

## **Weapons of Mass Destruction #Chapter 71: Pride - Read Weapons of Mass Destruction Chapter 71: Pride**

### **Chapter 71: Pride**

"Please give me the 92 gold you stole."

"No."

So goddamn shameless.

"Nat, please don't look at me like that. It doesn't suit your pretty face."

Damn it, don't call me Nat.

But wait a moment. The main objective of the quest is to witness the end of the world. Do I really need to pay back all this money?

"How long do I have to pay it back?" I try.

"A year?"

Huh? I know that I might not have to pay it all back, but what the heck!

"You said a level 50 soldier makes 1 gold a year."

"Yes."

"I am level 27 now."

"Yes."

How does this make sense?

"Your angry face is funny."

Okay, let's calm down.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Repeat.

"So after 12 months, I need to have 200 gold and pay it back, right?"

The second floor might end much earlier than that, so it would be perfect.

"Nope, monthly payments."

"Are you messing with me?"

"A bit, it's funny. Master can probably forgive you a bit if you miss a payment or two - if she likes you, but if you push it too much, she will feel as if you are disrespecting her, and who knows what will happen then."

Great.

"What are good paying jobs?"

"Soldier is pretty well paid."

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

"You just said again that they make 1 gold a year if they are level 50."

"Yes."

She is quite special, this woman in front of me.

"Anything else?"

"You can sell your body."

Huh?

"For experiments? Or selling body parts?"

"Nope, as a prostitute."

"..."

The what?

"Your face isn't that bad, and even though you are missing an arm, there are some people that are into this kind of stuff. You are a drifter too, so that makes you exotic as well, and your body is quite nice."

She looks me up and down.

"Oh, and your eyes are quite unusual. One gray and one brown, that's rare. Plus, some people might enjoy controlling someone as strong-willed as you."

A smile blooms on her face.

"I can be your first. 10 copper."

So, I am not worth more than 4 loaves of bread.

"Anything else?"

"I can go up to 50 copper if you agree to one or two role-plays I like."

Please stop looking at me like that, I am getting scared.

"We can do it if I become too desperate."

"Wow, some people would pay quite a few gold coins to even have dinner with me."

I can imagine that she seems to be a fairly strong and influential person, so it might be worth it for a chance to get closer to her master.

"I think there is something super rude going through your head."

Hm?

Anyway, let's try to explain to her my stance.

"You are pretty, and your offer sounds good too."

"But?"

"Instead of messing with you, I should focus on growing stronger, so I can not only pay off my debt but also be prepared for the future."

"So you don't even have a bit of time?" she teases me.

"Even as we talk, I am training, and if we didn't talk, I would be training even more." That would free my second **[Focus]**.

She crosses her fingers under her chin and uses them to support it while she looks at me.

"But you said you wouldn't mind doing it if you were desperate. Does it mean you are not attracted to me? I am curious."

"I think you are pretty, but I try to think more logically. Sure, if you really want to, we can do it right away, even for free, if it means getting on your good side. It might also help me to relax a bit, but I think you're mostly teasing me and not meaning it seriously, so I would only make a fool of myself if I agreed at the start. Plus it would give you more reasons to make fun of me."

Our eyes meet, and she nods.

Another bright smile.

"You guessed right. But it's interesting to see your thought process. So you wouldn't mind selling your body in some cases, you don't mind kneeling, and I'm sure you would beg and lick my shoes if I asked you to do so."

I nod.

"Do you not value your pride?"

I've been asked this question multiple times in my life.

"Isn't the pride you are talking about something only the strong can have?"

There is some curiosity on her face, so I continue.

"I obviously dislike it, but isn't that a low price to pay? Kneeling or dying, it's obvious which one is better. Licking your shoes? Some people would even pay you to do that, as they enjoy this kind of stuff. For me, the pride you're talking about is something useless and others can have it."

I look up into her eyes, making sure she pays attention.

"My pride is different. If I have to eat rotten food, I will do it. If I have to kneel, I will do it. If I have to bite, scratch during a fight, or spit and kick my opponent's crotch, I will do it. If I have to stand naked in front of dozens of people and

watch as they stare at me while they shave my hair, I don't mind it." I pause for a second.

Ruby is listening carefully without smiling.

"I will do it all If it means it will help me to survive. And then, after everything is over, and I am still alive, I will come back."

She listens without a single word.

"I will pay back for everything. Not in the same amount. I will be unreasonable, I will be petty. I will be cruel."

I always did it that way.

"That's the way I live, and that's my pride."

So in the end, I decided to become a freelance hunter, adventurer, or however Ruby called it.

They are individuals who go into the wild and hunt monsters or animals. Obviously, the owner of the land and the intermediary take a cut and the amount of money a person can get starts at a few copper and can become much higher.

The reason I picked this path is that I can level up while making some money at the same time, so that's quite good.

There are three ways hunters make money.

First is hunting monsters and bringing back their bodies for people to make use of them. Skins, meat, bones, teeth, nearly anything can be used.

Second, killing monsters that have multiplied way too much or pose a risk to roads; they can even get hired as guards for caravans if they want to.

Third is hunting monsters alive. This one is probably the best-paying one, as they will buy a live monster from you and sell it off to someone rich. The main reason is that rich people can kill them inside the safety of their houses and gain some experience to level up. I heard it's pretty popular among super-rich people, even though the amount of experience they gain isn't much.

