Reincarnated as a Castle - (LitRPG, Kingdom Building, Progression)

chapter 41-50

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The air suddenly grew heavy.

Why?
What's going on?
Did something happen to their tribe... something that made them unable to go back?
Now that I thought about it more carefully, why had these two goblins been out in the dangerous forest at night in the first place, being chased by those enormous horned wolves all the way to my castle?

Something about their situation didn't quite add up.

At first, I had simply assumed they had gotten lost in the darkness. Maybe they had been busy hunting a rabbit or gathering something in the forest and failed to return home before sunset.

But after seeing how confidently they could draw a map of the surrounding forest, that explanation felt less and less convincing.

They obviously knew the area quite well. And if they understood how dangerous the forest could become at night, there was no reason for them to be wandering around out there unless something had prevented them from returning home.

Which left another possibility...

They couldn't return.

Yeah, that has to be it...
...

However, although I desperately wanted to ask them directly, I had no idea how.

After all, I couldn’t speak a single word of Goblish.

Fuck! If only the System were kind enough to give me a proper translator!
But just as I was lamenting my terrible communication skills, something suddenly clicked in my mind.

Wait a minute... a translator?
I do have a translator!
That was when I realized another rather revolutionary way to use my [Quest Creation] skill.

Thanks to some magical effect, the System could already present quest content in a form that both the goblins and I could understand perfectly. To me, the quest scroll always appeared in English, but to the goblins, it could very well be displaying the same information in their own language.

If that was the case...

Why not exploit that functionality?

Why not turn the System into my personal translator?

"Muahahaha!"

I laughed internally like some player who had just discovered a ridiculous bug and was already planning how to abuse it.

"This is brilliant! Absolutely BRRRRRRILLIANT!"

"Sometimes, you just have to think outside the box!"

Excited by this sudden breakthrough, I spent the next full minute racking my stony brain and carefully figuring out how to make it work.

More specifically, I needed to find a way to structure the quests so I could extract information from them as efficiently and clearly as possible.

Hmmm...

It’s impossible to hold a full, natural conversation using [Quest Creation] alone.
But simple yes-or-no questions...
That should be perfectly doable.
I immediately canceled the recruitment quest and created a new one in its place.

Prerequisite: None
Quest Info: Your ruler wishes to understand your current situation. Answer the following question according to the instructions below:
"Did something happen in your tribe that prevents you from returning?"
If yes, nod.

If no, shake your head from side to side.

If you do not wish to answer, cross your arms. Your ruler will not pressure you if you do not feel safe sharing.

Quest Type: One-Time
Objective: Respond using the provided gestures.
Time Limit: 1 minute
Reward: None
Punishment: None
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The two goblins took a moment to read the quest.

Their eyes gradually widened as they realized what I was trying to do.

Then, almost simultaneously, they both nodded.

A nod meant yes.

"Damn! I knew it!"

"So they really can’t go back!"

A surge of excitement rushed through me.

At last, I had found a working way to communicate with them!

It felt a little strange to be this excited when my citizens were clearly dealing with something terrible, but I couldn’t help it. This was a breakthrough I had been desperately waiting for ever since they arrived at my castle.

Now that I knew they couldn’t return, the next obvious question was simple.

Why?

I quickly issued several more targeted quests, each presenting a possible explanation I could think of. As a webnovel author in my past life, imagination had always been one of my greatest strengths.

Did you break some kind of forbidden rule and get exiled?
Were you sent out on a special mission and unable to return until it was completed?
Do you have a serious grudge with someone powerful in your tribe and had to flee?
Or...

Was your tribe attacked, forcing you to escape?
At that final question, both goblins nodded again, while their expressions immediately became heavier.

I see... so your tribe was attacked.
My investigation had taken another important step forward.

Now then...

Who would be ruthless enough to attack these goblins?

A powerful monster?

Human adventurers?

Or...

Another goblin tribe?

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In the end, after a careful series of yes-or-no questions, I was finally able to squeeze a few more details out of them.

Their tribe had been attacked by some kind of enormous, terrifying spider monsters.

According to the information I managed to piece together, the creatures had descended upon their territory and completely overwhelmed the tribe.

Gopuro then pointed toward a specific location on the map—The same region marked with the skull-and-bone symbol.

"Wait..."

"Those spiders came from there?"

So that mysterious region wasn't just dangerous. It was the source of the monsters that had attacked my citizens' former home.

I continued questioning them, trying to determine what had happened to the rest of their tribe.

Unfortunately, I couldn't get a clear answer. For all I knew, Gopuro and Gopuran might have been the only survivors.

But that wasn't even the most concerning part.

As I continued asking questions, I discovered something far more alarming:

Their tribe wasn't the only one that had been attacked. Other goblin tribes had also fallen victim to the spider monsters.*freom*

And judging from the scattered information on the map, it seemed the spiders were spreading outward, advancing deeper into the forest, expanding their territory with every attack.

A cold realization slowly settled over me.

Sooner or later...
If nobody stops them, they're going to reach my territory too.

And just like that, reality hit me like a truck.

Given how terrifying those spider monsters seemed to be, I really shouldn't get cocky and start thinking I was already overpowered just because I possessed an amazing System and two incredible citizens.

Up until now, I had considered my two goblins fairly strong. After all, they had successfully evolved into the powerful [Super Forest Goblin] variant, received a massive boost to their stats, and even unlocked the ridiculously powerful [Enraged] skill.

But there was one important detail I had been overlooking.

They were still only Level 11.

If they returned to their former tribe now and faced those spiders, they would probably be killed in no time.

And worse...

If those monsters eventually came for my castle, I wasn't entirely confident that I could stop them either.

Sure, I could keep dropping rocks on them, just like I had done with the giant wolf.

But what if they were strong enough to survive falling rocks and spears?

What if ordinary traps and physical attacks simply weren't enough to kill them?

And what if there was a giant spider boss among them, one powerful enough to damage or even destroy my entire castle?

That possibility couldn't be ignored, especially if these monsters continued expanding their territory, multiplying in number, and becoming stronger.

And even if my castle walls proved impossible for them to break through, there was another problem:

They could simply wipe out the goblins and other creatures living throughout the surrounding forest.

And if that happened, where would I get new citizens?

I could end up stuck here forever, surrounded by a forest crawling with creepy giant spiders, with no intelligent creatures left around for me to recruit.

And that... was definitely not something I wanted.

Therefore, my goal was simple:

I had to become stronger. And I had to do it fast!

I needed to unlock more upgrades, acquire more powerful abilities, and raise my goblins' levels as quickly as possible.

In other words, I needed a massive amount of Points.

That, however, was precisely where the problem lay.

It was a shame that these two couldn't bring me more citizens. If they had been able to return safely to their tribe, I might have gained a steady stream of new goblins, allowing my population to grow rapidly.

But that option was gone now.

Their tribe had been destroyed, and the surrounding goblin tribes were apparently being attacked one after another.

I couldn't rely on them to expand my population anymore.

If I wanted to grow stronger, I would have to find another way.

For now, I would simply have to work with what I had.

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Anyway, I decided to put the spider problem aside for now. There were more immediate things I needed to worry about.

My attention turned to the two goblins standing in my hall.

