one who hadnt sustained any wounds whatsoever. In contrast, March had entire segments of her armor missing. As strong as she was fighting, the void remained beyond her.

Yeah. Dallion went up to the Icepicker and cast a healing spell. Purple symbols flashed around her, removing all wounds in seconds. Youd better go to the Timepiece. Ill deal with this.

You sure? Hannah gave him a look. Theres quite a lot to explain

Ill be fine. He smiled. Im a baron now.

Yes. The innkeeper stepped closer. Which makes you a lot easier to push off a cliff. She patted him on the shoulder. Lets go, March. Lets leave the baron to handle things.

The woman walked away, March closely behind her. Interestingly, none of them had asked about Spike. Maybe they thought that hed been killed by the general? Thankfully, it was better that way a clean and simple explanation that suited everyone.

Making his way through the broken ground, Dallion went up to the gearwheel. Of all the things, it was the only thing that had remained whole, glowing in its perfection, as if in mockery of everything else.

You can keep the materials, Adzorg said. Might be useful when you forge your next intricate weapon.

Yeah, I could do that. Dallion drew a seven-circle spell in the air. A pattern of symbols covered the gearwheel, sprinkling the item with glowing red flakes. The metals bubbled, heating beyond their boiling point. Or I could do this.

Some would call it a waste, but that was the last thing on Dallions mind. Turning around, he went towards the half of the structure that was still standing. Crowds of people had already started to form around what had been the arena. They glanced at it for a few moments, then moved away, accepting the situation. Even the city guards werent in the least bit concerned. Dallion didnt need a kaleidervisto to tell that limiting echoes were being used en-mass. The only question was who had seen to it: the new lord mayor, or the Orders bishop.

Stepping into the inner corridor, Dallion continued to where the generals old room had been. The place remained deserted, like an empty shell of what it was. On one occasion, a metalin tried to stop him from proceeding, but a quick slash attack with the Nox dagger reduced the construct to a pile of metal.

Lets see what you left behind. Dallion opened the door and stepped in.

The room seemed more or less as he remembered it. The collection of creatures had diminishedthere were only two dozen of them, kept in sky silver and sun gold cages. Occasionally, there would be something more exotic encased in crystal.

Dont worry, Dallion said as he walked by. As he did, each cage broke to pieces, sliced by a series of slashes faster than the eye could see.

Finding their freedom, most of the creatures instantly fled, eager to get out of their prisons and even the city itself. A few remained where they were, choosing to cling to Dallion instead. It was going to take some time and effort to get them to return to their previous habits. Right now, though, Dallion wanted to focus on the other prisoners: the weapons that had remained there for all that time.

Feeling alright? he asked, stopping in front of the shelves.

There was a time when a gold sand garden was located in that area of the room. When Dallion had first seen it, he thought it was meant to impress all visitors. That wasnt the case. It served as a warning to the items, what could happen to them at any point, should the general get bored or disappointed.

Its alright. Youre free now.

Out of habit, he used his aether vision to examine them. To his relief, there didnt seem to be any void threads. There was something elsea spot in the room completely deprived of magic.

Curious, Dallion pushed the shelves to the side, revealing the wall. Using his Nox dagger, he carefully cut out a square in it. The section gave in, revealing a hidden compartment. Whoever had made this had taken great care to integrate it into the wall, yet at the same time keep it separate from its realm.

A single metal box lay there, shimmering in an otherworldly fashion.

Id suggest you leave it, dear boy, Adzorg warned. Theres no telling what could be inside.

Worse than the void? Dallion ignored him. Still, he split into several instances before opening the lid.

A divine glow of magic filled the room, emanating from the item inside. To some, it would look like nothing but a rough piece of red crystal. Yet any mage would recognize it for what it really was a Moonstone.

Centors blessing, a familiar voice said behind Dallion. Stolen from the Order two and a half centuries ago.

Hello, bishop. Dallion retrieved the stone, sending it into his realm. Now, he had three. I thought youd stop by.

Leveling up the World #Chapter 844: The Third Player - Read Leveling up the World Chapter 844: The Third Player

Chapter 844: The Third Player

A little late to the party, arent you? Dallion said as he repaired the wall.

The albino shook his head.

You shatter half the arena and still repair that? He went to the generals desk and slid a finger along it. No echoes, he noted. Didnt see that coming. Although he was just a greedy snob, we had to keep an eye on him.

So much for the Order being omnipotent. Then again, the general had fooled the world for decades, if not longer. Or maybe there was another explanation.

Dallion split into instances, rushing at Cleric. Before the man could react, Dallion summoned his bladebow and shoved it into the others shoulder so that the kaleidevrsto came in contact. The bishops entire arm turned translucent. There could be no doubt that Dallion was in the presence of another copyette. For some reason, the bishop didnt seem the least bit alarmed. Sluggishly, he looked at the transparent part of his body, then slowly pushed the weapon off him.

Should have guessed. Dallion unsummoned the bladebow. The whole losing magic never matched up. Was there ever a Cleric?

There still is. That part was mostly true. He gambled his magic at the Academy and lost. We took him in. Hes been a monk ever since. Quite happy to be sealed off from the rest of the world. I just took it from there.

So, the Order did keep an eye on my family.

Not you, though. Were keeping tabs on your grandfather. The man has a knack for getting out of tight situations. Hes a bit like you in that way. And, of course, theres the promise to House Elazni. Cleric looked around. Any other reason we should stay here? I prefer that the repairs start sooner rather than later.

Youll repair this? Dallion snorted. Just like that?

Nerosal needs a symbol to mark its rebirth. This is as good as any. The general was despised by many.

Dallion could see it now: the Hero of Nerosal returns as a noble to take down the evil cultist whod held the city in his grasp. The story wouldnt be far from the truth and, above all, it would put the mind of many at ease. Likely, the city guard would also take an active part, capturing their share of low-level criminalspossibly a few more cultists. With a bit of donations from the Order, even the slums could get leveled up.

Sure.

Walking out of the main entrance, one might almost forget what had happened behind. Dallion instantly spotted several guild masters along with their captains. No doubt they had gathered in the hopes of getting contracted for the repair work. Knowing how the Order operated, all of them would be hired for the job, along with every other able awakened.

The overseer was also present, observing the actions of the city guard. Unlike before, she pretended not to notice Dallion. Strangely enough, no one else seemed to notice him, either; as if he and the bishop were in a different realm altogether.

You still have some tricks I dont know about, dont you? Dallion thought.

The two went off the main streets, venturing into the quieter parts of the city. Initially, Dallion thought that they were randomly walking around, but soon he recognized the surrounding buildings. This was where Eurys workshop had been before she had moved out to Lanitol.

Do I get a prize now that my work is over? Dallion asked.

Who said its over? The albino glanced at him.

The general is gone. Or do you expect me to purge the world of all void matter?

A tempting suggestion, but no. The void, like the Star cults, is only a threat when theres too much of them. Many of them have already gone into hiding. Some claim that the next Star has already emerged, but the archbishops prophecy isnt clear on the matter.

You seriously believe in those prophecies?

Do you believe in instances? the bishop asked, causing Dallion to quickly shut up. Thats not the immediate concern.

Oh, give me a break.

The void is a force of nature. You cant eliminate it, just prepare and deal with the consequences. A competent Star is a lot more problematic, but even they are second fiddle.

Is that coming from the prophecy as well? Dallion smirked. Or were you reading bad poetry?

The bishop abruptly stopped. Eight more sets of hands emerged from his body, starting a multi-circle spell. Taking that as a sign of hostile intentions, Dallion leaped back, casting several spells of his own. Aether spheres surrounded him, while his harpsisword.

Concentrating, he looked at the symbols composing the albinos spell. All of them were well known to him. Most were classic examples of distant viewing magic, combined with other elements of spying, as well as a basic aether creation spell.

A large purple map appeared in the air. The shape of the landmass unmistakably depicted the continent they were on. Seas and oceans were present to the west and north, along with vast swaths of unknown territories. Nearly every settlement, from the major cities to the smallest villages were there. Looking closely, Dallion recognized parts of the fallen south.

Youve become an expert on the Star, Cleric said. Throughout history, what did he do?

Seriously?

Indulge me.

My foot will indulge your face, Dallion thought.

The first Star yearned to be equal to the Moons, he said with a sigh. To become the architect of the world and create a utopia.

The bishop kept quiet, waiting.

After failing, the Star tricked several races into conquering the world, Dallion continued. All attempts failed and the his words trailed off.

What if it was never meant to be a trick? Each Star had provided knowledge, skills, and assistance to the respective conqueror, but never tried to conquer it on their own. They were in the very literal sense of the word a second fiddle to past emperors.

One thing thats lost throughout history is the sense of time, the albino continued. Some things you have to be there to feel what they really were like. In the old sagas its always written that one race or other tried to take over the world. What isnt written is how long it took. There wasnt one big war that came up out of nowhere and swept the world in a few years. A lot of planning went into it, a lot of subtleness. War only broke out when things failed.

It was never about conquering the world, Dallion said. It was all about the awakening level.

