

## Chapter 3: New Quest

Suddenly, I heard the voice of an old man whispering to my ears.

Who was it?

Wait... was this the tree that I've been looking for? It knew how to speak? I wonder... Well, this was a fantasy game, so everything was possible.

"Guider, was that voice...?" I turned to the floating orb.

"Yes, I also heard it. That's the place where your main quest will begin! Remember that I said that you can only accept one quest at a time? A main quest is where you can begin. The main quest will then begin to branch into many new quests that you must complete consecutively, they auto-generate over time and based on your interactions with NPC! They call this the Branching Quest System."

The guide spirit told me something about this. It seemed that you could only take one quest because there was only one main quest? And then it branched out into many quests... this was confusing.

"Well, let's move there, the arrow is indicating to me to get there... This is easier than I thought, although I still feel bad about killing that little rabbit... I wish I could have made it my pet."

"A pet? Hm, well, Dryads have the ability to befriend forest creatures, and farmers have the power to tame cattle animals too... With enough Job advancements, you can even become things such as Shepherd and tame a bunch of sheep... But that's not something that has happened before, nobody picks such a useless class due to how little it has to offer in fighting capabilities." Said the spirit. "You're a weirdo for picking a race and a job class that doesn't even have much fighting power... Don't you realize that in an RPG you need to fight and kill monsters to grow stronger and progress?"

"I don't... And I joined this game for my daughter, I am not into these kinds of games." I sighed.

"Sigh... W-Well, count on me, I will try to help you... But you're quite the handful." Said the guide.

I didn't seem to be a conventional player. Well, I had never played these games in my life, so everything was fairly new to me. While some people might have felt familiar with the mechanics, they all seemed alien to me.

Also, from the little games I've ever played, this felt more like I was having a trip elsewhere than playing a "game" at all. It really was like living a new life with magic included and fairy tales.

Maybe I should think of it like that instead of seeing this as a game?

We walked across the forest until we finally reached a place with a large and crystalline river. There were small fish swimming around, and I wondered if I could fish them out...

"You can fish them out using the Fishing Skill, it is included in your Farmer Skill Tree for 5 Skill Points, you gain five Skill Points and 5 Stat Points with each level." The guide said..

"Oh, I didn't know that... Maybe the Farmer is really useful!" I said.

"Eh... Well... I guess?"

All of a sudden, a strong presence made itself known around our surroundings. The air felt heavier than before, and there was even something mystic about this entire place.

Alongside that, the voice from before spoke to me.

"My child... Here..."

I finally looked behind me and suddenly realized there was a very big and old tree hiding within the forest, it was surrounded by many other smaller trees.

"T-That's the place!" said the guide.

"Tree of the Beginning, is that you, sir?" I asked.

"Yes... please, come closer."

The tree spoke to me directly into my mind, something I had never thought possible.

I decided to follow its direction. I walked towards it and finally reached it.

It looked like a beautiful mustard tree. Actually, those started out as nothing more but little seeds but became gigantic if you let them grow into trees.

The Tree of Beginning was so big it covered the entire sky above, and made a natural ceiling with his hundreds of branches and leaves. But there were no fruits on his branches whatsoever.

"Hello?" I asked.

"Yes... Hello, my child... What is thy name?"

"My name? Elayn- Ah, Planta!"

I couldn't just tell my real name around... it was better for me to just pretend I was in another role. I needed to roleplay with my new name in this game instead.

"Planta, my child. It has been eons since a forest spirit was born in this place. We are in dire need of your help, the forest is dying..."

"EH?!"

And just like that, the tree went straight to the point.

The forest was... dying?

"What is the meaning of this? Why?"

The old tree suddenly began to tremble, as the bark changed shape, and the face of a very old man emerged, with long beard and tired eyes that shone with golden light.

"That you've been born in this time is a signal, the Goddess of Life, Gaia, has sent you here to aid us... Please, you must help the forest survive this catastrophe..."

"O-Okay, I'll do what I can but I don't think I can do much..."

"You can do more than enough, Dryads have unique powers, especially with your Job Class, I have never seen such a wondrous Job Class before, it is ideal for our problems! You have really been sent here by our goddess!"

The tree seemed joyous of my presence here, and he was talking quite fast for an old person.

Ding!

[You have accepted your [Main Quest]

[The Quest Branching System has been activated]

[A New Quest had automatically begun...]

Eh?!

Suddenly, in front of me, the holographic windows emerged once more, and communicated to me that the quest was already taken.

When did I accept it?

Wait... I did say I was going to help him.

Ah... Well, that was good.

"Thank you for accepting my request..." said the old tree.

"S-So, what should I do?" I wondered.

The tree suddenly started to emanate a bright glow around the entire place, and such a glow encompassed me.

FLASH!

"Eh? What is this?"

[Your Health and Mana are recovering at twice the speed!]

"As long as you're around me, your Health and Mana will regenerate faster, make sure to come rest to my side, my child, whenever you feel tired of your journey."

