

Hell Difficulty Tutorial

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Chapter 31

The "suns" are gone once again. As before, a terrible wave of mana washes over the entire first floor before they disappear.

This time, it's a bit colder than before, so we collect more wood and hunt more animals while expecting even colder weather next time. A few more people have learned how to skin them without damaging the skins, so we're keeping them in case another cycle becomes even colder. So we hunt as much as we can and smoke the meat.

There are more animals.

There are more goblins, many more.

And now, even groups of wolves have started attacking us.

In the forest around our camp, we've also found terribly mangled corpses of giant wolves and trolls.

We don't know for sure what monster did it, but I have my suspicion.

Cinderbear.

Oh, I almost forgot.

Fuck that guy.

The corpses are mangled with limbs broken, torn-off limbs, and gouged-out inner organs, but they are not eaten, and that's what worries me the most.

Did Cinderbear develop a taste for a human-based diet?

If yes, why hasn't he come back?

People would be terrified, so only a few of us know about mangled corpses.

The bus is even more "armored" now, and we're using bigger and bigger pieces of logs to make it more durable. It's still our go-to place to sleep or hide. Our surroundings have also changed a lot.

There is an insane amount of sharpened logs pointing outwards.

There are some palisades closer to the bus.

We are building pitfalls with more sharpened sticks inside them, and Hadwin has taught us to set up some traps.

We are also collecting as much food and water as we can.

And we are leveling up.

I don't even bother killing level-two monsters anymore; I just break their limbs and throw them in front of someone else to finish. Sure, it's less experience than if they killed it on their own, but it's something.

In all of this, I try to have some fun as well.

When I'm fighting anything under level five, I don't use any weapon, just my hands and mana.

It was a bit hard and awkward at the start, but now it has become good training for me. I've learned more about their physiology and weak points.

Oh, and the level seven troll we fought some time ago together with Tess and Kevin?

Well, it was a baby.

Just a cute little baby and I think we found its mom.

Or dad, who knows.

I'm sitting high up in a tree and looking down as the troll slowly comes closer and closer to where I am.

[Troll, lvl 12]

During the past few days, I've been watching it together with Tess. From really far away, careful to not get noticed. We learned its routes, and the troll is more reliable than your country asking you for taxes. It always walks the same way, and we suspect it either comes from its *house* or goes towards it.

And now, we are here. We both washed in water, both our bodies and clothes, and then we threw some mud on ourselves and finished it by rubbing some plants onto our skin and clothes. All of this was to cover our smell as much as possible and to smell like the forest in hopes of avoiding its nose.

It truly has a humongous nose, I must say.

The troll's skin is more grayish this time, and it is probably 50% bigger than the baby troll we met. Its muscles look much more dangerous. The earth shakes a bit as it moves and stones crack under it's feet.

It moves closer and closer, and when it is right under me, Tess makes some noise where she is.

The monster instantly stops and looks towards her, smelling in that direction.

Nice timing.

Now it's up to me.

[Focus]

[Mana Manipulation]

I activate my skills, and my mind enters a calming, deeper state of focus. Everything other than this hunt ceases to matter.

I grip the mace in my hand and exhale.

The troll starts turning towards me when a spear comes flying out of nowhere and burrows deep into its left eye.

ROAR.

Another spear comes flying and shatters as it hits the troll's skin, unable to wound him at all.

The monster turns towards where the spears are flying from, and I jump down from the tree directly towards its head.

My muscles feel as if they are burning, and I swing my mace as hard as I can right at the back of the troll's head. The amount of mana going through my body is no joke, and I hear a crack as my mace hits.

Crack

Terrible wounds appear on the back of the troll's head, and the mace shatters to pieces. I throw away the now useless handle, instantly pulling out the short sword I have with me.

The troll staggers, confused and most likely with some brain damage.

Two more spears come flying and hit the troll's face, unable to do more than distract him.