The instructions of the Moons at the last gate were a lot clearer now. Indeed, it was no longer enough to fix his personal faults in order to grow. His will would be matched with that of others. In a way, the whole world was one big trial. Dallion, like many others, had thought having a domain was all about real-estate. The reality was that the domain was an expression of his will. By accepting to live in the capital as part of House Elazni, he had submitted his will to that of the Emperor and Dutchess Elazni. Thats why he wasnt able to leave the city. In his mind, there always were other reasons, as if the whole world was conspiring against him. The moment he had started relying on others to let him go, he had lost his option of doing so. It was the Order that had nudged him to do so, using his experience with the void as a pretext.

The level of each gate is double of the last. As the bishop spoke, two areas of the map changed color. Judging by the location, one represented the Tamin Empire. The other had to be the Alliance of Stone and Steel. Settlements changed into numbers. An awakened has to get to level eighty to become a domain ruler. That means that the next gate is at a hundred and sixty.

Dallion added up the numbers.

Theres a lot more than eighty points there.

Thats because youre looking at it wrong. Creating a hundred villages wont get you to the gate. Believe me, it has been tried.

Given the number of monasteries scattered throughout the world, it didnt take a lot to determine who had made the attempt.

Countess Priscord managed to pull her shenanigans because she was aiming to decrease Archduke Lanitols power. The size of your domain represents the visual

representation of your will in the world. The larger it is, the more you will exert. As such, each settlement level encompasses part of the world. The Imperial capital is the largest domain in the present world, as large as a province, yet its only level seventeen.

That still didnt sound right. If combined with the over provinces, that had to make well over a hundred.

The land the domain occupies is the empire itself, the bishop added. Yes. Even if we include all the recent gains through alliances and conquest, the emperor is three quarters short. As the saying goes, getting to a hundred is easy. The hard part comes after.

Dallion remained silent. It was still a bit difficult to swallow.

You, for example, have the level of a count, should you decide to go along that route. Achievements help, but its impossible to reach the gate through them alone.

You think hell try to conquer the world?

Its been the dream of all emperors. The current one inherited a lot, so it was natural for him to set things in motion to increase it. Now hes nearly at the endgame. On the map, the domain of the empire increased, until it filled up everything. Its believed that upon passing through the sixth gate, the awakened becomes a Moon and obtains the power to create their own world.

Seven Moonsseven worlds. Had there been another Moon in the pasta Moon of Colossi? It sounded possible, although Dallion still had his doubts. If nothing else, he couldnt imagine what the eighth trait would be.

The aether map crumbled into glowing dust that faded away into the air.

You want me to help you take down the emperor? Dallion went up to Cleric.

The archbishop would be grateful for your assistance. According to his prophecy, if the emperor isnt stopped, hell fail. Most of the human race will be banished as a result.

It wasnt lost on Dallion that the copyette said most.

If the emperor passes the point of no return, succeed or fail, half the world would be banished. The Order only wants to keep the current status quo. If we didnt, we would have gotten involved in the conflict decades ago.

Helping the Order against the emperor. Back when Dallion had woken up in the room without doors or windows, he couldnt have imagined hed end up in a situation such as this. There wasnt a single lie among anything that the copyette had said. The logic was clear, and so were the stakes. The Order wasnt willing to enter the fight and Dallion was

too weak to take the emperor on his own, yet if there was one new thing he had learned in the last ten minutes, it was not to submit his will to anyone.

What about Eury?

Attempts were made to approach her. The bishop gave a vague reply. She's too focused on the Azures to see the bigger picture. Hopefully, you'll be able to quell any conquest ambitions once the main threat is dealt with.

Yeah, right. I'll see what I can do.

Dallion was just about to add a few more conditions, when all the water shot out from the nearby lake, creating a pillar up to the sky. It wasn't the only one. More pillars followed, rising up so they could be visible from every part of the city.

People everywhere stopped what they were doing, staring at the unusual occurrence. So great was the allure that even the limiting echoes failed to extinguish their curiosity.

People of the world, a loud female voice boomed, coming from the pillars. As it did, they changed shape, transforming into a nymph in battle armor. Recently, the so-called Tamin Emperor turned part of the coast to glass. He probably thought that his toys could deny us what was rightfully ours.

Dallion felt the strings of his harpsisword tremble. This wasn't her usual eagerness for battle, but pure unadulterated fear, emanating from the very depth of her being.

Our conquest was cut short millennia ago, the nymph figures continued. But now we're back and will finish what we started.

Spell circles appeared in the air, launching dozens of aether blades at the water pillars. Within seconds, they destroyed the nymph forms, causing the liquid to splash back into its original locations. Sadly, it was too late; the declaration had been made.

Now, there were three players aiming for the awakening gate.

Leveling up the World #Chapter 845: A Chalice Realm Encounter - Read Leveling up the World Chapter 845: A Chalice Realm Encounter

Chapter 845: A Chalice Realm Encounter

Griffin remains filled the chamber. In a past era, this had been the treasure vault of a throne room, now fallen to neglect. Traps and protective spells had kept it from being looted for centuries, though after millennia those had faded and rusted away, allowing

for creatures from the wilderness to make it their home. Later still, the creatures had been killed off by hunters, though not all valuables had been taken away.

Twenty magic circles glowed on the far wall of the chamber, shooting aether daggers with the speed of hail in a hurricane. Individually, Dallion could avoid each and every one of them, but in such large numbers, he was forced to rely on his armadil shield and combat splitting.

Extend! he ordered, spreading his magic threads through the shield. The item stretched out, doubling in size.

Hello again, Count Elazni, Viscount Salista yelled.

The noble had it for Dallion ever since he'd entered the imperial capital. Lately, though, he had become particularly annoying. Of the seven times that Dallion had secretly ventured into the wilderness in search of artifacts, in almost half they'd crossed paths. Up till now, they'd only traded insults and provocations, but this time was different. The item that Dallion had come to claim was too important to let it go, and by the looks of it, the viscount thought the same.

Will your family withstand another scandal? Salista performed a point attack hitting Dallion's shield.

Idiot! Dallion thought. It took a particular kind of stupid to cast such destructive spells in an underground dungeon, and yet nobles seemed to do it all the time. The last was back when Dallion had gone to help his fiancé escape from a wyvern infested ruin.

An entire section of wall crumbled behind Dallion. Thanks to a quick spell, he was able to stabilize it, but that wasn't going to hold for long.

I've no time for this, Dallion thought, then entered the realm of the room.

AREA AWAKENING

Reality changed. The smell of rot and mold vanished, replaced by a chilly breeze. Dallion found himself in a world of giant grey and green structures composed almost entirely of columns and arches. The style was quite unique, but Dallion could see the nymph influence.

It had taken him several months of following clues and quite a large sum of money to find this current ruin. Technically, he wasn't supposed to be here; it was in former Azure territory, even if far from a significant settlement.

You are in the realm of LANON CASTLE.

The destiny of the realm has been fulfilled.

Fulfilled? That explained the lack of guardians. Even so, getting to the spot he wanted wasn't going to be quick. Dallion hadn't explored the ruin well enough to know which part of the realm corresponded to which. To make things worse, the builders had added magic protections that rendered orientation spells useless.

VISCOUNT SALISTA HAS ENTERED THE REALM.

Seriously? Dallion cast a flight spell on himself.

That pesky noble didn't know when to give up. It didn't help that House Mizovy tended to give him more than enough artifacts to partially make up for his lack of levels.

The figure of Salista emerged in the grey sky. This time he was accompanied by a dozen sun gold bladerers. Like animated suits of armor with wings made entirely of blades, the constructs formed two circles around their master, staring at Dallion with empty eye sockets.

Nice trick, Dallion said. What did you give the Mizovy this time? Or are you fighting on credit now?

Very funny.

A web of line attacks propelled from the bladerers in Dallion's direction. They had done a rather good job of filling up the space so that Dallion couldn't escape. No doubt their goal was to force him to take a defensive stance and gradually overwhelm him. Of course, that was a total waste of time. Being level ninety-one, Dallion had a lot of ways to deal with the attack. After a bit of thought, he decided to go on the offensive.

ATTACK NEGATED

You have sliced the BLADERERs attack in two.

Attack has no effect.

Red rectangles appeared in the air as Dallion split through sections of the mesh of attacks, flying through them. Once the first wave was over, he made several of his own. Normally, this was the point at which several of the constructs would get destroyed. These, though, were a lot more agile, evading every strike.

You have to give it to the Mizovy. They spare no expense, Adzorg said from Dallion's awakened realm.

I think they messed up with the viscount, Dallion grumbled in reply. That said, one had to admit that the noble had done a pretty good job tracking him both in and out of the capital.

A pillar of blue light suddenly descended from the sky, melting one of the bladerers mid-air. Almost immediately, it was followed by hundreds of others, putting an abrupt end to Dallions standoff.

You idiot! he shouted. What did you bring here?

What? the viscount asked, just as one of the bladerers flew him to the side fast enough to avoid another destructive pillar.

You triggered some defense spell!

Just my luck! How did we end up in the only ruin with active spells remaining?