They looked up at the ceiling, clearly eager to find out what their next task would be. Even though I still couldn't properly understand their language, I could sense their determination. They wanted to become stronger, strong

enough to one day return to their homeland, avenge their fallen tribe, and wipe those spiders off the map.

Perhaps that was why they had been pushing themselves so hard, accepting quest after quest without ever seeming to want a proper break. Even Gopuran had been willing to put herself through that ridiculous punishment just to obtain the [Enraged] skill.

Now then, the question was...

What kind of task should I give them?

Wood gathering came to mind first, but I hesitated.

I wasn’t building anything at the moment, and while Wood could certainly be sold for Points, it didn’t seem like the most efficient way to earn them.

From what I had seen so far, hunting offered far greater returns. That single horned wolf had yielded an absurd amount of valuable materials.

Still, sending them out to hunt right now didn’t sit well with me.

The forest was dangerous, and there was always the possibility that they could encounter the spider monsters that had destroyed their tribe.

I only had two citizens.

Losing even one of them would be a serious blow. Losing both would be catastrophic.

Perhaps I was being overly cautious, but I trusted my instincts. Right now, they were telling me not to take unnecessary risks.

In the end, I settled on the safer option.

I would let them stay near the castle and chop wood, at least until they gained a few more levels and became stronger.

But before that...

I had something else in mind.

If I wanted to properly command my citizens and understand what they needed, there was one problem I absolutely had to solve first.

The language barrier.

I prepared a new quest for Gopuran.

[Ding! Gopuran has accepted your "Goblish Teaching" quest!]
[Ding! Gopuro has accepted your "Goblish Teaching" quest!]
[Quest: Goblish Teaching Lesson 1!]
Prerequisite: None
Quest Info: Your ruler wishes to learn your language so they can communicate with you more easily. You will not receive an immediate reward for this quest. However, if you continue this lesson, you will earn 1 Powerstone for every 3 hours of teaching.
Quest Type: One Time.
Objective: Pronounce the following words in Goblish as slowly, loudly, and clearly as possible. Repeat each word 20 times.
Word List: Hello, goodbye, yes, no, food, water, danger, friend.
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Once again, both goblins were thrilled to accept the quest.

Gopuran eagerly took on the role of teacher, and within a few minutes, the goblin girl was already pacing back and forth across the stone floor of the hall, pronouncing each word slowly, loudly, and with surprising patience.

Gopuro was doing the same, working through a different word list I had given him.

Meanwhile, I focused as hard as I possibly could, absorbing every sound and subtle nuance they offered.

And slowly, through what could only be described as sheer, absurd effort on all our parts...

I learned.

My first two hundred and thirty Goblish words...

In just twelve freaking hours.

Even when the sun dipped below the horizon, I was still deep into the lesson, continuing without pause.

Both of them turned out to be surprisingly good teachers.

I even able .to learn beautiful phrases like how to say "f*** you" or "big holy titties" in Goblish.

In the end, even I couldn’t believe how quickly I was picking it up.

"Damn... is this the power of having no brain?"

I had never felt this sharp or capable before. It was as if I had become a giant sponge, soaking up every word Gopuran and Gopuro taught me at an absurd rate.

If this had been my past life, trying to learn a new language this quickly would have fried my brain and made me give up in under thirty seconds.

Yeah...

Maybe my mental capabilities had become something else entirely.

After all, I could handle dozens of overlapping visions at once without getting tired. I no longer needed sleep or rest, and I couldn’t even suffer from headaches anymore.

It was almost as if castle life had secretly been training me for this exact moment.

Interestingly, Goblish didn’t have a writing system at all. It was purely a spoken language, passed down orally from generation to generation, with no letters or symbols.

But strangely enough, it was quite easy to learn. The language itself was incredibly straightforward, with simple vocabulary and uncomplicated grammar.

By the end of that first intense day, I even received a surprise notification.

[Ding! Achievement Unlocked: Tongue of the Greenskins!]

[+20 Points!]

[Skill Unlocked: Goblish (Beginner)]

The two goblins were now having a full conversation during dinner, and I could actually understand them!

"Hmmm! Chicken is so delish!" Gopuro declared proudly, raising his grilled drumstick into the air like a trophy.

"Nu! Red meat is more delish! Puran likes steak!" Gopuran shot back while continuing to chew vigorously on her skewered steak. A little bit of meat juice glistened on her chin before she quickly wiped it away with the back of her hand.

Haha... these guys really love meat. They're easily the biggest eaters I've ever seen!
Still, my Goblish comprehension was only around forty percent at best. I was still very much a beginner, and nearly half of what they said still went straight over my head.

I definitely wanted to keep learning and improve my understanding of their language, but right now, I didn't have that much time to spend.

After all, I couldn't keep Gopuran or Gopuro inside the castle as my personal language tutor forever. I needed both of them out there working so I could start generating more Points.

Haaiz... if only I had some way to magically level up my Goblish skill...
Just then, something clicked.

"Oh, wait..."

"I do have a way!"

And that was my [Lord's Blessing] skill!

I wasn't entirely sure whether it would work on myself, but the description clearly stated:

[Spend Points to raise a citizen’s level or upgrade their skills.]
So, as long as the target was considered a citizen, I should theoretically be able to apply it.

Which brought me to one important question.

Am I considered a citizen of my own castle?
I checked my status screen.

[Population: 3]
Yes.

Three.

That meant I was being counted as part of my own population.

Logically speaking, it made sense. Even if you were the ruler of a country, you were still technically a citizen of that country...

Right???

Hmmm... now that I think about it... does the King of England even need a passport?
And what about the President of the US? He probably needs one too, right?
Well, no harm in trying!
Using [Lord’s Blessing] didn’t cost any Powerstones or Points just to attempt, so I immediately tried to apply the skill to myself.

However, the moment I focused my will, a cold System notification appeared.

[Error: You cannot bless yourself! You can only bless your citizens!]

"OH, COME ON! SYSTEM!!!"

"This is not fair!!!"

"I AM A CITIZEN!"

"I don’t understand this. Why the fuck am I not considered my own citizen?!"

But before I could continue arguing with the System in my head, another notification suddenly appeared.

[To level up your Goblish skill, you need to upgrade the Sovereign Shop!]

[Would you like to upgrade the Sovereign Shop right now?]

[Upgrade Sovereign Shop]
Prerequisite: System Shop Level 2 (Met), Castle Core Level 2 (Met)
Upgrade Cost: 300 Points
Unlocks: Ability to upgrade certain Sovereign Skills
New Skills: Vassal's Eyes, Ruler's Voice, Devolution
Haha... alright!

I had been planning to do these upgrades anyway.

And not to mention, those new skills looked amazing!

[Vassal's Eyes]
[Ruler's Voice]
[Devolution]
If those skills are exactly what I think they are... I'm going to be very happy!
And then another thought occurred to me.

Wait...
Who would have thought the [Goblish] skill I just obtained would also count as a Sovereign Skill?
Isn't that actually pretty interesting!
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With that thought in mind, I opened my Inventory and checked my current balance.

Hmmm...
My total net worth was currently around 2000 Points, at least by my rough estimation.

I had managed to harvest a decent amount of meat from the wolf carcass, but unfortunately, the System had forced me to sell most of it. After all, fresh meat could only be stored for one day before it spoiled.

At least I had been able to keep all the valuable non-perishable materials. The bones, fat, fur, fangs, and claws could all be stored indefinitely, and each was worth a surprisingly decent amount of Points.

