

Ascension of the Sylvan Cosmos.

Chapter 36. [Void Witherwood] and Ignatia.

Time went by quickly, and soon, 7 more days passed. During this time, Liu Shu focused on <Enchanted Growth> and <Nature's gift>, gaining a lot of proficiency in the latter. Nature's Gift managed to level up to F Rank Level 4, going up by more than half the level and approaching Level 5.

Other than that, Liu Shu received another 84 points of experience. What hadn't happened lately was Liu Shu fighting against anything. After the Rose Fairy set up around her, while they tried not to affect the surroundings so that creatures would still stumble on her, their traces were everywhere.

While hiding might fool some creatures, animals were very intuitive, knowing that something was wrong when they entered the Rose Fairy territory. This was more so when the recent Thornstride attack filled this area with powerful scents, marks, and more.

In short, the battle had become increasingly scarce. This was the reason for <Energy Methods> to be so important all around the world. Still, the fact that experience can be gained through killing meant that powers only focused on it were not strange.

A group of three people moved along the forest, their bodies surrounded by dark green clothes. They all wore similar deep purple wooden masks.

One of them, the one who looked like the leader because of the strength of his general atmosphere, asked as they ran through the forest at a relatively fast pace. "Have you all gotten the mission details correctly?"

Another answered. "We need to gain more information about the rumor that has started in Fortuna City, right?"

The third spoke. "Hm. Did you expect us to come this far without knowing anything?"

The one who spoke first snorted. "It would not be my first time having to remind newbies of their duties."

This group of three was from one of the mentioned powers. One of them asked. "Do we slice this forest down? There are a few trees that could benefit our experience pools."

The leader talked back. "Have you not learned anything? Trees and flora, in general, are not a good source of experience points. Only other plants can benefit fully from the

experience they give. In the worst case, you'll lose experience points from killing them. Penalties can be harsh."

That person clicked their tongue. "I know that World Trees or fully intelligent flora are the only thoroughly Plant creatures that give experience as usual. If it weren't like that, all forests in the world might've been cut down already."

The leader sighed. "Being too experience-thirsty is not good, even if we are <Void Witherwood> disciples."

These people were from one of the powers mentioned above. A group of people who venerated strength gained by battle and disdained any other method.

Lately, a few people who had come to hunt in the Golden Sap Forest, the forest where Liu Shu resided, noticed the strange movement of creatures. This pushed people to investigate, and they saw groups of creatures of one type moving around.

In this world, <Monster Waves> existed, which were usually created when a significant shift in the ecosystem forced the majority of beings in one place to move away.

As beasts, plant creatures, and other types of beings moved, they didn't attack each other because their focus was on migrating. This lack of aggression could create large masses of creatures of all types that could overrun cities.

The name <Monster Waves> was given to this phenomenon in honor of the monstrous destruction they caused. It could get so bad enough that even when the highest levels of the creatures inside the mass were in their 10s, Level 20, Level 25, and more could fall prey to them.

Plus, the real danger was that, as it advanced and swallowed more creatures, Experience Points were diverted across the stampede, increasing their strength over time.

With this latent danger in mind, people would always check out what was happening when a large number of beasts moved at once.

Spotting them beforehand could prevent many tragedies.

So, Fortuna and other surrounding cities received news of this, making the powers stationed there give missions to their disciples to go and check what was happening.

If reports said that the chance was high, then the powers would send their higher-level people. When it was confirmed that a <Monster Wave> would occur, then the real powerful people would go and clean up a bit.

"Hey, leader. I've found something."

The other two approached that person and looked down. The leader nodded. "Good job. These trails clearly come from groups of beasts of the same species. Hm, from their distance apart, it should be a quadrupedal beast. With those sharp and pointy-looking parts, it should be a bug-type beast."

"But look, leader. These are not quadrupedal."

The group leader looked over and frowned. "That's... a woman's footprint? But it's wrong, right?"

"Perhaps she has strange feet?"

The other two looked at him with a deadpan. However, they didn't completely rule out his words. After all, creatures roaming in the forest could gain really bizarre forms and shapes.

"Let's follow it. If we manage to spot a large gathering of beasts and report it, we'll get quite nice rewards."

"Understood!"

"Understood!"

With a firm answer, the three of them began following the trails on the ground.

Meanwhile, in a cave far away from there, a certain Ant Queen was swinging her slender and long naked legs as she lay face down on a couch. "Ah... I'm bored."

"Lady Ignatia, we've carried what you asked for."

Ignatia, the Ant Queen, looked up and directed her compound eyes toward the entrance of her room. Seeing the petite and red-haired woman who could probably sit on the palm of her hand, she smiled. "Oh, you are a new one."