So yeah, there are a lot of options.

Before I left with an average-looking sword, a few pairs of clothes, some food and paperwork, and owing a bit more silver, Ruby warned me not to run away and to come back every week to report to her and her. It looks like her master left some sort of marker on me, and I still can't find it.

It also surprises me how easily they let me go.

I could die out there, you know. Aren't you worried? Is it because of her master? Is it because of Ruby? Is it the system's work?

Well, it works for me. It's just annoying not to know.

So here I am, walking through Stonehaven, alone. It feels weird now that there isn't anyone leading me somewhere or giving me orders.

I stop by the side of the road, making sure I'm not in anyone's way.

The last thing I want right now is to bump into a hotheaded individual.

I open the community.

**Noname (Hell, group 4)-** *Anyone?*

**Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing)** - *Sup, Noname. Grumpy was super worried about you, dude.*

**Sset (Hell, group 4)** - *Hello, you are late. The other two already spent their allotted time.*

Yes, that's true. But it's not like I could use the community in front of Ruby.

**Noname (Hell, group 4)** - *I couldn't help it.*

**Sset (Hell, group 4)** - *Is everything fine?*

**Noname (Hell, group 4)** - *Yes, you said you were a hunter, are you near Stonehaven?*

**Sset (Hell, group 4)-** *They took us to another city and still keep us on a leash, but we are leveling up.*

That's good to hear. Still, it looks like I will be on my own. I don't mind it that much; it just means I will have to be more careful.

I terribly lack any useful information, and I think they're not for free. Plus, a single high-level monster probably means the end.

**Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing)**- *Oh, Noname and Sset! I wanted to tell you something. When both of you were away, a new guy joined the community. I'm only telling you because he is batshit crazy, and I haven't seen him before.*

At first, I almost ignore him, not curious about this kind of stuff, but then he says something that catches my interest.

**Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing)** - *He was from your group, so you probably know him. He named himself "FoodFood" and kept spamming in the chat, the one word only, and all the time. Either "Food!" or "Food?" or just "Food."*

I sigh.

Why am I not even surprised?

Goddamn it, Biscuit.

I'm glad you seem okay, you little twerp.

## **Chapter 72: Weredeer**

My job? Killing monster boars.

Pay? 1 to 2 silver per piece.

Bonus? Level ups.

A problem? They are heavy.

Solution? Hire a group with a skill similar to Kim's **[Gravity Well]** to carry them.

Price for that group? Thirty percent of every boar delivered.

God damn it.

But there is one thing I like about them. They use some glowing stone that they use their skill on and then put it on the corpses. At that point, the stone works like a medium, slowly releasing some mana to keep the skill active even without their presence.

Sure! It lasts only for a while, but it's cool as hell!

It amazes me and I want one.

But I am instantly rejected. Something about a trade secret.

God damn it.

To be honest, I might fall in love with this world for real. It's full of magic and its uses that fascinate me so much. After spending a few days here, I feel as if we used sticks and stones on the first floor.

You know, like monkeys, trying to figure out how to ride a bike, while here they are flying around in jets.

I love it.

I dodge to the side using absorbed kinetic energy, and a small bead made out of my mana forms near my shoulder then flies at the monster.

Unlike during my fight with the Cinderbear, there is damage as it hits the boar's eye, blinding it.

I form a few more and send them at the monster, distracting it while I move to its back.

I cover the blade of my sword in an oscillating mana and finish up the monster.

**[You have defeated a Boar - lvl 19]**

**[Lvl 29 > Lvl 30]**

Then I check my stats after putting everything into mana, obviously.

**Lvl 30**

**Strength: 13**

**Dexterity: 14**

**Constitution: 39**



**Mana: 79**

Good!

The not rounded-up number on mana slightly annoys me, but hey, it's only a matter of time.

Huhuh.

Finally, my mana is twice as high as my constitution.

I do not have a problem!

Anyway, after a few days of hunting, I was able to gain 3 levels and a grand total of 36 silver. That's surprisingly a lot and makes me wonder what on earth the soldiers are doing to be paid only 1 gold a year.

Oh, and I also removed Sophie's construct from my head. I already remembered its patterns, and I am sure the rest is only about some experimenting and practice until I create a construct of my own.

So yeah, I removed it. You know, just to be safe.

It totally wasn't because of my too-high mana.

It totally wasn't that I had to let one of my Focuses run permanently and keep my mana under control and then couldn't fight because the other part of my mind focused on keeping her construct isolated.

Pfff.

That would be stupid.

"..."

So yeah, anyway.

The construct is gone, and I can finally think of doing all sorts of things that do not align with Sophie. staying alive.

Indeed, I haven't forgotten, and the next time we cross paths, she'd better make me an offer I can't refuse or she'll be out of luck.

“Boss. We are done here!”

### **[Mass Manipulator - lvl 23]**

The man's group members are even lower level than me, and they move the corpse away.

Judging from previous experience, I should get a silver and a half for one of this size. Before their cut, obviously.

“Aelric, I will need some better-paying jobs.”

“I thought the same! This seems too easy for you.” He starts smiling with that creepy smile that scammers like to have.

“How about Weredeers? Their antlers are really expensive right now, and people always pay a good price for them.”

The were-what?!