I land on the troll's shoulders and dodge the hand reaching out for me.

[Oscillation]

I send mana through the handle of the sword and towards the blade. It creates a thin mana coating around one side of the blade.

My head hurts, and blood starts running from my nose.

I focus more and more.

Mana on the blade becomes denser and denser and moves towards the tip. Using the Oscillation skill, the blade begins to vibrate rapidly, its edges humming with energy. The swift back-and-forth motion of the mana enhances cutting power. With the full power of my mana-strengthened body, I stab the sword inside the wound left by the mace.

Then, I hold on tightly to avoid falling and have to dodge its hands as the troll starts thrashing around. When given the opportunity, I pull out the sword and stab again right next to the first wound, but the blade bounces off the monster's head; **[Oscillation]** is gone, and even my **[Focus]** can't keep it running any longer.

So, I stab the already existing wound again and again. Every time I do, the monster's roars become weaker and its movements slower.

A chilling, piercing noise fills the forest as spear, propelled by psychokinesis, slices through the air like a deadly projectile. The steel blade gleams menacingly, streaking towards the troll's neck at breakneck speed. The terrifying combination of Tess's psychic force and the spear's sharpness drives it deep into the creature's flesh, leaving it lodged within its throat.

I stab again and move with the sword while it's lodged inside the troll's brain, creating disgusting wet noises as i make a mess out of the monster's brain.

Finally, the troll starts falling to the ground, and while jumping down, I grab the spear and pull it out so it doesn't break.

You're welcome, Tess.

The monster lands, and I finally get the message.

[You have defeated the Troll Lvl 12]

[Lvl 8 > Lvl 9]

I invest my stat points and look at Tess coming closer. She answers my unspoken question, "I did level up, yes."

Good.

The spears she threw, start floating in the air and then move right towards her. She slowly checks them out one after another while the remaining ones float around her in a circular orbit.

That's just plain showing off!

Well, whatever, just wait until my **[Focus]** shows its true power; even you will shudder in fear.

We get to the clearing, and I realize that we've been here a bit over a week. It's surprising to me how some people have adapted to all of this.

As more and more time passes and I observe them, I come to realize that none of us are normal.

Maybe it's not that we were randomly put into hell difficulty, but that we were put into hell difficulty because of who we are?

My theory is that the system places people into the difficulty it thinks is best for the person. As for the fact that an entire busload of people got here, maybe we are all suitable for hell difficulty?

There are so many people on Earth; there have to be groups of people together where all of them are a good fit for a specific difficulty, right?

Anyway, that's just a little theory I came up with.

What welcomes us at the clearing is an angry Hadwin stomping right towards us, with a few people following him, probably wanting to enjoy the free show.

Well, I can't blame them. These days, it's hard to find something amusing to do.

Chapter 32

"So you did it..."

You bet we wiped the floor with that level 12 troll. No biggie.

He looks at me and at Tess.

"Fucking hell, Nathaniel," he sighs and waves his hands around. "Do you have any idea how dumb that was?"

Dumb? Please! Only slightly dangerous.

"You could've fucking died!"

No worries! If it looked too dangerous, I'd run and bring him straight to our camp... wait, what?

"I expected something like that from him, but even you, Tess?"

Huh?

Should I feel insulted?

"You're putting all of our lives in danger, Nathaniel. Can you imagine how hard it would be if we lost both of you? Or if you didn't kill him and lured him back?"

Oh, so it's like that.

It's not my problem, though?

Right, Tess?

I look at her and she seems to be ashamed, just a little bit, really a tiny bit.

Lately, Hadwin has been more and more stressed as he deals with all of this. A lot of people just rely on him and let him lead them, and that puts a lot of pressure on him. Sophie creating her own group during all of that probably doesn't brighten his mood either.

Well, that's something he decided to do, so suck it up.

As I try to pass by him, he steps in my way.

Uh?

Even people around us seem to be surprised and start whispering among themselves.

