

A Glitched 1011

Chapter 1011 A Mysterious Child

We ate and celebrated a lot, so much that we ended super exhausted, and went to bed right away.

The two of us were so tired that the moment we dropped over the beds I brought in my inventory, we just fell asleep instantly.

I suppose there was no horny time this night...

...

BA THUM!

BA THUM!

Suddenly, as I slept, I found myself within my Soul Scape, still feeling quite dizzy, I could clearly hear the beating of a heart.

I set my eyes into the direction of this sound, finding the huge cocoon at the end of my Soul Scape, which has not changed ever since it begun to form several years ago.

It was beating faster and faster, something within it had finally developed a heart, looks like.

However, it felt strange... The huge cocoon wasn't just a new spirit being grown, it felt like something else, something much stronger.

And deeper...

Darkness slowly started to surge from within the cocoon, I noticed my Familiars were nowhere to be seen here...

FLUOSH!

The darkness engulfed me before I could make any sense of it, dragging me towards the cocoon, as I heard the whispering of a little voice as the shadows covered my body.

"Bah..."

"Huh?"

"Buh... bubih..."

"Eh?"

I kept hearing baby-like noises, as I started moving across the sea of darkness, until I finally found its origin, I was most likely inside the cocoon's "dream" or maybe even its own soul scape.

And within this soul scape of endless darkness, there was a little thing, a small, baby-like silhouette, it was floating in midair, and once it noticed me, its white eyes turned deep red.

"Baah!"

It flew towards me, suddenly hugging me with its tiny arms... Just what's going on?!

"W-What's going on? Who are you?"

"Guhh..."

The baby seemed disappointed I didn't recognize it. But I couldn't sense any presence or strong mind within it... it was a blank slate.

"Wait, you're the Spirit forming in my Soul Scape all this time?" I wondered.

"BAH!" The baby nodded; I couldn't tell its shape at all other than a small shadow thingy. "Guh... Babah?"

"I-I don't really understand you..." I said.

"Babah!" The baby said again.

Babah... Is it calling me mama or something? No way, right? No spirits born have called me mama before, not even Naturia.

But technically, this little one is being born from inside my soul, so it is technically my child, right? It is quite bizarre when you think about it...

"Gah!"

It began crawling around the shadows, growing eight spider-like legs.

"Oh, alright... So that's what you are, a spider?"

"Guh!"

However, it suddenly changed their form again, turning slightly blue and gaining strong arms... and black horns.

"Wait, the blue demon?"

"Bah!"

Then it walked towards me, and the little baby changed shape again, turning deep red, covered on flames, and with two big horns spiraling from his forehead.

"Buho!"

"You're a True Demon now?!"

But then it changed again, beginning to fly, gaining large bug-

like wings and an exoskeleton... landing on my head.

"Gugah! Heheh...!"

The baby giggled innocently as it turned back to their original, shapeless form... I guess it must still be trying to decide what it wants to be.

"If I'm not wrong, then you must have been born out the combination of all those Souls I got through EXP I couldn't properly digest?" I wondered. "So you've got the Blue Demon's Soul Fragment, then Lilith and maybe the other two guys she came with, those True Demons Celeste and her cult had invoked back then, and then there's Arachne and most likely her follower, that woman whose name I don't remember well anymore. I suppose they were unable to keep their minds, and only their Soul Fragments, their very power and essence remained..."

So they're just technically dead I suppose, nothing to do about it. This baby is born out of their leftover Soul Essence though, which merged together attempting to finally become something.

Maybe all the other Soul Essence from True Demons I've gotten had made it even slower, but now, it was finally getting somewhere.

These essences all started coming up together once my Soul Evolved into a Psyche! Is this baby also signaling my Soul's evolution, somehow?

"Bubuh..."

The baby then started floating in front of me and kissed my nose.

"Mooch! Mama!"

"M-Mama?!"

I felt somehow embarrassed and happy it called me like this... Although I also felt nervous, what exactly was this little child?

"I'm so confused about what you are... Are you feeling okay, at least? Is your creation going smoothly?" I asked them.

"Gaguh!" It nodded, it seemed to understand a bit of what I said.

"T-Then I hope you're okay..." I sighed. "D-Do you need something? Why did you bring me here while I slept- Wait, do you have some sort of dream weaving ability?!"

"Buh?" It was confused. "Bubuhh..."

"Or maybe you were... I see! Were you trying to ask me what form I wanted you to take?" I asked the baby.

"BAH!" It seemed to nod.

"I guess if I choose no form, you might be born soon but weaker... if I pick only one, it might be born in some more time, but stronger... But I think all of them identified who you are, you're a mix of everything, right? So why not pick all of them? Become your own thing by mixing them all up!"

"Babah...! Hmm!"

It suddenly nodded, feeling really happy. It started glowing as all the forms it had taken emerged one after another, and then, its whole body melted into an endless sea of darkness, lights resembling stars themselves started appearing amidst their body.

Then, the shape of countless spiders, then crimson eyes and demon horns, blue and red flames, and many other incomprehensible shapes...

I was slowly pulled away, until I appeared outside of the cocoon, and then, I fell back into my Soul Scape, as if waking up from whatever was that dream.

"Sylphy! Are you okay?" Alice's voice echoed at my side.

"Master?" Nephi was in my soul scape too.

"I-I'm fine..." I sighed in relief. "That child... will be quite strong, I think."

Chapter 1012 Chaos

"I see, so that's what happened." Alice nodded.

I ended explaining my familiars what I saw, as I mediated inside of my Soul Scape, trying to refine my Magic Circle and add more Runes to expand upon my magical abilities.

"Seems like it was quite the ordeal." Nephilim said. "But it seems to be quite content, the cocoon is no longer making loud noises anymore... It must be happy, somehow."

"I-I hope so..." I sighed. "I am not sure what to even say or think anymore, that was quite something... For sure, I need a break."

"You were perhaps dragged inside the cocoon's own soul scape then." Alice nodded. "Quite an amusing thing to happen, that little child is very strong if it could do that..."

"I don't understand half of what happened, but I think you helped the thing get stronger or something? Fine by me." Ignatius shrugged. "Now, who's next in the evolutions? Me, right?"

"I haven't gotten your materials yet! Don't be so impatient, you..." I sighed, grabbing his fat tail. "Naturia got an easy evolution thanks to Yggdra, but that's not going to happen a second time as easily... I guess Scarlet and Sapphire could evolve quickly though, but I want better materials for them first."

"We'll be patient, master." Scarlet also appeared inside my soul scape.

"Yeah, I don't mind, as long as she doesn't get the evolution first, I'm fine with that!" Sapphire floated in midair.

"Huh? And what if I get it first anyways? What are you going to do about it?" Scarlet taunted.

"Y-You damn old metal stick!" Sapphire grew pissed off.

"Enough, enough." I sighed. "Don't fight! We're chilling here, right?"

"Hahaha, well, I guess so." Yggdra's spirit also appeared here. "What you talked about reminded me of the time I created Naturia... You must have created this child like this, you're the child's mother, Master!"

"E-Eh? I'm their mom? Ah... Well, they did call me "mama" after all but, still... It is a bit unnerving to think I've suddenly become a mother at my age!" I complained.