If there werent any left, dear boy, there wouldnt have been any treasures, either.

Not helping, Adzorg!

Dallion summoned his aura sword and slashed the air. Tens of spell circles formed in its trail, each creating an aether barrier to try and slow down the trap.

Split up! Viscount Salista ordered the remaining balderers.

As they scattered, more sections of the realm became affected, shooting destructive beams of light onto the structures.

Getting a notion which areas were safe, the viscount had the bladerer carrying him go in that direction. Dallion did the opposite. He had played enough video games back on Earth to know that the path to the treasure was covered in traps. If he wanted to reach his goal quickly, that was the safest bet. Besides, things could hardly get much worse at this point, so he might as well fly into the eye of the hurricane.

Dallion took a small clay cylinder from his belt and broke it. The spell inside came into effect, causing an aether echo to emerge.

Deal with him, Dallion whispered, as he split into instances along the path of traps.

Pillars of light kept on crashing down in almost predictable fashion. The mages of the time probably didnt imagine someone would use their safeguards to reach the heart of the vault. Everything considered, they had been rightonly a reckless fool would deliberately put himself in danger. Then again, the only difference between a reckless fool and an intrepid maverick was ninety levels.

Its unlike you to leave echoes to deal with your fights, Adzorg remarked.

To this Dallion just smiled. One of the bonuses of being a domain ruler was his ability to move familiars between the real world and his realm. Right now, Dallion had let the

creatures roam his mansion in the imperial capital while he took a more hands-on approach. The notion had annoyed his great-grandmother the Duchess of House Elazni but it kept him from getting complacent. More importantly, it focused everyone's attention away from the important things he was doing.

The rays made a sharp turn, intensifying in the direction of the higher points of the realm. It was notable that regardless of the fury with which they crashed onto the structures, there didn't seem to be any damage.

A reinforced area, Dallion thought.

That had to be it. Casting a spell to boost his speed, he darted in that direction and, upon reaching the desired spot, left the realm.

Reality flashed back to the real world, moving Dallion to the inside of the vault. The space was small and dark, or it would have been if Dallion's presence hadn't activated the defensive spells. Clearly, they were just as active as they had been within the realm itself.

Magic circles formed on all surfaces of the room, illuminating it with their purple glow. Ironically, the first thing that came into view was Viscount Salista.

The tip of the rapier thrust right at Dallion's face amid the many aether shards that were starting to fill the room.

Without panic or concern, Dallion summoned his harpsisword and deflected the blow.

So persistent. Dallion summoned the aura sword with his free hand. One quick wave later, and the entire room was isolated, with thick barriers of purple that covered the floor, walls, and ceiling. I'd hoped you'd quit back in the realm.

Just because you know some magic? The viscount pulled back, not in the least bit impressed. I've been fighting on the front long before the start of the war. You think that a few magic tricks would make you better than me?

That's how it usually works. Dallion waved his aura sword again to create a new layer of barriers over the cracked ones.

In the light, the prize had become visible: a single chalice of Moon platinum placed on a pedestal in the center of the small room. A series of religious scenes were engraved all over its surface, visible only to people with a perception trait of forty or more. The gorgon embodiment of the White Moon Emion was depicted in several of those scenes, granting her followers with good fortune and prosperity. By any standard, the item could be defined as priceless. The Moon platinum alone was enough to make everyone outside of the imperial family envious, yet that wasn't why Dallion wanted it.

Plunging forward in another attack, the viscount reached to grab the chalice.

Noticing his intentions, Dallion extended the magic threads from within his body in the direction of the item.

ITEM AWAKENING

The green rectangle popped up the instant the magic threads came into contact. The realm had shifted again, transporting Dallion to a serene lake surrounded by platinum white sand.

You are in the land of CHALICE.

Defeat the guardian to fulfill CHALICES destiny.

That was sort of good. It meant that the item still had a guardian hopefully one that could be reasoned with. Unfortunately, there also was a fly in the ointment the same fly that had been pestering him all day now.

Without a word, Dallion played a chord on his harpsisword. Music, attack, and magic skills combined, causing a series of purple threads to shoot out from the weapon. Mercilessly, they attached to the viscounts armor and throat, freezing him in place. A split second later, the mans entire armor shattered.

I warned you last time, Dallion said, still playing chords on his harpsisword as he approached. I was very clear about it.

You still cant kill me.

Here lay the problem. Despite his hounding, the noble was loyal to the empire and still took part in skirmishes on the front. After the return of the nymph empress, the Azure Federation had crawled out from their holes and launched attacks on the frontier. In most of the cases, their attacks ended in defeat, although there were chunks of territory they continued to gain here and there.

If Dallion were to kill an ally during peacetime, hed have a lot of explaining to do, not to mention give House Mizovy an excuse to cause problems in the capital. Salista knew it, so thats why he kept on hounding Dallion every chance he got.

Cant kill me, cant cripple me, cant hurt me, the noble smirked.

Wrong. I can definitely hurt you. Dallion infused the harpsisword with magic and thrust it into the others stomach.

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage is increased by 1000%

PERMANENT EFFECT DIARRHEA

VISCOUNT SALISTAs stomach has been affected. He will receive urges every hour until the status is removed.

The status continues to be in effect in the real world.

The man flashed out of existence, leaving the realm.

Ouch! Vihrogonthe dryad guardian of Dallions shieldsaid. Might have been better if youd have killed him.

I didnt harm him physically. Dallion let go of his harpsisword, causing the weapon to disappear in midair. He can complain to the emperor if he wants to. Part of him hoped that the viscount would. Now to do what I came for.

Leveling up the World #Chapter 846: Fourth Moonstone - Read Leveling up the World Chapter 846: Fourth Moonstone

Chapter 846: Fourth Moonstone

The lake turned platinum the moment Dallion touched it with the tip of his harpsisword. Ripples formed, spreading along the surface in perfect circles.

Looking at it for a few moments longer, Dallion bent down and put his hand in. Instantly, the surface hardened in an attempt to trap his hand. Thanks to his reaction trait, Dallion easily pulled his hand out before that could happen.

Sneaky. He smiled.

Someone had gone through a lot of trouble to make sure that the item was protected from without and within. The proper way to claim what was hidden was to swim down through the lake, face the guardian, then hope to have enough health left to deal with any remaining surprises. Of course, there were alternatives.

Nox, Ill need your help for a bit, Dallion said.

A dull meow from his realm let Dallion know that the enthusiasm wasnt shared.

Ill just take a moment.

A crackling puma emerged in the realm beside him. The creature was twice the size of a human, its pitch-black body covered with eyes. This was the first companion familiar Dallion had obtained back when he was still in his home village. Since then, it had grown quite a bit, yet its dislike of water remained the same.

With a yawn, the large puma stepped away from the edge of the lake, waving its tail in annoyed fashion.

GUARDIAN CHALLENGE

Nox has challenged the guardian of CHALICE on your behalf!

The guardian has no choice but to respond to the challenge.

Thanks, buddy. Dallion patted the crackling behind the head, proceeding to scratch behind its ear.

Nox looked away indignantly, pretending to be too old for such foolishness, yet never fully moving away.

Large black tentacles emerged from the center of the lake. They were soon followed by a humanoid body with almost as many eyes as the crackling.

A Scylla? Dallion wondered. It made sense come to think of it, although it had been a while since hed faced one. Want to stay around and he began, but before he could finish the sentence, Nox had already disappeared. Guess not, Dallion sighed.

CHALICE GUARDIAN - FUOCO

Species: SCYLLA

Class: SHADOW

Health: 84%

Traits:

- BODY 50

- MIND 70

- REACTION 30

- PERCEPTION 40

- MAGIC 40

Skills:

- ATTACK
- GUARD
- ATHLETICS
- ACROBATICS
- SPELLCRAFT
- CARVING
- ARTS
- FIRE WATER (Species Unique)

Weakness: NONE

A white rectangle emerged above the guardians head. The traits werent particularly impressive, but it had a proper name, suggesting that it was a few levels above the standard creatures.

I dont suppose youll settle for a draw? Dallion asked, using his music skill to spread fear into the heart of the guardian. Unfortunately, none of the music strands were able to attach to their target. Guess not.

Just to stress on that, the guardian clapped his hands, setting the surface of the lake alight. White flames rose up, reaching all the way up to the creatures waist.

Thats something new, Adzorg said. Could you move a bit closer?

I dont think I have an option.

When you reach my age, dear boy, youll find that there are very few things in the realm of magic that surprise you. This is one of them.

So, its not common nymph magic.

No, its not common nymph magic. This is a unique gift to this individual guardian. Very much like Dirohs ice magic, it shouldnt exist under normal circumstances.

Thirty levels ago, Dallion might have been worried. Now he pitied the guardian. It wasnt like hed be killing the entity. After its defeat, it would return stronger than before and

without any void corruption. Still, the fight might well be described as a full-grown tiger fighting a newly born kitten.