The small Rose Fairy nodded. "I-I was born not long ago; I just reached Level 3!"

Ignatia squealed and swiftly approached, grabbing her and burying her in a literal valley of soft flesh. "Cute, so are so cute, darling. A little Level 3 child~. What do you want? Do you like this compost I made for my babies? Perhaps playing a bit with them would be nice as well~."

The Ant Queen went full motherly mode, making the petite Rose Fairy melt in the comfort given by the ultimate mother, an Ant Queen!

The small Rose Fairy was being fed something that was actually delicious while blinking. "L-Lady Ignatia-."

"Call me mommy~."

The Rose Fairy blushed. "M-Mommy Ignatia."

Ignatia giggled and used her antennae to tickle her face lovingly. "Cute~. What do you want, baby?"

"F-First! I've carried this thing you asked for, the, um. That long thing?"

Ignatia's eyebrow raised. "Oh? It's done already?"

The Rose Fairy nodded a few times. Then, she asked hesitantly. "But, wouldn't it have been better to wait?"

Ignatia smirked. "Don't worry. I'm just confident that I have the materials to create something much better in the future. For now, this is best."

Then, she communicated with a few worker ants that were around and asked them to carry over the things the Rose Fairy carried. Seeing it, her mouth arched. "Hehe, here you are~."

[Level 3 Ant Carapace Amulet (Basic-Grade Complete Level)]

+9 Aether Mana Shards

+9 Phoer Body Shards

+36 Anima Energy Shards

Aether (+3), Physique (+3), Anima (+9), Willpower (+3).

[Vital Increase (active)]: Use to increase Anima Energy Shards by 300 for a short period of time. If these Anima Energy Shards are not used in 20 seconds, they will dissipate. It can be used once a day.

Note: This is ***** first complete-level item. It's crafted to aid the Ant Queen in laying eggs while giving a decent overall stats boost. The materials were wasted on this low-level item. Overall, it's a decent item for the objective it was built for.

Ignatia blinked, cleaning her compound eyes while using her antennae to clean them a bit more. "This is much better than I expected."

The Rose Fairy, still trapped in the large valley created by the motherly ant queen, looked up and said timidly. "It would've been much better if you waited three days, m-mommy Ignatia..."

Ignatia looked down and laughed, poking the plump cheek of the fairy. "Don't worry. I have more of them saved. I just didn't expect that tree to have such a strong proficiency in making items. She is really good, huh."

The young fairy smiled widely. "Liu Shu Is really nice! Her aura is always so calming~."

Ignatia blinked and looked at the note again.

Note: This is Liu Shu's first...

Her lips arched. 'Heh~, she is called Liu Shu. Flor told me before, but I didn't fully trust her. This little one can't lie, so it was the truth.'

As Ignatia played with the reddish amulet and placed it on her chest, she commented. "Well, little one, was it comfortable?"

The Rose Fairy, who almost fell asleep between the softness and warmth, snapped out of her grogginess and answered loudly. "Y-Yes! Very comfortable!"

Ignatia laughed. "Good now-. Hm?" Her face changed entirely as she moved her compound eyes toward the entrance. Her antennae began twitching, and the other ants relayed information.

She looked down and picked up the tiny fairy, smiling and placing her in her resting area. "Little one, wait here, okay? I'll be back quickly."

The Rose Fairy saw Ignatia's solemn expression and nodded, full of trust. "Okay!"

Ignatia patted her head with two fingers and then walked out, her wide hips swaying together with her ant-thorax-like tail while her face turned cold and murderous. "Call all warrior ants." Then, she smiled. "Food just delivered itself to our doors."

Meanwhile, outside the cave, the group of three people looked around with wary eyes. "Be careful. This is an ant nest. Although I'm Level 10 and you both are Level 9, creatures here can become quite annoying to deal with if we are not careful."

He explained that a wave of red spread out from the cave entrance they were observing, making them feel quite horrified. Behind all the ants that appeared, a charming woman with a cold face and voluptuous curves appeared. Still, her facial characteristics and ant thorax protrusion going from above her hips told them that she was a humanized ant queen.

The leader's face was a bit horrified. "No way, a humanized ant queen? When did this one appear?"

He quickly checked her stats.

Level: 12

Aether Mana Shards: 3096/3096

Phoer Body Shards: 8948/8948

Anima Energy Shards: 5587/5707

His face became ugly. 'Level 12?! Since when did the Golden Sap Forest have Level 12 beings?'

Ignatia looked around and suddenly pointed their way. Then, a massive fireball flew their way like a shooting star.

BOOM!

Ignatia's lips arched in a sneer. "If you want to play, don't hide, and come out, humans."

