

Brand New 431

[Brand New Life Online: Rise Of The Goddess Of Harvest](#)

Chapter 431: Enhanced Magic Weapons & A Wild Monster

[Potential Cube (D Rank)] has been utilized on [Expert Hunting Knife (No Rank)]!

[The [Expert Hunting Knife (No Rank)] has evolved into a D Rank Magic Weapon!]

[It has gained the Potential Abilities [AGI +12% (D)] and [Aura Slash (D)]!]

[Potential Cube (D Rank)] has been utilized on [Smith & Wesson 442 Handgun (No Rank)]!

[The [Smith & Wesson 442 Handgun (No Rank)] has evolved into a D Rank Magic Weapon!]

[It has gained the Potential Abilities [DEX +15% (D)] and [Mana Bullet (D)]!]

FLASH!

Both weapons began shining brightly with powerful magical auras! Sadly I couldn't really read what they were those abilities about, but they were surely strong. The voice immediately disappeared the moment I heard the announcements. I do remember my own shovel got STR +15% and Explosive Blow or something.

"Oh, the knife became red in the handle?" Mark was surprised, grabbing the newly enhanced weapon.

"Sheesh! Look at this gun, it has a whole evil aura around it now..." Rita was surprised her handgun now had a malicious dark aura.

"The knife gained +12 AGI boost and Aura Slash. And the handgun got DEX +15% and Mana Bullet! Try them out to see how they work." I said.

"Alright!" Said Rita, pointing her gun to a tree.

"W-Wait! Don't shoot!"

BAAAM!

Suddenly, the bullet came out, but it didn't emitted any sound at all, reaching the nearby tree. The only sound we heard was that of the tree being left with a rather large hole, its destructive power was way more than a normal little handgun now, another shoot and the tree would fall down for sure. It probably had the destructive power of a rifle now... If not more.

"I felt like a tiny bit of my energy got sucked, but damn that's a good shoot! And it didn't made any sound either!" Rita said.

"Mana Bullets don't make sound duh." The Great Spirit said. "They're made of mana, not explosives that react and send something flying off at super speeds, so it is like a stealth attack. I think you only have around 70 MP with the lemon pie though, and each bullet is around 50 MP, you can't shoot another one or you'll fall unconscious due to mana fatigue."

"Eeep! Noted." Rita nodded.

"Let's see this one then...!" Mark said, slashing the empty air as he imbued mana into his knife.

SLAAASH!

A massive slash made of magic aura emerged, flying into the tree Rita shot and then slicing it in half!

BAAAM!

The whole tree fell!

"W-Woah... Ugh, now I feel a bit sickly..." Mark ended spending most of his MP for that though.

"I see. That one probably costs way more than 50 MP to use, its destructive power's really something else." Said the Great Spirit.

"Like that, I guess we're covered up with weapons..." I said. "Now we need armor!"

"Armor? Are we really going to craft armor?" Wondered Rita.

"Maybe we could get some of that armor that rugby players have, and motorcycle helmets?" Wondered Mark.

"I suppose that would be good enough, Hollows hit really hard." I sighed. "Though if they're too many pieces, its going to be hard to get everything strong enough, I have a limited amount of D Rank Cubes right now. To get more I would need to either buy them or go on a boss rush."

"How many do you have right now?" Wondered Rita. "I've got around twenty I think?"

"I also have roughly twenty, that should be enough, no?" Mark wondered.

"I do have... seventeen, I also had twenty." I nodded. "You're willing to give them to me?"

"Sure, here."

"Yeah!"

It is also possible to use the game app to transfer, sell, or buy items between players offline, so Rita and Mark quickly sent me those items, and a bunch of many other materials around D Rank and below, including MP Potions from the beginner's gift, which they had not used.

"With these MP Potions we can refill our Mana so I can keep getting more stuff out easily and also use magic, nice!" I said happily. "I think I could drag some beginner armor I have laying inside of my inventory... Here."

I took out some F Rank Armor so everyone could try them out. It was just shoulder, chest, and leg armor. My class didn't even use armor at all, so it was all a new experience to me. The armor was just "Steel Warrior Armor" and it could be gotten for cheap in any shop.

Though, any equipment above F Rank costed more MP than I had at maximum, so I couldn't drag it out. Nonetheless, we could also make our own stuff eventually. For now, this sufficed.

"We should get more weapons and maybe shields later too." Mark said. "You're never sure when we'll need them."

"Yeah, yeah, but that's for later! Now we need to get our magic!" Rita said.

"Yep! I've got enough materials from Arcadia, but we need materials from this world as well, so we'll go out to find them!" I said with a smile.

"Wait, what?!" Rita asked in surprise. "Y-You plan for us to go out in the night to the forest?!"

"You've eaten magic food and also we got a lot of mana potions now, so what's there to fear?" I sighed.

"Don't worry, if a Hollow shows up, I'll defeat it with my shovel and Blackie here."

"Meow!" Blackie emerged at my side.

"Well, let's go then." Mark seemed willing, walking at my side as we made our way into the forest near to my house's territory.

"W-Wait! Don't leave me behind!" Rita complained, rushing behind us.

This forest was quite large, surrounding the entire mountain in the background. There are wild boars but that's about it, and they're way easier to deal with than Hollows, for sure.

We spent the next two hours picking up herbs, flowers, branches, leaves, and mushrooms. The Great Spirit helped me find anything with some accumulated Mana. It resulted in that this whole forest was undergoing "Awakening" into a Magic Forest, and many plants had already evolved into magic ones! Although of very low quality.

"Good! We've got Materials with Mana of Earth and Materials with Mana of Arcadia." Said the Great Spirit. "We should try to go back now-"

"GRUOOOHHHH!"

However, things weren't going to be as smooth sailing.

Suddenly, an enormous wild boar emerged from the nearby bushes, roaring angrily at us.

"A wild boar!" Mark said. "It's bigger than I imagined wild boars to be..."

"Wait, that's a wild boar?!" Rita panicked.

"I think?" I wondered.

That thing... it was way bigger than any wild boar I have seen before. It was as big as a bear, and it was covered on red markings! Its tusks were extremely long and pointy, and it had furious red eyes.

"That's not a normal animal!" The Great Spirit said. "That's a Monster! To think the animals already began mutating...! I think it is similar to the Great Tusks you usually find in the Forest of Beginnings, though a super-buffed up version!"

"GRRRRHHHHH..."

The Great Tusk began emanating a powerful red aura, it was filled with powerful and dreadful amounts of mana.

And then...!

"GRUOOOHHH!"

It started charging directly towards us!

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Chapter 432: Hunting Big Game

As we were peacefully collecting Materials, we ended being greeted by a rather unsightly surprise! A giant, mutated Wild Boar, which the Great Spirit called "Great Tusk". The monstrous wild boar was incredibly tall, perhaps two times as big as an adult sized wild boar, and it had a pair of very sharp tusks, with red streaks around its fur.

"GRUOOOHHH!"

The furious Great Tusk charged forward with all his strength, leaping towards me in mere seconds, and pointing its sharp tusks to pierce through my body. Its eyes were glowing bright red, to make things worse.

"[Wooden Wall]!"