"Hadwin, I don't think it's a good idea..." Tess starts, but I filter out her voice and look at the man in front of me.

I look into his eyes, and he seems pretty serious, just staring into mine.

So that's how it is.

Feel free to try.

I enter **[Focus]** and then let a bit of my mana flow through my body.

Try it if you dare...

Then his fist hits me right in the face, and I stagger backward.

Huh?

Focus is gone, and so is the mana flowing through my veins.

He hits my face again, and I see blood. My blood.

What?

I try to collect mana and enter the **[Focus]**, but I am unable to do so.

This time he grabs my shoulders and kicks my stomach with his knee.

His kick is tough; air escapes my lungs and a sharp, searing pain radiates through my abdomen. My muscles tense involuntarily, and for a moment, it feels as though my insides are being crushed. Gasping for breath, I struggle to regain my composure.

I barely block his second kick and duck under his swing. His physical stats, like strength and dexterity, are higher, and without mana strengthening myself, I am slower and weaker than him.

Slowly catching my breath and relaxing my mind, even without the skill, I continue to observe his movements.

I read his swing and block his fist with my hand, using his hit to send me moving backward so I can collect myself a bit more.

My face hurts, my stomach hurts, and I am unable to collect any mana.

Is it his skill?

I read his movements, keeping my eyes on the center of his body and watching every movement. His shoulders, his legs, his waist.

I dodge another kick and swing. He is much quicker than me, but I start to move even before he is halfway through his attack.

Then I counter in the middle of his attack and hit his neck. That forces him backward while he makes a choking noise. By a reflex, his hand goes up to cover his neck, and he blinks.

That gives me the opportunity to move closer, and I kick his knee. He staggers backward.

That's it?

I feint a hit at his neck with my fist. He moves his hand to block it, but I strike with my other hand.

That's all you can do?

I hit his belly, and he staggers back once more as I kick his knee again.

He grimaces from pain, and I hit his face with my fist, right into his left eye.

I feel his skill turn off, and I know that I can use my skills again.

But I don't do so.

I attack him without using mana, with only the strength of my body.

Step closer and bury my knee into his stomach, he bends over and I quickly hit the bottom of his chin.

He is faster, he is stronger, but his attacks are telegraphed and easy to dodge.

Another quick hit at his chin, and he staggers, feeling lightheaded as the hit is meant to shake an opponent's brain inside the skull.

Two hits at his neck, and he makes a louder choking noise. I kick at his crotch; he tries to block it with his leg but is too shaken to do it in time.

While he is falling to his knees, I twist my body, pull more strength into it, and give him as strong a punch as I can, right into the side of his face.

He falls down, unmoving and I stare at him, and others around us too, no one jumping in to help either of us.

After a while, he looks at me and, weirdly, there is a smile on his face.

What's so funny, old man?

You got beaten, and I didn't even use mana, so what's so funny about that!?

WHAT IS SO FUNNY?!

"Hehe..." there is some blood on his teeth.

"You know it too, right?" he laughs again, "I could have killed you if I really wanted to."

"..."

"Hehe, you were ready for me, expecting an attack, but I still managed to land a few solid hits." He lies on the ground, gazing at the sky. "Wow, that was satisfying. I've wanted to smack you in the face for ages." He takes a moment. "You little punk," he adds.

"..."

My silence makes him laugh even longer. "Finally, I can see some emotion on your face," he looks straight at me, "You always look so uninterested, bored, even when fighting, but now... you look so angry."

I look around, and most of the people avoid my gaze. Lily and a few others look scared. When I look back, I see Tess standing close to me. Her face is hard to read, but she seems ready to move. Not to help me, just to stop me if I decide to finish off Hadwin.

"You know, lately you've become too confident, Nathaniel, too fearless. You enjoy fighting too much; you risk a lot. Not only your life but also the lives of people around you." He looks straight into my eyes. "You are not undefeatable. You could have easily died today, and you can die to something else if you continue being so careless." With that, he stops, probably not having more to say.