Chapter 37. Ignatia's and Flor's chase.

After the fireball, the place it impacted didn't start burning as one might expect. While the fire was indeed a weakness for most plant creatures, thanks to levels and natural strength, they had some resistance to it. This made wildfires much more uncommon.

Her fireball understandably left a charred spot. Yet, the fire didn't spread. The resistance of the surrounding plants was more than enough to resist the spreading.

Ignatia's beautiful compound eyes caught the entirety of what happened before her, allowing her to detect even the slightest movement; adding to the extra senses her antennae gave her and the few scouts she had released to track them, Ignatia was quick to find them. "Hm? Are you fleeing? First, that dumb idiot Froorar, and now you. Do you think it is that easy to come and go from my nest!? Follow them! My children, today, you are eating human flesh!"

With a wave of her hand, hundreds of giant red ants surged out like a small tide from the nest, rushing through the forest in an eerily silent yet swift march.

Because ants communicated through smell most of the time, their fights, movements, and any action always seemed silent and cold, like machines built for that specific purpose.

Ignatia communicated with a few worker ants, telling them to send the Rose Fairy back to their territory, and then she rushed behind her army of children.

The Rose Fairy saw one of the Level 4 workers approach her and tilt her head a few times while clicking her mandibles. Speaking of which, because of Ignatia's unique skill, all the ants in her colony were female, which allowed her to have children without needing fertilization.

Regardless, the Rose Fairy, who was looking at the ant's gestures, couldn't help but giggle. "Hm... Although you are cute, I don't understand."

The worker ant stood there, speechless, literally and metaphorically.

After a few seconds of thinking, the worker ant turned sideways and lay on the ground, her head tilted a bit to look at the small fairy. The Rose Fairy blinked and understood, flapping her wings and landing on the ant's back. "Are we going somewhere?"

The worker ant began walking away with quick steps, and on the way, one of the warrior ants left behind to protect the nest followed them.

The Rose Fairy smiled and patted the ant's carapace. "Thank you~."

Once they arrived, the Rose Fairy on guard received them. "How did it go?"

The Level 3 Rose Fairy grinned. "Mommy Ignatia loved it!"

The other Rose Fairy blinked. "Mommy?"

"Ah." The Rose Fairy covered her mouth, her face gaining a blush. "I-I meant Chief Ignatia. Sorry."

The one speaking with her smirked with an amused smile, making that Rose Fairy even more embarrassed. With a slight stutter, she commented, quickly changing the subject. "A-Also, I think she is in trouble. We should tell the Queen! Chief Ignatia suddenly went out with a lot of warrior ants!"

Hearing her serious tone, the Rose Fairy receiving them quickly nodded. "Understood. Wait for a second. I'm going to speak with her."

Flor was resting on one of Liu Shu's branches, basking in the Sun, when she heard one Rose Fairy rush toward her. The buzzing sound of the quickly flapping wings created a very peculiar sound that was hard to confuse with anything else.

Flor opened her eyes and looked over. "What's wrong?"

The Rose Fairy was quick to answer. "Queen! I've received information that Chief Ignatia is about to start battling someone! She took out most of her army with the intention of doing so."

Flor sat up, her eyebrows coming together as she got thoughtful. "Thornstrides?"

"We don't know." Answered the Rose Fairy while shaking her head from side to side.

Flor looked at Liu Shu and commented. "Little one, I'm leaving for a moment. While we can't really be considered allies, Ignatia wants to join us in the near future, so lending a helping hand is something I should do."

Flor then turned around and left.

Meanwhile, Ignatia was facing the three humans with a sneer. "Well, now you are surrounded. You poked the ant nest, and this is the result."

The group leader looked around carefully and warned. "Monster, if you kill us, my power will send stronger people to investigate."

Ignatia's antennae moved up and down as she thought. Then, she smiled at them. "But if I let you go, you will inform your power that an ant nest has been spotted in the Golden Sap Forest."

The group leader's face changed significantly. 'How clever is this monster? I need to deliver the information back to deal with her. Should I escape alone, leaving these two behind?'

While speaking monsters were not that rare, those who could rationalize and think deeply were not only uncommon but very dangerous. After all, more intelligence meant a better use of the system and its advantages.

Ignatia looked at him with a smirk. "Now, become-."

"What's going on here?"

A powerful aura descended as Flor appeared, stealing the attention of everyone present. The three mask-wearing humans' facial expressions went from bad to worse. While Ignatia felt powerful, the Level 10 human felt that he could match her for a while and resist or even flee.

Still, the much smaller flying fairy that appeared was different.