I hit the ground with my shovel, channeling Mana into it as if it were a staff, and immediately after, a wall made of thick and hard bark emerged in front of me.

CLAAAAASH!

The Great Tusk's enormous body was as strong as that Warrior-type Hollow, easily managing to pierce the wall with his tusk and then shatter it into smithereens.

However, I managed to escape in time and then emerged around the Great Tusk with my shovel, imbuing it with more Mana.

"HYAAAAA!"

BAAAAAMMMM...!

I hit the Great Tusk with all my strength, as my Shovel's Special Ability [Explosive Blow] activated, generating an explosive shockwave of Mana which intensified my attack even further.

"GRUUUUOOOHHH...!"

The Great Tusk suddenly lost one of its tusk, as the leg that got in the way of my blow looked broken and half its body was covered in blood. The beast panicked, running away from me and then leaping at Rita!

"RITA! Evade!"

"Shit!"

Rita quickly evaded, jumping away as the Great Tusk hit a tree behind her.

BAAM!

"Take this you damn pig!"

Rita, who had already charged her Magic Gun with Bullets, began to shoot them all against the Great Tusk. Her Aim was quite alright, but not too good either.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

She missed three shots out of five, and the other two only hit the wild boar's back, making it only angrier. She had to aim either to the eyes or the stomach to deal good damage.

"S-Shit..."

"GRUOOOHHH!"

The Great Tusk jumped off the ground, as if attempting to crush Rita with its own weight! Mark, however, was close by, swinging his knife and unleashing an Aura Slash with it, slicing through the Great Tusk's belly.

SLAAAASH!

"GRAAAAH...!"

BAAAM!

The enormous creature fell into the ground before it could manage to get to Rita. As I leaped forward, controlling the nature around me.

"[Thorny Vines]!"

FLAAAASH!

The surrounding glass quickly transformed into countless vines, wrapping around the Great Tusk and inhibiting its movements.

"GRUOOH! GRAAAHHH!!!"

The beast furiously struggled, attempting to free itself, but my vines were very tough and it was having a hard time with all the wounds over its body.

"Rita! Are you alright?" I asked Rita, running to her side.

"Y-Yeah, I am fine... That thing's so strong though, it made that tree fall off when it hit it..." Rita sighed.

"We have to kill it before it frees itself!" Mark said.

"Right, let's go!" I nodded.

With Mark's help, we slammed the Great Tusk's head with everything we had, until it finally stopped moving and... it died.

"Ahh, its skin is so tough, and so its skull! If it wasn't for these magic weapons we would have never been able to kill it." Mark noticed. "Even normal bullets wouldn't have worked; Rita's bullets barely did some damage."

"Yeah, monsters... Are much stronger than normal animals. Perhaps modern weaponry won't work too well, unless they're giant tanks and gatling guns or something, which we can't really get as civilians." I sighed, sitting over the ground.

"Meow!" Blackie showed up, he had been off for a while and finally came back.

"Blackie! Why weren't you here when we needed you the most?" I sighed.

"Meow!" Blackie was crunching something on his mouth, and his aura of mana was growing slightly stronger.

"What are you eating?" I wondered.

"Wait, his mana's growing stronger..." Rita pointed out.

"Oh! The little rascal has been helping us, seems like he has hunted two Hollows on his own already." Laughed the Great Spirit. "What he's eating are the hollows cores. He can feed on them now that he evolved into a Familiar, and slowly grow stronger. Only monsters can do this though, you guys will get sick and die if you try."

"Wait what?! You defeated two on your own?!" I asked in shock.

"Only like F- Rank at most I would say, he can't beat stronger things on his own." Said the Great Spirit. "But I've sensed him wandering around."

"Incredible, your cat's super useful. I guess this is the reason we've had a peaceful exploration for the most part, although the Great Tusk broke that illusion." Sighed Rita, standing up. "Alright! Can you store this big guy inside your Inventory?"

"I can!" I said, touching it and then making the entire monster disappear in a blink.

FLASH!

"In the game- I mean the other world, this power doesn't even seem like anything special because everyone has it..." Said Mark. "But in Earth, it really feels like an amazing ability... Can you store more things?"

"Yeah, have you tried doing some crazy stuff? Like maybe storing a living person inside." Rita laughed.

"I have tested it a lot already while I was alone. Living things can't be stored. Neither living plants, so I can't touch this tree and store it, I would need to either cut it, uproot it, or take its branches. Its similar with other living beings. I can't store people, nor I think I can store things that are "equipped" on them. Though if something falls off their bodies or is taken away, I think I could steal them really easily..." I said with a smile.

"Huh... Maybe we could steal some stuff and get rich quickly, heheh..." Rita began to giggle.

"E-Eh?! No, Rita, that's going too far though! The Gods said that they would take it away if I used this power to do evil things... I think." I said.

"Ahhh, what a bummer." She sighed.

Her dreams of becoming phantom thieves vanished in a second.

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Chapter 433: Mark And Rita's Awakening

As we made our way back home, I began playing around more with the [Inventory] Ability, and discovered that by concentrating my mind into the corpse of the Great Tusk, it was possible to dismantle it instantly into parts inside of it. I was able to easily dismantle the bones, meat, organs, tusks, fur, and the big-sized magic crystal it had.

"It is a bit bloody, but this is the Great Tusk's Magic Crystal..." I said, once we arrived at the barn where the horses were sleeping, we decided to make this place our hidden place to do magical stuff.

"Perfect, it is big and red-colored, it has a ton of mana, and unlike Hollows, it has little corrupted Mana too! Maybe we should go hunt more monsters later." The Great Spirit nodded. She seemed awfully happy about this.

"Err, maybe later, once we grow stronger, Great Spirit." Mark said. "More importantly, how does this Magic Circle process goes?"

"It shouldn't be complicated. I've already done it here now so I've got the hang of how to properly do it. Let's build the magic circles quickly! One for the two of you." Said the Great Spirit.

"Alright then! Mark, Rita, help me out!" I said.

"Soon, soon I will become a witch!" Rita laughed.

"A witch with a gun?" Mark wondered.

"W-Well, yeah!" Rita said. "I wonder if I could eventually get myself a flying broom..."

"I don't think that would be possible..." I sighed.

"Well, let's leave her dream." Mark said.

"Right, then, let's continue..."

Like that, through the next few minutes, and using the instructions of the Great Spirit, we made two big magic circles composed of the Great Tusk's blood, and many other materials spread all around them.

Runes inscribed using the blood and the "mud" of the Warrior-type Hollow also helped. And of course, my blood too, to enchant and purify the corrupted mana. I have a pretty good regeneration anyways, so it is not hard for me to give off a bit of my sap-like blood.

"The Great Tusk's Magic Crystal here will feed both magic circles with its large quantity of Mana." The Great Spirit instructed. The Great Tusk's Magic Crystal was on top of a small node made of runes connecting to the other two magic circles.

Building magic circles and inscribing runes was a rather complicated "science" of its own. It had a lot to do with connecting the components and making mana flow through them correctly, all while also achieving the results you desire. I felt like slowly, I was learning more and more about this.

"Alright so we just sit here cross-legged?" Mark wondered.