Besides the **Sovereign Shop**, I also wanted to upgrade my **Item Shop** to unlock better equipment options, and also better food too. That upgrade only cost 100 Points to reach Level 2, so I figured I should have enough to upgrade both.
As for the other available shops...

None of them seemed particularly useful to me right now.

So, without any further hesitation, I decided to start with the **Sovereign Shop**.
[Ding!]
[Sovereign Shop Upgrade Successful!]
[-300 Points]
[Sovereign Shop Level 2 Unlocked!]
[Nice! You can now upgrade certain Sovereign Skills to Level 2!]
[Nice! New Sovereign Skills are now available for purchase: Vassal's Eyes, Ruler's Voice, Devolution!]
I opened the Sovereign Shop and examined the newly unlocked skills.

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[Vassal's Eyes Lv. 1]
Type: Active
Description:
Connects to one citizen's senses, allowing you to see and hear whatever they are currently seeing and hearing.At Level 1, you can only activate this skill on **one citizen at a time**. Activating it on another citizen will automatically disconnect the previous target.Skill usage slowly consumes Points and is subject to a range limit.
Upgrade Potential: Higher skill levels allow you to target more citizens simultaneously while also increasing the range limit.
Max Duration: Unlimited
Range Limit: 5 km from your Core
Point Cost: 1 Point per hour
Unlock Cost: 100 Castle Points
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[Ruler's Voice Lv. 1]
Type: Active
Description:
Allows you to communicate with your citizens by sending messages directly into their minds.

You can freely customize the tone and sound of your voice. However, no matter which voice you choose, your citizens will always recognize it as the voice of their ruler.

This skill has a range limit and consumes Points based on the number of messages sent.

Range Limit: 5 km from your Core
Point Cost: 1 Point per 10 messages sent. Group messages count as multiple messages. The cost increases by 1 Point for each kilometer the citizen is away from your Core.
Unlock Cost: 100 Castle Points
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[Devolution]
Type: Active
Description: Reverts a citizen to an earlier evolutionary variant. 30% of the accumulated EXP lost during devolution will be refunded in the form of Powerstones.
Unlock Cost: 100 Castle Points

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As I read through the descriptions, I couldn't help but celebrate with joy.

Some of these new skills were exactly what I had been hoping for!

First, **[Vassal's Eyes]** was amazing!
The ability to see whatever one of my citizens was seeing? Absolutely perfect!

With this, I would finally be able to see beyond the same boring forest clearing, the empty rooms inside my walls, and the gloomy basement I had been staring at for far too long. After so many days stuck in this place, I had grown incredibly sick of these limited views already!

And the best part was that the skill didn't just let me see through my citizens' eyes. I could hear through them too.

Soon, I would be able to listen to the gentle rustling of leaves deep within the forest, the soothing sound of a river flowing over rocks, and the distant calls of unknown birds and beasts.

It would basically be like having a live stream straight from my citizens' point of view.

There was literally no reason to hesitate.

[Ding!]

[You have successfully purchased the Sovereign Skill, Vassal's Eyes!]

The System notification announced that my purchase had gone through.

Only 100 Points?

That's cheap!

Even if it had cost 500 Points, I would have gladly emptied my entire stock of Points for it.

Too bad it was already night.

Otherwise, I would have immediately issued a quest and sent Gopuro running around the surrounding forest, giving me a personal tour through his eyes.

Still, it was a little disappointing that the skill had a strict 5 km range limit.

Good thing I could upgrade the range later. I just hoped that one day, I would be able to remove the limit entirely and explore this world without any restrictions.

Now, regarding the second skill, **[Ruler's Voice]**.
Only 100 Points?

"Damn, what's wrong with the System's pricing today?"

Cha-ching!

[Ding! You have successfully purchased the Sovereign Skill, Ruler's Voice!]

Purchased!

Another skill in the bag!

This was also exactly what I needed.

If I didn’t know Goblish, then perhaps this skill wouldn’t have been very useful to me. After all, without knowing the language, being able to speak directly into their minds would be completely pointless if none of them could understand a single word.

But now, with Goblish under my belt, the entire situation had flipped.

No more painstakingly filling out complicated quest forms just to have a simple conversation with my citizens. I could now talk to them freely, whenever I wanted!

"Ahh... what a wonderful quality-of-life upgrade!"

And for some reason, I also had a strong feeling that this skill could be abused in a few absurdly overpowered ways in the future.

After all, the ability to send messages directly into a citizen’s head reminded me of some insane technologies from my old world.

Radio? Podcasts? Telephones? Walkie-talkies?

Hello? Moshi-moshi???

Exactly!

In times of war, this could be incredibly useful, if not completely broken!

Combined with my ability to see and process multiple viewpoints at once, I could send clear commands across great distances in real time without any communication delay.

Even coordinating thousands of troops across different battlefields could potentially become as easy as cake.

That aside...

The last skill, **[Devolution]**, left me feeling a little confused.
If I understand this correctly, this skill would allow me to... devolve my citizens?

But why would I ever do that? Why would I willingly make one of my citizens weaker and lose part of their progress?
But as I thought about it more carefully, I began to understand the real purpose behind this skill, and exactly who I might want to use it on.

Ah, I see...
If my hypothesis is correct, then this could actually be very useful indeed.
But well... there's no need for it right now.
So I left it alone for the time being and moved on to check my other skills.

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Just like that, my net worth plummeted at an alarming rate.

Still, even after spending so much, I couldn't help but open the full list of what the upgraded Level 2 Sovereign Skills had to offer.

Yup, it's the skill I wanted right there...

[Goblish Lv. 2]
Effect: Allows you to become more fluent in Goblish.
Upgrade Cost: 200 Castle Points
I immediately purchased it, and the moment I did, another mountain of information suddenly flowed into my brain!

"Uwaaaaaahhh!!!!"

It was like downloading an entire dictionary directly into my head!

My vision went static, and I felt a little dizzy for a second. But soon, the discomfort faded, and my mind quickly returned to normal.

I shifted my attention back to Gopuro and Gopuran, eager to test out my newly upgraded language skill.

And indeed!

I could hear them much more clearly and understand them waaaay better than before!

It was like someone had suddenly turned the subtitles on in my brain.

And right after that, the System prompted me again.

[Would you like to purchase another upgrade? Goblish Lv. 3 is now available!]

"Ooohhh!"

I immediately checked the skill, but the moment I saw the price...

[Upgrade Cost: 1,000 Castle Points]
"Nope!"

At my current level of fluency, I should already be able to have normal conversations with them without much trouble. There was no need to spend that many Points right now.

Maybe in the future, yes.

But definitely not right now.

Anyway, I moved on and started checking my other skills.

And the moment I saw one particular skill, I was stunned into silence.

"Oh god... I really don’t want to spend more Points."

"But damn!"

"This skill... it’s so freaking good!"

[Lord’s Blessing Lv. 2]
Upgrade Prerequisite: Possess the skill **[Vassal’s Eyes]**
Effect: Spend Points to raise a citizen’s level or upgrade their skills.
Additional Effect: The Ruler can now spend Points to grant citizens powerful temporary blessings.
[Blessings Available at Level 2]
Blessing of Haste: Grants 50% increased Speed.
Blessing of Strength: Grants 30% increased Attack and 30% increased Defense.
Blessing of Life: Grants 20% increased Max HP and 0.1% Max HP regeneration per second.