The Aether Mana swirling around her was dense as the wind moved her long red hair and leafy dress. He couldn't help but curse. 'Crap, what is this monster!?' Her

characteristics are close to Rose Fairies, but the feeling around her is on another dimension!"

Ignatia blinked and smiled. "Flor, why are you here?"

Flor looked at the three humans and then at Ignatia. "I want to ask the same. What is going on?"

Ignatia snorted. "These three came to my nest's doorsteps. I was just telling them that if they wanted to see so much, how about becoming a permanent resident by becoming my children's food?"

Flor looked at the three humans and commented. "Humans are troublesome. Once a few of them die, they will investigate what happened. If they are from the wrong group, we could end up provoking a high-level Human."

Ignatia nodded. "I agree. However, if they leave, my life is in as much danger as if I let them leave. So, Flor, can you lend me a limb to kill them? As long as the next wave of humans doesn't discover me, there won't be any problems, right?"

Flor hesitated. "What if they stumble upon... her?"

Ignatia paused, having forgotten about the special existence in the middle of the grove. Now, it was time for Ignatia to frown. However, that doubt quickly vanished. "Ant Queens like me who have gained a certain level of intelligence are hunted down quickly. So, I think that the people they will send will be stronger if they return. Not only that, you've also shown yourself."

Flor blinked. "You are right."

At that moment, the human group leader whispered. "Run."

Flor and Ignatia had been keeping an eye on them all the time, so the second they moved, they also moved.

"<Wind Slash>!"

"<Fire Blast>!"

Both of them quickly shot at the weaker humans, their attacks rushing quickly enough for them to have almost no time to react.

Slash!

Boom!

Both attacks hit true, slicing almost eighty percent of their Phoer Body Shards. Still, even when they weren't dead, Ignatia and Flor ignored them and rushed after the Level 10 human.

As they left, Ignatia's cold voice spread and reached their ears. "Eat them."

The two humans felt their hearts drop as the ants surrounding them rushed forward, clearly intending to eat them alive.

"NO! GET AWAY FROM ME!"

"AH! AH! I DON'T WANT TO DIE!"

However, their pleas were useless, as the ants had received an order from their Queen and Mother. The humans wanted to resist, but it was futile; with the powerful attacks they received, their bodies were weakened to the point that even a single Level 7 Warrior Ant would probably be able to deal with them.

They were surrounded by hundreds, some Level 8 and 9 ants included.

Flor and Ignatia ignored the shrieking humans while quickly navigating the forest to catch up with the swift human.

Ignatia's compound eyes quickly analyzed the surroundings as her curvy body agilely navigated the lush forest. Her quick dash was helped by the branches, sticking roots, and even some springy flora, which allowed her to flash through the forest with incredible precision and agility.

Flor was even more impressive. Her Physique stat was much lower than Ignatia's, but she had the skill called <Frantic Flight>. This skill was an E- Rank skill, an entire tier above what Ignatia used.

Her Aether stat was also high enough to make her Aether Mana break through the five digits.

Combining both, her body was like a ghost, rushing forward much faster than Ignatia and swiftly closing the gap between herself and the Level 10 human.

The group leader was sweating as he felt Flor's presence approaching, and Ignatia followed at a slightly faster speed than his. 'If it was only that Ant Queen, I would've no problem escaping. However,...' He took a quick glance behind him and saw the small Rose Fairy Queen right at his heels, getting too close for comfort. 'This monster is too fast! I couldn't analyze it previously, but compared with the ant queen, she should be at least one or two levels ahead.'

He was cursing his bad luck in his mind. How could he find an ant nest by chance, and instead of being a normal one, he had to stumble across one with a humanoid ant queen?

If that wasn't bad enough, the ant queen seemed to be in alliance with an absurdly powerful Fairy Queen. It really felt as if someone wanted him dead.

Flor followed behind, and when she was close enough, she spoke. "Stop. I'll count to three."

"One..."

The man sneered. 'As if I will-huh?'

"<Wind Slash>!"

He quickly changed his footwork, trying to dodge to the side. But the surprise attack from Flor was too swift and struck his side.

[-427]!

The human took a sharp breath in pain, and his steps faltered for a moment, allowing not only Flor but Ignatia to close the distance. 'I got hit!?' Tsk, since you are so eager for a fight, I'll give you one!'

When he felt that Flor was close enough, he used a tree in front of him and his trained legs to do a side jump by using the tree as a spring.

Flor's eyes flashed with surprise when she saw the blade rushing at her. 'Dodge!'

But, as her own attack, Flor wasn't prepared, and the only thing she could do was create a makeshift barrier with Wind Aether Mana, deflecting the blade away from her neck.

It still managed to land on her stomach, blasting her flying for several meters.

[-865]!