"Yeah, just like this?" Rita asked.

"Yep! Just stay in there and don't move. The Magic Circle will do the trick. Elayne, I'll go with each one of them to inscribe some spells that I think will be useful for them. While that happens, you'll have to supply me with mana constantly, are you ready?" The Great Spirit asked.

"Leave it to me! I've got a lot of Mana Potions as well." I said, holding one in my hand whenever I need more Mana.

"Alright then! Let's begin!" The Great Spirit seemed excited, as she imbued her Spiritual Energy and my own Mana into the magic circles, and everything started.

FLAAAASH!

The Runes started activating, glowing brightly and dancing around the magic circle. In mere seconds, they connected with wondrous magical colors, a sight I never could have ever expected to see in real life before.

"Now I'll go!"

"Alright!"

The Great Spirit flew into Mark's Heart first, and then into Rita's Heart, she took about a minute with each one. Once she was finished, I had already drank two Mana Potions, and felt my stomach was about to burst.

Unlike in Arcadia with the game-like mechanics where we can consume as many potions as we want without getting stomachache, Earth doesn't have any of such mechanics... I think I can drink at most another one before my stomach explodes...

FLAAASH! FLAAASH!

Once the magic circle creations were done, the magic circles in the ground suddenly disappeared into ashes, leaving no trails behind. The big magic circle of the Great Tusk also was emptied of Mana and then shattered into pieces, leaving only empty glass.

"Phew... Ugh, I feel a bit of pain all over me..." Mark sighed. "But is it done, right?"

"Yep, it should be done now!" I nodded. "Though it might be hard to use magic right away..."

"Hmm, I've found out their attributes and added spells that will eventually evolve on their own into higher versions. It is up to their own imagination and learning to improve themselves." The Great Spirit said. "Rita's Element is Darkness, interestingly enough, and Mark is Nature and Fire."

"I have two elements?" Mark wondered. "Fire... then maybe like... [Ember]?"

FLUOSH!

Suddenly, a small spark of fire emerged on top of his index finger, illuminating the dark surroundings.

"Ah, it is hot but it doesn't burn either..." He said in surprise. "Are our attributes connected with our Arcadia's Player Avatars, by any chance?"

"Something like that!" Said the Great Spirit. "Rita also had been awakening some Blood Magic but that'll take some time."

"Blood Magic and Darkness Magic... Perfect for a Witch!" Rita celebrated. "Now... Darkness, come to me!"

FLUOOOSH!

Rita finally was able to fulfill her dreams as a cloud of darkness began to surround her momentarily, making her look evil... But that was it.

"Cough, cough... Ugh, agh! How do I turn this off?! H-Help! I can't see anything!"

She was suffocating herself...

"Just say [Dispel] for spells to disappear." I said.

"[Dispel]!"

POOF!

The black smoke quickly dissipated.

"What you used is the [Dark Smoke] Spell, it conjures black smoke to confuse enemies and temporarily blind them, or even help you hide in the darkness of the night." The Great Spirit was our Magic Teacher at this point.

"Ah, then which ones can shoot black lasers?" Rita wondered.

Seriously, does she only cares about that?

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Chapter 434: Growing Stronger

"Ugh you're such a hard learner! Just concentrate your mind into your own magical powers and you will instantly know what you can use and what you can develop." Sighed the Great Spirit.

"Concentrate...?" Rita wondered, closing her eyes and then, finally, she started to learn about how to use magic properly.

"Magic Circles are imbued into our hearts, and so the spells which are various runes." I explained. "Once we get them, we can simply concentrate and we will immediately know how to use them."

"This is how Magicians in Arcadia used to learn their magic! Well, some still do I believe. Though even the inhabitants can rely on the System to develop their abilities, so these ancient techniques are mostly forgotten." Sighed The Great Spirit.

"Amazing... So how much mana do I have?" Rita wondered.

"I've been feeling it flowing around my body for a while, I must have a lot as well, no?" Mark wondered.

"Don't get too cocky, Mark!" Said the Great Spirit. "Rita only has 350 MP and you... Well you've got 400 MP, Mark."

"Oh, that's not bad, right?" Wondered Mark.

"Eeeeh?! I only have 350?!" Rita cried with a bit of frustration, grabbing her hair. "And how much does Elayne has then?" She asked.

"Around 550 MP?" Wondered the Great Spirit.

"Huh? It increased?" I asked.

"Yes you've increased it over time thanks to my super amazing magic circle!" Laughed the Great Spirit.

It seemed that my Magic Circle was capable of drawing power from the surroundings to grow stronger. Though consuming special potions or other materials, apparently, could also increase the Tier of the Magic Circle.

"Now that we've got this done, we should probably go to sleep." I said while feeling slightly tired.

"Yeah, though... I am a bit worried." Mark sighed.

"Worried? Why?" Rita wondered, raising an eyebrow. "We've got magic now!"

"Yeah but can't you see the most obvious problem now? The world's... slowly changing. What if more of those Great Tusks appear? Or other monsters? How will the people of this small countryside town deal with their rampage? Normal guns might not work too well either... And we're literally the only ones that could fig them..." Mark grew more concerned.

"I guess you're right... It is something quite problematic and dangerous. If monsters show up more and more, then the government will have to take some sort of precautions. Unless they want to hide this." I sighed. "Agh, so many problems would emerge..."

"Well, not like we can't make our own army if that happens... As long as we can prepare enough." The Great Spirit said.

"Eh? Our own army?!" We asked in unison, feeling confused.

"You mean awakening more people? But that would be..." I felt confused.

If we awakened more people and we involved innocents, then wouldn't things get EVEN more complicated at the end? At most we cant get Lily to join us later... But what else could we do? Force more pets into Familiars? Blackie's situation was quite unique. I don't know if it would work for every other animal.

"No, no, I don't mean that, dummy." Sighed the Great Spirit. "Didn't I tell you that you can Summon Spirits? You're a Spiritualist! That's your whole Spell Build. This world's Spirits are here, everywhere. They might be weaker and less frequent than the ones at Arcadia, but we can feel them around. Even when you conjure magic, they show up to give you some of their aid."

"You mean... we could ask for the spirit's help?" Mark wondered.

"Yep, you too! You should be capable of eventually being able to call your Animal and Totem Spirits." Said The Great Spirit.

"Me too?" Rita wondered.

"Darkness Spirits have been already attracted by your showiness and are floating around all of us, but you can't see them yet." Laughed the Great Spirit. "They are the most populous in the night."

Right, I had completely forgotten about the Spirits! If we could bring their aid and use unique magic to fuse them with nature to create temporary physical forms, then it could totally be possible to get our own army of Spirits.

"Though for such a big thing... We need to prepare and hunt more monsters." Said the Great Spirit.

"First, we need you to at least get to 800 MP, Elayne. Then, we'll need something, like a staff maybe? That could channel the spirit's powers. We can craft something using your [Pathway] power and more materials if we ask Gaia's aid. And lastly, all of you need to at least get to Tier 1 Rank 8!"

"I see! I guess it could be possible... We could also get my Player's low quality items and materials to hurry the process." I nodded.