I look at Tess; she doesn't avoid my gaze but doesn't say anything, and that's enough for me.

I leave before I hurt someone.

I enter the forest and slowly, slowly, calm myself down.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Repeat.

I don't use **[Focus]**. I disable it as much as I can and think.

And think.

And think more.

After calming down, I come to realize that both of us might be right. The truth is somewhere in the middle.

Sure, I can be more careful; actually, I need to be more careful and not blindly rely on my skills, as he showed me so *nicely*.

Damn that jerk, I'm sure he enjoyed hitting my face.

On the other side, I can't just stop hunting and give up on becoming stronger. Sure, there is some risk, but something tells me that this 1st floor of Hell tutorial is just the beginning. If I take it slowly and comfortably level up while being super careful might not make me grow fast enough to survive the entire five years.

I will hunt, I will risk, I will enjoy the challenges, and I will continue using focus to get rid of some useless emotions, as it's all for my survival.

As for Hadwin and his lesson? My thanks will be that I won't beat him senseless and will dial it down a bit. He is right about me being cocky and showed it off in a beautiful way.

So thank you and fuck you.

As for which of us is right?

Only time will show.

Chapter 33

POV Kevin Wilson

It's the first time I've seen Nathaniel so angry; actually, it might be the first time I've seen him showing any strong emotion at all. He usually walks around looking like someone printed his resting face onto paper and then stuck it to his head.

Damn, for a second, I thought he might kill Hadwin right here, right now.

I'm sure Tess would try to stop him, but I'm not sure if she would be able to if he really wanted to do it.

The scary part is that he didn't even use mana.

Like, what the hell, who does that?!

I didn't sense anything, but Kim told me that Hadwin did something to disrupt Nathaniel's mana. Then at some point during the fight, Nathaniel canceled the older

man's skill, and even though he could use mana, he finished him off without even bothering to use it.

What a madlad.

Again, who the hell does that?!

Right after the fight, he went into the forest. The way he just casually entered it while checking his surroundings sent shivers down my back. He's probably the only one who does that. The rest of us are still nervous every time we go hunting.

I get back to smoking boar meat and continue what I started before the fight happened.

"Do you think he's very angry?" Lily asks quietly.

"You saw his face; he's suuuuper pissed off."

"Oh..." she quiets down.

At this point, I am sure everyone can see that she's got a small crush on Nathaniel.

Well, probably everyone other than him. He doesn't seem to be too good with people stuff. He thinks he's careful, but I always notice how quickly he disappears every time more than one or two people talk to him. Sometimes he endures a bit longer, but as time passes, he becomes quieter and quieter. Most of the time, it ends up with him just leaving or Tess saving him – or us?

It's kind of fun to mess with him a bit.

That isn't the main problem; the main problem is him being a selfish, mostly emotionless asshole.

But he's our selfish, mostly emotionless asshole.

I don't know if he's aware of it, but I'm sure that half of the people would be already dead if it weren't for him; hell, probably even more.

Sure, he doesn't have to be such a dick about it.

I remember the time from a few days ago when he power-leveled Kim in exchange for his sword. Damn, he actually did take it without even a hint of hesitation after getting the boy to level four, leaving him unarmed.

He's ruthless, selfish, and somewhere in the back of my mind, I'm sure he doesn't care that much about all of us.

Yet.

He's always calm, and even when things go to deeper and deeper levels of shit, he doesn't become desperate; he just listens, nods, and says one or two sentences, giving us something to do.

It's weirdly calming, having someone to rely on just a little bit.

Even while knowing how he sees us.

I'm back.

First to welcome me is the goodest doggo of the first floor of hell difficulty.

Yup, the shameless little bugger of a corgi is still alive and well, and I swear at this point, he might be heavier than some of the girls.

God damn, boy!