Flor didn't have as many Phoer Body Shards, so this hit took away a fifth of her Phoer reserves, showing how fragile Rose Fairies were if you managed to close the distance.

Still, the human man was not happy about his strike. 'Only 800? Her body is really tough! I should've bisected her!'

"<Fire Blast>!"

The human man snarled. "Annoying ant queen!" He quickly moved and slashed sideways, using decent sword mastery to slash precisely at the fireball rushing his way.

BOOM!

The explosion hit him head-on, slicing around 300 of his 6,000 Phoer Body Shards. What he didn't realize was the silent attack rushing at him from behind.

SLASH!

A lethal gush of blood sprouted from his back as a large number appeared in his eyes.

[-2360]

'Shit.'

Chapter 38. Flor's strength!

'Shit! Who was it!?'

He quickly looked behind him to see who attacked, and his eyes widened when he spotted the relatively small fairy looking at him with a cold face. What surprised him the most was the fairy's state. 'My sword was that shallow?'

Flor had a significant slash going across her chest, but she looked perfectly fine and free of injuries. Her face was cold and indifferent as he looked at her after delivering an attack that had pushed her body forward and opened a wound large enough to see her ribcage from behind.

Ignatia stepped forward, her fist clenched, and she punched his gut. "<Fire Blast>."

The human's pupils shrunk as he tried to dodge quickly, but their physical strength was similar, making it impossible because of the closeness between them.

BOOOM!

His body arched like a bow as he was flung backward, his internal organs taking deep damage as his Phoer Body Shards plummeted.

Flor was not one to lose an opportunity, and she quickly flew above him, pointed downward. "Die."

Several wind crescents shot from her, all of them landing one after another and making his body bounce against the ground while large gashes spread around him. After the third slash, Flor stopped as a message entered her eyes.

[Congratulations on defeating <Silent Shadow Human Level 10>. You've gained 17 Experience Points.]

Flor took in a deep breath only to hiss in pain. Ignatia approached and smirked. "Quite a nice reward. I've gained 84 experience points, hahaha."

Flor rolled her eyes. "Are you bragging, knowing I have less?"

Ignatia smiled smugly. "I've realized that you've probably tiered up somehow. So, yeah, I'm bragging because I feel annoyed that you are now stronger than me. So, how much did you win?"

Flor snorted. "As if I would tell you. Anyway, is his equipment useful to you?"

Ignatia looked and shook her head. "Nothing interesting. I didn't expect much, but his weapons and tools are not my fit. So, with their low quality, if I wear them, it will most likely not be worth it."

Flor looked at them and saw that they were all Level 5 unranked equipment. 'Well, even Flawed Basic Level equipment is expensive in the cities, from what I learned, so it is normal not to have any.'

Unranked equipment was the most common because it didn't need special ores to be created. Sylvanium, Etherium, and such were not only uncommon but almost impossible to find and obtain sustainably. While there might be mines, their production rates were also abysmal. So, high-level equipment was usually worth extreme amounts.

Trades between powerful kingdoms, empires, or religious groups were all made using those ores, as they were equally important for every living creature.

Flor still didn't throw the equipment and used her strength to carry the human back. Ignatia said. "Oh, can you give me the corpse? A Level 10 is very rare to come by, and it can probably nurture a subordinate queen."

Flor blinked and looked at Ignatia. "Subordinate queen?"

Ignatia nodded. "I'm naturally not going to be the only queen in my nest in the future. I need weaker queens to focus on creating worker ants while I focus on breeding the stronger ants. Moreover, as long as I'm alive, they will always obey me as their progenitor, so they are different from wild queen wannabes."

Flor laughed. "Queen wannabes, huh?" After thinking for a second, she nodded. "Well, I don't have any use for a Level 10 corpse either way. However, the clothes fit quite snuggly, so can I carry him first to my place, and then you can strip him down and carry him away? I don't really want more Aether Mana than I've used to carry these items back."

Ignatia easily agreed. "I don't have any problems with that. I also want to relax a bit, so I can help you carry him if you want."

Flor knew that Ignatia was physically stronger, so she threw the corpse at her. "Sure. Let's go."

As they trotted back, Ignatia looked toward the ants that were approaching and ordered them. "Return home and guard it until I come back. Go back to your usual work."

The ants all silently acquired and moved through the forest as one, returning to the nest by following their pheromone traces.

Then, both leaders strode through the forest in silence for a while until Ignatia smirked. "He got you good."

Flor's eyebrow twitched. "He sneak-attacked me."

Ignatia's smirk widened. "You also did so and did less damage."

Flor gave Ignatia a side-eye. "Is this how you thank me? By mocking me?"

Ignatia couldn't hold it and finally burst into laughter. "Seeing you fly away was hilarious, hahaha."