"Yep! Your [Inventory] Ability is what making all of this actually realistic." Laughed the Great Spirit.

"I see... Is it my idea or is... there something coming?" Mark wondered. "I feel it... Since I awakened my Mana. Like... a great malice, a darkness."

"Me?!" Rita asked.

"No, not you Rita, something evil." Mark said.

"I've also felt it..." I sighed. "I thought it was just wild monsters and hollows, but it is a bit too intense to be just that, right?"

"I believe there might be something coming, yes." The Great Spirit said. "Elayne, if you want to protect the home of your family and this small town, we'll need to prepare as much as we can... I can sense them, countless Hollows, and monsters..."

"S-So many?!" Rita panicked. "We'll get eaten alive! We just have to run away!"

"But what sort of excuse could we even use?" Mark asked.

"W-Well, maybe we could say..." Rita began thinking.

"No, we can't run." The Great Spirit said. "This presence, this malicious being must be... It is most likely Phantasmos, or someone serving him. They wouldn't be here for some mere humans nobody cares about. He... wants Elayne. And if we run, he'll simply keep chasing her, bringing destruction wherever his phantasmal presence reaches."

"Phantasmos..." I sighed, recalling the name of the entity that escaped Arcadia and infiltrated our world. "I guess there's no helping it. Tomorrow we'll have a lot to work and preparing to do!"

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Chapter 435: Going To The River With The Family

Because of how worried I was about Phantasmos most likely coming here from Arcadia to destroy me, I could barely get any sleep. However, I still woke up rather refreshed, as I had constantly used my Mana into the [Mana Breathing Technique] that the Great Spirit taught to all three of us before going to sleep.

It is a simple technique that help us make Mana flow around our bodies through a calm and composed breathing rhythm. It passively enhances the physique and all body parts over time, and it is the pillar necessary to master before actually getting ourselves a Physique.

Physiques are like unique powers within the physical body, and they're related with strength, vitality, agility, and dexterity. To obtain them, we first need to create a foundation and make our physical bodies reach "the next stage" or something.

Although with mana alone, our physical strength can also be boosted, and so our regeneration, speed, and defense, with Physiques is when we'll finally reach a more "superhuman" level. Later, the Great Spirit explained we'll need special materials depending in which Physique we want to create, and then imbue these materials into runes, which then will permanently fuse with our bodies.

However, unlike Mark and Rita who are still just humans with magic, I am quite... different. Due to the powers of my Arcadia Avatar having its own body in that world, and my connection with it, I can draw its power and imbue it into my body, giving me a sort of... pseudo physique.

It is the one responsible for allowing me to shapeshift my own body into branches, plants, and turn my blood into healing sap, though it is not as powerful as the Yggdryad's shapeshifting powers, it is pretty darn good.

However, this unnamed physique is still in a "beginner" level, so we need to improve it further. Doing around 8 continuous hours of Mana Breathing helped at stabilizing it and improving it, the rest will be on what we can craft and find.

And today, of course, we decided to go out, I had already promised my daughter and my family, so we were now already in front of the Big River near our home. It was very clean water that flows from the mountains, surrounded by rocks, a bit of sand, and the beauty of nature.

Of course, due to fear against monsters, we crafted some charms for each member of my family. We made them out of the things they never leave behind, their phones. So each of the have a charm imbued into their phones.

I didn't do it personally, the Great Spirit can reach very far on her own, and is pretty much invisible, so she did the job and I just gave her the Mana.

"Ohhh! So this is the Big River everyone was talking about! Woah, such a pretty and refreshing looking water! Today's not cold at all either, how about we take a dip, Elena, Anna?" Elisa was incredible happy of going into the wilderness.

"Sure, I want to take a dip as well!" Anna said. "Oh, was that a fish just now?!"

"Yeah, there are fishes in here." Said Elena while looking around.

"Alright girls, did you wear swimwear below your clothes? If you did then you should just jump straight in. Of course, use sandals. The rocks in the river could be a bit sharp." I said.

"Okaay!" Elisa said, quickly beginning to undress.

"M-Milady you mustn't do this in front of the people!" Her bodyguard tried to stop her.

"Meh, not like anybody cares!" Sighed Elisa, quickly jumping into the water.

SPLAAASH!

"Ahh, the water only reaches my hips, its not really that deep!" She said happily, using a floaty in the shape of a duck to float and swim around.

"I'm joining in then!" Anna quickly entered the water, jumping over it.

SPLAAAAASH!

"Hey you brute!" Elisa got angry.

SPLASH!

But Elena from behind her splashed water on her head.

"E-Elena?!"

"Come on don't be a party pooper."

"Geez, you'll see now! Hyaaaah!"

SPLASH! SPLASH! SPLAAASH!

As the girls started playing around the river, we quickly set up everything else. We came here with dad's car, and we brought a ton of stuff to make grilled food and a small camp.

"Today's awfully sunny!" My father laughed. "We should make some nice grilled meat to go with it."

"Dear aren't we eating a bit too much meat this week?" Sighed my mother.

"Naaah, it's fine! Elayne and everyone else is here, we need to make something tasty for them if possible!" My father seemed cheerful as ever.

As my family were setting everything up, I gave them a hand in anything I could. Once dad started grilling meat we were finally freed from the shackles of helping the family set-up everything.

"Damn, I ever thought the River would be this beautiful." Mark said.

"We used to get water from here too, but now there's potable water in the house." I sighed. "Though I can't say I miss those times I had to come with buckets for water..."

"Wait, you didn't had potable water before? Woah..." Mark seemed rather impacted.

"Hahaha, it's a thing of the past anyways. What? Did you pity me or something?" I wondered.

"Oh, no... I just thought you had a pretty fun childhood." He said with a giggle.

"Geez, well, I would had preferred less farm work when I was a kid but we can't really pick the family we're born into." I sighed.

"Yeah... I guess." Mark sighed. His eyes seemed slightly saddened.

Was there something bothering him? Every time I talk about family he gets like this. Maybe he doesn't have a good relationship with his own...

"Hey Mark, Elayne, how about we catch some fish?" My brother appeared right behind us. "Do you know how to fish?"

"Err, a bit?" Mark said.

"I still remember, so let's try it! There's a lot of river fish here." I said with a smile, grabbing a fishing rod.

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Chapter 436: A Sudden Encounter While Fishing

While Rita was with Mary and Henrietta spending a nice time, I began fishing with my brother Harry and Mark. There was a small fishing spot made of wood we had made ourselves, we could sit over there and let the fishing rods with some mealworms call for the fishies.

The day was nice. The sky was clear of most clouds, the sun was shining brightly atop the skies. There was a calm and refreshing breeze, and the shadows of the many trees surrounding us made for a nice atmosphere, which was complemented by the singing of many birds.

"Ahhh, fishing's always relaxing." Harry sighed, just sitting there cross-legged.

"Yeah, I guess it is the laziest way to catch food out there." I laughed.

"I-I've never fished before. Am I supposed to just sit here and wait for the fish to come to me?"
Wondered Mark.

Hasn't he fished in Arcadia through the game-like system though? Well, maybe that's a bit different than in our world, no? Or perhaps...