As I sit with my back against one of our palisades, he comes to me while bringing something in his mouth.

A wallet.

“...”

What the hell?!

What the actual heck?!

Also, good boy. We'll split 50/50.

I pet his head, which is still of a similar size to what it was at the start, and take the wallet from him while he swings his tail wildly. Once again, it looks like he's shaking his butt because of his short tail.

I open the wallet and there's some cash, bank cards, one ID and nothing more.

Hadwin Harper.

Oh my.

It's getting better and better!

I quickly look around, but there are no witnesses... uh, I mean, there's no one around.

I take all of the cash, probably around two hundred dollars, and close the wallet and give it back to the best boy.

"Can you put it back?"

He blinks slowly and then there he goes, running back to where he came from.

Is this the first cash theft on Hell difficulty's first floor? It must be, right?

Hehe.

Take that, old man!

I put the cash into my pocket and pull out the remaining pieces of the necklace that I got from the goblin shaman that I killed, which feels like weeks ago. It's still broken, and I only hold its pieces, but I keep coming back to it. I can feel some mana lingering on it, but I just can't find out what it's for and how it's etched into the pieces to be able to stay there.

One good thing is that I improved my usage of **[Oscillation]** thanks to studying the necklace, so that's something.

Biscuit comes back and lays on the ground next to me, putting his head on my thigh. He then breathes out and closes his eyes.

At this point, I'm almost sure that he's the smartest one out of all the people here. He just knows how to behave around me and never becomes too annoying, and then there are things like with Hadwin's wallet.

It's weird, but I think he saw us two fighting and wanted to help me get some petty revenge to get into my good graces.

I'm not crazy!

That must be it.

I slowly pet his small head and enter a bit deeper into **[Focus]** and start training my **[Mana Manipulation]**.

After a while, Tess comes to me.

"Hey..." she starts carefully.

"It's okay." I only say that much, but she will understand.

I know she partly agrees with Hadwin, but she wasn't able to tell that to me for some reason. Hell, I probably wouldn't even listen, so I can't actually be mad at her for not helping me or being ready to try to stop me if I tried to do something worse to Hadwin.

After a while, she gives one of her tiny smiles and sits next to me. She pokes Biscuit's bulging belly, and the dog opens one of its eyes and then closes it when he sees it's Tess. That makes her poke him a few more times, but the good boy ignores her, so she stops.

Corgi 1, human 0.

"Kim got his **[Telekinesis]** to level three, and Lily got **[Rejuvenation]** to level two," she informs me.

Damn, what is that scrawny boy eating and doing? Level three already?

"She can heal small and slightly bigger scratches now, but still only her own. She wasn't able to heal others."

Oh, that's a shame, but no worries, we will get there.

My personal healing station is coming along nicely.

Tess doesn't continue, so I guess others weren't able to level up any skills. The annoying thing is that I don't know if the speed at which we are leveling up our skills is good or bad. There is nothing to compare it to, just us.

Out of nowhere, I get an idea.

"Hey, Tess?"

"Hm?" she leans a bit closer, and I put my hand into my pocket and pull out a one hundred dollar bill, a gift from one unnamed guy.

"Can you go and buy me some sweets?" I hand her the banknote.

She looks at me, then at the bill.

Back at me and then once again at the bill.

Her confused face is so funny.

"Did you steal it from Hadwin?" she instantly guesses outright.

Crap, am I that predictable?

Oh, wait a moment! I didn't do it; I almost forgot.

"The dog did it," I point at the sleeping corgi, and she rolls her eyes.

"Sure," she just stands up and leaves.

The banknote stays behind.

Two hours later, the Cinderbear appears again.

Chapter 34

The once-peaceful forest transforms into an eerie, unsettling place. Every rustle and crack makes my heart race, and the sense of foreboding grows heavier with each passing second.

It is then that the monster makes its entrance. Emerging from the dense foliage, the giant gray bear steps into the clearing with a deliberate, unhurried pace.