“Oh, sorry! Do you know deers?” After I nod, he continues, “Weredeers are something like bipedal deer. Obviously much more dangerous. They like to use body-strengthening magic and some ranged attacks made out of mana. Quite similar ones to yours.”

Oh? That sounds interesting; maybe I can learn a thing or two. From a monster, again.

People on this floor are learning magic since they are young, they even have schools for this, mentors, and all this stuff.

Meanwhile, I am here smashing two stones against each other, hoping something will happen.

“As before, get me as much information about the monster as possible. Levels, variants, skills, weaknesses, plus a map of the area. I will pay, as before.”

“Yes!” he says with a smile, and I am sure that I am paying him a premium.

But right now, I am almost sure that I don't even have to save up money to give them all back.

In the past few days, I did talk to Aelric a lot; I even bought a lot of information from him, and it looks like there is a war going on.

You might ask, how can that cause the end of the world, which is the objective of this quest?

Well, it's obviously because of goddamn humans.

Especially some individuals possessing overwhelming power.

Champions, Paragons, Absolutes. They call them many names, and every kingdom possesses a few of them.

People rumored to be powerful enough to wipe entire nations off the face of the Earth. Living monsters able to delete entire cities if they wish to do so, some of them may even be able to take it a step further.

That's what I think is the objective: to watch the war play out, to watch these insanely powerful humans destroy everything.

The reason? Hell if I know.

Maybe it's to show us something? Teach us a thing or two? A warning as to what can happen?

I also came to think that everyone here is fake, the reason being that I gained experience from killing Emeric, while I didn't get any when I threw Ethan at the Cinderbear back on the first floor.

They may be extremely human-like; there also might be copies of someone that existed, but I am almost 100% sure that they were just created for us to experience.

The flow of my thoughts stops as I feel another presence with my **[Mana Perception]**.

“One more boar.”

Aelric just nods and quickly disappears to the back, rejoining his group while I start walking towards the monster.

**[Iron Boar - lvl 28]**

The boar covered in red fur. It's not much bigger than the one I just killed, but it feels so much stronger.

I gesture for them to move even further.

I slightly release the hold my **[Focus]** has on my mana, and it flows wildly through my body.

One part of my mind continues to manipulate and control my mana, and the other focuses on fighting. It still feels weird as my mind splits into two parts, but I am slowly getting used to it.

**[Mana Surge]**

**[Armament]**

I feel the strain on my mind as I use two skills at once, and a spear forms in my hand.

It's still translucent and see-through, but thanks to my training, it's much stronger than the spike I used on the Cinderbear.

The boar finally notices me, and its eyes seem to glow as it turns to me. The ground under the monster cracks, and it dashes at me, faster than it has any right to.

I breathe out and bury my feet into the ground.

For a moment, I release my second focus and use it to strengthen my body with **[Mana Surge]**, then reach back with the spear in my hand. I twist my body, spin, and throw the spear at the boar.

Immediately after the spear leaves my hand, it starts losing some of its firmness, but that's okay. I used a lot of mana.

The spear flies through the air, turning into a blurred line of white-blue light.

It burrows itself deep into the monster's shoulder, and its charge staggers a bit before continuing.

At that point, I reach out towards the boar with **[Kinetic Redistribution]** and absorb its energy, making it slow down.

I groan; the monster is heavy, and the force behind its dash is no joke.

When it's almost within arm's reach of me, I use Hadwin's skill and disrupt the protective barrier around its body. Feeling the mana waver, I redirect the absorbed energy into a thin cone and aim it inside its eye, making a mess out of the inside of its head.

It lets out a long squeal and staggers even more, and I jump to the side as its body slides past me and then stops moving.

### **[You have defeated the Iron Boar - lvl 28]**

I poke the corpse with my foot and gesture at the hiding Aelric.

“Nice job, boss! And you didn't even damage it that much!”

I just nod and move to the side.

Knowing a monster's weaknesses sure helps a lot, and having skills that counter them is useful, but I am still not satisfied.

Yes, throwing a spear made out of my mana is nice, and mana orbs too. I can make them stronger in the future, but somehow they feel... lacking, even as I use my surge to strengthen them.

I need some stronger ranged attacks that will take advantage of my ever-increasing mana pool.

And I also need to create my very first construct.

I need to practice **[Disruption]** as well. In a world where magic is so prevalent, it seems like a really strong skill, and it almost might help me learn to counter similar attacks that could end up being my biggest weakness, as I rely on mana so much.

Oh, also another **[Focus]** would be nice!

There is so much to do.

It's fun.

Even though I complain, I am happy.

I put in an effort, and I get rewarded. I gain more silver, and I can take a warm bath at night and sleep in freshly washed blankets. I eat tasty food and drink clean water.

Then there is so much magic to study and watch and so much to learn.

I leave people alone, and they leave me alone as well, not caring if I die or what I do with my life.

I hope it will last.

Weredeers?

Yeah?

Screw them.

God damned system.

Fucking Aelric.

A terrifying call sounds into the surroundings as more and more Weredeers gather at the edge of my perception.

**[Weredeer - lvl 26]**

**[Weredeer - lvl 31]**

**[Weredeer - lvl 26]**

There are three of them circling around me, moving on their hind legs most of the time, and sometimes getting on all fours to move faster.

Their antlers are sharp and glowing, covered in ominous red mana. Their calls hurt my ears, and their skin seems to be glowing, covered in similar tattoos that the Battle Trolls had back on the first floor.