"As if that were to matter, it still going to take some time before hatching." Beelzebub analyzed the cocoon.

"Hmmm, he's not wrong." Curse nodded. "I've analyzed this cocoon many times. It seems to also be related with the Cultivation and growth of your Soul. This might be something your parents haven't told you about... Maybe they don't know either, the path to develop and evolve a mortal's soul..."

"I mean, they MUST know something, right? In the last battle against Arachne, I remember they were able to unleash the power of their Souls." I explained. "And they were very strong..."

"Still, there's no documentation about Soul Cultivation Techniques that I know about... So their growth must have been based on their Soul Scape itself growing as they made contracts. Maybe Divine Blessings make souls become stronger too, there are many possibilities." Beelzebub explained. "Soul Scape, Familiars, Spirits, Tamed Monsters, these are all also essential for the growth of someone. Even I used to have several Familiars, although they were all monsters that died a while ago."

"I guess all of you here are essential for my growth too, my own family inside my soul!" I giggled. "I love you all!"

"Chuuu?"

"Guuh?"

Suddenly, little Brownie and Violet appeared by my side.

"You two as well!" I hugged the two of them. "I wonder when you'll learn to talk though."

"Why are you saying such embarrassing things out of nowhere?!" Ignatius was really embarrassed.

"Ugh... I cringed so hard..." Curse sighed.

"Damn brat..." Beelzebub was.. happy?

"Hahaha, you guys are so funny when you get all embarrassed. Come on, are you little girls or something?" I couldn't help but laugh a bit at their reactions.

"Y-You're the little girl here!" Beelzebub angrily said.

"We've only meet for no longer than a year, but I am glad to have joined your family, Master!" Said Nephi. "Ah, right, you prefer me to call you just Sylphy, right?"

"Yeah, yeah~ Sylphy is alright." I nodded.

"I've been accompanying Sylphy for a long while now..." Furoh said. "She always gets herself in trouble... But she's a goodhearted person, you'll have a lot of fun in the coming future, Nephi."

"Well, I've already gone through quite a lot..." Nephi smiled.

"Hahah, yeah, I guess so!" Alice laughed too.

"Have you thought about a name for the child, master?" Yggdra asked me.

"Give it a good name, master!" Naturia said.

"A name, huh?"

As I talked with my Familiars, I noticed Curse still assessing the Cocoon, it felt as if something about this child was also connected to him.

"What is it?" I asked him. "You're staring at it way too much..."

"Hm, it's odd. I feel like this child must be connected to the Curse..." He said. "Well, the Curse itself fused with your Soul after all, you modified it so it wouldn't consume it, and it evolved into a power. And now, that power, within your soul, is Evolving at the same time as this child. And me... I am connected with the kid too, somehow."

"Like siblings?" I asked him.

"SIGH... I suppose, maybe, that's an okay way to say it... Urgh." He clearly looked pissed off with his single red eye.

"Do you have some sort of clues?" I asked him.

"..." He kept glancing at the cocoon. "It possess the essence I lost when you absorbed me."

"You lost some Essence?!" I asked.

"It was a very important one, the strongest Demonic Soul Fragment of my creator..." Curse sighed. "It didn't contain his personality or anything, but it contained the Sealed Techniques he evolved, capable of slaying Gods, if developed enough..."

"W-What...?" I felt confused the more he explained.

"I've regained some of the memories of my Creator." Curse dropped the bomb. "And I've finally remembered my purpose too, it wasn't just to kill the heroes, as you've speculated before. I am a special Curse, one that would stack on power for thousands of years, eons of lives I've parasite and absorbed their energies from... Made exclusively to kill the Gods, and that power, has already blossomed within you when you damaged the Evil God of Darkness and then Lolth."

"That's... I see..." I muttered. "I did have that idea but... It still quite shocking, yeah."

"Let me continue." Curse sighed. "What I'm trying to say is that this child... Might be what could let you both advance your Soul Cultivation to the next stage and also to develop this power that allowed you to damage Gods! To bypass their mighty barriers and devour their very essence... Heh, pretty amazing, isn't it? This kid... it's going to bring utter destruction to all those bastards! What better name than Chaos?"

"Chaos..." I looked into the cocoon, realizing what I've been creating inside of my soul this entire time.

All those demonic souls and true demon powers, which are so opposite to the gods. And if based on Nephilim's memories, must be their mortal enemies!

This is... the entity that will help me expand these powers even further.

Chaos!

...

"I don't know about that name though, it is a bit... Too on the nose, you know?" I asked, feeling a bit odd about it.

"Ugh, can't you just be serious for a minute, dammit?!" Curse cursed the heavens. "...Also the name is cool! It's my sibling so I get to choose the name!"

Chapter 1013 The Trio Of Goobers

The next morning came, and with that, I slowly woke up. I felt slightly refreshed as I stretched my arms around and felt the breeze of the wind coming from outside the cave.

Aquarina wasn't at my side this time, she had gone somewhere else, which is surprising as she's usually sleeping until very late.

Which was actually a bit worrying, what happened?!

I quickly walked out of the tent, finding her there. She was right outside the cave butchering another giant goat she hunted!

Wait, what? She hunted another?!

However, Zack and Luck were also helping her butcher it. I could hear their conversation quite clearly by expanding my Senses.

"I can't believe you two hunted this one, well done!" Aquarina was congratulating them. "It is not as strong as mine though, heheh."

"Those things are sure tricky, man..." Zack complained. "Eh?! What do you mean it wasn't as strong as the one you hunted?! It was even stronger I think!"

"Nah, mine was stronger, just accept that." Laughed Aquarina.

"Y-You...!" Zack grew a bit angry.

"Come on now, we didn't hunt this one for you two to fight over it..." Luck facepalmed. "You wanted to thank Sylphy for the armor, right Zack? That's why I helped you out... Also you promised me you would convince Sylphy to get me some equipment out of the monster materials."

"Yeah, yeah~ Sylphy's pretty greedy sometimes. I'm sure she'll love this gift and happily make you something if I ask her nicely." Zack said.

"That's... I guess you're not wrong." Aquarina nodded. "She's a greedy little princess, hehe."

Well, he wasn't wrong...

However...

"Hey! Did you get permission to hunt this?!"

I ran towards there with all my speed, resembling a flash of bright light as I landed in front of the two.

"S-Sylphy?!" Zack, Aquarina, and Luck all reacted the same way.

They really made an adorable little trio of goobers sometimes...

"I just woke up and I find another goat dead..." I facepalmed. "Ugh, my mother's going to kill us!"

"C-Calm down, I got permission!" Zack said, he was clearly lying.

"I know when you're lying Zack." I sighed.

"Urgh... Sorry Sylphy, we just wanted to make you happy." Luck said.

"Y-Yeah! Don't blame them, please." Said Aquarina.

It was surprising that she was actually defending them... Also, why are they so afraid of me?

Have I slowly become like my mother as I grew up?

I guess I'll be fulfilling a similar role that she had in the previous hero party, huh?

After always getting tired of my mother nagging at me, I ended becoming similar to her at the end.