The bear's enormous paws make a sickening crunch as they crush the underbrush and fallen leaves beneath them. Its massive size and power are evident in the way the ground trembles with each step it takes.

The most chilling aspect of the giant gray bear's appearance, however, is its eyes.

They glow with an unnatural orange light, as if fueled by a fire that burns within the monster itself.

A wave of mana hits the clearing and everyone becomes paralyzed with fear.

As the bear continues its slow, methodical advance, the forest grows quieter and quieter.

Its low growl reverberates through the air, a rumbling sound that makes your body shake.

Once again, the bear looks at me and then at the ground in front of it.

[Cinderbear, lvl 20]

The creature has leveled up.

Waves of mana I feel from the bear make my stomach clench, and my entire body feels as if it isn't getting enough air. It is even hard to breathe.

The bear takes a few steps towards us and then stops, looking at us with its wild but intelligent eyes.

One minute.

Two.

Three.

Cinderbear just keeps looking. At some point, someone screams out of fear and desperation. The monster's ears seem to perk up, but it just stays where it is and growls back. The remaining unbroken windows on the bus shatter, and the guy instantly shuts up.

"What does it want?!"

"I-i can't run."

"Can we fight it?"

"He should fight it!"

"Maybe it's friendly?"

Then someone says something I've been thinking about:

"Maybe it wants to eat something? Just like last time?"

Everyone falls silent, and we all remember the scene of Damon's body being slowly consumed by the bear. The monster growls and moves even closer. As it walks, it steps on a few spikes and hits several palisades with its paw. The pieces of wood shatter without dealing any damage.

With the memory of Damon's gruesome fate fresh in our minds, people exchange scared glances, unsure of how to handle the terrifying beast. The bear is getting closer and closer, and the fear is becoming worse and worse.

Our feet feel glued to the ground.

The air feels thicker now, and cold sweat is running down my back.

I thought I might be able to do something the next time we met the bear, but no, I can't do anything. Even thinking about running away feels impossible.

I feel... pathetic.

In a moment of selfish desperation, Ethan screams, his face twisted with panic, "Maybe we can throw it someone, just like last time! We should give it... someone." His eyes dart around, searching for the weakest among us, hoping to save himself at the expense of another.

The group recoils in horror at the suggestion, but the fear makes it hard to dismiss his idea completely.

Ethan's eyes land on Sophie's sister, but he quickly changes his mind, and his eyes stop at Lily, a petite, defenseless-looking girl. "We should... I'm sorry..." he desperately moves closer and grabs her; she screams.

At the moment, no one is able to move, so they react a bit late as he instantly starts pulling her closer to throw her at the bear.

I agree with him. He is most likely right. He is only trying to save his life.

But.

What does he think he is doing?

In front of me!?

I'm finally able to take a step and grab his neck while strengthening myself with mana. With my other hand, I break his hand he put on Lily, and he screams in pain. Then I pull him away from the girl. Towards the bear.

I am thankful, Ethan, you made the first move; at this moment, you were more decisive than me.

But.

That girl is someone I know a bit. I've talked with her a little and she always tries to speak nicely to me and not annoy me. You, on the other hand, I don't know.

You're a stranger to me.

So It's not a hard decision.

I pull him away from the others and throw him towards the bear while strengthening my body. He flies through the air, falls down, and then rolls until he stops right in front of the bear.

He looks up, shaken and confused, and then screams upon seeing the bear's maw right in front of him.

He uses his skill, and a light blue, thin barrier of mana appears around him.

Meanwhile, my eyes meet those of Cinderbear, and I feel a wave of mana from him, while he ignores the screaming human beneath him. Then he turns his attention back to Ethan.

The barrier instantly breaks the moment the monster touches it with its paw.

Crack.

It steps onto Ethan's left hand. The shield made of mana flashes into existence once more but instantly breaks. The bear bites his other hand and pulls it off with a wet sound of tearing muscles and tendons.