But the main problem is this guy.

**[Battle Weredeer - lvl 33]**

The biggest one out of them. Antlers sharp enough to cut me apart and a mouth full of sharp teeth. The monster moves on its two legs, and its tattoos are glowing in beautiful white light.

Its eyes look at me like a hunter looks at its prey.

Then, the mana flows out of its antlers, creating a shape similar to that of an arrow. The mana begins to glow in a color similar to its tattoos and flies toward me at a speed that is difficult to follow with the naked eye.

### **Chapter 73: New Side quest**

I dash to the side, strengthening my body as I do so.

The world becomes quieter, black and white, with only mana retaining its color in the world of **[Focus]**.

My **[Mana Perception]** works overtime as I continue tracking the four weredeers' mana signatures around me.

Thankfully, only the Battle Weredeer seems to be able to create mana projectiles, so I keep running away from them or dodging them after determining their trajectory.

One weredeer moves closer to me, dropping to all fours. A horrifying noise escapes its mouth as it charges at me, red mana glowing around its antlers.

I take a step towards it, and my **[Disruption]** flares up, causing the glow around its antlers and tattoos to flicker. The monster slows down, and I stab at it with my sword.

Darn it.

I immediately absorb some energy and push myself away, rolling on the ground before springing back onto my feet. The spot where I had been standing is bombarded with mana arrows.

With no more time to think, I dash again, avoiding the charge of another weredeer.

As I pass by it, I make a deep wound in its side with my sword, coated in oscillating mana.

My body is already heating up, and mana surges through me, held at bay by the second part of my **[Focus]**.

I dodge again and absorb more energy, using half of it to pierce the leg of one of the weredeers and the other half to push myself away.

The monster's tattoos begin to glow more intensely, and I can feel all this mana in the air as even my own mana rages through my body.

Mana Circuit and **[Mana Flow]** both allow it to move quickly, improving my control over it while thanks to **[Focus]** I mold it and send it where it needs to go.

I've already forgotten Aelric's betrayal. I don't think about the tutorial, the other people, or my problems.

I just fight.

My mana surges, and the oscillating mana on my blade extends, cutting off the weredeer's leg. As it falls, I absorb its inertia and remold it into a thin cone that I shoot at its head after using **[Disruption]** to weaken it.

Half of the head explodes, and the remaining eye slowly loses some of its glow, along with the mana around its antlers.

### **[You have defeated a Weredeer - lvl 26]**

I jump back. **[Armanent]** creates armor on my forearm, and I redirect two mana arrows from the Battle Weredeer.

Then I turn and stab my sword at the monster behind me. It dodges, and another one charges at me, but I dodge it as well.

I create dozen of mana orbs and shoot them at the Battle Weredeer while charging one of my opponents. With my perception, I feel the monster dodging my attack and giving me enough time to disrupt the mana in the tattoos of another weredeer. This slows it down just enough for me to reach it and stab my sword through its chest.

The sword breaks, and I let go. A sword made with **[Armanent]** appears in my hand, and I stab it into the monster, extending it as far as I can, making it go right through its body.



Then I have to dodge and jump behind the monster I just wounded.

The spot where I had been standing is hit by another shower of mana arrows, which also strikes the body of the monster I stabbed

### **[You have defeated a Weredeer - lvl 31]**

I slowly breathe out and release some tension in my body.

Then, I **[Focus]** more and take a deep breath in, followed by a slow breath out.

Ten mana orbs appear around my body, and I feed them more mana. I make them bigger, firmer, and then elongate them, attempting to replicate what the Battle Weredeer did.

The monster roars, and I shoot my attack at it. Half of the projectiles dissipate after a while, and the other half miss the monster, causing only minor damage to the ground.

I reduce the number of projectiles to two and continue shooting at them while dodging attacks from both the remaining weredeers.

My head hurts, and my ears are ringing. I'm breathing heavily, and sweat covers my body and forehead. I even feel it on my hairless scalp.

Caught in the heat of the moment, I release the second part of my **[Focus]** that holds my mana at bay and use it to temper my mana projectile.

The other part of my mind activates **[Mana Surge]** and then tries to control the massive output of mana.

Both mana projectiles shoot off at an incredible speed and blow the head off one of the weredeers charging at me.

### **[You have defeated a Weredeer - lvl 26]**

I stagger backward and roll to dodge another volley of arrows while both parts of my **[Focus]** work to regain control over my mana.

My circuit feels like burning, and my head is overheating.

I slow down and tilt my head to dodge another glowing arrow from the monster. My perception warns me that the weredeer is creating another one, and I dodge even before it shoots it off, already getting better at watching the monster's skills come to life and predicting where it will shoot.

I lower my body and start running straight at the bipedal deer, still focusing on calming my mana and only using **[Mana Perception]** to watch the monster.

The glow around its antlers disappears, as do its projectiles, and its tattoos start glowing even brighter. The monster roars louder than before, and its eyes follow me as I run.

For the first time, it puts all four of its limbs on the ground, and massive mana flows into its legs.

The ground around the monster cracks and then explodes into the air, leaving a small crater where it used to stand.

I absorb all of my kinetic energy, making me stop on the spot, and then I jump to the side using the absorbed energy to push myself.

The monster speeds past me and crashes through a few trees, bulldozing the forest. I can immediately feel it collecting mana into its legs once more.