"Well yeah city boy, what else do you want to do? Sing the fishes a melody or something?" Laughed my brother.

"Hahaha, don't be so rude with him." I laughed a bit as well.

"Ah, sorry, I am just not used to these kind of things. I hope we get something big." Mark said.

"Well yeah..." My brother said. "So? How are you two doing?"

"Eh? How... are we doing?" I wondered.

"Yeah." My brother looked back at me.

What does he mean by that?

"We're doing well in the job if that's what you meant." Mark said. "I haven't talked this with Elayne yet but we'll be hiring a few more people due to an expansion of our area."

"Oh, I didn't know that... Is Jenny gonna be okay?" I wondered.

"Okay how?" Sighed Mark. "She's fine, don't worry. I am not firing her or something, she still does her job well."

"Phew." I sighed in relief.

My brother kept looking at us talk and interact with a smile.

"Been a while since I saw you so cheerful and energetic, sis." He said. "Good for you."

"Huh? Well, yeah..." I said while feeling slightly confused. "Wait, now I get it... Are you attributing this to Mark or something?"

"Hehe, you two make a good pair." Harry laughed mischievously.

"T-That's a bit... Well..." Mark got slightly embarrassed but kept his composure.

"W-Well, partially but... there are other things that have made me happier as well!" I told my brother.

"Hoh?" Harry asked with a teasing smile.

"Though... when I am with him, I always feel happier and more energetic, yeah." I nodded. "I feel like I kind of want to make him smile, even if a little bit. He's often so gloomy. It just doesn't fit such a handsome face, and with such a cute smile... it would be a waste to not see it from time to time, don't you think?"

"Eeeeh~?" My brother started giggling.

Wait... d-did I just said that just now?!

"E-Elayne... Do you really think of me like that?" Mark wondered.

His entire face was as red as a tomato, but he was containing the embarrassment.

Well, I simply couldn't myself.

"I-I mean... Ahahaha... T-That's slipped off my tongue..." I started laughing nervously.

And then Mark smiled, giving me such a sweet, and cute smile. It filled my heart with fuzzy feelings.

"Nobody has ever said such a thing to me..." He sighed. "Thank you. You're also... your smile is also very beautiful."

"T-That's... Y-You didn't need to say it back though..." I began laughing even more nervously.

Meanwhile, my brother, the one that provoked this, watched in the sidelines like a mischievous demon that had completed his task.

SPLASH!

And suddenly, perhaps due to my nervousness, I ended imbuing Mana into my fishing rod, which attracted a big fish!

"Huh? Something picked up!" I said in surprise.

"Nice, looks big! Pull it!" Said Harry.

"Wait, isn't it a bit too big?!" Mark wondered.

RUMBLE!

Suddenly, the entire lake surrounding us started to shake rapidly, as a large shadow, of at least four meters wide emerged, and two gigantic eyes glanced from the depths. I know that there are massive fresh water fishes out there, but aren't rivers... not big enough for these guys?!

"W-Woah, its coming here!" Harry quickly began helping me pull the fishing rod.

"Wait! No! Let that fish go!" Mark said in desperation.

But it was a bit too late.

SPLAAAAASH!

A massive catfish like fish creature emerged from the water's depths. It had sharp blue eyes and a... clear blue jewel on its forehead?! Its scales were strong-looking, and its fins seemed to have developed into amphibious limbs.

"GLUOOOP!"

The enormous fish began groaning at us as it was dragged out of the water, shaking the entire place. The jewel on its forehead was shining brightly.

"W-What the heck is that?! That's a fish!? Wait, I do remember fishing some massive beasts, but never in a river! Did it infiltrated from the lake into here?" My brother wondered.

"Y-Yeah, that's right!" I nodded, trying to convince him of that.

Because it was obvious this thing, overflowing with mana, wasn't an actual normal fish. It was a Monster! Harry seemed overly afraid of it though, as he began running away.

"I'll bring dad here!" He said.

"O-Okay! We'll hold it off for now!" I nodded.

"How can we hold this thing off?" Mark wondered.

"GLUOOOOP!"

The giant fish wasn't planning on going back into the water without grabbing a meal. And it looked like we were exactly what he wanted. He immediately started walking towards us, although sloppily.

"T-That thing's surely a Fish Monster... Probably E Rank at that!" Said the Great Spirit. "It looks a lot like those Amphibious Catfish monsters from Arcadia... Though this one has a weird blue jewel on its head..."

"GLUOOOH!"

Suddenly, the Catfish's mouth began growing bigger, as if it were an air balloon and then, it fired a gigantic stream of water towards us!

SPLAAAAASH!

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Chapter 437: Fighting The Ruler Of The River!

An E Rank Amphibious Catfish emerged in our peaceful River Trip, from all things. And I think it was because of my own damn fault. Without realizing, I ended imbuing Mana into the fishing Rod and brining this mana-hungry, probably recently developed Fish Monster.

And it unleashed a powerful Water Stream out of its mouth, no less!

SPLAAAAAASH!

The enormous impact would have completely devastated us if it wasn't because I summoned a [Wooden Wall] with four layers now, which managed to withstand the attack, although all four layers were destroyed at the end.

Yeah, I was getting a bit tired of my defenses always getting broken, so I will just create multi-layered walls made of hardened wood instead, until it can finally work.

"That was strong, this thing..." Mark muttered. "We have to either spook it back into the river or kill it and save it inside your Inventory, Elayne!"

"Yeah, I know! It would be better if everyone doesn't see this thing..." I sighed, quickly gathering Mana into my Shovel as I pulled it out of my Inventory. "[Spiritual Attack]!"

FLAAASH!

My Shovel gained the power of the Great Spirit's spiritual energy and my own Mana, suddenly beginning to shine bright green. The light blinded the giant Catfish, giving me enough time to slam its head with it!

BAAAAAM!

"GLUOOOPH...!"

The Catfish angrily roared, pushing forward, and charging against me after receiving the powerful blow!

CLAAASH!

It ended pushing me with all its strength. Although not as powerful as the Great Tusk, its headbutt really hurt, throwing me down into the ground.

"Good thing I brought this with me... Hey fish, how about I turn you into sashimi?" Mark smiled, imbuing Mana into his knife as flames began to emerge from it. "[Mana Slash]!"

SLAAAAASH!

A massive, blazing slash of mana emerged from his magic knife, reaching the Catfish that was about to give me a bite.

BOOOOOMMM!!!!

"GLUOOOP...!"

The giant fish received that explosive hit rather badly, beginning to groan in agony, the wound left seemed rather severe, as he was burned until a delicious grilled fish smell started to linger in the surroundings.

"[Spirit Call]!"

While the Fish groaned in pain and directed his gaze at Mark, I was touching the ground around me and then conjuring Spirit Call, connecting my Mana with the Spiritual Veins that had been formed for many generations in this forest.

"[Earth Spirit Call]!"

FLAAAASH!

From the ground, a large mass of mud emerged, as three tiny Earth Spirits combined together with the mud surrounding the river and forming into a massive golem-like creature, catching the Catfish, and then beginning to asphyxiate it by covering all of its wet body with mud.

"GLUOOOGGHHH..."