Not even bothering to summon his aura sword, Dallion cast a five-circle spell. A blue glow spread from him, freezing the flames solid. Just as he was about to offer another draw, cracks emerged throughout the ice. A loud, shattering sound followed. The flames shot up like a living coil. Wings sprouted, along with a beak and two pearl-like gems that composed the eyes.

A platinum firebird?

The giant creature screeched with all its might, then enveloped the scylla, granting it wings.

COMBAT INITIATED

A fire infused line attack flew in Dallions direction.

Choosing to take the fight to the air, Dallion cast a flight spell, avoiding the attack. Then he charged straight at his enemy. The guardian did the same. Platinum swords formed in all of its tentacles, while it summoned a massive crossbow. The design was rather unique, holding three arrows instead of the usual four.

Tentacles extended, encircling Dallion in an attempt to cut off his escape. White flames poured onto him from all directions, followed by a shot of the crossbow.

Dallion didnt panic. With perfect calm, he cast a series of protective spells. Purple barriers stacked up in front of him. One by one they shattered, though each time they took away from the bolts force to the point that Dallion was able to grab them through the air with ease.

Target markers covered the guardian, showing Dallion all weak spots. It was slightly annoying that they would appear on weaker enemies, which he could take out even without knowing them. Still, there was no point in looking a gift horse in the mouth. Using his strength and reflexes, he threw all three arrows back at the base of the tentacles.

CRITICAL HIT

Dealt damage is increased by 200%

CRITICAL HIT

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CRITICAL HIT

Dealt damage is increased by 200%

The tentacles twisted in pain, while the platinum fire attempted to burn through Dallion. It was futile, of course. He had already covered his body with spells to resist magic of that level.

Just finish it, Vihrogon said. No one likes a show off.

Sorry, Dallion whispered, then thrust his harpsisword forward. A jet of water shot from the tip of the weapon.

Noticing the attack, the guardian quickly split into instances, pulling away. Alas for him, the water split up, curving in the direction of each instance, then pierced through his chest.

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage is increased by 1000%

A red rectangle emerged, followed by a blue one.

CHALICE level has increased!

The CHALICE has been improved to pure MOON PLATINUM.

There was a moment in which Dallion wondered whether it would change into something else. Of course, he knew better. Moon platinum was the rarest metal there was. For there to be anything beyond that, it had to have divine qualities; rather, even more divine qualities.

The guardian disappeared in a cloud of glowing dust, taking with him the flaming lake. With the main feature of the realm gone, it resembled a bowl still shining in a bright white. If anything, the light was a lot stronger than before and how couldnt it be, since it held one of the greatest treasures the world had to offer: a white Moonstone.

Theres no need to remove it from the chalice, dear boy, Adzorg said. Its valuable in its own right. Why not simply take it?

Why not both? Dallion made his way to the chunk of shining white crystal and placed his hand on it. The next moment, the treasure was gone, moved into his own personal realm. That makes four.

He was still a long way from getting all of them. Supposedly, other than their appearance, there was no difference between one Moonstone and another. Initially, Dallion thought that they would affect the respective trait of the Moon they belonged to, but from what he could tell, they all emanated the same type of divine magic. Also, he

had noticed that keeping them within his realm tended to boost his magic and awakened powers.

What do you think, Harp? Dallion looked at the harpsisword. Any remarks?

No, the nymph guardian replied.

Ever since the return of her species, she had become a lot quieter. Dallion couldn't blame her. At first, he had spent several times per day visiting her tower in the awakened realms in an attempt to cheer her up, or at least find out her concerns. Yet, no matter the approach, the result was the same a lot of silence and a vague promise she'll tell him later.

Well, I guess all that's left to do is go back to the real world, grab the chalice and

Collect the stinky mess you left in the chamber, Vihrogon interrupted.

Crap! Dallion said. He had completely forgotten the viscount.

Yep, that would be the result, Vihrogon chuckled. *As both of you pointed out, you can't kill him.*

Sadly, that included leaving him in the ruins vault. With the spells in effect, there was no way that the noble would make it out of here on his own. Dallion would have no choice but to carry him, which was going to end up being a bit messy.

You have no choice, dear boy. Adzorg chimed in. *You're allies after all.*

With allies like these I don't need Nevermind. He left the realm, returning into the real world.

Some of the scholars of the world claimed that everything in a person's life was perfectly balanced. The more hardships one went through, the greater level he was expected to obtain. That was only partially true. Indeed, the awakened did all the serious fighting, but they enjoyed a far higher level of comfort. In this case, though, Dallion's shiny moonstone came with a diarrhea-plagued noble that he had to save and carry back to the imperial capital. The only positive in the situation was that he'd enjoy seeing the reaction of the Mizovys upon seeing or rather smelling the state of their dog.

The trip back to the capital was long and arduous. Even with spells, the viscount proved to be a handful. When he wasn't dealing with his status effect, he was actively trying to kill Dallion which, after having his artifact trinkets removed, turned out to be an impossible task.

When, a week later, a crimson cloud fort descended from the sky, Dallion was all too happy. The fury captain in charge of the fort conveyed the usual warning from the

emperor, but that had long lost its significance. As long as he continued to play the role of a spoiled fool, there would be no serious punishment.

On the way back to the capital, the fort came across a dozen more coming from the front. Despite the effort the furies had put into patching up the forts exteriors, it was obvious that they had suffered heavy casualties. The war near the coasts was getting more costly by the month. Supposedly, the Alliance of Steel and Stone was taking on the brunt of the nymphs attacks, but Dallion was starting to have his doubts. More and more awakened joined the provincial armies, and few emerged to replace them.

After another two days, the imperial palace became visible in the distance. Known as the greatest city in the world, it shined brightly like a star in the night. No longer feeling tired, Dallion went to the top of the cloud fort to enjoy the breeze and the view.

Almost as soon as he did so, a green butterfly flew up to him.

Hey, Dallion whispered with a smile, as he grabbed the creature.

The butterfly burst into a ball of vapor, which then transformed into a scroll.

New losses. Im fine, but want to see you soon.

Eury

New losses, Dallion thought. He wasnt worried that his fiance couldnt handle herself, but if things continued like this, in about a year, there'd only be two powers in the world: the empire and the Azure federation. He had to find a way to level up fast and reach the sixth awakening gate.

Reading the scroll once more, he transported it into his realm.

Theres no point in keeping her letters, dear boy, Adzorg grumbled. *Technically, youre not supposed to even talk to her.*

Technically, this isnt talking, Dallion replied.

Sure, be a smart ass.

At least thats better than the alternative, Vihrogon wasnt able to keep himself from saying.

The comment earned a chuckle.

Count Elazni. A crimson fury approached him. The emperor has ordered you to go to his gardens alone.

Of course. Alone? That wasnt the most encouraging sign.

Leveling up the World #Chapter 847: East Domain - Read Leveling up the World Chapter 847: East Domain

Chapter 847: East Domain

There was a stark difference in the emperors garden. All the green plants had vanished, replaced by shades of crimson red. Normally, Dallion wouldnt put any stock in it, but given that the emperor had called for him so suddenly, it was nave to think this wasnt meant to intimidate him.

The path, too, had transformed. No longer the straight line of tiles, it zigzagged in deliberate fashion, ensuring that visitors had to walk as long as possible until they made it to the emperor.

Youre in trouble, a vine bush chuckled as Dallion passed by.

At this point, that was pretty obvious. Dallion wouldnt be surprised if any of the plants attacked him on the way. Most likely, they werent going to kill him, but a scratch here and there would be acceptable.

The further he went, the more plants joined in. Curiosity emanated from them, suggesting that the result of the meeting was anyones guess.

After several minutes, the path suddenly straightened, leading directly into a massive rosebush.

Dallion, Dallion, Dallion the emperor said. As he did, the rosebush untangled, transforming into an archway. What will we do with you?

Shining as bright as ever, the ruler of the empire was on a marble throne, leaning on his left hand. Initially his attire seemed rather simple, made entirely of cotton. That was until one realized that it was actually alive.

Emperor. Dallion fell to one knee. A lazy wave of a hand on the emperors side allowed him to stand up.

Youre like a feral kitten. Sneaking out of our home, then causing trouble before you return.

The description was rather apt, making Dallion smile on the inside. The first time hed returned was after the death of the general. With the Order of the Seven Moons claiming that the snob had been a high-ranking member of the Star cult, the emperor

had little choice but to make Dallion a full count. After that, all trips were markedly less significant, though never low key.

And this time you brought back a dead bird with you, the emperor continued.

The viscount is very much alive, emperor.

Hes politically dead. People have been asking for your head long before this. While it amuses us having you stir up this boring place, youre no longer a child. The tall man rubbed his chin. Youve entered the teenager phase no longer cute and requiring a lot of maintenance.

All of Dallions bravado vanished, along with most of his confidence. If one continued the allegory, he was about to be given a time-out. And in this world, that meant a few decades in a prison item. Had he pushed his luck too far?

And what does one do with children when they grow up? The emperor moved his head off his hand. They kick them out.

There was a long moment of silence.

Am I being banished? Dallion found the strength to ask.

What? The emperor blinked. Of course not. What gave you that idea?

Given everything so far, it was a logical assumption to make.