Blessing of Protection: Prevents any new negative effects from being applied. The effectiveness and damage of existing negative effects are reduced by 50%.
Blessing of Sharp Senses: Greatly enhances perception, night vision, and reaction speed.
Max Duration: Unlimited
Point Cost: Varies and is deducted over time depending on the strength of the blessing.
Limit: At the current level, only one blessing can be active on any individual citizen at a time, though multiple citizens can be blessed simultaneously. Once a blessing is turned off, you will need to wait at least 1 minute to apply another blessing. Further upgrades to this skill will unlock additional blessings and the ability to stack multiple blessings.
(This skill shares the same range limit as [Vassal's Eyes]. Upgrading [Vassal's Eyes] is highly recommended for maximum effectiveness.)
[Upgrade Cost: 1,000 Points]
One...

Thousand...

Points!!!

My soul practically cried.

I had just spent 400 Points upgrading the Sovereign Shop and another 200 on upgrading Goblish, and now the System was asking me to throw another 1,000 Points into the same money pit.

My carefully accumulated fortune was disappearing at an alarming rate.

And yet...

I stared at **[Lord's Blessing Lv. 2]** for several seconds.
How the hell was I supposed to resist something like this?

Fifty percent more Speed.

Thirty percent more Attack and Defense.

More HP and regeneration.

Resistance against negative effects.

And enhanced perception on top of all that.

...

Oh man...
Should I buy it right now????

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So that's **[Lord's Blessing Lv. 2]**.
Anyone who had spent even a little time as a gamer would immediately recognize how broken this skill could be. These weren't minor stat increases. Every single blessing offered a powerful boost that could potentially change the outcome of a battle.

The only real drawback was the massive amount of Points required to maintain them. I definitely wouldn't be able to keep a blessing active on my citizens all the time. Doing that would probably drain my entire fortune before I even realized what had happened.

But... that wasn't really the point of this skill anyway.

Most likely, it was designed to be used during critical, life-or-death moments.

For example, if one of my citizens was seriously injured and their HP was rapidly dropping toward zero, a well-timed **[Blessing of Life]** could give them just enough extra HP and regeneration to survive until the danger passed or help arrived.
Or, if they suddenly encountered a powerful enemy far beyond their level, **[Blessing of Haste]** could provide the burst of speed they needed to escape with their lives.
Even **[Blessing of Protection]** could potentially save someone from a devastating status effect at a critical moment.
In other words, I didn't need to keep these blessings active constantly.

I just needed to use the right blessing at the right time.

And that made the skill incredibly valuable.

I immediately placed **[Lord's Blessing Lv. 2]** near the very top of my "must-have" list.

For now, though, I didn’t have any immediate use for a blessing. Furthermore, I couldn’t afford it yet. 1,000 Points was no small amount. Buying this skill right now would drain my wallet almost completely dry.

After all, I still had other upgrades to go through and some items to purchase.

Still...

At least I knew exactly what I wanted to purchase next.

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The next morning...

"Hnnnngghh!!!"

Gopuran woke up first, stretching her arms wide with a huge yawn.

Meanwhile, Gopuro was still fast asleep, snoring loudly like a horse. He was wearing nothing but a simple loincloth, completely oblivious to the world around him.

Gopuran stared at her dear brother for a moment, her eyes slowly narrowing with a mischievous glint.

Then...

PLAP!
She slapped his fat butt cheeks so hard it made a loud, explosive sound that echoed through the hall and scared the shit out of the sleeping birds!

"AAAA!"

Gopuro jolted awake, flailing around like a fish out of water before frantically rubbing his stinging ass with both hands. A bright red handprint was clearly visible against his green skin.

He sat up and stared at Gopuran in complete confusion, while she simply giggled innocently.

"P-Puran? Why?! WHY?!" the dude cried in disbelief, his eyes already watering dramatically.

"Come on, Puro! Time for a quest! Big Boss is waiting!" Gopuran grinned widely.

Haha, seems like things are already getting lively this early in the morning!
I couldn't help but smile as well.

These two were so silly and entertaining that they had already made me laugh more times than I could count.

Anyway, now was the time.

Time to flex my new skills and my upgraded Goblish!

"Ahem! Good morning, guys," I began, using **[Ruler's Voice]** to send my words directly into both of their minds in fluent Goblish. "Mic test, 1 2 1 2... How was your sleep? Did you sleep well?"
The moment they heard my voice, both goblins froze on the spot.

Their faces twisted into expressions of pure shock, as if they had just seen a ghost.

"Come on! It's me!"

"B-B-Big Boss...?" Gopuro muttered, his lips trembling.

"What? You... you can speak?!" Gopuran's eyes widened in disbelief.

"Of course I can speak!" I replied.

"UWOOOOHHHH!"

Gopuro suddenly shouted, pumping his fist wildly into the air with unrestrained excitement.

"Big Boss can speak Goblish now! And Big Boss is speaking with such a MANLY VOICE!"

"YEAH!" Gopuran cheered right along with him, her eyes sparkling. "And Big Boss's voice is so cool!"

And just like that, my first real conversation with my citizens got off to an unexpectedly intense start.

For the next few moments, these two silly goblins kept worshiping me with exaggerated enthusiasm, showering me with a nonstop stream of praise.

"Big Boss is so strong!"

"Big Boss is the smartest!"

"Big Boss's voice is so manly and powerful!"

Though, regarding my voice...

It wasn't actually my original voice.

It was the voice I had carefully configured when I first set up the **[Ruler's Voice]** skill.
While they were still fast asleep last night, I had spent some time messing around with the settings. The skill let me change my voice however I wanted. Whether it was a super deep, rumbling demonic voice, a high-pitched kawaii anime loli girl voice, or even a sultry, sexy hot-mommy voice, everything was possible through the power of the System.

But of course, I would cringe myself into another dimension if I actually used one of those exaggerated voices in a real conversation.

So I had settled on something more... restrained, yet still carrying enough natural authority and gravitas to make it sound like the voice of a proper ruler.

That was when I suddenly remembered a certain God of Rock from the gacha game *Fantasy Impact* that I used to play.
But... for some reason, I seemed to have underestimated just how ridiculously manly his voice actually was. Apparently, I had accidentally given myself the kind of deep, raspy, manly ASMR voice that could make even the straightest man question his own sexuality for a second.

Either way, it felt incredibly nice to finally be able to talk to someone after so long. A warm wave of joy washed over me as I listened to their excited voices.

After spending so many days trapped inside my own castle, being able to actually have a real conversation with someone felt surprisingly wonderful.

It was also pretty interesting how naturally they referred to me as "Big Boss."

Compared to something more formal like "My Lord" or "My God," it felt much closer, friendlier, and honestly... a lot more fun.

Maybe "Big Boss" wasn't such a bad title after all!

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As the initial greeting died down, I was once again showered with a barrage of eager questions.

"Big Boss, where are you?" Gopuro asked, turning his head left and right, scanning the hall with wide, curious eyes as if trying to spot a hidden figure somewhere in the shadows.

"Big Boss, did you build this place?" Gopuran followed up.

"Are you... a god?" Gopuro added.