A single mana projectile starts floating near me, and I make it denser and denser.

For a moment, I use the surge to boost my body and dodge to the side, avoiding a second dash. My ankles feel as if they're about to break, but I ignore the pain and focus more on the projectile floating near my body. Its color becomes a darker hue of blue.

The monster collects its mana again, and before it dashes, I release my **[Focus]** that is trying to control my mana and put as much as I can into this projectile.

It shoots off at the monster just as it's about to charge at me, and suddenly, the forest falls silent.

The weredeer freezes. The projectile went through its body and exited, still causing some damage to the forest behind it. The tattoos lose some of their glow, but then, with another grunt, they start to shine even brighter.

The monster is barely controlling its mana as it charges. This time, it misses me and crashes through the forest even more violently than before.

A pained roar sounds, and I feel the monster trying to collect its mana but failing as blood keeps flowing from its pierced body.

Slowly, life escapes its body while it keeps trying to stand up.

**[You have defeated the Battle Weredeer - lvl 33]**

**[Lvl 30 > Lvl 31]**

I exhale softly and calm myself down, feeling as though I am emerging from a trance now that the fight is over.

Mana?

Mana!

I quickly invest all of my stat points and go through the notifications while slowly calming down.

One part of my mind continues to calm my mana, and the other keeps scanning the area around me.

Oh, a new **[Side quest]**.

**Side quest:** *Get 5 skills over level 10*

**Rewards:** Skill upgrade token

Huh, that sounds good, doesn't it?

**Active skills:**

*Focus (Dual Focus) - Lvl 11*

*Mana Manipulation - Lvl 12*

*Mana Perception - Lvl 11*

*Oscillation - Lvl 7*

*Kinetic Redistribution - Lvl 9*

*Armanent - Lvl 4*

*Mana Surge - Lvl 2*

*Disruption - Lvl 3*

Does the already upgraded **[Focus]** count towards it? I wish it would, but I'm more inclined to think that it doesn't.

It just doesn't sound like the system that I know and simultaneously love and hate.

So, with **[Kinetic Redistribution]**, I am over halfway there.

Another two skills I should focus on leveling up should be **[Oscillation]** and then... hmm, which one? The remaining ones are at similar levels, and I can use them all, but it would be more productive to bring one of them to level 10 instead of just using all of them.

**[Armanent]** just showed me how useful it can be as I finally gained a decent ranged attack.

It took a long time, but I'm finally starting to feel like a mage and not a cheap, knockoff version from the marketplace. A step closer to finally taking advantage of my mana without damaging my body every time!

But the problem is that other skills are amazing in their own way.

**[Disruption]**, boosted by the surge, feels like straight-up bullying when I use it against someone with worse mana control or lower mana reserves.

**[Mana Surge]**, on the other hand, gives me an incredible boost to almost everything, taking advantage of my passive skill and trait.

Dang it, too many good choices! A typical first-world problem.

I don't even want to think about all the headaches I will have while deciding which skill to upgrade. Last time I got eight options for two skills. Will I get twenty of them this time?

One part of me is already scared, but a small, excited part of me screeches in anticipation somewhere in the corner of my mind.

Okay, I'll deal with that later! It sounds like a problem for future Nathaniel! Screw that guy!

But first, there's one person I need to take care of.

The person who gave me the wrong information and sent me here to die.

Aelric.

### **Chapter 74: Biscuit, no!**

I enter the bar in the inn Aelric frequents, which is situated in a small village near the wilderness where hunters gather to hunt monsters.

Surprisingly, he is there, together with his group. They are drinking happily without a care in the world.

It pisses me off.

I walk towards the inn owner, who works from behind the counter.

Five silver coins leave my hand – half a year's wage for a farmer.

"I need to have a 'talk' with Aelric and his buddies."

### **[Aura Strengthener - lvl 51]**

Finally, I am able to see his level.

He looks at me, then at the coins, and then at Aelric. A sigh escapes his mouth.

"Triple it and no deaths. I don't want to deal with their godforsaken guild."

I put the coins out without any hesitation, reducing my saved-up coins by a fair amount.

The man takes them, and I turn towards Aelric and the four men surrounding him.

Two of them are level 30 and 35, while Aelric and two more are a bit over 20.

The group has already noticed and is on guard.

"Hey, boss! You wouldn't believe what happened. I swear there should be only level 20 weredeer and not moving in groups! We had to leave too! The big grou..."

He starts, but my fist already burrows itself into the belly of the level 35 man. He groans even though his reinforcement and mana flare up.

Immediately, my **[Disruption]** dissipates his hold over his mana, and my fist hits him in the face.

I take a step back to avoid the attack of another level thirty, and mana flows through my body as my leg hits his chest, sending him rolling on the ground.

None of the men dare to use big area damage skills inside the inn that is under the protection of a strong association.

Aelric, seeing the men he often hires for protection get beaten, becomes a bit nervous and takes a step back.

"Look, Boss, Nathaniel, Nat, it's just a huge misunderstanding."

**[Armament]** creates a helmet without any visor around my head, and the bottle smashes against it half a second later, trying to distract me.

I continue to watch them with my **[Mana Perception]**, and when the level 35 dashes, there is mana glowing in the palms of his hands.

My **[Kinetic Redistribution]** slows down his charge to a crawl, and then I shoot absorbed energy back at him.

Something cracks, and he grabs his leg while groaning on the ground.