"Meow!" Blackie quickly arrived at the scene. He immediately channeled his shadow powers and began to shape them into tentacles, grabbing the fish and wrapping them around it, completely immobilizing it.

Despite having eaten a few Hollow Magic Crystals, he was still not the strongest out there, so the most he could do was this, weakening and stopping the monster for us alongside the spirits.

"Nice one, Blackie!" I said happily.

"Woah, you arrived in time, finally..." Mark sighed.

"Meow!" He seemed to tell us to hurry as well.

"GLUOOP!"

FLASH!

The jewel on the catfish's forehead started glowing with a bright blue light, and then it started shooting down Water Bullets towards us as the Mud Golem.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

"Agh, damn it!" I protected the three of us using Wooden Shields, but they were being rapidly destroyed. "Mark, give me your hand!"

"Eh? Sure!" Mark gave my hand without asking why, as I quickly channeled his magical power to strengthen mine, something the Great Spirit told me could be done between magicians of the same attribute.

I used [Plant Manipulation] to manipulate the wood I had conjured using [Wooden Wall], shaping it as a gigantic, piercing wooden spear.

"[Wooden Spear]!"

FLAAASH!

A little spirit of Nature suddenly showed up as I conjured the spell, jumping into the spear and imbuing it with powerful spiritual energy.

FLAAAASH!

"GLUOOP?!"

The giant Catfish panicked, as it quickly generated a Barrier made of water, trying to defend from my powerful magical attack!

SPLAAAASH!

The barrier was somehow working, holding the Spiritual Wooden Spear even after everything I've poured into it!

"Agh, this damn thing's so resilient!" I gritted my teeth.

"Well, we simply have to make another one then!" Mark said, spending the last Mana he had and shaping another Wooden Wall into a spear, sending it straight towards the other I fired.

CLAAAASH!

The impact of the one he sent quickly pushed the first one forward, destroying the Water Barrier of the Amphibious Catfish and piercing its body!

BAAAAMMMM...!

"G-GLUOOHHH..."

The Catfish struggled for a few seconds before it completely stopped moving. At the same time, the Mud Golem collapsed, and the two of us ended there, completely covered on water and gasping for air.

"T-That thing could have seriously injured your family if they got closer..." Mark sighed.

"Yeah, thankfully we somehow managed..." I sighed in relief.

I touched the fish's body, quickly storing it inside of my Inventory and making it disappear. It was just better to leave no evidence. I also threw the mud into the river just in case, and generated a tiny flower to exude a sweet aroma instead of the smell of grilled fish left behind lingering around.

When my brother and dad came back, there was nothing for them to catch.

"Huh? There's nothing here! Where's the big fish go?" Asked dad.

"Eh?! But it was right here!" Harry said.

"Yeah it was here but it escaped. It was a bit too big for us to grab..." I sighed.

"It jumped into the water and disappeared. Sorry." Mark apologized.

"We're all covered in water and smell like fish because we tried to grab it though, but it was a bit too strong and heavy..." I said.

"Damn it! That thing was so big we could have appeared on the news!" My brother felt slightly frustrated.

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Chapter 438: Crafting A Magic Shield

Harry was rather impacted by learning the fish ended "escaping".

"Damn it! That thing was so big we could have appeared on the news!" My brother felt slightly frustrated.

"Hahaha, there's a lot of monsters in these lakes and rivers. I've seen some TV Shows where they show catfishes the size of like five meters! They have to grab those between three fishermen." Laughed my father. "Maybe that one sneaked into the river by accident. Those things like to sleep in the river's deeps and only hunt small fish, they don't attack people."

"W-Well, what a relief!" I said with a smile. "So anyways, let's keep trying! Maybe we can fish something decent now."

"Right! Come on, don't get all sad." Mark said.

"Yeah, I guess." Harry sighed.

After that... incident, we had a more relaxed day. We fished a lot of fishes once things calmed down, and we enjoyed them grilled with the family. I also took a dip in the river, mostly leaving behind Charms imbued into the rivers floor so monsters wouldn't show up. These were "Monster Repellent" Charms, which generate a "disgusting" sensation to monsters when they get closer.

It feeds on the lingering mana of the surroundings, and also grow stronger by themselves. The Great Spirit said they were the ultimate Charms created by an Ancient Kingdom of Magicians to repel invasions of monsters from dungeons back in Arcadia.

The River Water was quite refreshing, and the little nervousness left behind by having fought that unwelcomed monster slowly faded away as I left those problems for later. Naturally, the meals I prepared were all lingering with delicious effects, keeping everyone healthy and refreshed after eating them.

I also prepared some special fish sandwiches using the meat of the catfish for Mark, Rita, and of course me. And I also feed some of the monster fish meat to Blackie, and he loved it, licking his whiskers after the big meal and asking for more. Despite having become a strong familiar, he's still quite the fat cat.

After what happened yesterday I've kept Blackie around me some more. It is nice he hunts Hollows on his own, but its better to stay with us and help us out fighting monsters. I had considered making more Familiars, but all other farm animals are too big for that.

We need something small and nimble, there are no cats in the house, dogs? Well, they're too big too, and nothing guarantees they would get shadow powers to easily travel and hide. Maybe something like a pet rat, or a hamster. Or maybe even a smart lizard, a snake... or even a spider or something, a small animal that can be controlled using Familiar Magic.

However, the Great Spirit said it would be too much of a burden to get more than one Familiar until I grew stronger, so she recommended me to let Mark and Rita get their own instead... so we'll probably go to a pet shop or something to get one.

Once we were back home, we decided to continue our plans.

"Tonight we'll use Blackie's abilities to hide in the shadows and leave Monster and Hollow-repelling Charms in the entire town if possible." I said. "In the way, we might have to hunt any Hollow we find as well."

"I see, I guess those Charms are really useful, they grow stronger by themselves?" Wondered Mark.

"Yep, they absorb the surrounding's mana, as I explained earlier." I nodded. "I've made a special paint using my blood, the blood of the Great Tusk, the blood of the Amphibious Catfish, and the Hollow's Mud to make it, alongside other herbs mixed in."

"Ugh, I am so jealous you got to fight a monster without me..." Rita got slightly angry. "I've gotta debut my powers someday!"

"Yeah, yeah, we'll do it tonight." I sighed. "Anyways, I've given you special Magic Paper I created, you just put it on the surface we'll add the charm and then put some of the Magic Paint on top with the paintbrush. And done!"

"Is the charm invisible to normal people?" Mark wondered curiously.

"Should be!" I nodded. "So anyways, let's get to it!"

"Alright, Hollows, wait for me!" Rita was pumped up for hunting more Hollows, mostly wanting to use her magic.

"A-Ah, right, before that, wait a bit." I said, taking out a custom shield I had created just half an hour ago.

"Wait, what's that big shield over there?" Wondered Rita.

"It is a custom magic shield! I made it using monster materials from this world and Arcadia." I smiled. "I made it mixing the big scales of the Amphibious Catfish, using the Great Tusk Fur and Bones, and also using Magic Crystals from Arcadia, coupled with Iron Ingots from there too!"

"Ingots?! How did you build that thing without a furnace then?" Rita was even more shocked.