Well, I was a castle. I had no flesh-and-blood body to show them.

And as for who I truly was...

Hmmm... a god, huh?

There was no point in telling them that I used to be a human who had reincarnated here as a castle.

It would only confuse them. Worse, knowing how goblins viewed humans in this world, revealing my origins might even make them wary of me. I had no reason to throw away the trust I had built with my own citizens.

But that didn't mean I should tell them that I was a god either.

Sure, if they believed I was a god, they would probably worship and revere me even more. If I eventually gained enough followers, I could even turn myself into the center of an entire religion and expand my influence much faster.

But I didn't want to build my relationship with my citizens on a lie.

If they eventually discovered that I wasn’t actually a god, they might feel betrayed and lose their faith in me. No matter how useful such a lie might be in the short term, it could cause serious problems later.

And there was another reason I didn’t want to casually claim divinity.

This was a world of magic and unknown powers. I had no idea whether actual gods existed, or what they might think of someone suddenly declaring himself one.

Why risk attracting the attention of a real god when I had no idea what the consequences would be?

So, for now, I decided to stick with the truth.

Well... at least the part of the truth I was willing to share.

"Well, haha, I may be able to make food appear from thin air, give you powerful blessings, and even help you level up, but I’m actually not a god."

I said it as casually as I could.

But for some reason, my words seemed to come as a huge shock to them.

"No way!!!" Gopuro exclaimed. "Big Boss is so powerful! Big Boss can make things appear, give us power, and even make us stronger, and yet Big Boss isn’t a god?"

Even Gopuran looked confused.

"If you’re not a god, then are you... more powerful than gods?"

"Ooooh! Right! Right! That must be it!" Gopuro suddenly nodded in agreement.

Oh boy...
I couldn’t help but feel speechless.

I had only wanted to be humble and avoid declaring myself a god. And somehow, they had immediately jumped to the conclusion that I was even more powerful than the gods!

What kind of logic was that?!

"Well, then, why don’t you tell me what exactly a god is?" I asked.

Based on their answer, I might be able to learn more about this world and the beings that these goblins revered as gods.

And perhaps... I could even figure out whether I might actually qualify as one.

However, the moment I asked the question, both goblins looked at each other again.

Neither of them answered immediately.

Their brows furrowed as they tried to remember something from the stories they had heard.

"Hmmmm..." Gopuro finally muttered. "Puran, do you remember... the tales about gods?"

"Well, I only remember some of them..." Gopuran replied hesitantly.

And then, as they slowly pieced together what they had been taught, I finally got my first glimpse of what counted as a god in this world.

Or at least... what gods looked like in the eyes of these goblins.

"The elders said that gods are mythical and powerful beings who live on the highest mountains or in the deepest oceans..." Gopuran began. "They are immortal and possess unlimited magical power. They can do almost anything."

"Right!" Gopuro nodded enthusiastically.

"When the gods are happy, they bring good weather and bountiful harvests to the world..." Gopuran continued. "But when the gods become angry, terrible disasters can happen."

"Oh! And the legends also say that there used to be a Dark God!" Gopuro suddenly added.

"Oh, right!" Gopuran exclaimed, her eyes widening. "There was a super evil god who nearly destroyed the entire world thousands of years ago! Fortunately, the other gods were able to defeat him."

At the mention of the Evil God, my curiosity immediately skyrocketed.

A god powerful enough to nearly destroy the entire world?

I wanted to know more, so I asked them for details.

Unfortunately, both goblins simply shook their heads.

They didn’t know anything beyond the stories they had just told me. Apparently, that was pretty much everything the elders had passed down to them about the gods.

Suddenly...

"Big Boss, where do you come from?" Gopuran asked.

"Right!" Gopuro’s eyes widened as though he had just realized something important. "I was here last winter, and there was nothing like this here!"

"Big Boss, when did you build this... giant pretty house?" Gopuran asked.

"Haha, it’s called a castle!" I replied. "And like you said, I’ve only been here recently. But as for where I came from..."

I hesitated.

How should I explain this?

After thinking about it for a moment, I decided to give them a simple answer.

"Well, it’s a place very, very far away. So far away that I can’t even remember how to get back home. Apparently, I was sent here by a mysterious power."

"Ooooh! Then that mysterious power must be a god!" Gopuro exclaimed.

"That... maybe?" I mused.

Thinking back...

The power to pluck a soul from Earth and reincarnate it into a completely different world, then turn that soul into a literal castle and give it a System?

Yeah... that definitely sounded like something only a god could do.

But who was it?

And why had they done this to me?

What did they want from me?

I really wanted answers to those questions, but there was no way I could figure them out right now.

"Big Boss... are you on a mission for a god?" Gopuran asked, tilting her head.

"Haha, well..." I laughed awkwardly. "I don’t actually know. That being suddenly transported me here without giving me any explanation or warning."

"Huh?" Both goblins looked confused.

"But since they gave me this castle form and all these powers, I think I might have an idea of what my mission is," I quickly added.

"Ohh! Mission?"

The two goblins immediately listened intently.

"Yeah," I replied. "They probably want me to grow stronger. And by stronger, I mean gaining more citizens, making those citizens stronger, and then expanding my territory. Basically..."

I paused for dramatic effect.

"...creating a powerful kingdom!"

"Oooooh!!! A powerful kingdom!!!" Gopuro suddenly gasped, his eyes shining with excitement.

"And world domination!" Gopuran chimed in, pumping her fist into the air.

"Yeah, yeah, something like that!"

The two goblins exchanged a brief look.

Then, almost simultaneously, they turned back toward me.

"Alright, Big Boss! Please let us help you!"

"Please make us stronger!"

"We will conquer the world! Hahahahaha!"

Well, needless to say, I liked their enthusiasm!

More importantly, they seemed to understand my goals a little better now, and they were willing to help me achieve them. That realization made me feel surprisingly excited as well.

Still...

World domination, huh?
That's a pretty big goal.

But who knows?

Maybe one day, I really could achieve it.

And just like that, I spent nearly an hour that morning chatting with my two dear citizens while they prepared and ate breakfast.

I found myself much more talkative, probably because it had been so long since I'd been able to speak with anyone. After spending so many days in complete isolation inside my own castle, simply having a normal conversation felt almost miraculous.

As we talked, I gradually learned more about the two goblins.

As expected, they really were brother and sister. They had even been born on the exact same day. Meaning, they were fraternal twins!

They didn't know who their father was, though....

Apparently, goblin society didn’t have the same family structure or marriage customs as humans. Within their tribe, relationships between adults were much less formal, and children were generally raised by the wider tribe rather than by a single family unit.

As for their mother though...

She had died when they were only a few months old, killed by wild beasts in the forest.

It was rather sad to hear about.

Yet, when I expressed my sympathy, the two goblins seemed genuinely puzzled by my reaction. To them, this was simply a normal part of life.

After all, goblins lived in a harsh world. Wild beasts, diseases, conflicts between tribes... death was an everyday occurrence. Simply surviving long enough to reach adulthood was already considered an achievement.

Perhaps that was also why goblins matured so quickly.

Within just two or three years, a goblin would reach adolescence and become capable of reproduction.

It was probably a natural survival adaptation. When danger lurked around every corner, a species couldn’t afford to spend a decade or more as a helpless child. They needed to grow up quickly and become capable of surviving on their own.