"Ugh... Okay, I'm not angry or something. Come on, don't be afraid of me." I smiled, although my smile only intimidated them, even Aquarina felt the pressure I was trying to hold back.

Actually, I was really angry, my mother was going to give us a deadly scolding.

"But okay, I get why you did this. I also heard you saying that I was greedy, Zack." I said, crossing my arms as I looked into his eyes.

"Eep! I'm sorry ma'am!" He cried.

"W-Why are you so afraid?!" I cried.

"I-I don't know, but that face you make... reminded me of your mom a lot." Zack realized he was being nonsensical.

"Ugh..." I sighed again. "Anyways, we'll have to explain them what just happened. I bet they already know anyways; our parents have super senses everywhere."

"R-Right..." Zack sighed, feeling guilty.

"Sorry, we were a bit reckless..." Luck said. "But Zack was eager to repay you for the awesome armor he got, and he really wanted to try it out... He's my first friend that's... a guy, so I wanted to help out too."

"I just woke up once I smelled the blood and wanted to get some of the meat because we almost ate everything yesterday." Aquarina giggled a bit.

"Okay... It's alright." I said with a smile. "I know you didn't do it out of malice. You're good friends. So, Luck, you wanted something for yourself?"

"A-Ah, yeah..." Luck said. "Well, I also want something for Lara. I want to give her a nice gift..."

"And you want something for Mist, right?" I asked Zack.

"Y-Yeah..." Zack nodded. "I heard the pelt and the horns have light element, right? Mist element is light so..."

"Sigh... You two are so predictable! You really just do everything for the girls you love, huh?" I giggled a bit. "Well! I'm not that different myself..." I glanced at Aquarina, as she blushed at my words. "Alright, let me help you dismantle this, and then I'll start thinking about what we could make for them."

"Really?" Zack asked. "Thanks a lot Sylphy! You're the best friend I could have ever asked for!"

"Yeah, thanks a lot!" Luck said. "Since you and everyone else appeared in my life that everything has turned for the better... Thank you!"

"Geez, you two are so corny sometimes..." I felt slightly embarrassed, as I patted their heads. "Alright, let's work! Aquarina, wanna help?"

"S-Sure! I was already helping anyways~!" Aquarina agreed immediately, but came to give me a hug and a kiss. "Thank you for understanding them and being so nice. Mooch, you deserve extra kisses today!"

"Heheh, fine, I accept this little reward!" I allowed her to cover my face with kisses. She gave me a few in the lips, which made the two boys watching blush in embarrassment.

I guess seeing two cute girls make out was a bit... stimulating for them. I can't really blame them.

"A-Alright Aquarina, that's enough. We can kiss more in private. Let's start the job." I said, giving her a little kiss in her adorable nose.

"Okay!" She nodded.

Like that, we began our job. Thanks to my help, things got done much faster. We separated the meat, internal organs, bones, melt, and horns in a couple of minutes, and then stored it all inside of Glutton, who happily swallowed it all.

"CHOMP...! BURP..."

"Uuuh, Sylphy, is it okay for the food to get all covered on this monster's saliva?" Wondered Luck, feeling a bit unease.

"Oh? Don't worry, Gluttony doesn't leave things nasty, it is only like a visual effect... His saliva never gets into anything, unless he licks you directly, like right now!" I giggled.

"WAARF!"

Little Glutton was licking Luck's face as we spoke.

"Uuaagh! Let me go! Ugh...!"

Chapter 1014 Preparing Something For Mist

After saving all the materials, we moved back to the camp. We didn't address what happened, and... somehow none of my parents talked about the topic.

None of them at all, not even Ninhursag or my mom. But I was pretty sure they sensed us when we were talking and all... Yet they have decided to act aloof over it.

I guess they were too moved by Zack and Luck and just decided to let this pass?

"Sylphy, she's not addressing anything at all, I'm getting scared." Zack said, as we were enjoying a bountiful breakfast filled with fruits, bread, butter, cheese, milks, juice, and many other meals.

"W-What's going on?" Luck wondered.

"You guys look like you committed a crime, relax." I shrugged, whispering to them. "Isn't it obvious? They are just pretending to be aloof; they know why you did this and accepted it, they're letting you be."

"E-EH?!" Both were shocked.

"Don't be so loud though!"

As I reprimanded them, mom gave me a glance.

"Sylphy..."

"Y-Yes?"

I thought for a second she was going to reprimand us anyways...

Yet...

"Can you pass me the strawberry jam?" She asked with a gentle smile.

"Eh? Sure..." I gave it to her.

I guess she was indeed just letting us go...

"Why are you guys being so suspicious?" Celeste noticed something was off. "What are you hiding?"

"Hiding? Nothing..." I said while looking elsewhere.

"Eh? I ain't buying that!" Celeste said angrily.

"Calm down, Celeste, don't be so annoying..." Celica said. "Be nicer!"

"E-Eh? To think Celica from all people would say that to me..." Celeste was taken aback.

"Like mister teddy, he's always nice and he gets rewarded for that." Celica nodded.

"Yeah!" Said Zephy, without properly understanding what Celica was even talking about.

Mist and Lara were still wondering what we were talking about too, but they weren't as aggressive when asking like Celica.

"Still, what are you guys plotting?" Mist wondered.

"Something special maybe? Heheh." Lara giggled.

"Err... We can't say anything for now, sorry!" Said Luck.

"Yeah, it's a secret." Said Zack.

"Oooh!" Mist was excited.

"What secret?!" Lara asked.

"It's a secret! I can't just tell you! It wouldn't be one if I did!" Luck was losing his marbles.

"Awww, bummer." Lara shrugged, eating an apple.

While we talked and tried to just move the topic so I could have some time to think about things. I started sketching some ideas in my little notebook.

Luck didn't want a normal accessory for Lara. Apparently, according to what he told me, the horned Anima usually wear beautiful ornaments and accessories over their horns.

This usually happens whenever they're given important titles or when they are engaged or married with someone...

So I guess Luck wants to ask her to be his girlfriend with such a gift, huh?

Gotta make it extra cute and also not too extravagant, I kind of know Lara's tastes, she's a lighthearted girl that loves flowers, clear colors, and not too many things.

Meanwhile, as for Zack, he wants a dress for Mist. He's worried about her safety, so he wants her to be extra protected. Something nice and cute that is also befitting of her Religion.

Mist was raised by the nuns of the orphanage around the Saint of Illumination Religion. This is an Ancient Saint that lived long ago, said to have ascended into the heavens after realizing the concepts of life, fate, and everything else.

Alice said it was strikingly similar to Buddha from Earth, whoever that is. I don't know if it's an actual god at all, but it is someone that did exist at some point.

They taught people to not fight and love themselves, because when they love themselves is when they can finally begin loving others.

"Accept your flaws, accept who you are, and make your own fate."

This is the usual doctrine of this religion. It is also a religion that incentivizes charity without expecting anything in return.

They taught the children to be nice and love themselves, so they can love others. To always share if you have enough, and to walk your own path.

To try to be happy without the restraints of fate.

Honestly, it is a pretty good religion!

So anyways, some dress that goes around this religions clothing would be nicer. Mist usually wears a long black and white nun-like dress.