Flor shook her head and sighed. "I don't know how almost being bisected is funny, but sure."

Ignatia pondered. "Say, if you hadn't had this strange breakthrough, would you have been able to survive that?"

Flor thought and commented, unsure. "Probably with heavy wounds. I mean, if I had my previous strength, even catching up to him would've been a problem."

Ignatia snorted. "If you hadn't appeared, I could've fought him with my children and avoided any escapes."

Flor looked at her, speechless. "Wouldn't many of those ants have died if you had fought him alone? Is this how you say thanks to me coming to wipe your thorax?"

Ignatia looked at Flor with her compound eyes and, this time smiled genuinely. "Thanks."

Flor scratched her cheek, not expecting such a straightforward answer. "No problem. We are neighbors now, so I wouldn't want anything bad happening to you."

Ignatia chuckled. "Yeah... neighbors."

Flor nodded, and both forest creatures continued their journey in a comfortable silence.

After arriving, a few Rose Fairies came forward to help, and they quickly stripped him of his equipment. Ignatia smiled at Flor. "I'm returning; if you need anything, tell me."

Flor nodded back. "Next time, tell the Rose Fairy what happened so we can send aid."

The Ant Queen grabbed the corpse by the nape and agreed she dragged him away. "Sure~."

Amapola approached and asked. "Queen, what is happening?"

Flor rubbed her chin. "Hm... We have a problem. Some humans appeared outside of Ignatia's nest, and it doesn't seem like a coincidence. There will probably be more creatures coming."

Amapola frowned, looking worried. "If a strong Sylvan comes with bad intentions, we will be helpless."

Flor got thoughtful as she turned to look at the tree standing in the middle of their now living area. "... Perhaps not so much." Her eyes moved to the small garden they built at the side and asked. "Speaking of which, how are the young ones growing?"

Amapola's face changed from worried to ecstatic. "Liu Shu's aura is doing wonders on their development. I feel like they will be stronger than normal fairies."

Flor blinked. "Stronger?"

Amapola nodded enthusiastically. "One of them has been born, and because of Liu Shu's influence, her base stats are like this."

Aether Mana Shards: 35/35

Phoer Body Shards: 11/11

Anima Energy Shards: 22/22

Flor's eyes widened when Amapola told her. "No way, that's 50% more Aether Mana, and the Anima Energy reserves had been doubled as well!"

Amapola commented. "We've guessed that they are probably F+ Tier instead of F Tier at birth. This is a massive improvement! Moreover, this one was transplanted, so she hasn't received the entire benefit since birth. It will take a few more months for the newly planted Rose Fairies to be born, but we are sure that when they hatch and level up, they will become much stronger than we are."

Flor laughed. "Good. Like in your case, a Rose Fairy reaching the F+ Tier is very rare. However, now we will be guaranteed to reach that level." Flor looked at Liu Shu and said with a wistful tone. "Perhaps, reaching the E- Tier is not completely out of the question."

Flor was currently at that tier but reached it by luck. Therefore, her expectations were not high for Rose Fairies to break this significant barrier alone. However, she didn't think it was utterly impossible. After all, they had Liu Shu. 'She is just Level 3, and she has already managed to influence our race's basic tier by one small level. If she reaches Level 10...' Flor couldn't bring herself to imagine what kind of gargantuan influence Liu Shu could have by then. 'She will probably be the Golden Sap Forest's overlord, right? No... Perhaps more... But.'

Flor looked in the direction of Fortuna City. 'There is another World Tree in that direction, right? I've heard that World Trees don't like each other's presence much, but I'm not too knowledgeable about it. Hm... I should add it to the list of information we need Verdantia to collect for us.'

Flor paused. 'Speaking of her, I wonder what she is doing? I should go visit her when I have time.'

Amapola commented. "Also, Queen. We've noticed that the Thornstride had been spotted in the River Beaver and Myconid territory."

Flor's eyebrows raised. "Myconids? Aren't they descendants of a fungus race and relatively... tame?"

Flor was about to call them lazy, but her lifestyle was not much different from someone growing roots. Other than her routinely scheduled hunt rounds, she would stay by Liu Shu's side, enjoying nature and manipulating Aether Mana for fun.

Amapola nodded. "We just received a report from the fairies we stationed around." Her face became a bit sad. "Speaking of which, one of them died."

Flor paused and sighed. "Tell them to be careful. If they don't return, we will never get the information they've managed to gather."

Amapola nodded. "Also, Queen. Why are you wearing that stuffy cover over your chest?"

Flor looked down and remembered about her wound. Thankfully, she was covered and didn't agitate the entire Rose Fairy race. "Ah... Well, I got a bit injured by the human. Ignatia was worried and helped me."