"Oh! I see, thank you." I said.

"Every Race has a special area called "Home Resting Area" where they can come back to rest and recover HP and MP, you can automatically teleport here as well with a cooldown of 5 hours." the Helper Spirit said.

"I can? How?" I asked.

"It is included in your Spirit of the Forest Skill." Said the guide spirit.

"I see, thank you for telling me that, I really didn't know..." I said.

"Well, that's what I am here for!" said the spirit proudly.

"Now, my child, you've now marked this place as your home. Whenever you feel tired of your journey, come take a visit to rest and sleep..." said the tree.

"Thank you very much sir... I am very grateful!" I said.

"Eh? Ah... It is no problem, dear. You're very polite, that's good, that's good..."

The tree seemed surprised by my manners. Were all people in this world impolite or something? My mother always told me to be polite with people, if you want others to be polite with you, you must be polite with them first after all.

However, the tree seemed to be very old because he had not answered my original question... Was this because he was an NPC and his answers were limited? I wonder...

"So? What should I do?" I asked.

"Hmmm... The catastrophe that this forest is about to suffer will happen in some time, but with your abilities, it could be possible to stop it from occurring..." he said.

"What... catastrophe?" I asked.

"Stop interrupting the NPC while he speaks!" said the guide spirit.

"Ah! Geez, okay, sorry..." I sighed.

"Don't worry, I am glad you're so worried. You see, this is the Ancient Spirit Forest, a place that once belonged to our lady and mother of life, Gaia. It was her sanctuary. However, due to certain circumstances, she had to leave this domain, and since then, it had been slowly deteriorating, it used to be an enormous forest that extended almost over the entire Continent of Verdant, but now, it had been reduced to only but ten percent of its original size..." sighed the Tree. "This is not only happening due to the lack of spiritual energy that was provoked by our goddess leaving this place, but also due to the Dark Miasma that is spreading across the world..."

"Dark Miasma? What is that?" I wondered

"Hmmm... It would be too complicated to explain exactly what it is but... It is corrupted mana that only spreads destruction, infecting life and twisting it into aberrations we know as Dark Beasts..." said the tree. "It is your duty to clean the Miasma from the forest and to not let it infect the Sanctuaries of Fairies and Spirits spread around, all while helping as many little beings as you can."

"Oh... S-So I have to clean? I am pretty good at cleaning!" I said.

"I see, that's good then. The Dark Miasma has originated from the Dark Demon King of Miasma, Marduk, an evil Demon that had woken up from his million-year slumber after having been struck down by the Seven Ancient Heroes and..."

And the tree continued to speak about folklore I didn't know about. This entire game seemed to have a very expansive lore, something that made it feel even more alive than I ever thought.

He explained to me that the Dark Miasma had spread from the Dark Continent where the Dark Demon King of Miasma woke up. He was originally sealed there by the Seven Ancient Heroes, but now that a million years have passed, the seal weakened, and he was back up again...

It seems to be a world-wide event, and this being is what people call "World Boss", each time, a lot of players attempt to defeat one of them. If the World Boss was defeated, the story of the entire world changed and advanced further into a new Chapter.

It was said by the Guide Spirit that there were three other World Bosses before this one that were already defeated by the players, all three of them marked a new beginning when they died. Each new beginning was ushered in

by an update with many new features, races, and job classes dropped, alongside new areas and continents to explore too.

However, it was said that from all other World Bosses, this was the strongest of them all, hundreds of attempts had already been made to defeat him, but all had failed, he was way too high-leveled, and many people were still trying their best to defeat him.

Eventually they'll do it, I am sure.

I was not really interested in heading out to fight such a being though... so I planned to stay in this forest and help the world realistically instead of having great dreams of vanquishing evil.

After all, the promo of this game said that we can play it however we wanted to!

"Do you understand?" he asked.

"Erm... Yeah, I get it..." I said.

"Very well then... For now, there is a small village of Squirrel-folk nearby that had been being attacked by the Dark Beasts and contracted a strange disease that is slowly weakening them... Many of their elders had already perished... My child, it is your duty to find a cure for them. Please, I beg of you," He said.

Ding!

[New Branching Quest has been generated]

[Save the Squirrel-folk!]

[The Squirrel-folk village had been struck down by an evil Dark beast which they managed to somehow defeat, but now many of them had contracted a devil disease that is slowly eating away their lives. It is your duty as the Spirit of the Forest to find a cure for their deadly disease before the last descendants of Ratatoskr perish!]

[Completion Rewards: Special Items, Gold, Experience Points, NPC Allies]

[Failure Penalty: The last descendants of Ratatoskr will perish, and your reputation in the Forest will go down]

"T-There it is! I got a new Quest now..."

"Good, please go help them... I beg of you."

"Don't worry, I will do my best!"

And like that, my small journey began. I believe I might have to complete these quests before finally embarking outside and trying to find my daughter's Avatar somewhere... This was going to be quite the long journey.