However, other times she just wears a white dress, or black dress with a white blouse. She doesn't seem to like many other colors.

Maybe because they go well with her pale white skin and hair, and her black horns and eyes.

So!

For Lara, some beautiful yet simplistic ornaments for her horns. And for Mist, a beautiful nun dress, or something similar to that!

Got it...

Now, onto the buffs. Mist wants to have some protection in her simple dress. Maybe adding a mode that summons an armor of light wouldn't be so bad.

Maybe if I can imbue some of the power of my Divine Protection Skill, and copy its functions to an extent, it would be ideal.

And as for Lara... I guess protection against Darkness and Curses, which are her weakness, would be good. Also something to help her manage her Mana better.

And maybe more protection too? Although the Spirits are always protecting her...

Her magic power is also really overpowered, so I don't know if I should prioritize giving her a boost, she's quite the perfect little Saint, isn't she?

Well, she's really clumsy sometimes, so that makes up for it...

She's a good-hearted person, and a good friend too. I want to see her smile, although she's always smiling anyways.

So I guess something for that will have to do. Something that can protect her from Hexes, Curses, and Status Ailments would be nice.

Also something to protect her from Corruption-type Elements she's not good against, like Miasma, Chaos, Death, Poison...

Yeah, things like that.

I also want Mist's dress to help her handle her Mana more easily, and also to be able to help her conjure a secondary protection aside from the armor of light.

Maybe arrows that rotate around her body?

Sounds cool!

Chapter 1015 A Morning Full Of Training

As we chatted while I brainstormed what I could make for these two, I also continued sketching my ideas for my own equipment. The black gloves I wanted were already almost done in design.

They would have a simple, lightweight design, and will be black. They will also be made using threads I'll create out of mixing the goat's leather with mithril and the goat's horn material too.

Lastly, I'll also imbue the rainbow spirit stone fragments, and the giant goat's magic crystals too!

Also, I'll add the golem's core crystals, and add several defense and weight-enchantment runic engravings.

What I need the most is weight to hold my ground, I've realized that some time ago...

These gloves will help me both have more weight and also push me through constant exercise as a result, so I can strengthen my arms some more.

I've also resumed my daily sword swings, which I've stopped doing for a year now because of all the battles we've had so far.

"Phew!"

And after finally finishing my three thousand swings after only half an hour, I felt renewed, my muscles were strengthening themselves, forcing themselves to become tougher to resist all the pressure.

Ding!

[You have successfully practiced 3000 Sword Swings in less than one hour.]

[Your Physique has absorbed the Essence of the Sword and strengthened itself.]

[Your Physique has become stronger.]

[Your Physical Strength, Physical Fitness, and Stamina have improved.]

The System notified me of my progress, even if I couldn't gain stats, I could still improve my physique and my physical fitness.

"I really needed some of this lately... I've gotten too lazy, this is not like me! I'll get back to my full-on training mode!" I said while celebrating my growth.

After gaining so many skills, powers, and abilities, I ended growing conceited and neglected my training, relying on the system for everything.

But that isn't like me! I can't simply rely on Alice for everything. I have to continue growing stronger by myself.

That System notification right now was merely a notification, it wasn't any power it granted me.

This strength... I gained it on my own!

"You seem pumped up!" Alice giggled. "Looks like everyone's getting ready to depart though, are you ready to walk that much?"

"Of course! I want to climb the Sunstone Plateau at all costs! Look, I've made a lot of weights lately, using the heaviest metals I could find, and I've wrapped them all around my body." I showed Alice.

"Wow, you're sure going hardcore on the training, I thought this was a vacation?" Ignatius wondered.

"It is, but I find training fun, actually, so I don't mind the hardships." I answered while cleaning the sweat off my forehead. "Anyways, let's go back with everyone for now."

I moved rapidly back with my friends. I did feel heavier, but that was actually good. I need to be heavier to both strengthen myself and also to not be thrown around like a ragdoll.

"Sylphy! Are you done with your training?" My mother called me. "We're moving up!"

"Let's go, dear!" My father called me.

"Big sis!" Zephy called.

"Okay, okay, I'm coming!"

I leaped over the rocks one after another, reaching them in a split of a second. I had climbed to some spot where I could see a beautiful view before, but I had to descend to go up again with everyone.

Even with all the weight I could place around my body without it looking weird, I was still able to move swiftly... Well, the weight is still there making my movements slightly rougher.

But that's also part of the training!

"So we're moving up? To the summit?" I wondered.

"Yep!" My father said. "I've heard there's some big ruins over there, we want to check them. After that, we'll go down again all the way to the grasslands. Shouldn't take more than a day or two."

"Honestly, I'm quite excited..." My mother admitted. "Exploring new ruins used to be one of my hobbies before I became a Saint... Going back to this is quite nostalgic...!"

"I'm glad you're so excited, mom! This was also some vacations too. So I'm glad you're getting to have fun." I said, as I gave her a big kiss in her cheek.

"You sure love to spoil your mother." She giggled, as she quickly started walking across the plateau.

It wasn't just rocks, there was a clear path moving upwards, so there was no problem in climbing it the plateau, as it wasn't exactly just vertical.

It was just an enormous elevation of stone and ground that led very high, something that rarely happens out there.

My friends caught up to us, we were a huge group walking upwards. The view was gorgeous though, there were all sorts of unique endemic herbs that grew at this altitude, which I neatly picked up one after another.

Around the road we walked through, there were also large growths of Sunstone, which I only picked a couple of times, to not make my mother angry... or well, too angry, she was already a bit angry I got greedy again.

The enormous Sunstone Plateau Giant Goats were gently and calmly walking across the expansive area, there was grass here and there, huge cactuses, and stones sprouting from the ground, resembling gigantic spears.

"Man, the breeze in here is just as calming. Although a bit stronger." Zack said while stretching his arms.

"Cloudia is really a beautiful place..." Luck smiled, admiring the view.

"It is! And there's so many Spirits everywhere! Hi! Oh, hi, how are you? Me? I'm good! Hehehe!" Lara was already making friends with hundreds of invisible spirits.

"I always dreamed of a relaxing trip into some unknown place, an adventure without having to worry about stuff." Mist said with a smile, holding Zack's hand.

"Honestly? Me too." Zack nodded. "I think it makes it even better when you're there too. You make any view even more beautiful."

"Z-Zack..." Mist became as red as a tomato.

"He's good." Aquarina nodded.

"Yep, he got her." I agreed.

"Where did he learn those phrases?" Wondered Celeste. "This man's full of rizz now! I remember when he was such a bratty kid..."

"I taught him a few things," uncle Arafunn from all people floated nearby.

"EH?!"

Chapter 1016 Climbing The Sunstone Plateau

"This is such a huge and relaxing place..." Said Nephilim as she calmly walked by our side.

"It is... But it also gives me this desolate feeling. This place... It feels abandoned, somehow." Pyuku commented.

"Is that so?" I wondered. "I suppose the better word would be "uncharted", mankind's hands have not reached into this sanctuary of life and nature, right?"