She really didn't want to express goodwill toward the woman, but... 'Hm... Since we are neighbors, we might want to take care of each other. Spreading a bit of good publicity shouldn't hurt anybody, right?'

"O-Oh, Queen Flor!"

Flor turned and saw a petite and low-level looking at her. "What's wrong, little one?"

The small Rose Fairy gathered her courage and shouted. "T-Thank you for helping Mommy Ignatia!"

Like a glass mirror, Flor's lighthearted smile cracked. Amapola, at the side, also looked at the Level 3 Fairy with a stunned look. "Mommy?"

The Level 3 Fairy stuttered, her face as red as her hair or eyes. "W-Well, she told me to call her as such..." She was extremely embarrassed, but one of her friends told her to express herself freely, so she did so.

Flor rubbed her forehead, looking at the child with a non-enthusiastic expression. "Well, do as you please, I guess? But remember that she can turn on us in a single instant if someone angers her."

The Rose Fairy nodded timidly. "I-I will."

Flor asked. "So, what do you want as a reward?"

The Level 3 spoke loudly. "O-Oh! I know! A brush with hard bristles!"

Flor's lips twitched. "Why do you want that?"

The Level 3 fairy smiled bashfully. "T-To brush Mommy Ignatia's carapace."

Flor answered in a single dry sound. "Oh."

Chapter 39. Level 4!

Liu Shu was excited today. Why was she excited? Well, this is what her accumulated experience showed.

Accumulated Experience: 1098

Liu Shu giggled in her mind, feeling happy. 'Just a little bit more~. What would be the changes? Will I gain anything new? Perhaps a new fruit! Or, or, hm... What more can I learn? Oh! A new skill? But... I hope it isn't too high level, or I won't be able to use it...' Liu Shu realized. "Right! There is also the basic stat gain! Will I become much stronger? Perhaps I can fight that big bad guy!"

Liu Shu's branches happily swayed from side to side. Although the movement was not that noticeable, it was enough to hear a very gentle and soothing rustling of leaves.

Flor opened her eyes from her sleep, feeling the mood of the young World Tree, and yawned. "Are you happy, Liu Shu?"

Liu Shu answered in her mind even though Flor couldn't understand. 'Yes! Today is my Level Up day! Hehehehe. What do you think I will develop, Flor? I hope that I can become bigger! Also, also. I want to have my roots go deeper. I've found very yummy things under the earth, which is nice~. Hehehe.'

Flor felt waves of energy with a meaning close to calling her and saying that she was happy, making the Rose Fairy Queen feel like Liu Shu suddenly had a problem. 'Why is she calling me and telling me she is happy? I wonder what goes through a tree's head?'

Then, Liu Shu realized something. 'Oh... But when I become bigger, the Rose Fairies will have a harder time cleaning me and taking care of me...' A difficult decision was presented, but it was almost instantly discarded. 'I want to grow big! How big? Biggg.'

While Word Trees could be considered a blessing for creatures on land, air, and even water, they were very voracious in their own territory. As the World Tree's roots spread, the flora changed or subordinated to them, becoming their source of energy and strength. That's why, stats-wise, World Trees were usually in an entire dimension of their own. Of course, the tier was the thing that affected stats the most at the same level, the only detail that couldn't be seen through the system's interface.

However, more often than not, Tier was innate and unchanging. It changing was rare, and for large changes, you would need lucky chances and powerful treasures or the influence of an exceptional creature.

After taking a deep inhalation of the forest's breath, Flor looked at the sunrise and smiled and commented. "A new beautiful day." Then, she checked her injury and saw that it was mostly healed. Her Phoer Body Shards were also at more than 90%, making her feel healthy.

Her Aether Mana Shards were still lacking; after all, she used a good chunk to heal her wounds and kill the human. 'It will take around a week to recover to my peak. Liu Shu's berries can only help me recover an extra 50 per day, which is honestly not much. Still, it helps.'

Thinking of them, she flew to one of the branches and gently picked five of them. While there were special fairies in charge of this action, Flor was their Queen, and she could do as she pleased.

Flor sat back on Liu Shu's branch and smiled. "Liu Shu, your fruits are as delicious as ever."

Liu Shu looked at her with speechlessness written all over her aura. '...'

As Flor calmly ate her berries, she was suddenly bombarded by Liu Shu. 'Flor~ use that skill on me! Flor, Flor~. Use that red duuuust, Flooor. Why are you not using it? Use it, use it~. I'm about to Level up! I waaaant toooo Leveeeeel Uuuuup!'