That meant Gopuro and Gopuran, despite being only seven years old right now, were already considered adults by goblin standards.

From a human perspective, they were still children.

But to goblins, they were already roughly equivalent to humans in their late teens or early adulthood.

Now that I think about it...
Could this rapid development be the reason ordinary goblins aren’t particularly intelligent?
Perhaps their bodies developed so quickly that their brains simply couldn’t keep up...

Yup, that has to be it.
At least, that had been my initial theory.

But the more questions I asked, the more I began to suspect there was something else going on.

Something related to both their intelligence and their evolution.

And eventually, I stumbled across something that made the whole matter far more interesting.

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"Wait... you saw the same thing?" Gopuran suddenly asked, her eyes widening.

"Huh? You mean..." Gopuro muttered, turning toward his sister with a piece of chicken still in his mouth.

"Yes! I saw exactly the same thing you saw during your evolution!" Gopuran replied.

Hearing this, I immediately became intrigued.

Earlier, Gopuro had told me about what he had experienced when he evolved into a Super Forest Goblin.

His description had been remarkably vivid.

At first, for a brief moment, he had found himself in a world swallowed by darkness and cold.

Half of his body was submerged in a thick, sticky black substance. It clung to him like tar, constantly dragging him downward. The air itself felt heavy and suffocating, filled with a dense black fog that made it difficult to breathe, let alone speak.

But the physical sensations weren’t the strangest part.

He had also been overwhelmed by emotions he could barely control.

An unbearable hunger.

A deep, almost uncontrollable anger.

Then came the pain and sorrow, pressing down on his mind until it felt as though he were drowning in his own emotions.

And then...

A ray of light appeared.

Within that endless darkness, something suddenly shone like a brilliant star.

Its light spread across the bleak world, illuminating everything around it. Wherever it touched, the black fog began to dissolve, while the tar-like substance covering his body slowly evaporated away.

Little by little, his thoughts became clearer.

The crushing hunger faded.

The anger subsided.

The pain and sorrow gradually disappeared.

And eventually, for the first time, his mind became calm, almost peaceful. So peaceful he just wanted to cry.

Then Gopuro moved toward the light.

The moment he reached out and touched that brilliant star, it merged into his body.

A warm sensation spread through him, washing away the last traces of the darkness.

And then...

He woke up.

When he opened his eyes, his evolution was already complete. He had become a Super Forest Goblin.

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At first, I had assumed it was simply some strange hallucination brought on by the evolution process, and that the experience had been unique to Gopuro.

But now Gopuran was telling me that she had seen the exact same thing.

That changed things.

Could there be something deeper and more profound happening within them during their evolution?
Could that light that saved them and brightened their world actually be the power of my System?
The thought sent a strange ripple of excitement through me. Something told me I had just stumbled upon a secret far more important than I realized.

For now, though, I had far more questions than answers.

There was no way to reach any conclusions based on the experiences of just two goblins.

I would probably need to investigate this later, once I had more citizens and had the chance to observe more evolutions.

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A few moments later...

The two goblins had finished eating, their bellies full and their stamina completely restored. They were already brimming with energy, eager to get back to work.

"Big Boss, what we do today?" Gopuro asked, a wide grin spreading across his face as his eyes sparkled with excitement.

"You chop wood," I replied.

I had assumed that after one day of nonstop chopping, the guy would already be so bored of such a repetitive task.

But nope.

"Alright! I love chopping trees!" he exclaimed, striking a dramatic muscle pose before eagerly grabbing his old axe.

Damn! If this guy existed in the modern world, he'd be the perfect corporate slave!
I was genuinely impressed by his attitude.

This guy didn't need motivation. He didn't need encouragement.

Just give him a job, and he would happily throw himself into it!

With that kind of dedication, he more than deserved what I was about to give him.

"But before that, take this!" I said.

Then with a thought, something suddenly materialized in the air before Gopuro, something I had just recently purchased.

A brand-new axe!

Gone was the crude bone tool! This one was made from proper metal, with a sturdy wooden handle and a sharp iron blade!

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The moment the axe appeared, Gopuro's eyes lit up with joy and excitement.

"UWOOOOOOOOHHHHH!!!!"

Dude roared, snatching the axe with both hands as if it were the most precious treasure in the world.

"Big Boss! THIS IS SO COOL!"

"Haha," I chuckled. "Today, you chop wood with this new axe!"

"HELL YEAH!!!"

I couldn't help but smile at his reaction.

The crude bone axe he had been using before looked downright pathetic compared to this thing. The Big Iron Axe had a sturdy wooden handle and a massive iron blade that looked incredibly sharp and dangerous. It was also

surprisingly heavy, weighing more than 7 kilograms, and was around 1.3 meters long, with the head itself over 40 cm wide.

This monstrous thing had been made for one purpose only: chopping through things with excessive amounts of force!

[Big Iron Axe]
Type: Weapon
Damage Type: Normal
Rarity: E
Description: A large, intimidating iron axe forged for heavy labor and combat.
Effect: +5 ATK
Special Effect: Grants the holder the Skill: **[Big Slash Lv. 1]**
[Big Slash]
Description: Channels energy from within the user's body into the held weapon for one second, imbuing it with a small amount of mana. The user then unleashes a powerful slash that deals heavy damage.
Mana Cost per Slash: 10
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The previous night...

I spent 100 Points to upgrade the Item Shop to Level 2.

The moment I hit confirm, a familiar notification sound rang out.

[Ding! Purchasing Castle Core Upgrade... Success!]

[Ding! Your Item shop is now level 2]

With the item shop now leveled up, the levels of all three sub-shops also increased at once: the Furniture Shop, the Food Shop, and the Daily Equipment Shop!

I opened the Daily Equipment Shop first, since it was the one I cared about the most right now.

"Alright, let's see all the new equipment!"

I had been hoping for some decent higher-tier weapons or armor. Maybe even a few proper iron pieces would be nice.

But the moment the new menu appeared before me, I was left utterly speechless.

[Daily Equipment Shop - Level 2]

Wooden Shield (F)

Wooden Katana (F)

Wooden Spear (F)

Bone Sword (F)

Bone Dagger (F)

Wooden Staff (F)

Sure, there was one more item in the selection now. The shop had gone from five items to six after reaching Level 2.

But...

"Oh, come on! Where the fuck are the higher-tier weapons?!"

I couldn’t believe it. All I got was more F-tier trash!

That was when I remembered exactly how this shop actually functioned.

The selection of items wasn’t guaranteed to improve just because the shop had leveled up. It was entirely based on rates.

Basically, it was a gacha.

[Current Rates:]

F Tier: 90%

E Tier: 10%

D Tier: 0%

C Tier: 0%

B Tier: 0%

A Tier: 0%

Each item slot had only a 10% chance of rolling an E-tier item.

"Oh god... I’m really unlucky, haha."

Not a single E-tier item.

Fortunately, I still had one free refresh for the day, so I used it.

The item menu refreshed.

[Daily Equipment Shop - Level 2]

Wooden Hammer (F)

Bone Sword (F)

Wooden Club (F)

Bone Sword (F)

Bone Staff (F)

Wooden Shield (F)

Once again, it was all F-tier.

"NOOOOO!!!"

Unlucky again!

"But wait... what is the probability of one shop having at least one E-tier item right now?"