Youre making me an archduke? A sense of euphoria filled Dallion all of a sudden. He had never held much hope for such an outcome, but everything was in the emperors hands. As ruler, he could do anything he wished, and that included giving Dallion his own province.

Were allowing you to make your own settlement in the wilderness, the emperor said firmly.

Dallion felt like a deflating balloon. Objectively, that was a huge deal more than anyone could hope for. Dallion was supposed to be overjoyed, yet after mistakenly considering that he might be made an archduke, this new offer seemed like a massive demotion.

Thatll give you a chance to make use of all that energy you have in useful ways.

Yes, sire. Ill be sure to help the war effort and

Youll be creating your new domain to the east, the emperor interrupted. At the edge of our borders.

The east, emperor?

Even the Order didnt expand much to the east. Before the war, they had focused on expanding westwards, even making attempts to cross the world ocean. The only one whod chosen to hide out east was Arthurows.

All nobles of significance are already expanding our domain to the west. Youll have an easier time expanding it east, and without getting distracted by anyone else.

The hint was clear.

Yes, sire.

Good. Well grant you the power to recruit anyone you want, as long as they arent from the imperial capital.

Normally, that wouldnt be a problem. There wasnt anyone that Dallion would take from here, anyway. However, there were two exceptions.

Thank you, emperor. If I may, can I request that an exception be made?

Youll get your apprentice. The emperor all but sighed. We dont consider her part of the city.

Were grateful, but I was hoping that youd grant me an advisor as well.

The request visibly caught the emperors attention. The man leaned forward, putting his hands together an indication he wanted to learn more.

Id like to take Adzorg, sire. Dallion fought to say the words. Im aware of the esteem you hold him in, but would very much like to make use of his wisdom. *Not to mention that you already promised that youd give him to me when I won the spire fields battle.*

You want Adzorg? The emperor asked, as if Dallion had uttered a blasphemy.

Ill make sure hes bound to my domain. And, I promise that hell cause no more troubles to you or

After what happened at the Academy, we didnt think youd want to have anything to do with the old man. Granted, well have to settle with a less than adequate chess partner. As eager as Alien is to please, his chess skills are rather nonexistent. The emperor scratched his chin. Very well. Well give you Adzorg, but only after youve created your domain.

Im grateful, sire. Dallion bowed deeply.

Naturally, you'll still be allowed to spend time in our capital. As we said, we like it when you stir things up. Just don't go overboard.

I'll try my best, emperor.

The emperor waved his hand, indicating the conversation was over. On cue, Dallion started walking backwards. After a few seconds, the rosebush closed up before him, shielding the ruler from view.

I don't think you could have hoped for anything more, dear boy, Adzorg said from his domain. I'm touched by your concern, by the way. Not that I minded my present circumstances.

I can always leave you where you are, old man, Dallion grumbled mentally.

No, no. It's quite alright. I could use a change of scenery.

Dallion smiled. The only people who preferred a golden cage were those too weak to survive out of it. In their own ways, Dallion and Adzorg had grown beyond that, and even the allure of luxury wasn't enough to change their mind.

Two overseers were waiting for Dallion once he left the garden. One was a young boy who didn't seem to like him very much. The two had gotten on the wrong foot ever since Dallion's first visit to the capitol, and things had gone downhill from there. Even so, he had to accept Dallion's title. While barons were a dime a dozen, counts were just important enough to be noticed.

I'll take you to your house, count, the boy said with a note of anger.

Since it's you, how can I refuse? Dallion smiled widely.

Right. The overseer frowned. And get your pets under control!

There's been complaints?

Gleam created an illusionary tower on the roof of your mansion, count. The other overseer stepped in, placing a hand on the boy's shoulder. Apparently, in response to a comment made by a member of another noble house.

Dallion nodded. It was no secret which noble house that might be.

While there's no law against it, there are certain expectations from members of the emperor's city.

Did she dispel it?

Not before a rather long and interesting conversation. Dont get me wrong, count. Gleams not the most irrational companion the capital has had by far. A lot of children actually admire her. I myself am used to her eccentricities. That doesnt excuse her behavior, though.

Ill talk to her. Dallion nodded. By the sound of things, she could use a change of scenery as well. Anything else?

No. Your other companions have behaved quite well.

Thats good to know. Dallion turned to the overseer boy. Shall we?

A bubble of reality formed around Dallion and the younger overseer, scooping them from the emperors palace. Making its way through matter as if it didnt exist, the bubble transported Dallion to the door of his mansion, where it popped out of existence. Naturally, the overseer had disappeared as well.

And a good day to you too. *Shithead*, Dallion added mentally.

As Dallion stepped towards the door, it opened.

Welcome, young master. Taem said. He took on the complicated role of Dallions butler, advisor, and legal expert when it came to the capital. I hope youve had a successful trip.

Is there any other kind? Dallion smiled as he entered.

When the mansion was originally created by Vihrogon, it was a prime example of dryad elegance. For almost a week, it had even created a fashion trend in the city, causing a number of nobles to redecorate or rebuild their own homes in the dryads style. Since then, the place had transformed into something completely different. Most of the basement and the first two floors were transformed into a one massive space to hold parties, which happened every other night, regardless of whether Dallion was there or not. The top floor was divided between Dallions bedroom, a guest room, and rooms for his familiar companions. Naturally, Taem also had his own quarters, which were in a separate section of the basement.

Glad to hear that, sir, the butler said with a straight face. Would you like for me to call your usual friends?

Not tonight. I have some packing to do.

Youre leaving again, sir? Taem arched a brow.

Yep, but not for what you think. The emperor granted me the right to create my own settlement.

Thats extremely generous, young master. The duchess will be delighted.

Yeah That wasnt at all how Dallion saw it. The old woman wasnt at all pleased with his antics. She had learned to accept them, but never hid her disapproval. The rest of the family, on the other hand, were more than pleased. Dallions reckless disregard of social norms meant he would never be proclaimed heir to House Elazni, leaving them to settle things between themselves. Wheres Diroh?

The apprentice is out at the moment. I expect shell be back by evening.

That was highly doubtful. Since her entering the capital after weeks of delay on the part of the archmage the fury had received quite the welcome. Finding her exotic, not to mention actual fury royalty, the nobles that despised Dallion had done practically everything to find her favor. Diroh had been warned to be on guard, but even if she hadnt, spending years in charge of a hunters tavern had taught her a thing or two.

Would you like me to call for her? Taem offered.

That would be nice, thanks. Dallion went up the single staircase in the middle of the room. Ill start packing my things.

Of course, sir.

Oh, and please tell grandma that Ill

Already done, young master. She wishes you well.

The silent treatment already? Duchess Elazni wishing him well was the equivalent of her voicing her absolute opposition to him moving out. Since it was an imperial decree, there was nothing she could do, not even voice her opposition in private. Not wishing to see him, though, conveyed the message loud and clear.

Thank her for me. Dallion paused for a moment. Oh, and once Im gone, tell Ber he can stay here.

Youd allow him to stay here in your absence? Im not sure your house will be able to withstand his lifestyle for long.

Ill still come by from time to time. As long as he doesnt enter my room, its fine to do what he wants. Im sure hell understand.

Leveling up the World #Chapter 848: Agents of the Order - Read Leveling up the World Chapter 848: Agents of the Order

Chapter 848: Agents of the Order

Going back to his room was always a bittersweet experience. Technically, Dallion didnt need to stay there. He tended to sleep in his realm or in the wilderness. At one point, he used it to have private conversations with one person or another, but that, too, had ended. Thanks to the duchess, his communication with Eury remained through magic letters, and other than Diroh there wasnt anyone else he trusted enough to bring here.

Piles of glass, metal, stone, and wooden objects covered parts of the floor. Some of them were brand new, some had been improved dozens of times. In all cases, they had been created by Dallion with the sole purpose of improving his skills. It would have been easy for him to use his domain ruler powers and stash them away. Ironically, he held his personal realm in a much greater regard, preferring to keep it neat and tidy.

Throwing them out also wasnt an option since Dallion had gotten to know their guardians rather well. Clearly, one of the first things hed do upon starting his own settlement was to create a building with a basement where to keep them until he gave them away to his future inhabitants.

Tiptoeing to his desk, Dallion placed his hand on the stone orchid. The flower was nearly in full bloom. Apparently, once the void had been purged from Dallions being, the seed had become a lot more susceptible. All the music and magic training in the room had made it bloom with ease. A bit more and hed be able to officially return it to the gorgon.

A knock came from the door.

Yes? Dallion looked over his shoulder.

The door opened and a pair of fury-like creatures stepped in. They had fury features, dryad hair, human skin texture, and dragon eyes, glowing red and cyan respectively. Of course, that appearance was nothing more than a set of complex illusions.

Gleam, Dallion said with a nod. Ruby.

About time you got back. The cyan-eyed fury crossed her arms. Would have been a lot faster if youd taken me along.

Youre the one who asked to stay here, Dallion replied calmly, removing his hand from the stone orchid. Also, an overseer told me about your tower adventure.

Gleams illusionary form frowned.