I create a small orb made of mana at the side of my fist and shoot it at level 31, who is slowly getting on his feet. I boost it with **[Mana Surge]** and after getting hit also staggers back, now with a broken arm.

"Nat, Nat! You have to calm down, you..."

I don't give him a chance, and my kick hits his crotch, sending him down on the ground with a loud groan.

The other two level 20s don't even try to run away, and I break both of their hands and finish them off with a kick to the crotch and then to the head.

Then I turn back to the man groaning on the ground.

"V-Viktor, Viktor paid me to do it! He didn't like you hunting so many boars; it got into his business." He pauses, breathless, but there's some hope in his eyes.

It's as if he thinks I will stop now and change my target.

He doesn't know me.

My stomp breaks his knee, and his screams are now louder as he keeps thrashing on the ground.

Fear slowly starts to creep into his eyes.

Could I have done it outside the inn and saved some money? Could I have even killed him for giving me the wrong information and sending me to my death?

Yes, I could have, and without any hesitation.

The instant he attempted to take my life, I no longer had any doubts about it and he doesn't have anything worth enough to make me change my mind.

But that's not how it works here.

I stomp on his other knee, and he passes out.

So, I pull up a chair and sit on it.

It's okay; I can wait.

I have time.

Eventually, I leave after breaking both of his elbows.

Oh, and I also cut off his hand.

Did I enjoy it?

Nope, I would have much preferred just killing him. An eye for an eye thing, but the current situation doesn't allow me that.

Even what I did just now might anger his guild a little bit, even though he was the first one to mess with me.

But it's much better than looking weak.

The moment I show weakness here, ten more people like Aelric will pop up and try to use me and then throw me away when I'm no longer useful.

I learned that the hard way after coming here.

The first day, multiple people made fun of me, called me a cripple, and tried to step over me or take my stuff.

At first, I wanted to ignore them, but it became even worse to the point where they were about to use me nearly as a slave or cannon fodder.

So, I fought them.

I beat a few people with higher levels than me senseless. I broke their bones and cut off their fingers.

Then no one dared to call me a cripple to my face, and Aelric approached me. After that no one cared what I did or if I died out there.

Still, It somewhat surprised me that Aelric attempted a similar thing as them.

He should have known better.

**Savant (Hell, Alone)** - *No, you should put only 20% of your stats into mana and the same amount into constitution; otherwise, it will mess up your balance. You can split the remaining points between strength and dexterity as you wish.*

What a dumbass.

**Noname (Hell, group 4)** - *That's dumb; the more mana you can have, the better. It's riskier now, but it's better for you to get used to it. In the future, it will show.*



**Savant (Hell, Alone)** - *Sure, like I would listen to the guy who blew off his arm because of that.*

The heck? Who told him? Hadwin? It had to be him!

**Savant (Hell, Alone)** - *I don't care if you killed Cinderbear. I did it too, and it wasn't even that tough. The monster was just a punching bag if you knew what to do.*

**Lootenant (Hell, WhiteWing)** - *Are they at it again?*

**Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing)** - *LOL, yes, it's fun every time I watch it.*

**FoodFood (Hell, group 4)** - *Food!*

**Grumpy (Hell, group 4)** - *Biscuit! I miss you <>*

**Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing)** - *Here we go; the guy is here again.*

**BenDover (Hell, IDK)** - *This jerk is pissing me off. Why does he repeat one word over and over?*

**BenDover (Hell, IDK)** - *God damned asshole.*

**Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing)** - *STFU; you're the worst one here.*

**BenDover (Hell, IDK)** - *Asshole*

Here we go; they're at it again.

**FoodFood (Hell, group 4)** - *Asshole?*

Huh?

**Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing)** - *Huh?*

**FoodFood (Hell, group 4)** - *Asshole!*

Oh no.

**FoodFood (Hell, group 4)** - *Asshole! Asshole! Asshole! Asshole! Asshole!*

Biscuit, no!

Then I get disconnected from the forum.

God damn it Biscuit.

After hunting more weredeer, I level up two times, and even my skills improve. Before going back to my weekly report to Ruby and her frightening master, I check out my stats.

**[Name:** *Nathaniel Gwyn*]

**Difficulty:** *Hell*

**Floor:** *2 - Mana Infused Kingdom*

**Time left until forced return:** *4y 322d 013h 51m 36s*

**Traits (1/3):** *Mana Circuit (Passive)*

**Lvl** *33*

**Strength:** *14*

**Dexterity:** *15*

**Constitution:** *40*

**Mana:** *88*

**[Primary Class:** *Mana Channeler*]

**[Sub-class:** *Unavailable*]

**Active skills:**

*Focus (Dual Focus) - Lvl 13*

*Mana Manipulation - Lvl 13*

*Mana Perception - Lvl 12*

*Oscillation - Lvl 8*

*Kinetic Redistribution - Lvl 9*

*Armament - Lvl 6*

*Mana Surge - Lvl 3*

*Disruption - Lvl 4*

**Passive skills:**

*Mana Flow (rare)*

**[Skill Points: 1]**

**[Stat Points: 0]**

Pfft, 20% of stats into mana?

Not on my watch!

All in.

Please, Mr. Focus, hold on! You can do it!

As I put more and more points into mana, I rarely can allow either one of my focuses to stop watching over it.

But hey, it's good training, right?

Right?