I paused for a moment and did some quick mental math.

Since I had no paper, I got creative again and used the interface of the [Quest Creation] skill as a makeshift notepad, writing down the formulas directly onto it.

It had been a long time since I left school, but at least I still remembered how to handle basic probability problems.

And within five minutes, I got my answer.

The probability of getting at least one E-tier item in a single six-slot refresh was approximately 47%.

A little less than a coin flip.

So, losing that coin flip twice in a row was still perfectly reasonable.

Unlucky, yes, but nothing particularly strange.

"Haiya..."

I sighed, accepted my fate, and clicked the shop refresh again.

This time, however, it wasn’t free. The first extra refresh cost 5 Points. The second cost 25 Points.

And neither of them gave me an E-tier item.

"Fuck! What is this?! Rate up is a freaking a lie! You scammer system!"

I shouted angrily while staring at the screen in disbelief.

The probability of getting at least one E-tier item in a refresh was about 47%, meaning the probability of getting at least one E-tier item across four independent refreshes was roughly 92%.

In other words, I had somehow managed to hit the unlucky 8%!

And thus, I became even more suspicious of the System.

"Hmmmm...? Could it be... this is the System’s doing? Is it messing with my refreshes?"

"But why?"

"Could the System really be so shameless that it literally manipulates gacha rates?!"

"Or worse... is it enjoying messing with me? Does it take joy in watching me suffer?"

For some reason, that thought reminded me of those popular gacha-pulling videos on OurTube I used to watch.

The most entertaining ones were always the videos where some streamer lost consecutive 50/50s, hit pity every single time, cried like a bitch, and ended up spending a godly amount of money just to get the character they wanted.

Yeah...

People really do love watching other people suffer. We all do.

The System must be reveling in my defeat right now, laughing its ass off somewhere behind the scenes.

"Sigh... Let’s try again tomorrow."

The next shop refresh would cost 100 Points. There was no way I was paying that much just for a chance at one E-tier item. I wasn’t that stupid.

I almost instinctively closed the Daily Equipment Shop when I suddenly remembered something new that had come with the upgrade.

[Item Combining.]
From the name alone, it sounded like some kind of crafting system.

But the moment I checked the feature, my soul practically lit up with joy.

"Hell yes! This is exactly what I needed!"

[Item Combining]
You can combine multiple unwanted lower-tier equipment to create a random higher-tier equipment. From F-tier to A-tier, every 10 lower-tier items can be combined into one higher-tier item. The maximum tier you can obtain is determined by the current Item Shop level, and the System will charge a fee for each combining attempt.

For Item Shop Level 2:
10 F-tier → 1 E-tier

Cost: 50 Points

Maximum Tier: E-tier

My eyes practically sparkled as I looked at the screen.

Forget the gacha. Who needed luck when I could simply turn ten pieces of useless F-tier trash into something better?

I bought all the available F tier weapons in the shop then proceed with item combining.

And that was how, through the [Item Combining] feature, I eventually obtained the [Big Iron Axe].

That big iron axe didn’t come with the [Big Slash Lv. 1] skill right away though. That would have been far too perfect. There was no way the System was going to be that generous.

Instead, the skill it came with was...

[Taunt]!

A skill that made the user draw aggro from nearby enemies. It wasn’t a bad skill by any means, but it was pretty much useless for what I needed right now.

Thus, I had decided to reroll both the skill and the damn +HP stat that came with it.

After five rolls, I was finally able to get exactly what I wanted:

[Big Slash Lv. 1]

[+5 ATK]

"Super nice!"

I literally couldn’t wait for Gopuro or Gopuran to try swinging that axe!

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Now...

Gopuro stood before a towering oak tree.

It was a massive specimen, with a thick trunk roughly sixty centimeters in diameter and a height of nearly twenty meters. By my estimation, this single tree would yield somewhere around 150 to 200 units of Wood.

In his hands, the new iron axe gleamed beneath the bright morning sunlight.

Gopuro gripped the handle with both hands, adjusting his grip until he had a firm hold. Then, the muscular goblin inhaled deeply, planted his feet firmly against the ground, and shifted into a powerful swinging stance.

For a brief moment, he closed his eyes and focused.

One second.

That was all it took.

Gopuro breathed out, channeled his mana into the blade.

A faint, ominous glow spread across the iron edge. A subtle vibration ran through the weapon.

Then...

With a thunderous roar, he swung!

"HAARRRR!!!"

The massive axe tore through the air with frightening speed!

The blade cleaved, slashing through the trunk completely in one single motion!

The entire tree shuddered before beginning to topple.

I couldn’t believe it.

Just one swing, and he had already felled that massive oak tree?

What the hell?

All he had to do now was cut off the branches, process the trunk, and haul the logs back to the castle. Then the wood gathering quest would be complete.

Gopuro, meanwhile, seemed absolutely thrilled with himself. He raised the new iron axe high above his head and let out a victorious roar.

"YAARRRRRR!!"

Then, without wasting any time, he moved toward another tree and began charging his skill once more.

One second.

Another swing.

BAM!
The second tree crashed to the ground in a single, clean cut.

And then...

BOOM!
Yet another one!

I watched another massive tree come crashing down and felt my excitement steadily building.

Oh god! This is incredible!
At this rate, I'm going to be rich very soon!
But watching Gopuro effortlessly cut through those enormous trees also made me wonder.

Was all this cutting power really because the weapon was made of iron?

Or was most of it coming from the skill?

After all, they had been chopping wood with freaking stone axes before...

Those things must have been incredibly dull. It was already a miracle that none of those crude axes had broken after yesterday’s long chopping session.

I was beginning to suspect that the [Big Slash] skill was doing most of the heavy lifting.

And then I got my answer.

Gopuro raised his axe again and tried to use the skill for a fourth time. However, this time, something was different.

The glow around the blade only lasted for half a second before dimming and disappearing completely.

Gopuro swung anyway.

The iron blade struck the tree with a heavy thud and bit into the bark.

But that was it.

It couldn’t even cut through a tenth of the trunk.

"Oh right! Not enough mana!" I exclaimed as I realized what had happened.

So that was the limitation.

The axe itself was certainly much better than their old weapons, but the truly ridiculous cutting power came from [Big Slash].

Still, even without the skill, the difference was still obvious. That iron axe was vastly more powerful than the old bone axes they had been using. A normal swing from Gopuro was already able to leave a deep cut. And that’s good enough.

The guy currently had 30 Max MP, with an MP recovery rate of 0.75 MP per minute.

Since [Big Slash] cost 10 MP per use, he could unleash three Big Slashes in quick succession if he started with a full mana pool.

After that, he would need to wait for his mana to recover.

At a rate of 0.75 MP per minute, it would take roughly 13 to 14 minutes to regenerate the 10 MP needed for another Big Slash.

"Haha, I can’t wait to see how many rounds of the Wood Gathering Quest you’ll be able to complete today, Gopuro!"

But then, to my surprise, this guy even did something clever!

Instead of immediately running over to attack another standing tree, he moved on to processing one of the trees he had already felled.

Right! Since processing and hauling the logs back to the castle will take more than 13 minutes, by the time he returns, he’ll have regenerated enough mana to use Big Slash again!
Haha! That’s my citizen!
Very smart!
"Good job, Gopuro! Keep it up!" I called out, encouraging him.