Soon enough, youll be able to make as many of those as you want.

Yeah. Was still impressive, though, she said with a cunning smile.

Im sure it was. Unwilling to squeeze his way through the room again, Dallion cast a flight spell and gently floated to the door. As he did, Gleam and Ruby dispelled their illusions, resuming the form of shardflies. How are the others doing?

The walls of the second floor corridor were covered in elaborate carvings depicting scenes of nature., One would guess that these had to be done by a master artist, and they would be in many ways wrong. Everything was done by none other than Ruby. The art and carving skill Dallion had taught him through magic had already been put to good use. The little guy had remained true to his artistic nature, while also improving his combat abilities.

Sadly, the same couldnt be said about the rest of Dallions familiars. Lux had very much insisted on learning music skills, which had turned out to be a colossal mistake. It wasnt that the firebird couldnt sing, but rather that he kept doing it incessantly in order to impress everyone around. Furthermore, he had combined the skill with his own flames, filling the sky with musical fireworks. One night had proved enough to unite all the nobles in the desire never to go through the experience again.

Nox, on his part, did the same things he did in Dallions realm mostly sleep. That left Gem, who, true to his own nature, floated about exploring as much of the world as he could get away with.

Lux. Dallion reached for the door to the firebirds room.

Before he could even reach it, blue flames emerged from the cracks of the door. Quickly merging to form the firebirds true form, only smaller.

Boss! Lux chirped, flying in circles around him. Youre back! Youre back! Youre back!

Nice to see you too, Lux. Dallion petted the firebird on the head. Did you behave while I was gone?

Yep! Yep! Absolutely, boss!

Dallion strongly doubted that, but nodded nonetheless.

Continuing on, He cracked Noxs door open and peeked inside. A large ball of darkness had curled up on the corner, snoring in catlike fashion.

Young master, Taem said from the floor below. Your apprentice has returned.

That was fast, Dallion thought. Rushing back to the main room of his house, though, he quickly saw one major detail the fury that had entered the mansion wasnt Diroh.

Gleam, Dallion said. Get everyone ready. Well be heading into the wilderness soon.

Right away? The shardfly fluttered up to his face. Do I get to show off before we go?

No, he replied, then went back down the staircase.

Taem tells me were heading into the wilderness, Diroh said. She was mimicking her voice, mannerisms, even attitude perfectly. However, there was no doubt in Dallions mind that the entity standing at the door was nothing else but a copyette.

In his mind, Dallion was going through options on how to deal with the apparent paradox. As good as the copyettes were at mimicking others, they werent in condition to explain the presence of two Dirohs in the city. There were enough spells that could cause the butler to forget, and possibly all the item guardians in the area, but they wouldnt trick the overseers.

Thats right. Dallion rushed down the stairs. On that note, theres something we need to discuss.

Upon reaching her, Dallion grabbed the fury by the hand.

ITEM AWAKENING

Reality changed, replacing the inside of Dallions mansion with a grey room made entirely of metal.

You are in the land of the RING.

Defeat the guardian to change the lands destiny.

The fury looked around casually.

Youre taking a huge risk, Dallion said. This better be important.

You worry too much. Weve done this before. Di likes to fly outside most of the time when youre not here.

Being a mage allowed her that privilege. Supposedly the rule had been established a few emperors ago, on a whims most imperial decrees were. Mages had the right to come and go to the city as they pleased. As in all things, there was a catch. Only mages invited to the capital could set foot there. Technically, the Academy was beyond the emperors reach, but with the emperor being a mage himself he had many ways of making the uninvited regret it.

People might be keeping an eye on her.

They are, the fake Diroh smiled. From the Academy, all imperial houses, even a few other nobles. Of course, all the watchers are ours.

No matter how many times he heard it, Dallion felt a feeling of unease. When he had agreed to work for the archbishop, he knew that the Order of the Seven Moons had copyettes in various places. He was astounded to find how many there were. Some of them had taken on the form on a permanent basis, taking on a role for decades or more. Others were only temporary measures lasting days or even hours.

Why are you here? Dallion went to the point.

The archbishop foresaw you'd be allowed a settlement, the copyette replied.

And he wants me to turn it down?

No. Leaving the capital is a positive development. Settling east will keep you away from the nymph empress. What's more the hand of the nymph changed, morphing into a map of the area the archbishop had the perfect location for you.

How thoughtful. Dallion looked closer.

A large red spot marked where the Order wanted him to start his domain. It was beyond the current borders of the empire, though not so much so as to cause any suspicion. It was far from any other settlement, providing Dallion a good opportunity to do anything he wanted, undisturbed and close to a water source. Most notable of all, it was just outside the eastern forest.

It's a bit north from what I was thinking, Dallion said. Was hoping to keep in touch with some mages.

That won't end up well. The archbishop had prophesied that if you want to have a chance, that's the spot.

Right. Dallion still had yet to get a straight answer regarding the prophecy skills or even if it was real but he couldn't argue with the results. It was thanks to the archbishop that he had found the fourth Moonstone, not to mention a lot of information about the important players of the capital.

Take advantage of the calm and use it to grow quickly and prepare.

Dallion waited. From experience, he knew that wouldn't be all. Each time the Order had given him something, they requested something more in return. So far, it was just informational a few questions from an item guardian here and there, but the difficulty of the requests was quickly ramping up.

You must get to ninety-five as quickly as possible, Diron said. A hundred if you can.

And I thought that it would be something difficult.

Thats the level at which the emperor will start noticing you.

I think hes noticed me plenty already.

He finds you amusing. The copyettes tone shifted abruptly. While its true that you can give most counts a run for their money, youre nowhere near an archduke. If were to get close to the emperor, youll need to be at least that strong.

At least as much. Deep inside, Dallion knew that all too well. The original plan was never to take on the emperor himself, even if he himself planned on doing just that. In order to get there, he had to get stronger and fast. A hundred, despite what hed just said, was only the first step.

I doubt Ill get there with a single city, he said.

You wont. The map disappeared. But its a start. Oh, and take a more active role on the political scene. Now that youre a true domain ruler, you can afford to show a bit of arrogance.

The conversation ended there. With nothing left to say or ask, Dallion returned to the real world and immediately ordered the copyette to oversee the move. As for himself, the only thing he did was to move the stone orchid back into his domain and make arrangements with Taem.

The butler needed no instructions, but Dallion gave him enough, nonetheless.

The duchess would like to have an echo ring, young master, the man said.

No need. Ill be passing by often. Dallion forced a smile.

Of course, sir. The young duchess also would like to remind you of the conversation you had with her.

Dallion knew exactly which one she had in mind. He had been warned that certain members of his family might try to kill him, or worse. Apparently, his dropping out of the Elazni heir race had proved to be a temporary measure.

Tell her not to worry. I have everything under control.

Of course, young master.

Ten minutes later, Dallion flew out of the imperial palaces domain along with all his familiars, possessions, and Diroh. There was no telling when the switch would occur, so Dallion chose to initially head south.

The results didn't delay. Once the city was out of view, a merchant caravan was spotted. The driver appeared to be an old acquaintance of Dallion's back when he had first gone to Nerosal. Coincidentally, Diroh the real one was also there, sleeping in one of the wagons.

Time to say goodbye. The fake ice fury changed form, transforming into a middle-aged man in an expensive merchant outfit. You're on your own from here. Don't worry, though, we have your back.

I'm sure. Dallion didn't even pretend to be pleased. Tell the archbishop that when I get to a hundred, I'd like to have a one on one with him.

I'm sure he already knows. The merchant laughed. But if it'll make you feel better, I'll send the message. Who knows? If the Moons are willing, he might even agree to your request.

Leveling up the World #Chapter 849 - Read Leveling up the World Chapter 849

Chapter 849

The caravan dropped Dallion off at the start of the forest. The trees started up a lot smaller, though the hundred-foot variety was visible further away. A few brief goodbyes were said, including by a slightly embarrassed Diroh. The fury wasn't fully clear what had happened. From her perspective, it seemed like she'd gone on a flight, as she often did, and ended up falling asleep at a random merchant caravan. Nôv(el)B\\jnn

Skye would have jumped in if something had happened, she said, guilt and defensiveness emanating from her.

It's fine, Dallion said. He knew that against the Order, she never stood a chance.

You don't have to be like that. I can take care of myself. I've been taking care of myself long before you showed up. Before even Ji showed up!

Dallion looked at her. He could see exactly where this was going. The emotions bubbling within her were all too visible, and yet he could do nothing about it. A few sentences and she would be able to realize the big picture of it all. Everything would become clear with no possibility of misunderstanding. Yet, if she were to learn, so would others, possibly even the emperor.

I know, Di. I'm just worried this might be a dangerous time for you, Dallion used music skills to add some calm into his words. A few want to go against me in any way they can, and now that I'm out of the capital, they'll try to hurt you just to make a point.

At those words, Dirohs pearl necklace expanded, transforming into a cloud fox around her shoulders. The familiar come from the world of furies had established a deep bond with Di and was ready to sink its teeth and claws into anyone who'd be considered a threat. Sadly, it had proven helpless against the Orders copyettes.