I partially blame my missing arm for making it more difficult even as I use everything to help me handle my mana. My trait, my passive, two of my skills.

As my **[Mana Perception]** and **[Mana Manipulation]** improved I realized how much of a problem is a missing arm to my flow and circuit.

It looks like there are a few important pathways for mana in arms, and cutting them off makes mana switch to other ones. But it's like you switch from a new highway to a country road.

So how do I solve it?

The best solution would be to get my arm back, but as I found out, that could be quite difficult.

It's super expensive, and healers here are locked up in luxurious mansions, leaving only to heal people rich enough to afford them. Sometimes they are even tied to strong families, being used to extend the life of old but powerful men and women.

Even someone with a low level like Lily is highly valued and taken care of.

So yup, this option might take a while.

The second option is to try to mess with my body and Mana Circuit and fix it myself. The consequences could be terrible if I mess it up with my current lackluster knowledge and skills.

The third option is to leave it as it is. Sure, it will continue to mess with my flow, but at the same time, it's as if I add more weight to myself while exercising. If I survive, it will help me become even stronger, and when I finally restore it, I will be that much more powerful.

It's not like there are many options anyway, so I will just go with the third one.

I also hope that at level 20, I will be able to upgrade **[Focus]** again; that would be amazing.

I find an inn in Stonehaven after leaving the village at the edge of the wilderness.

I enjoy a warm bath that costs me a few coppers, and I eat good food with dessert. I put on my freshly washed and nicely scented clothes.

With not that full pouch, I reach the mansion where I have to meet Ruby.

The guards let me in, expecting me.

I walk through the hallway, following my guide, who leaves me in front of the wooden door.

After a knock, the door opens and Ruby emerges. Her red hair flows freely over her shoulders, and her yellow eyes almost seem to be glowing as her gaze lands on me. She is wearing black pants and a white shirt. They almost look like men's clothes, but I notice a few changes here and there that accentuate her figure.

"Nat! It's nice to see you alive and well. Your hair is funny now; you look like a hedgehog."

Please don't call me Nat.

"Master is waiting for you. Come in," she says as she steps aside, revealing the figure of a tall, older woman sitting on the couch.

Her eyes slowly look at me, and I enter the room.

Then the door behind me closes with a loud thump.

## **Chapter 75: Champion Keiron**

"You got rid of that rudimentary thing clinging to your brain, why?" she asks me immediately.

"It was too dangerous to leave it without oversight, and I'm not skilled enough yet to do that many things at once. Plus, I believe I learned all I could from it."

She stares at me for a second and then slowly nods.

"You walk a dangerous path."

As if I don't know that.

"Do you like mana that much?" she asks, a hint of curiosity in her voice.

"Yes," I say without any hesitation.

There is something in her eyes I have a hard time describing before she turns away, looking at the wildly spinning mana in her hand.

"You may ask a question."

"Can I use my mana in your presence?"

Her smile doesn't fit her age at all. It's barely noticeable, just a lifted corner of her lips, but even then, I can feel some cheekiness from it. Cheekiness and a warning.

"You can try."

I notice Ruby wildly gesturing at me to stop, but even through all of my senses warning me, I open up my mana and reach out towards her with my **[Mana Perception]**.

At first, I don't sense anything.

"Allow me to reveal the path you've chosen to tread."

I start feeling it in my bones, in my insides, on my skin. Impossibly powerful mana.

Its edges are expanding more and more. It feels like a never-ending ocean, like a tsunami. It feels like the heat of a star.

And it's beautiful.

I release my focus on handling my mana and use all of it to feed my perception and defenses. I want to see more. I need to see more.

Her mana is too massive for any human to have a right to, and my mana continues flickering in her presence, like a dying candle in a hurricane.

My ears start ringing, and it's harder and harder to breathe, and I am already down on my knees, unable to stand. I even feel blood running out of my eyes.

But I continue to look.

Like a fly dreaming of reaching the sun.

"Well, that was dumb. You're lucky my master only released some of her mana. I've seen her kill people for much nicer requests than yours." Ruby sighs, "She must find you quite interesting, doing all of this."

I am listening to her with only one ear and still going through what I saw.

"Haa, so annoying," she throws herself on the couch, acting more brazen now that her master has left. She stretches her legs, "I could never understand your type. All of you are goddamn crazy."

I slowly focus on her words and stand up, my body complaining as if someone danced on it all night. With a groan, I sit on the armchair opposite her.

"How strong is she?"

"Who knows? I hope to never find out." Ruby shrugs her shoulders.

"Stronger than Champion Keiron or Champion Tristan?" I ask, curious since I heard the names of the two strongest people from Roland.

"I see that someone has been collecting information," she smirks and, still lying on the couch, continues to look at me, "My master is... she's special, that's all you need to know. But don't even dream about reaching Champion Keiron. The man is ancient, and the last time he fought, he sank an island, along with a million people who lived there. He is a monster capable of destroying an entire kingdom if he wills it."

She jumps to her feet, "Enough of that. Now invite me to dinner, and I'll show you something interesting."

Huh?

I end up leaving the restaurant with my pouch much lighter.

Sure, the food was amazing. So good. But what the heck!

What kind of dinner for two costs as much as a farmer's yearly wage?!

Damn it.

"Look," I hear from Ruby, and I look where she's pointing.