"Hahaha, I used the very convenient [Synthesis] Spell that the Great Spirit imbued into my magic circle, and fused it with the [Pathway] power. Lady Gaia was nice enough to let me unify everything into this shield. However, I still have to "awaken" it." I said, taking out a D Rank Potential Cube and then imbuing it into this shield.

FLAAAASH!

And then I once more heard that mysterious voice...

[Potential Cube (D Rank)] has been utilized on [Roughly Made Monster Shield (No Rank)]!

[The [Roughly Made Monster Shield (No Rank)] has evolved into a D Rank Magic Shield!]

[It has gained the Potential Abilities [RES +17% (D)] and [Elemental Shield (D)]!]

"Nice, it gained two great potential abilities! And its overall design changed, becoming even more prettier." I smiled, caressing my precious shield.

"What Potentials does it has?" Mark wondered. "It looks strong..."

"REST +17% and Elemental Shield! Should be good enough to resist monster attacks now, right?" I wondered.

"Yeah, it will be pretty useful...." Rita said. "You didn't made some for us, didn't you?"

"T-There weren't enough materials..." I sighed. "But we can share it!"

"Well, if we find any other non-Hollow monster, we can craft something out of them later." Mark said.

"Now let's go then!" I said. "Blackie, use [Shadow Mirage] on all three of us!"

"Meow!"

FLAAASH!

Hidden within the shadows, we quickly started exploring the town at night, it was awfully silent. However, I immediately sensed something strong within the center of the town, as we left behind Charms in the houses and streets...

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Chapter 439: Hollow Legion

This small town is always rather peaceful, and so silent at night it feels almost creepy. This creepiness intensified even more after arriving here and sensing the presence of Hollows nearby. We sneaked around using the magic that Blackie conjured over us, and slowly made our ways into the origin of this presence.

Hollows made a particularly annoying presence; their bodies are made up of corrupted mana and negative energy exuded from people's everyday lives. According to the Great Spirit, people let out every day a tiny amount of "Negative Energy" which is the concentrated essence of our life force, which comes out naturally due to stress, exhaustion, and more.

Once this energy gathers in a certain point, merging that of many people at the same time, a Hollow is made, and they can grow stronger by absorbing more of this or by absorbing Mana, which will help them evolve even quickly.

They were extremely rare, the Great Spirit said that before the "First Contact" there weren't more than twenty in the whole city, and they often dissipated into thin air naturally or were hunted by... mysterious supernatural people.

But now that there's Mana everywhere, and its quantities will only continue to intensify, Hollows are being born faster, much faster than before. Due to being made of negative energy and corrupted mana, they generate a very strong and nasty smell that only people with Mana can detect though.

"There's a few of them, this smell is way too strong." Mark pointed out.

"We better be careful." I nodded, sneaking closer to a small plaza in the town, where there were still some people around.

"Wait, what's going on over there?" Rita pointed out.

"OOOOOHHHH..."

A large hollow was near a young woman drinking in the plaza, she seemed lost and slightly drunk, and the Hollow was behind her, slowly absorbing the negative energy coming from her.

"Hah... Life fucking sucks... I am so tired of being indebted... I want to die..." The girl seemed rather sad.

"Suffering... Oooohhh..."

The muddy tentacles of the Hollow slowly began sneaking around the woman, and then reaching her body, and touching it. They started to wrap around her slowly, she was too drunk to notice and then...

"Hm?"

When she finally noticed, she looked behind her.

And although she couldn't truly see the Hollow, its distorting face generated a shadow in the night, so big and terrifying it terrified her.

"W-Wha...? G-GHOST?! UWAAAAH!"

She quickly tried to run away but the Hollow began dragging her towards its enormous jaws. Was this thing trying to eat her?! But I thought hollows left normal people alone!

"HELP! HELP MEEEEEE! SOMEONE! S-SOMETHING'S DRAGGING MY LEEEEEGG...! AAAAAGHHH!"

I can't stand here looking at this! I quickly began running into the scene, Mark and Rita were a bit too slow but they quickly followed me from behind. I brought out my Shovel and my Shield and began calling the Hollow's attention by hitting the shield with the shovel and generating a sound.

"HEY! Over here!" I said, quickly emanating some mana from my hand.

"M-MAANAAAAAA!" The Hollow quickly let go of the girl, as she suddenly began running away without even giving us a glance.

"We've got his attention, that's for sure! But what with this abnormally big size?!" Mark asked.

"T-That's not certainly a normal one, isn't it?" Rita asked. "I haven't fought one yet so I don't really know but are they supposed to be like six meters tall?!"

"That's not a normal Hollow!" The Great Spirit said. "This is probably an amalgamation of many Hollows mixed together! I-It usually happens very rarely, but there's some sort of strange power inside of it that forcefully merged several Hollows into one... It is probably as strong as a D Rank monster, a Hollow Legion!"

"A-A D Rank Monster already?!" I asked in surprise. "We aren't possibly ready for this!"

"Yes you are! Just think as it as a bunch of F Rank Monsters stuck together and it should be fine! It is pretty big and slow, so take advantage of that!" The Great Spirit said. "Use your [Spirit Eyes] for heaven's sake!"

"GRUOOOOHHHH! MANAAAAAAA!"

The enormous mass of black mud slowly began approaching, albeit its muddy tentacles were way faster than the rest of its body quickly aiming at us!

BAAAM! BAAAM!

They began hitting the ground as they failed to hit us. I swung my shovel furiously, activating the weapon's [Explosive Blow] Ability and generating explosions of spiritual energy and mana around the tentacles, blowing them into pieces!

BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOOM!

"Your weapon's ability is way too OP! Not fair! Uwaah!" Rita cried, running away from many tentacles at the same time, and shooting Mana Bullets charged with her Dark Magic at them. "Uggh, this better fucking works! [Darkness Bullets]!"

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The bullets that came out were smaller, but grew larger the more they reached their target, in just four bullets, Rita filled several tentacles with gigantic holes all over them, making them explode into pieces over the floor.

"How about some inflammable, essential oils?" Mark wondered, smartly using his Nature Magic to turn his blood into an inflammable plant oil and spraying it over the tentacles, and then imbuing flames into his knife and swinging it furiously.

SLAAAASH!

The slash of flames quickly reacted with the oil, generating a blazing explosion!

BOOOOOOOMMMM!

Not only that helped him save Mana, but it used both of his attributes pretty well, amazingly done!

And about me? The Great Spirit said I had to use my [Spirit Eyes]. She probably meant the [Spiritual Gaze] Spell I have!

"[Spiritual Gaze]!"

FLASH!

My eyes shone brightly, for a moment it felt like I couldn't see anything due to my own light, but I quickly realized this spell's amazing ability.

FLASH! FLASH! FLASH!

I was able to see strange red spots moving around the Hollow's main body as it slowly moved towards us. Those red spots were not just for show, it seemed to be the areas that connected the many Hollows stuck together.

If I can hit them really hard, they're sure to blow up one by one and eventually kill the Hollow Legion. I guess that's why she told me to use them!