"Yes, Big Boss!" Gopuro replied, his eyes shining with pride.

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Meanwhile, Gopuran had been standing off to the side the entire time, growing visibly restless.

She had cheered and clapped excitedly when Gopuro felled the first tree with his overpowered new skill. But as he continued chopping down tree after tree, her excitement gradually faded.

Now, she was pouting, her long ears drooping slightly. It was obvious that watching Gopuro receive such an incredible gift while she had yet to get anything was making her a little jealous.

"Big Boss!"

Gopuran eventually mustered up the courage to ask, her voice filled with hope.

"What about me? Does Puran get a big axe too?"

Her eyes sparkled like an eager puppy’s.

Of course, Gopuro had gotten a gift. There was no way I would forget about his dear little sister!

"Well, not a big axe, but you get something else!"

"Ooh! Really?"

"Yeah!"

From my inventory, I materialized another weapon that I had obtained from the Item Shop right this morning.

This time, I had gotten it from a natural roll. I hadn’t needed to use [Item Combining] at all.

Of course, getting an E-tier weapon naturally was only the first step. I had still needed to reroll its stats and skill until I got something I actually wanted.

Fortunately, after a few attempts, I had managed to get a pretty nice combination.

[One-Handed Iron Small Sword]

Type: Weapon
Rarity: E
Description: A lightweight one-handed small sword with a slightly curved blade, making it ideal for swift, slashing attacks.
Effect: +2 ATK, +2 SPD, +10 HP
Special Effect: Grants the holder the Skill: **[Wind Blade Lv. 1]**
[Wind Blade Lv. 1]
Description: Channels mana into the sword and releases it in a swift slash, creating a compressed blade of wind that travels forward and strikes enemies from a distance.
Mana Cost per Strike: 5

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Gopuran held out her hand and carefully accepted the short sword, staring at it for a long moment.

"So... beautiful..." the goblin girl murmured.

Curious, Gopuro waddled over as well and sneaked a peek.

"Wowwww!"

His eyes widened the moment he saw the iron sword.

To be honest, it wasn't particularly fancy by my standards. It was simply a well-made one-handed sword with a polished, gleaming blade and a slight curve, measuring around 35 centimeters in length. The handle was wrapped in white leather, giving it a clean and refined appearance.

But perhaps, in the eyes of these goblins, a weapon like this was already a masterpiece of craftsmanship.

Gopuro suddenly reached out, clearly intending to grab the sword. The dude probably just wanted to hold it and give it a few swings.

But Gopuran reacted instantly.

SMACK!

She slapped his hand away.

Then, without even giving him a chance to complain, she followed up with a punch straight to his stomach!

POW!

"OWWWW!"

Gopuro staggered backward, clutching his stomach as his face twisted in pain.

"P-Puran... why did you hit me?!"

"Hmph! This is the sword Big Boss gave me! It's mine!"

She hugged the sword against her chest, her ears standing proudly upright.

"Only I can touch it!"

"Ehhhh?"

Gopuro stared at his sister in disbelief.

"But I just want to try it once!"

He quickly raised his big axe.

"How about you let me hold the sword and swing it once? I'll let you swing my axe too!"

Gopuran glanced at his axe.

Then she looked down at her shiny new sword.

She immediately turned her head away.

"No."

"Eh?!"

"I don't want to."

"But why?!"

"Because this is my present!"

She hugged the sword even tighter.

Gopuro's face scrunched up in disbelief.

"You're so mean!"

"Blehh!" Gopuran simply stuck her tongue out at him.

I couldn't help but chuckle.

Yep. She definitely likes that sword.
And considering how long she'd been watching Gopuro show off with his new axe, I guess I can't really blame her for wanting to keep her own present all to herself.
Eventually, Gopuran took a few steps away from her brother, gripping the sword firmly as she prepared to test its special skill.

Gopuro stopped complaining and watched with curiosity.

I focused my attention on her as well.

Alright.

Let’s see what this [Wind Blade] can really do!

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Now...

Gopuran stood three meters away from a thick tree trunk, the sword held firmly in her hand. She took a deep breath, steadied herself, and raised the weapon.

"Wind Blade!"

Whoosh!

A thin, crescent-shaped blade of compressed wind shot from the sword, slicing through the air with a sharp whistle.

It flew straight toward the tree.

Slash!

The wind blade struck the trunk cleanly, leaving a deep cut across the bark.

Gopuran’s eyes widened.

"Woah!"

Gopuro, who had been watching from the side, leaned forward with interest.

"Puran, can you do it again? But step back farther this time?" I asked.

"Yes!"

Gopuran nodded eagerly and moved back until she was about five meters from the tree.

Once again, she raised the sword and concentrated.

"Wind Blade!"

Whoosh!

Another crescent of compressed wind shot forward. It traveled several meters before striking the tree.

Slash!

A second cut appeared across the trunk. It wasn't quite as deep as the first, but it was still impressive, easily powerful enough to cause serious injury to a living creature.

Oho! Not bad!
The damage was obviously nowhere near Gopuro's [Big Slash]. That skill could cleave straight through a massive tree trunk in a single hit.

[Wind Blade], on the other hand, was much weaker.

But that wasn't really the point.

[Big Slash] was a powerful close-range attack that consumed 10 MP, while [Wind Blade] only cost 5 MP. That meant Gopuran could use it much more frequently.

More importantly, it gave her something a sword normally lacked: range.

A melee weapon user usually had to get dangerously close to an enemy to attack. But with [Wind Blade], Gopuran could slash the air and send a cutting blade of wind several meters toward her target.

That alone made the skill extremely useful.

Still, I wanted to find out exactly how far it could go.

"Gopuran, try ten meters."

"Nn!"

Gopuran immediately nodded.

She carefully backed away from the tree until she was roughly ten meters away.

Then she raised the sword once more.

The surrounding air seemed to stir around the blade as she channeled her mana into it.

"Wind Blade!"

Whoosh!

Gopuran swung with all her strength.

The crescent-shaped blade of wind shot forward, maintaining its shape as it flew toward the tree.

Five meters...

Six...

Seven...

The blade continued forward.

But as it approached the target, its edges began to blur. The compressed wind rapidly weakened, and the crescent became thinner and thinner.

Then, just before it could reach the tree, it completely dissipated.

So ten meters is already beyond its effective range, huh?
The exact maximum range seemed to be somewhere between seven and ten meters. And naturally, the farther the target was, the weaker the attack became.

Still, that was pretty damn good for a sword skill.

Not bad at all.
"Nice! That’s really useful, Gopuran!"

Puran’s ears immediately perked up, and her eyes sparkled.

"Hehe... Big Boss gave Puran a really good weapon!"

Gopuro stared down at his enormous axe.

"Big Boss... can my axe do that too?"

Haha, this guy...
"Come on, Puro. You already have the [Big Slash] skill, and you still want another fancy skill?"

"Of course! I want as many skills as possible!"

He proudly raised his giant axe as though he were making a perfectly reasonable demand.

I couldn’t help but laugh.

"Then chop more wood! If you give me enough wood, I’ll be able to make better weapons and better skills for you!"

Gopuro’s eyes immediately lit up.

"Yes, Big Boss!"

The dude turned around and charged toward the nearest tree without wasting another second.

"Hahaha! Wood chopping! Here I come!"