The statue towers over the area, a depiction of a man tall and imposing and adorned in complete, meticulously crafted armor. You could spend hours studying the armor alone, each piece bearing intricate details of painstaking labor and skill. The armor's metallic sheen contrasts beautifully with the backdrop of the blue sky.

The sculpted face of the man exudes an aura of unwavering confidence and raw power. Etched with such realism, you could almost see the determination set in the statue's stone eyes. The man's grip on the sword is firm, with the blade stabbed into the ground in front of him.

"This is Champion Keiron," she says.

Ehm?

That makes me look at the statue once more, making sure I remember the face.

"It's nicely made," I start. Was this information really worth that much silver?

Ruby laughs. What's so funny?

"You don't understand. *THIS* is Champion Keiron."

"..."

What?

"No one remembers now how old he is, but everyone knows that every ten years, he creates another avatar of himself and places it somewhere in the kingdom."

No way.

"There are now tens of his avatars all over the kingdom and the world," she turns to me, none of her normal cheekiness visible on her face now,  
"Champion Keiron can instantly transfer his mind into any of these avatars and then fight with all his power available."

I have a hard time wrapping my head around it. How is something like that even possible?

How?

"Some say that he can now awaken all the avatars at once and control them, with each of them containing most of his power," her eyes have the same look I must have now.

I just don't know what to say.

"That is what Champion is capable of."

## **POV Lily Chen**

"Novice Lily, please hurry up."

"Y-yes!" I quickly grab my bag with the things I'll be needing and glance around my room one last time, feeling a mix of excitement and nervousness.



It's huge and predominantly white in color, filled with beautifully carved furniture with gold accents. The bed is massive, much bigger than I need. But the mattress is amazing, so I don't mind it that much. I still feel like I'm living in a dream, like any moment someone will pinch me, and I'll wake up.

Everything is better than sleeping on the first floor's cold, hard ground. My thoughts drift back to those nights, and I try to shake off all those bad memories.

I don't want to think about that. I'm in a better place now, right?

"Sorry for keeping you waiting, I'm ready now!" I say as I exit the room, hoping my enthusiasm isn't too obvious.

Everyone here is so nice to me, so I try to treat them with the same kindness. I can't help but feel a little out of place, though. I mean, I'm just a regular girl who happened to acquire healing powers.

My guide, Mentor Lyra, smiles at me, and I can't help but smile back, feeling my cheeks warm up a bit.

"It's okay, Novice Lily. Shall we go now?"

"Yes!"

I quickly follow her as we walk through the lavish hallway that I'm still not used to. It's too pristine, too fancy-looking. Every step I take feels like I'm walking on clouds, and I wonder if I'll ever get used to living like this.

We pass by a few more people, and everyone greets and smiles at me. Some even bow.

That's another thing I'm not used to. It makes me feel important, but also a little awkward.

In the community, Nat said that healers are super rare in this world and that I wouldn't have to worry about anything for a while. He told me to enjoy some rest and... I remember something and giggle a bit, suddenly feeling mischievous.

He also said to "yoink" some expensive things for him, mentioning that he might need some gold fairly soon. I can't believe he asked me to do that, but it's kind of exciting.

"Mentor Lyra, I was thinking, could I ask you for some gold coins?"

Her eyebrows rise a bit, but contrary to my expectations, she just nods.

"That's something we can do for you. We can discuss it when we return from your training and talk about the amount you need."

Oh, that was easier than I thought it would be. I can't wait to tell Nat!

"T-thank you."

She nods with a smile, and we enter the massive dining room. Huge windows offer a view of the beautiful gardens, and we eat slowly, served by a few dedicated attendants just for us. The food is amazing, and I only regret that the others can't be here with me, even silly Biscuit. I hope they're okay.

"Let's go and heal a few people, okay, Novice Lily?"

I agree and stand up, feeling determined. It's something I have to do to be allowed to live the way I live now.

And it will help me become more useful in the future, not just for myself, but for the people I care about.

I will not allow the events from the end of the first floor to repeat.

"I fed him to the pigs. I cut his body into small pieces and threw them inside the pen, making sure they eat it all," I say quietly to Ruby, who is sitting opposite me.

She doesn't smile, only nodding and pulling a card from the game we're playing. She flips it around and shows it to me again.

"I won again. Now tell me how you did it."

I stay silent for a moment, already yearning to forget the situation.

"I kept an eye on him since he started showing hostility towards me. Then I began to observe his movements and his sensitivity to my mana usage. I was

careful, never showing any aggression," memories flash through my mind. "I created a small orb of mana inside my mouth. I've learned that everyone's body has a kind of barrier that partially conceals the mana within, and even though you can sense it if you try hard enough, or if the other person isn't good at controlling it, I noticed that Emeric wasn't proficient at it."

Ruby nods likely understanding where I'm heading with this.

"He continued to taunt me in the hallway to my room, out of earshot of everyone else.

He did it every day.

So one day, I simply waited for him to lean closer, and then I opened my mouth as if to say something, and shot the mana orb through his eye into his brain," I look at her, "he died almost instantly."

I leave out the part where I had to drag him to my room. I omit the part where I had to go out and immediately clean up the blood.

I don't tell her how I had to cut his entire body into pieces while using **[Oscillation]** and feeling like I was on the verge of passing out several times, able to continue only thanks to **[Focus]**.

I don't regret it, I did it all to survive.

But damn, it feels disgusting.