Ethan is still screaming.

Still alive as Cinderbear slowly chews his hand while curiously looking down at the man.

Then the bear leans closer and takes a bite of the man's belly.

I am sure I will remember his screams until the day I die.

Slowly, they become weaker and weaker, he coughs up a lot of blood and then passes out.

The monster slowly eats the entire man while looking at us and casually glancing around.

There isn't even a hint of wariness towards us as he finishes his meal.

After he is done, he licks his maw, and another pulse of mana flashes towards me. This time, I am able to sense that it's focused on the broken necklace in my pocket.

Then, Cinderbear leaves once more.

A few hours after the bear leaves, I go into the forest.

Alone.

I hunt and kill everything I can find.

Trolls, goblins, wolves, animals. I murder anything I see. Rage and mana are burning in my veins as I do so.

I've never felt so weak.

I've never felt so defenseless.

All I could do was watch and sit there, not even able to run.

Just helplessly wait and hope one man would be enough.

Pathetic.

I hate it, I despise it, I don't want to feel like this.

Never again.

Time passes, and I finally get the message I wanted.

[You have defeated the Troll Lvl 11]

[Lvl 9 > Lvl 10]

[Well done! The side quest has been successfully completed. Please select one of the traits. The traits are based on your actions and performance up until now within the Tutorial.]

Be advised: humans are limited to three Traits.

Choose with caution.]

The system has become nicer out of nowhere.

Chapter 35

When I come back, bloodied, and tired, but satisfied, I find everyone packing. Some of us are collecting food and hides, while others are making sure we will take enough water to last us for a while and gather all useful stuff.

The decision is unanimous.

Rather than waiting for the Cinderbear to appear once again, everyone prefers just moving somewhere else in hopes he won't find us.

I agree, even though I am unhappy about that. It's a smart decision, but it still feels sour, as if I am leaving behind unsolved problems. Cinderbear is terrifying, but I want revenge before the 1st-floor ends.

"Tess, can you keep a watch over me for a few minutes?" I instantly find the girl by her mana signature.

Hearing something in my voice, she doesn't ask where I went and what I want, and just nods solemnly.

I enter the bus and move to the last seat, the seat I sat in when we got here.

I breathe in. Let's see.

"Trait," I say.

Please select one of the traits that are based on your actions and performance up until now within the Tutorial.

Be advised: humans are limited to three Traits.

Available traits:

Enhanced Mana Heart (Passive)

Augments the user's natural mana pool and regeneration rate, allowing for longer and more sustained use of mana-based abilities. This passive trait enables the user to cast more spells and maintain their magical abilities with less downtime, providing a significant advantage in extended battles and outside of them.

Regenerative Tissue (Passive)

The user's body gains the ability to regenerate tissue rapidly, accelerating the healing of wounds and reducing the impact of injuries during combat. This trait not only helps the user recover from injuries more quickly but also ensures that they remain in peak fighting condition, even in the most grueling of encounters.

Mana Circuit (Passive)

Integrates a network of mana channels throughout the user's body, optimizing the distribution of mana and amplifying the power of their mana-based abilities without additional mana consumption. This enhancement allows the user to draw upon their mana more efficiently, resulting in more potent spells and abilities while reducing overall mana expenditure.

Adaptive Resistance (Passive)

Temporarily and gradually adjusts the user's resistances based on the types of damage they receive, allowing them to become more resilient against recurring threats over time. As the user encounters different forms of attack, their body learns to adapt and develop natural defenses against those specific damage types, providing a growing advantage in combat.

Mana-Infused Vitality (Passive)

Considerably strengthens the constitution by using user's mana to bolster their natural vitality, resulting in a drastic improvement in overall health, stamina, and recovery rate. This infusion of mana into the user's body grants them increased durability and resilience, allowing them to endure more punishment and recover more quickly from damage.