Things will change soon, Dallion lied, forcing a smile. We're at a new beginning.

The trip through the forest was almost non-eventful. Subtly combining music and magic, Dallion sent out waves of fear all around him, discouraging any wilderness predators from attacking. In doing so, he also took the opportunity to check if anyone was trailing them.

Diroh used a few spells to do something of the sort, although she was still quite limited. The knowledge and artifacts obtained at the Academy had allowed her to be a rather good magic apprentice, but she was still far from the title of mage.

Evening approached. Once the sun fell beneath the horizon, Dallion summoned his aura sword and swung it through the air. A series of spell circles formed.

I can fly on my own, you know, Diroh said, crossing her arms.

You'll have to. The spells triggered, all targeting Dallion. They're for me, so I could keep up.

For the first time that day, the fury smiled.

A small sphere of cyan formed, rising into the sky.

I don't know that spell. Diroh looked at it, trying to discern the magic within.

Guiding light. It'll lead us to where we need to go.

Moments later, both of them rose up into the sky, flying after the ball of light. Even with all the spells he'd cast on himself, Dallion remained slower than the fury. It almost made him envious of the ease with which she followed the guiding light, often looking over her shoulder to check how far he was behind her.

Cheeky as always, Dallion thought.

You can't blame her, Vihrogon said. *It's one of the areas in which she's better than you.*

Not enough to look out for herself.

Were you when you were level forty?

The question was valid. At the time, Dallion constantly complained that people kept underestimating him. After everything he'd achieved, he was convinced he had what it took to fend for himself. Why would Di be any different?

Maybe, he thought.

The flight continued till morning. The lack of domains became more and more apparent, as did the presence of powerful wilderness creatures. For Moons know how long they had been there, without contact with any awakened. It was notable that the dragon had also had its lair here, before Katka had killed it, turning it into a shadow.

Dallion cast a spell, causing the guide light to disappear.

What's up? Icicles formed around the fury as she got ready for combat.

Nothing. Dallion played it down. We're already there.

Where?

Just beyond the forest.

The just beyond ended up being another twenty minutes of flight. Eventually, the massive trees gave way to a normal forest, which then slowly turned into a plain. There was a river nearby, just as the copyette had claimed, as well as a distant mountain chain.

I'd have preferred a bit less isolated, Adzorg commented. But I suspect this place has its advantages.

Down there. Dallion pointed as he flew down.

His first instinct was to create the domain right next to the river. After some consideration, though, he chose to position it up to a mile away. If things went as they should, the settlement would reach the river soon enough.

REALM CREATION

A green rectangle emerged, followed by a blue one.

Name the Land you wish to create.

Sandstorm, Dallion said. This time the name was for keeps. In all honesty, he hadn't given the matter too much thought. Sandstorm sounded well enough, plus it continued the inside joke.

You have created the Land of Sandstorm Level 1.

You have full control of the Land of Sandstorm.

The glass colossus has returned as the lands guardian.

Defeat the guardian to change the lands destiny.

You're back? Dallion asked, surprised. The last time he'd seen this particular guardian was when he'd created his first domain back during the battle in the vortex fields. Back then, Dallion only used the domain as the means to an end. For some reason, though, the area guardian that had appeared had remained linked to him.

Thought you're an owner worth having, the colossus replied.

While the white rectangle described him as being level onesame as the domain itself, Dallion could see that his traits were boosted. In fact, they had retained the exact values as they'd been after the leveling ups.

Thanks, and sorry about last time. Dallion waved through the blue rectangle, causing it to disappear. Ready for a few more rounds?

COMBAT INITIATED

Not even using a weapon, Dallion charged forward, landing a punch in the colossus chest.

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage is increased by 1000%

SANDSTORM Level increased

The VILLAGE has been improved to Level 2.

It was easy to claim that the guardian hadn't improved much, but that wouldn't take into account the eleven levels Dallion had leveled up since then, not to mention that nearly all of his skills had reached the hundred level cap.

The colossus shattered, then re-emerged, stronger than before.

COMBAT INITIATED

The rectangle emerged, though this time it wasn't Dallion who had initiated it.

Eager, aren't you? he smiled.

Granting the area guardian for his initiative, Dallion waited.

Rows of glass shards emerged, surrounding the entity, then flew all in Dallions direction. Each of them was accompanied by a long green cone indicating the path theyd take, including the spot they were aiming for.

Dallion could have easily completed several guard sequences, as he evaded them, but he chose not to. It was bad enough for his opponent that the speed of the ranged projectiles felt like pebbles sinking through honey. Dallion didnt even bother to deflect them, merely walking forward, as if immune, until he stood a step away from the colossus.

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage is increased by 1000%

SANDSTORM Level increased

The VILLAGE has been improved to Level 3.

Wow, Dirroh whispered. I could even see that.

Being both in the real world and his domain, she could see everything short of the rectangles. The full strength of a noble was on display.

Was I like that in front of the archduke? Dallion asked, glancing at her.

The greater the level, the greater the difference between gates, Vihrogon said. *Domains are yours to control, which no non-awakened could even imagine.*

Dallion feared to think what the jump beyond the next level would be.

COMBAT INITIATED

The red rectangle appeared, reminding him that the fight hadnt ended.

Choosing to avoid ranged damage, the colossus went back to melee, its limbs transforming into sharpened blades.

Without thinking, Dallion punched the air in its direction, performing a point attack. The strength of the attack split the air, yet surprisingly was avoided.

CRITICAL STRIKE

Dealt damage is increased by 200%

The guardians left arm shattered as it was torn off.

ARM SEVERED

Enemy will no longer be able to make use of its LEFT ARM

Good reflexes. Dallion followed up with three more line attacks. This time, they hit their target long before the colossus got anywhere close.

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage is increased by 1000%

SANDSTORM Level increased

The VILLAGE has been improved to Level 4.

Level four. By this point, the area of the domain had stretched beyond the river. If Dallion wanted, he could create a town larger than his home village. Of course, it would be a very empty town. At the moment, his domain had one potential citizen and no structures whatsoever.

COMBAT INITIATED

A new red rectangle emerged.

I think we should stop here, Dallion said.

From what he remembered, the first five levels of settlement corresponded to a village. After that, it would become a town.

Shards of glass flew by Dallions face, while the colossus followed up with a combined acrobatics attack. The motion was fluid and precise. In normal circumstances, even mid-level awakened would have trouble against such an opponent. Dallion, though, could see all the attacks before they happened. Before any awakened markers formed, he knew the reach, speed and trajectory of all attacks in his mind. He also knew the best way to counter.

TERMINAL STRIKE

Dealt damage is increased by 1000%

The torso of the colossus cracked up again, then crumbled to pieces. Only this time, a new rectangle emerged.

SANDSTORM Level not increased due to lack of inhabitants

4000 inhabitants required for SANDSTORM to improve further

The VILLAGE remains Level 4

The area guardian reappeared again, though this time there were no changes

Was wondering when that would happen, Dallion said. Lets stop it here for now, he told the colossus. I promise well continue soon enough.

The guardian nodded, then disappeared into the ground.

Well, Dallion turned to Diroh. What do you think?

You have a whole lot of nothing, she said unapologetically. A lot of very nice nothing.

A lot of nice nothing, Dallion let out a chuckle. Well have to do some building.

Slabs of stone emerged from the ground, creating a wall on the edge of his domain. Ten feet tall, it was enough to stop a few beasts, but couldnt be considered protection against any real opponents.

Whats that supposed to be? The fury narrowed her eyes.

Just marking the border. Well sleep in the open tonight. Tomorrow, we start building.

How about building at least one house tonight? Vih can do it easily, and if not him, I

Some fresh air will do you good, Dallion interrupted.

In truth, he wanted to think a bit before committing to anything. Forging a domain was a lot different than shaping his personal realm; and while he had the option to destroy everything and restart from scratch, he preferred to save some time by spending a while thinking about it first.

Seriously? The fury extended her air currents, using them to form the symbols of a four-circle spell. Shards of ice emerged from the ground. They were a lot smaller and slower than the wall Dallion had created, but still combined to form a simple and very pyramidal ice structure. There, Diroh said. No need to thank me.

Youve learned a few new spells as well, Dallion admitted. Go ahead. I still prefer to sleep in the open, though.

Whats so special in the open?

There are many Moons tonight, he said into the sky.

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Chapter 850: Green Moon Visit

Five Moons glowed in the sky. The Blue Moon and Cyan Moons were missing, pushing the light towards the warmer part of the color spectrum. There was no telling whether the missing Moons were upset, or they didnt wish to look upon the world at this time.

To this day, Dallion knew quite little about the Moons. His interactions had made him know some of their personalities a bit. The copyettes and clerics he was in communication with occasionally would let slip a crumb of information, but a lot of the practical bits remained pure speculation.

Does everyone see you in the same way? Dallion asked while laying on the ground. Or do you depend on each person?

Only wind replied.

Sure, be mysterious. Dallion yawned. If one of them reaches you first, you wont stay amused. Will there be a new Moon in the sky? He rubbed his eyes. If I reach the gate, will I join you up there?