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Chapter 440: The Power Of A Blessed Shield

"Cover you? What are you planning, to rush head-on or something- Agh! She's actually doing it!" Rita panicked, quickly recharging her gun with more Magic Bullets, and firing them at the tentacles coming towards me.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

SPLAT! SPLAT! SPLAT!

The tentacles exploded into pieces one after the other, her ability to combine her explosive dark magic spell with the bullet guns made for a deadly combination! Giving her magic was certainly the right call.

"Alright, we'll keep the tentacles at bay!" Said Mark, without even hesitating, he pushed forward and began slicing the tentacles using his fire-covered knife mercilessly. His movements were still rather clunky, but he was getting the hang of it very quickly.

SLASH! SLASH! SLASH!

"Meow!"

Of course, Blackie, our fourth member wasn't just sitting idly anymore. He followed me very closely from behind, stopping any tentacle from drawing closer using his own Shadow Tentacles or even conjuring temporary Shadow Shields around me. I'll make sure to reward him with a tasty treat later.

CLASH! CLASH! CLASH!

I kept running as I also blocked the tentacles using my brand new shield, it possessed a great defensive ability after having been made of different monsters, and even Gaia gave it her blessings as I utilized [Pathway] to connect to her powers momentarily to construct it.

"GRUOOOOHHHHH! S-SO HUNGRYYYYYY!"

The multiple heads of the Hollow Legion continued distorting monstrously, as I suddenly felt a phantasmal, dark power emerging from within him! Did he realized I was going for his weak spots already?!

FLUOOOSH!

A large phantasmal power emerged from the inside of the Hollow's mouth, as ghostly hands and faces emerged one after the other... this was certainly not the normal power of a Hollow!

"Shit, that thing's has been blessed by the power of Phantasmos?!" The Great Spirit realized it. "Elayne, defend!!!"

"Got it!"

I quickly imbued Mana into my shield stopping midway through.

"[Elemental Shield]!"

FLAAAAASH!

My shield began shining brightly, with fiery red and blue colors, and generated a barrier of multiple colors, resembling a rainbow, around my body!

BOOOOOOMMMM!!!

The phantasmal attack hit the Elemental Barrier and immediately started to dissolve apart.

"T-The power of Life...!"

"It reeks so much...!"

"Pain, agony!"

"I-I am being purified?!"

The monstrous ghosts and phantoms screamed in agony, as they started to dissolve one after the other! I see because this shield was made by Gaia...

[The [Roughly Made Monster Shield (D Rank Magic Shield)] Hidden Trait [Life's Shield] has been activated.]

[The power of [Pathway] is resonating with your shield.]

That voice again!

Well, thanks for the clarifications! Gaia probably left this gift for me while finishing the shield, and [Pathways] reacted to this and activated such Hidden Trait, amazing.

"I-IT HURTS?! GRUOOHHHH...!"

The Hollow Legion realized the pain was spreading around its body, as I utilized this moment to attack, I leaped forward, swinging my shovel at the red spots I could see through [Spiritual Gaze]!

CLASH!

"GRAHHHH...!"

BOOOM!

I hit one red spot and immediately, a part of the entire mass of the Hollow Legion exploded and disappeared, only leaving a Hollow Crystal behind.

"Again!"

CLAAASH!

"GRYYAAAH!"

BOOOM!

"And again and again!!!"

CLASH! CLASH! CLASH! CLASH! CLASH!

While defending myself using my shield and receiving the support of my friends from behind to handle the Hollow's deadly tentacle attacks, I continued hitting the Hollow Legion red spots constantly, overing myself on its black mud!

"Please, just rest!" I roared, as I pointed my shovel at the Hollow Legion's last red spot, piercing through it and then utilizing [Explosive Blow] on it!

FLAAAASH!

A burst of powerful mana and spiritual essence began entering the entire Hollow's body, inflating it like a balloon as it screamed in agony.

"GRUUUAAAAAAGGGGGHHHH....!"

BOOOOOOOMMMM!!!!

The Hollow Legion couldn't take it anymore, and it quickly exploded into countless pieces, leaving a large purple colored crystal behind too.

Silence and stillness finally took over our surroundings. We were... somehow able to win against such a formidable foe. I guess it is all thanks to proper preparation!

If we fought this thing without having awakened Mark or Rita, it would had been impossible, even less without this shield or their new magic weapons.

Thanks a lot for this gift as well, Gaia!

[The Divinity [All Mother of Life and Souls] smiles at your accomplishment.]

Huh? The voice again?

It can even tell me how Gaia feels?

Wait, could this voice... be an extension of [Pathway] somehow?

Well, I better concentrate on the present and not overthink things for now.

"W-We did it?!" Mark asked, in the floor, completely exhausted.

"I-I think so... Elayne, you're all covered in the mud!" Rita began laughing.

"Ahahaha..." I sighed, quickly beginning to store everything. "Phew... that was something else. I feel like sleeping for a week now..."

"No sleeping! We've got ourselves a nice loot of materials! Seven E Rank Magic Crystals and a big D Rank Magic Crystal from this single Hollow. With this you could grow pretty strong, but you need to hunt more! Are you planning on leaving these weird Hollows wandering around the town?" Te Great Spirit reprimanded me.

"R-Right, I can feel a few more wandering here and there, and we've only covered half the town with Charms... We've gotta hurry before morning comes." I said with a nod. "Everyone, let's go!"

"Hahhh... I am about to die, my entire body hurts like hell!" Rita complained, over the ground.

"I-I can't move..." Mark cried.

"Eh?" I wondered.

"Agh, they've ran out of mana and they're experiencing Mana Exhaustion. Give them some lemonade and lemon pie before departing." Said the Great Spirit. "Don't waste MP Potions though!"

"Geez you're so stingy." I sighed. "Here."

I still ended giving the two MP Potions for better recovery.

"Ahhh... Phew, alright, let's get going." Mark quickly stood up.

"Let me... stay here for a few more minutes..." Rita sighed.

"Rita just stand up..." I facepalmed.

And then...!

"Hey! Who's there?!"

"Did someone heard gunshots just now?!"

"There's people in the plaza! Is something happening?!"

Suddenly, tons of people living around began gathering around, the cops might be here at any moment at this rate. We have to get out of here as soon as possible!

"Agh! Blackie, quickly, bring us out of here!"

"Meow!"

Blackie ate a Hollow Crystal as a snack to recover MP and using his Shadow Sneak, he brought us out of the plaza.

Like that, we spent the rest of the night hunting, placing charms, and escaping from people's eyes. Ultimately, we slain 14 more Hollows, mostly F Rank, and a few E Rank ones.

Although everything ended fine, I could feel this Phantasmal Presence drawing closer.

Phantasmos might be here faster than we imagined... we need to hurry and grow stronger while we can.

Once we were finally in the barn with the cows and the horses, it was finally time to use our spoils for what we truly wanted, to grow stronger.

"Alright, seems like you guys have naturally developed a higher Maximum Mana quantity while fighting since your awakening." I said with a nod, as I used [Spiritual Gaze] to see through their Mana Veins and their Magic Circles, noticing the increase in Mana Density and Runes inside their Magic Circles. "Now the next step is to grow even stronger using our current spoils."