"Indeed." Yggdra agreed, she was sitting on my shoulders, her size reduced to the height of a little fairy. "This is my home, a place uncharted with the greedy hands of mankind, and also a sanctuary. It might feel desolate and a bit abandoned because the Gods once made of this place their home, but right now... I like it like this."

"This place was never alone, Pyuku!" Lara interrupted us. "It's filled with friends and buddies everywhere! The Spirits love it here! I'm sure the other slimes do as well!"

"Hehe, I hope so, Lara. Thanks for trying to cheer me up." Pyuku smiled gently, his rainbow eyes were very pretty to look at.

"I-It's nothing! Don't worry!" Lara smiled, suddenly making a few of her spirits visible. "Here! They said they want to accompany you, so you don't feel lonely."

Suddenly, four little guys appeared.

They were Spirits of the Land, of the Wind, and the Sun, and of the Stone. They were small and adorable, unlike the usual spirits we make contracts, they were directly connected with Nature and the Landscape.

Therefore, you can't make contracts with them, but they will help Lara because she's the Saint of all Spirits, her very presence draws them closer to her.

"Oh?" Pyuku felt surprised as they walked over his body and sat over him.

"Kyu!"

"Puwa!"

"Fuwo?"

"Awah!"

They made adorable little noises too; they were like curious children that just wanted to see the world.

Perhaps without Lara as their connection to us, they wouldn't have ever approached us to begin with... But thanks to her, they had the opportunity to greet and meet many others and learn about them.

This got to the point where they can feel our feelings and emotions and feel bad when we feel bad. They know we're Lara's friends, so they want to see us as happy as her.

They're incredibly purehearted and lovable little babies, aren't they?

"Just be grateful! They're nice and cozy." Lara smiled, vibing with her hundreds of Spirits everywhere she walked.

I guess among all of us, she's someone that has never felt alone through her entire life. She knows that wherever she goes, there will always be buddies to help her and bring her company.

"Ahaha... Okay!" Pyuku giggled. "Thank you for accompanying me..."

"Gyuh!"

"Gubu!"

"Shawa!"

"Bawa!"

The four little Spirits talked back as if they were very proud of themselves... I guess they were the only four brave enough to approach Pyuku.

As we chatted and walked across the place, suddenly...

"Huh? What's that?" Zephy pointed at the distance while he was chatting with Celica, noticing something odd.

"Oh? I can see it at as well, in several areas..." Said Nephilim.

They pointed to large piles of old rubble, overgrown on vegetation and sunstone. In fact, it was where the sunstone seemed to be being born from, which later expanded across the rest of the landscape from the essence the larger ones exuded.

"Those must be fragments of the Sunstone Plateau Ruins. They're all over the place." My mother explained.

"I wonder what happened here for the pieces to be scattered everywhere..." Said Pyuku. "Something big or tragic?"

"Hmm, I can't say for sure." My mother said. "We would need to investigate further! But I do have a theory."

"A theory?" My father asked.

"Yes, I believe that all these fragments of walls, ceiling, and floor that are scattered everywhere flew away when something within the ruins at the top exploded..." My mother said.

"What could have exploded there, auntie?" Wondered Celica.

"Hmmm..." My mother continued thinking. "Perhaps some sort of ancient artifact lost control and blew up. Or maybe something else is in there, a guardian, perhaps? Or monsters? We'll only find out once we explore the ruins."

"I see..." I said, while rubbing my chin. "I kind of want to find out what it is, like a little activity while we climb?"

"Good idea! I actually really wanted to investigate the rubble, but I didn't know if you would want that..." my mother sighed. "So? Are you kids up for a little challenge? Let's try to find clues about what happened by checking on every rubble we find! You are free to extract some sunstone from them, they're of higher quality and purity, so they're even more expensive than the other."

"Sure! Why not?" I wondered. "How about it?" I asked my friends.

"Sure! I'm up for it! I want to make some cash, so it benefits me!" Mist was pumped up for the money for her future with Zack.

"Alright!" Zack said. "If she wants to, I'm all for it."

"Sure? I mean, beats just glancing at the view." Celeste shrugged.

"There's a lot of shiny buddies in those brighter stones, so please don't take too many, okay? Or you might upset the shiny buddies!" Said Lara.

"There are bigger spirits in those?" Wondered Luck.

"Yeah!" Lara nodded. "It is where they're born the most... So please don't take too much, okay?"

"Okay..." Mist sighed. "Maybe I was focusing too much on getting money, sorry Lara. I won't say that again..."

"O-Oh..." Lara suddenly heard the spirits talk. "T-They say you can take a bit, so you can earn for the future! They're very worried. So they said its okay, a tiny bit though!"

"R-Really?!" Mist was excited. "Thank you so much, spirit buddies!"

These two are the cutest of our group...

"Celica, let's go explore then!" Zephy grabbed Celica's hand.

"Okay~!" Celica just went with the flow.

"Shall we?" Aquarina asked.

"Alright! Let's divide and conquer then, team!" I said.

My mother also decided to explore with my parents, while they let us go on our own path. We went mostly in pairs because there were dozens of ruins everywhere...

And as we started moving...

FLAAASH!

I felt something.

I glanced into the top of the plateau, for a split of a second, I could swear I felt a brilliant, overwhelming light.

"What... was that?"

Chapter 1017 New Special Quest

I could swear I felt a powerful presence, a blinding light... There was no way nobody could have felt that, right?

"Aquarina, did you feel it? That light?" I asked her.

"What light?" Aquarina tilted her head, confused.

"Pyuku?" I asked him.

"No?" Pyuku was coming with us.

"N-Nephilim?" I asked again.

"I didn't feel anything, Master... And my senses are spread everywhere due to my internal functions..." Nephilim explained. "If there was something, I would have sensed it right away."

"But then... Weird."

I felt confused for a bit as we made our way to the closest pieces of ruins there were. I asked Alice or my Familiars, but none of them felt anything either.

"Perhaps it was something only you could see with those eyes of yours?" Aquarina wondered. "Your eyes are very special after all, Sylphy!"

"Y-You're not wrong..." I said while wondering. "Maybe it was something only I could see or perceive. But it came from the summit."

"The summit? Where the ruins are?" Pyuku wondered.

"Yep..." I said. "Well, for now let's concentrate in mother's task!"

Ding!

[A New [Special Quest] has been generated: [Find Clues About What Happened to the Sunstone Ruins]!]

[For some mysterious reason, the ruins blew up long ago, according to your mother's findings. This sent flying the pieces of these ruins everywhere, causing a lot of chaos back then.]

[Now, eons later, these fragments continue exuding a large quantity of Sunlight Energy, producing the very rare and endemic Sunstones that only grow within the Sunstone Plateau.]

[However, the mystery of why this even happened is still lingering around, waiting for a group of curious adventurers to finally unveil this ancient and now forgotten event...]

[Find five clues that could bring you to the truth of what might have happened.]

[Clues: 0/5]

[Completion Rewards: [EXP] [???]

[Time Limit: 24 Hours]

Oh wow, another new Quest! This is completely unexpected but welcomed.

"Alright, let's find clues then!"

The ruins which we were moving to were already in front of us. The first thing I noticed is how bloated they were with Sunstones.

There were almost no crevices where we could get into the small room-sized area that the rubble had formed in there.