Mana Sensitive Skeleton (Passive)

The user's bones become highly sensitive to mana, allowing them to channel and store mana within their skeletal structure. Additionally, this heightened sensitivity enables the user to better detect and sense mana within their own body and the surrounding environment, increasing their awareness of magical presences and activities.

Efficient Mana Conversion (Passive)

Increases the user's proficiency in converting their mana into different forms of energy, such as thermal, kinetic, or electrical, granting them a wider range of abilities and techniques in combat. This mastery over mana conversion allows the user to adapt their abilities to suit the situation at hand, providing a versatile and unpredictable fighting style.

Spell Diffusion (Passive)

This trait allows the user to diffuse a portion of incoming magical attacks, scattering the energy and reducing the overall impact on the user. This ability is especially useful in battles against magic-wielding foes, as it weakens their power and provides a defensive advantage to the user.

Reinforced Musculature (Passive)

Strengthens the user's muscles with an infusion of mana, granting them increased physical power and the ability to perform feats of strength beyond their natural capabilities. This trait not only enhances the user's offensive capabilities but also allows them to perform impressive physical feats that may be useful outside of combat.

Kinetic Channeling (Passive)

Enables the user to channel their mana into kinetic energy, allowing them to enhance their physical movements and attacks. This trait provides the user with the ability to perform faster, more agile, and more powerful physical actions, making them a formidable force in close-quarters combat.

Wow, that's a lot.

I expected a few traits, and here we go, 10 of them and even with descriptions!

What the hell? Who are you and what did you do to the system we all knew and hated?

I'm not complaining, just curious.

Also, any new skills for me? You know, I find it unfair as some people started with diamond spoons up their throats.

Just look at Tess! At this point, the stones she throws with her **[Psychokinesis]** feel more dangerous than bullets, and Sophie is there walking through the forest while manipulating monsters not to see her until she stabs her spear up their rear ends.

Look, I'm not ungrateful, but maybe, maybe one OP skill?

Just one.

...

Yeah, I thought so, screw you too! It's not like I wanted something from you or anything, stupid!

Now, back to traits. They look amazing, all of them. Unfortunately, I can pick only one, but in the future, there will probably be more opportunities, as it's said humans can have 3 of them.

Does that mean that there are different beings than humans that can get more or fewer traits?

Probably? But that's a problem for tomorrow me.

For a start, I read over them a few more times and try to think of all the usages and which one could be the best not only for immediate growth but also helpful to my growth in the future.

Enhanced Mana Heart (Passive) One mystery is solved. The thing that gives all of us mana, regenerates it, and collects it is called Mana Heart. It's either somewhere within my heart or my own heart changed into one. Either way, I like this one, and it seems like a strengthened version of it.

Regenerative Tissue (Passive) This one sounds really good too, as it would help me to heal from wounds faster than just increasing my constitution. But still, I like the first option more.

Mana Circuit (Passive) This is a serious contender for the first spot. Darn, I already know that I will have a hard time deciding which one to pick.

Adaptive Resistance (Passive) This one is meh. Sure, it sounds good, but I'd rather something that will allow me to end the fight faster.

Mana-Infused Vitality (Passive) Similar to Regenerative Tissue.

Mana Sensitive Skeleton (Passive) Something I got thanks to my **[Mana Perception]**? Not bad, but I still like Circuit and Mana Heart more.

Efficient Mana Conversion (Passive) Sounds interesting, but it's a trap! I'm sure I can learn to convert mana into different forms on my own, and now I even have hints. Hahaha. So thermal, kinetic, electrical, and probably much more. But let's start experimenting with these three.

Spell Diffusion (Passive) Good, but I need something more versatile and something that can increase my damage.

Reinforced Musculature (Passive) This one is probably from my continuous strengthening of my body?

Kinetic Channeling (Passive) This one is also a no.

So that's it. It's either Enhanced Mana Heart or Mana Circuit.

Which one should I pick?