As he looked, the Moons seemed to move faster. Dallion considered the possibility. They werent rolling along the sky, so he couldnt tell for certain. More likely it was wishful thinking, brought on because of his current thoughts. Then, the Green Moon fell out of the sky.

Ever the optimist. The Moon transformed into an Earth military pilot in a glowing green uniform.

Dallion jumped up. For several seconds, his mind tried to come to terms with what had happened. Never before had a Moon come down in avatar form to talk to him.

Im dreaming, arent I? he shook his head.

Been a while since our last talk. The Moon took a step forward, then sat down in a plastic green chair that had just appeared. I remember there was a time when youd pray every night for people to appear in your dreams. Jirohs fine, by the way. Shes talking to Di right now.

Did Galatea make her his favored?

You dont have to be a favored to have us visit. Though, it helps.

Dallion had long stopped trying to figure out what the Moons were really thinking. Sometimes, they seemed to be helping, sometimes they seemed to be watching, on a few occasions he was fairly certain they had hindered him.

What did I mess up this time? Dallion asked.

The glass half full. The pilot shook his head, then took out a candy bar from his pocket. Nothing as far as were concerned. Im here to give you a hint.

Why?

Because you need it.

Why are you giving me anything? I thought you said that you wouldnt influence me from here on.

True. Chewing the candy bar, the Moon crumbled the wrapper and threw it on the ground. But this time we thought you deserved a bit of thanks for what you did to the void.

Youre thanking me for killing the general? Dallion thought. He despised the man, and for good reason as it turned out, but he had already received an achievement. Plus, the void couldnt be killed.

Yes. The Moon nodded. The void cant be killed, but its the effort that counts. Now to the hint. A while back we helped you create an emblem.

Dallion thought back. That was around the time he had learned to properly forge. The item had taken him an enormous amount of effort, although now he could make one just like it without breaking a sweat.

Dallion summoned the item. It was small, more like a piece of jewelry made of sky silver. Dallion had made it using one of the blueprints he had obtained within his trials. Thinking about it, it couldnt have been an accident.

We didnt let you have that just for fun, the pilot continued.

An emblem shell it was far from complete. Even with the basic form made to perfection, there were still seven empty holes within it forming the emblem of the Order.

It wasnt meant to be metal, Dallion thought, finally realizing it.

Now you get it, the Green Moon smiled.

I didnt even know about Moonstones when I got the blueprint.

I know. But we did.

I got them by accident. If I hadn't caught the phoenix or agreed to the deal, I wouldn't have set foot in the Academy.

That's what makes observing otherworlders so fascinating. Your journey is a chain of impossibilities. You're all given an equal chance, but it's up to you to make something out of it. Some start with the privilege of magic. Others are part of a noble family. Others still start at the very bottom, forcing them to make use of their otherworldly knowledge in different ways. It's never guaranteed to work out. Sometimes, it does.

That couldn't be said for Arthurows. The last Star had relied more on his knowledge of Earth and that had gotten him nowhere. If he hadn't been born in Nerosal, if he hadn't started in a city, he might well have been the one having this conversation with the Green Moon.

Dallion looked at the emblem. Instinctively, he knew which Moonstone should go where. At present, he had four of them, which left three remaining.

I almost used them against the void, he looked at the Green Moon.

I know. The other nodded. That would have just made your task more difficult, not impossible.

So, there really is an achievement for gathering all seven, Dallion thought vindicated.

What happens when I get them?

The Moon stood up, then tossed a coin into the air. Dallion instinctively looked up, only to see the coin land on the night sky, transforming into a Moon again. Immediately, Dallion looked back down, but the embodiment of the Moon had gone.

I said I'll just give you a hint, the Green Moon said. Figure out the rest on your own.

Dallion burst into instances, jumping off the ground. Night was almost over. Of the seven Moons, only the green one was visible half hidden beneath the north horizon.

Nightmares, dear boy? Adzorg asked. *Not like you to be so jumpy.*

Yeah, Dallion lied, leaving all but one of his instances to fade away. I think I'll go hunting a bit. Gleam, he brought the shardflies into the real world from his realm. Keep an eye on things here for me.

While you have all the fun.

Im going to get some food. Dallion continued towards the wall. The section he was heading to sank down, creating an opening. Not turn them to mush.

Everyones a critic.

As he walked, Dallion summoned the unfinished emblem. It had been so long since hed needed an emblem that hed completely forgotten about it. Good thing too, or he might have done something stupid, like fill up the holes.

Entering the forest, Dallion then went into a sprint. When he was far enough from Sandstorm, he ventured into his realm.

PERSONAL AWAKENING

The smell of seawater filled his nostrils, brough to him by a gentle breeze. The sun was high in the sky, its light adding to the glow of the moonstones. Gen, Dallions first echo, had arranged them one next to the other, creating one giant shard of four materials. Having them for so long, Dallion had stopped noticing the magnificence the giant crystals presented. Knowing that theyd be gone soon, made him see it once more.

Hell be upset, July said walking towards Dallion.

Who will? Dallion turned towards the echo. Ariel?

No.

July pointed at the Moonstones. A large aether jellyfish lay on top, like a transparent cap, as if it were an integral part of them. Being an entity created entirely of magic, it was normal for it to rest and feed there.

Gem, Dallion sighed. Ill need the Moonstones.

The aether fish rippled, then rippled some more.

Err, okay, boss. The creature detached from the shards, floating around them, before stopping a few feet away from Dallion. Will you be fighting?

Soon enough.

Bronze markers appeared around each of the Moonstones. Like cutout lines, they showed Dallion where to cut to create the shape he desired. Normally, that wouldnt be enough, but when combining his carving and scholarly skills, the correct shape took forma shape that would fit within the emblem he had crafted long ago.

Time to start.

The thread splitter emerged in Dallions hand. The dagger was sharp enough to cut through cloud matter, and thanks to a few enchantment spells, durable enough to withstand the hardness of diamond.

Two slashes were enough to separate the four Moonstones from each other. Feeling the absence, they changed form, becoming rounder. Now, the intricate bit began.

Thousands of bronze and copper markings appeared throughout the massive shape. Careful not to slice through the magic threads that composed the crystal, Dallion started slicing away. Each strike took a small chunk off, as if he were a surgeon removing burned flesh.

When a piece was cut off of the main Moonstone, it burned up releasing its magic charge into the awakened realm.

You have assimilated part of the MOONSTONEs magic.

Purple rectangles popped up one after the other, although none of them seemed to increase Dallions magic trait.

Ignoring it, Dallion kept on slicing. Gradually, the chunk shrank from the size of a large rock to that of an apple. The form had gained perfection, composed of so many individual cuts that it seemed oval.

All markers vanished, leaving the gem floating in the air. Dallion reached out and touched it. The moment his fingers came into contact with the hard surface, the Moonstone shrank to the size of a grain.

There was a small click as the grain entered its spot on the emblem, filling in the hole entirely.

MOON EMBLEM

1/7 COMPLETE

A yellow rectangle emerged.

Yellow? Dallion said. So far, hed never seen a rectangle that color. For that matter, there wasnt a yellow Moon, either.

The other three Moonstones were shaped in similar fashion. When one became part of the emblem, a yellow rectangle would appear. Once the item was four-out-of-seven complete, there were no more shards to work on.

I wouldnt say I understand it, Adzorg confessed. Its definitely something, although you wont be able to get a boost in battle should you need one.

As you said, sometimes there are more important things than a boost.

Quite right. Just keep in mind that Gryms still out there.

Right now, hes the least of my worries.

Taking the emblem with him, Dallion returned to the real world.

With a little help from the trees, he quickly managed to find a suitable creature for food. Even this far east most of the species were familiar. In this case, branchhare were the diet of the day. Large and nimble, they spent most of their life in the trees, eating nuts, acorns, and the occasional bird that flew too close.

Brushing up on his hunter skills, Dallion caught, drained, and skinned them with the thread splitter, then returned to his domain.

A camp fire was waiting for him upon arrival.

Very funny, he told the flames. Did Gleam teach you that?

Yes, Ruby replied.

It was undeniable that his illusions were getting better. Still, Dallion felt it wrong to have the food cooked on illusionary flames.

You can stop, Ill take care of it. He cast a quick spell, causing a second fire to appear nearby. Where are Di and Gleam off to?

To check out the mountains. Di thought it might be interesting.

And why didnt you go with them?

Someone had to take care of you.

It was difficult to say whether Dallion should feel flattered or insulted. Of everyone present, the only one capable of defeating him was Harp.

Just appreciate the gesture, Vihrogon said. Youll live longer that way.

The fake flame vanished, turning into a shardfly with ruby wings. After fluttering about, the creature landed on Dallions shoulder, as it used to back when he was a hunter.

Summoning a few pieces of wood, Dallion prepped the branchhare meat and put it on a spit to get cooked. Being tough, the meat was going to need an hour to be fully cooked.

Ruby, keep an eye on things. I need to start building my kingdom.

AREA AWAKENING