"Well, it is sure full of these stones... I guess we can't just smash them all, the spirits are living in here and being constantly born, according to Lara..." Aquarina sighed, crossing her arms.

"I think I could open up a small crevice so we can get in." Pyuku said.

"You can?" I asked.

"Yeah! Leave it to me!" Pyuku quickly transformed into his smaller, slime-like form and started eating the black stone that made the rubble.

Slowly, he dug through a tunnel where we could get through barely...

"It's open! Come in!"

As he called for us, I was analyzing the components of the ruins with my eyes...

It was called Ancient Black Steel Stone. It wasn't as powerful as other divine metals, but it was still a divine metal.

It was as tough as mithril, but had terrible conduction with mana, and it was used to isolate places, apparently...

Such a tough metal, whatever that explosion was, it was strong enough to blow this metal into pieces!

"Alright~ We'll get going!"

Aquarina quickly kneeled and started moving through the tunnel.

I quickly followed her, as I ended finding her big butt in my face.

"Ugh...!"

I ended hitting her soft butt with my face, as Aquarina gave a little moan.

"S-Sylphy?!"

She sounded really embarrassed...

"A-Ah... Sorry, I just hit it by accident..." I apologized. "Your butt is really soft though~"

"W-Wha...?!" Aquarina suddenly got even more embarrassed. "L-

Let's just keep moving..."

"Sorry~" We continued moving through the tunnels, while Nephilim walked behind me.

Once we landed on the other side, we found ourselves on a small cave, illuminated by bright orange and red-colored sunstones.

Pyuku was standing in the middle of it, looking at what looked to be a...

"Metallic Tablet?" I wondered, walking to his side.

"Oh? Yeah, I found this here... It is broken, only a piece of one." Pyuku said.

"This is..." Nephilim suddenly recognized that piece. "It is a Communication Tablet, technology of the gods. With this, they can communicate from long distances at any time, project their forms, and search for endless information and entertainment... They also store a lot of information in these. But it is broken, sadly."

"I see..." I nodded. "It does have some things engraved on it. Words?"

"Yeah, those are words, right?" Aquarina wondered. "Pyuku, can you read them for us?"

"S-Sure..." Pyuku grabbed the tablet and start to decipher it first.

In the meantime, Aquarina tightly grasped my butt!

"Ouch! H-Hey!"

"Hehe, that's my revenge~!"

"You little brat~!"

I played with her and grabbed her butt back, tightly grasping her cheek.

"H-Hey!" She got even more embarrassed. "If you continue like this, I'm going to eat you up!"

She quickly started kissing my neck and biting it playfully, without hurting.

"Nom, nom, nom!"

"Hehehe, stop it!"

As I played with her, I heard Pyuku and Nephilim talking with one another about the words, until they finally got a clue.

"I think we got it... I didn't know Nephilim knew how to read these words as well! Was a huge help at deciphering some phrases." Said Pyuku.

"No problem, I'm here to serve and help in any issue." Nephilim said with a gentle and serviceable smile.

"So? What does it say?" I asked.

"Yeah, yeah?" Aquarina asked, grabbing my hips.

"Well..."

Pyuku started to read it slowly. It wasn't much, but what it revealed was quite shocking.

"This is what it says..." Pyuku said. "Unbeknownst to us... the sun's curse... catastrophe... the children of mana. T-That's all, but it feels cryptic..."

"The sun's curse, catastrophe, children of mana? And it seems they didn't know something..." I wondered. "Could the catastrophe and the sun's curse be related with the ruins blowing up?"

"Maybe?" Aquarina said. "Though, Children of Mana rings some bells, I wonder where I have heard this word..."

"That is the general name that all the tribes that the gods created." Nephilim clarified. "Meaning, all of you, elves, humans, dwarves, anima, slimes, and more."

Ding!

[You have found one of the clues!]

[Clues: 1/5]

Chapter 1018 Finding Clues

Ding!

[You have found one of the clues!]

[Clues: 1/5]

Aw, it only counts as one clue...?!

Oh well, that still got us something.

"Let's keep the tablet for now, it might be useful somehow." I said, quickly storing it. "I remember that these things always can open secret passages in the ruins, so might as well keep this."

"You're not wrong." Nodded Aquarina, patting my head. "Now let's get moving, this is only one of the dozens!"

"Yep, let's go!"

Pyuku and Nephilim rushed outside the little cave as I followed them behind...

On the way out of the tunnel, Aquarina intentionally bumped on my butt at least five times!

I think she even kissed it once...

"..."

I was glaring at her with a bit of embarrassment, anger, and some horniness all mixed up.

"W-What?"

Aquarina tried to act aloof...

I punished her by grabbing her butt even strongly!

"Eep~"

After that, her butt hurt a bit, so she was rubbing it...

"So mean~ What's wrong with bumping into my girlfriend's ass every now and then?" She complained on our way to the next ruins.

She's sure a shameless little brat!

But I guess I am not too different myself...

"Master has grown rather pervert these last years..." Commented Pyuku. "I'm sorry for her behavior. She just happens to really like you, Sylphy."

"Ahahah, don't worry, I know." I laughed a bit. "Oh? There's another unexplored one over there!"

We arrived at a second one. While the first unexplored area was almost square shaped, with a huge growth of Sunstones, this one resembled a rising triangle, with several sunstones here and there.

It had a large entrance, so no more tunnel shenanigans for now...

"Huh? What's this?"

Aquarina wondered as she walked forwards.

In the middle of this tiny cave, there was a huge, tree-shaped sunstone growing all the way to the ceiling, its branches connected to the ceiling.

And inside of that tree, there was... a skeleton.

"W-Why are there bones in here?" I wondered. "W-What in the world happened?"

"This is... what?" Aquarina was just as confused.

"Is there a panel around here?" I wondered.

"No, nothing..." Pyuku said. "Just... this."

"Even for me, this is... bizarre." Nephilim commented.

The skeleton seemed well maintained, and at the same quite grotesque. Sunstone was entering its eye sockets and mouth; it had been completely engulfed by it.

I couldn't sense any Soul or presence either... it was just this gruesome scene.

"I wonder... This skeleton is... human!" I said, as I analyzed it with my eyes. "And it says... what?"

"What is it?" Aquarina wondered.

"Something odd?" Pyuku wondered.

"The description... It says that this person died gruesomely, victim of the Curse of the Sun." I spoke with a rather serious tone of voice.

"Eh?" All three of them were left speechless...

Ding!

[You have found one of the clues!]

[Clues: 2/5]

"Whatever that Sun's Curse was..." Nephilim spoke. "Maybe... no, it can't be, right? Let's not jump to conclusions yet."

"I guess it is better to find out by ourselves..." I sighed. "Let's move. Aquarina?"

I saw Aquarina and Pyuku looking at the skeleton with sorrowful eyes, and then leaving behind fruits and some flowers they picked up on the way here.

"May your soul rest in peace." Aquarina said.

"..." Pyuku remained in silence.

The Amazonian Tribe usually always paid respect to the dead, whenever someone died, they would make a huge ceremony. According to their beliefs, it is to let these souls reach the afterlife peacefully.

I waited for her patiently as she got done, and then we started moving again. This time we moved slightly more to the summit, I could sense and see everyone else nearby, they were all safe so far.

"This one's rectangle shaped!" Nephilim said excitedly.

"Huh? There's not really any cave in it though, sadly." Said Pyuku. "Wait, is that...?"

However, we found some strange marks in the enormous rectangle-shaped piece of rubble, alongside a weirdly shaped growth of sunstone.

Which had the slight shape of some sort of screaming face...

Very creepy.

However, the marks we saw in the walls were the most unnerving ones. They resembled nails marks, as if several people were trying to grab on it...

"Could these marks have belonged to people?" I wondered, caressing the walls. "So there were a lot of them... Their anguish, could it have been formed into this weirdly shaped sunstone?"

"Maybe..." Said Aquarina, feeling rather interested and at the same time, looking quite thoughtful. "This most likely confirms there were many people inside a room, and that they went through something so horrible they all tried to escape, grasping on the walls and scratching them..."

"This is an incredibly tough metal, doing that could have most likely broken their nails and fingers..." I analyzed. "To go so far... It must have been truly the stuff of nightmares."

Ding!

[You have found one of the clues!]

[Clues: 3/5]

"Let's move on, I don't like this one..." Aquarina said.

"Yeah, me neither..." Pyuku agreed.

"Alright."

We kept exploring the land, sometimes bumping into huge goats walking around, gently eating some of the sunstone or the tall growths of grass around the area.

It didn't take long before we found another unexplored area while we moved past a few groups, this one was triangle shaped, but it had many red and yellow sunstones instead of the common orange.

This time, we found another tablet piece in the depths of the small cave there was, Pyuku quickly tried to analyze the words as we looked around the growths.

Nephilim then, noticed something odd to the left of the caves.

"Is that...? Another face?" Wondered Nephilim.

And indeed, this time, it wasn't on the sunstone, the face was on the black walls, as if it were coming out from them.

It was the face of what looked like a young girl, screaming her lungs out...

"T-This is..." Pyuku muttered, as he deciphered the tablet engravings.

"What does it say?" I wondered.

"Failed experiment... Soul crystallization... Harvest... Demon... King?"

Those words...

Could it be?

Ding!

[You have found one of the clues!]

[Clues: 4/5]

Chapter 1019 The Sunstone Tree

"Failed experiment... Soul crystallization... Harvest... Demon... King?"

Those words...

Could it be?

Ding!

[You have found one of the clues!]

[Clues: 4/5]

I guess the clue is filled up the moment I realize it or find it out, we don't even need to address it verbally, huh?

But those words that Pyuku said... I think I can guess what they're about.

"We can already guess a few clues with this..." I said. "We would assume that the people trapped here were turned into crystals through the Curse of the Sun, which causes Soul Crystallization?"

"Does that mean that... the Gods, or whoever was controlling these ruins, wanted the Sunstones?"
Wondered Aquarina.

"It makes sense I guess..." Nephilim said. "Those stones are incredibly high quality, even a god could find some value to them, perhaps even to enhance their own growth and power."

"And they were harvesting them here..." Pyuku gritted his teeth. "Ugh, this is disgusting! I... Sigh..."

"Calm down, this happened thousands of years ago." I shrugged. "We couldn't do anything even if we wanted, so-"

FLAAASH!

Suddenly, for a second time, I felt it.

That presence, a blinding light coming from the summit.

It felt as if it was calling me...

"What was that?"

I looked again to the summit, but there was nothing again...

"Did you have another vision?" Alice wondered, sitting at my other shoulder.

"This is the second one, no?" Yggdra asked. "This is worrying... Could there be a possibility that whatever is in those ruins, might be trying to communicate with you, Sylphy?"

"So there's something alive there?" Wondered Pyuku.

"Maybe a monster?" Aquarina asked. "It is not uncommon for ancient ruins of the gods to turn into Wild Dungeons. The one back home is also one of those."

"I don't know but I feel weird whenever it calls me or something..." I said. "It feels... like a distress call?"

"Hmm..." Nephilim thought about it. "Well, calm down, master. There's nothing we can do right now. Once we reach the summit, we'll be able to investigate further."

"I guess you're right." I sighed. "Let's go for the last one before grouping back with everyone else. I can tell they're already moving back together."

"Alright!" Aquarina nodded, holding my hand tightly.

I guess she did that because she saw me getting a bit uneasy about the flashing light... Even though I'm strong, it was so weird and out of nowhere that it made me slightly afraid.

"Let's go!" She smiled.

"Yeah, let's go." I smiled back at her.

With her at my side, I suppose I can muster all the strength I want...

...

We looked for a while, until we found the last unexplored piece of ruins in the area, it was hanging by a cliff, so we had to get there flying using our dragon wings.

Aquarina could fly using wind magic, but I carried her to make it quickly. Princess carrying her was really nice, and she didn't mind it.

"Here we are... This one was quite well hidden." I said, as Aquarina didn't want to let go of my arms. "A-Aquarina?"

"Come on, carry me a bit more~ I'm your princess, right?" She giggled teasingly. "You once called me like that, hehe."

"T-That's..." I felt embarrassed. "Come on now, don't get too spoiled...!"

She quickly walked out of my arms, as we explored the cave.

This one was larger than any of the previous ones because it led deeper into the plateau interior.

Still, it was just a long corridor leading to a larger cave, filled of sunstones.

However, at the center, there was another striking formation of sunstones.

This time, there were several skeletons and bones inside of this much larger "Sunstone Tree" as I'll call it.

And there were at least several screaming faces growing out of the black stone and the sunstone too...

"T-This must be the largest one here. So much evidence of the horrors they committed in the past." Sighed Aquarina.

"That's a lot of bones..." I said. "Ahem! Anyways, this is... I guess another of those places too. This might have been another room where these people were forced to become sunstones..."

"Master, there's something over there." Nephilim kept calling me master, it was a bit tiring, even though I've told her to just call me Sylphy.

"Just call me Sylphy!" I told her. "Or at least Lady Sylphy if you really want to use formalities..." I crossed my arms.

"Sorry, Lady Sylphy. Over there." Nephilim pointed at the distance.

There was a large formation of crimson sunstones to the right area of the caves, behind the huge tree.

It was almost hidden behind! And it had something inside, something silver and metallic.

Perhaps another tablet?

We moved over there, and Pyuku helped us to get the tablet out of the red stone by gently opening it without destroying it.

The little fragments that dropped, which were still the size of my fingers, were saved inside my inventory.

This crimson sunstone was called "Nova Sunstone" and was a version of it which was supercharged with fire element.

"The tablet has some words!" Pyuku said. "Let me see..."

As he started to read, we looked around the cave curiously. I picked up some mushrooms and herbs growing here, and a few more tiny pieces of Sunstone.

We left the Sunstone Tree alone though, as Aquarina made another little ritual to wish these souls a good rest in the afterlife.

And as we explored the area, Pyuku recited what he was able to decipher.

"It says... False sun... Desperate... Mass-Destruction... Failure... And... Abomination."

"Abomination?" I wondered, raising an eyebrow. "Wait, those words... False Sun, Desperate, Mass Destruction, Failure, Abomination..."

"Could it be?" Wondered Aquarina. "Were they trying to make a new sun out of this sunstone? But why?"

"I don't think it was a false sun..." Nephilim commented. "Most likely, a weapon of mass destruction. They wanted something to fight the Demon King, perhaps? Or something to raise their ranks among the Gods before they left..."

"But what is the Abomination?" I wondered, looking at the Sunstone Tree.

RUMBLE!

"Huh?!"

And in that moment, the caves started to tremble.

FLUOSH!

The Sunstone Tree started overflowing with a powerful Aura of Sunlight and Flames, corrupted by Miasma, turning deep black!

"OOOOHHHH...!"

And several grotesque, phantasmal beings, surged from within!

Chapter 1020 Accursed Sunstone Specters

"Give us back... our lives..."

"Accursed gods... you betrayed us!"

"Why?! Why? WHY?!"

"What did you do to my daughter... Give her back... GIVE HER BACK!!!"

"AAHHH... MAMA!"

The terrifying specters that surged from the Sunstone Tree started overflowing with crimson and black flames, groaning and screaming.

They were souls that were in constant agony! Has the Miasma infected this place enough to create such creatures?

"T-Those are ghosts?!" Pyuku, surprisingly, was quite scared.

"I-It looks like... They're most likely the souls of the people that were turned into that tree made of Sunstone." I said, unsheathing my sword. "We have to deal with them, before they become too much of a problem."

"Right..." Aquarina seemed slightly dispirited, taking both of her daggers. "We'll end this quickly!"

FLAAASH!

The Sunstone Tree suddenly gave a bright glow, the specters gained an Aura of Sunlight, somehow enhancing their strength and size.

Ding!

[The Accursed Souls sealed within the Sunstone Tree have manifested themselves!]

[They are absorbing the Spiritual Energy and Miasma of the environment, taking the form of spectral beings filled with Fire Attribute Mana.]

[A dozen [Accursed Sunstone Specters (Tier 7)] have been summoned!]

[The Sunstone Tree remains as their Core, enhancing their Stats and Fire Attribute Magic Power by +150%]

"That Tree is giving them some sort of powerup, Lady Sylphy." Said Nephilim. "Should we destroy it?"

"I don't know if that's the right thing to do!" I said. "After all, Lara did say they were where spirits were born the most... Let's deal with specters first and leave. They seem to have only reacted to our presence!"

"Very well. [Spear of Oblivion]! [Lance of Pandemonium]!" Nephilim nodded, suddenly summoning two spears, one made of holy light and the other made of demonic darkness, dual wielding them. "

"GRAAAHHH!"

The specters quickly rushed towards us, their bodies constantly twisting in form. We leaped into action while Pyuku remained watching in silence, he seemed somehow afraid of ghosts.

"BURN! YOU'LL PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID TO US!"

Three specters reached me in a flash, their bodies overflowing with crimson and black flames. Their very bodies transformed into dozens of fireballs, bombarding them towards me.

"Ignatius! [Fire Absorption]!"

I fused with Ignatius, as my passive Draconification was boosted, while giving me his Skills. With a mere command, his powers activated.

"On it!"

FLUOSH!

The fireballs that fell over me were absorbed into my body, suddenly making my Aura erupt with even more power.

"Now- Ugh!"

However, I quickly felt strangely exhausted. These flames were not pure enough, somehow making me feel really sick inside.

"Sylphy! You can't handle these? They must be contaminated!"

Ignatius quickly released the flames I absorbed into the form of a giant dragon claw.

CRAAASH!

The dragon claw destroyed one of the specters with a single swipe, while releasing a shockwave of power that sent the other two flying.

"I'm fine now... Phew, we better not absorb that, it must be contaminated with demonic energy or something. It almost affected my soul."

"It seems to be the case."

Ignatius popped out of my body as our Spirit Fusion finished abruptly.

"Let me handle them! I can do it quite well."

"But it'll hurt!"

"Not if you combine me with him."

Suddenly, Curse appeared by my side, telling me to combine him with Ignatius.

"Wait, like when I did it with Ignatius and Alice?"

"You do have the Skill for it, don't you?"

"I do... Okay, let's do it."

I gathered my Mana and Spiritual Energies into my hands, as I directed my power towards Curse and Ignatius.

"[Spirit Fusion]!"

FLUOSH!

Both Spirits quickly converged together. This was a Skill I acquired from a Scroll containing Lara's Skills. I got it when I managed to rescue her, alongside the scepter she's always using.

And its power was... not something that could be scoffed at!

Ding!

[You've fused the Spirits [Curse] and [Ignatius]!]

[Both Spirits have temporarily transformed into the [Abyssal Cursed Flames Dragon] High Spirit!]

[All of their Stats have converged together and increased by an additional +25%, and their Skills have been temporarily fused.]

[Due to the instability of your control over Spirits, the duration has been reduced.]

[Fusion Duration: 5 Minutes.]

"ROOOAARR!"

A huge black dragon, covered on purple flames materialized, with a large crimson eye in the middle of its forehead, and big, demonic black horns.

Its wings spread out, releasing a shockwave of abyssal, accursed flames!

"Amazing..."

I was shocked by what Spirit Fusion could accomplish. I hadn't practiced it much after that one time I tried it out, but I should really try using it, especially when I still can't evolve all my Spirits to the next stage yet.

"GRAAAH!"

"LIZARD!"

"NO MATTER!"

Four more specters attacked us, as I quickly intercepted them with my sword, imbuing it with Holy Light from Alice.

"[Sea Blade] + [Demonic Katana Infernal Dance] + [Holy Dragon Fang] = [Heavenly Katana's Demonic Dragon Exorcizing Dance]!"

I swung my sword horizontally and vertically as I spun while moving, boosting my speed with my dragon wings and my Yggdragon Aura, each of my attacks manifested beautiful clouds and bright holy light.

SLASH! SLASH! SLASH! SLASH!

The manifestation of a furious holy dragon biting through the Specters ethereal bodies emerged as I attacked them, their bodies dissipating and only leaving their mana crystals after I felled them.

POOF! POOF! POOF!

At the same time, Ignatius absorbed the fire attacks they released, making it easier for me to target the specters once they were caught off-guard.

"GROOAARRGH!"

However, I saw how three of them merged together into a larger and more menacing specter, rushing towards me.

"[Holy Dragon Breath]!"

Nonetheless, I received it by fusing Alice's Magic into my Draconification techniques and releasing a deadly beam of golden flames.

BOOOM!

"GUUAAGGHH...!"

The fused specter quickly burned into ashes, leaving behind only the magic crystals that seemed to be their cores.

I noticed that Nephilim and Aquarina were handling things just as fine as I was, however, the Sunstone Tree was acting strange.

It was beginning to burn with black flames...

RUMBLE!

And then, its roots crawled out of the ground and started moving like giant legs, while its branches twisted into enormous arms with sharp claws.

Ding!

[The resentful souls only desire retribution and death! They have used the Sunstone Tree as their vessel!]

[The [Accursed Sunstone Treant (Tier 8)] has emerged!]

"GRAAAHHH!"