Thankfully, or not, Flor didn't understand a word other than that Liu Shu was calling her incessantly. Her eyebrow twitched constantly as waves of aura hit her brain one after another. 'What now? What's wrong? Aren't I literally sitting on her branches? Why is she calling me!'

Flor coughed and asked. "What do you want, Liu Shu? Can you stop bombarding me with messages?"

Liu Shu stopped, looking at the Rose Fairy with curiosity. 'Do their eyebrows twitch when they receive my messages? I need to be careful then.'

Flor thought about it and sighed. "Well, let me do the morning routine before we talk."

Liu Shu laughed. 'Hehe, she answered what I wanted without knowing~.'

[A <Rose Fairy Queen Level 12> has used <Royal Pollination> on you. You've gained 9 Experience Points.]

[<Basic Pollination> has been used with <Royal Pollination>. Aether +12, Physique +12, Anima +12, Willpower +12. Duration: 23:59:59]

[You've gained a 5% increase in plant production rate and growth rate! Duration 23:59:59]

Reading the three messages that appeared every day, Liu Shu felt delighted. 'Hehe, finally I have enough~.'

[You've used <Basic World Energy gathering>. You've gained 3 Experience Points.]

'And so, my accumulated experience is...'

Accumulated experience: 1110

Liu Shu giggled and then looked at her level

Level: 3 [0/1110]

Liu Shu giggled again. 'Perfect Experience Points!'

Then, without thinking anymore, Liu Shu threw everything to her level. 'Level up!'

The Level Up was not instant.

The Rose Fairies that were flying around like usual first felt a profound energy pulse. Flor's face went from helpless to surprised to delighted. "So, the little one was calling me because she needed the experience to Level Up!"

Thinking about the ruckus Liu Shu caused when she leveled up the previous time, she felt like she had to do something. "Zinia, go and call Ignatia. Tell her to bring a few Ant Warriors. I don't know how much time Liu Shu needs to Level Up, but just in case."

Meanwhile, Liu Shu lost connection with the outside as every sense in her body focused on herself. Feeling the energy that came from the Experience Points slowly nurturing her body and stretching it by feeding it pure energy, Liu Shu groaned in delight. 'So nice~.'

As her body gained sturdiness and vitality, her Physique stat also increased.

As her energy reserves evolved and deepened, her Aether stat also augmented.

As her soul gained extra energy and grew, her Anima stat also improved.

As her mind sharpened and became clearer, her Willpower stat also amplified.

And, as her aura spread through the fabric of the cosmos, her Destiny stat also improved.

Gently, slowly, that energy transformed her body and refined it.

In that manner, everything about Liu Shu grew and became stronger. Her branches creaked slowly as they lengthened, her trunk created low and rumbling noises as she grew, and her roots moved the earth around her.

Then, when every inch of her body was improved by the experience-energy, her aura ballooned and burst out.

BOOM!

The Rose Fairies saw a gentle aura spreading past them, making them feel relaxed and invigorated. Ignatia had arrived a while ago, looking at Liu Shu with a stunned expression. "Flor."

Flor smiled. "What's wrong?"

Ignatia looked at her with a clearly surprised facial expression, enough that even with her compound items, Flor could see her incredulity. "T-That, her. S-She is not a tree!"

Flor's eyebrow raised. "Oh? You know?"

Ignatia looked at the relaxed Rose Fairy Queen with a dumbfounded face. "No wonder you are so eager about her..."

Inside, she was thinking of many paths of action. 'What to do? This is insane! There is a World Tree right before my nose!'

Ignatia felt a deep urge to beg the World Tree to allow her nest to be built under it. 'Robust larvae free of illness will be born with the help of the natural aura passively emitted by all World Trees. If I beg her enough or beg her friends, it might be possible to nest below her.'

Meanwhile, Liu Shu grew and grew, finally reaching an imposing six-meter height. With the thickness of her trunk and the width of her gorgeous canopy, she could be considered a young and proper tree instead of a sapling.

Then, Liu Shu's mind was filled with messages.

[Level Up!]

[Aether +7, Physique +9, Anima +8, Willpower +10, Destiny +100.]

[You've gained a new fruit!]

[You've completed one Basic item before reaching Level 10! Rewarding <Level 5 Sylvanium Branch Accessory (Flawless Basic Rank)>]

[Level 4 Sylvanium Branch Accessory (Basic Rank Flawless Level)]

+48 Aether Mana

+48 Phoer

+48 Anima Energy

Aether (+12), Physique (+12), Anima (+12), Willpower (+12).

[Sylvanium Shard (active)]: Use to create one Sylvanium Shard. Cooldown 1 Day.

Note: A perfectly crafted Sylvanium branch explicitly made for World Trees. It can transform one of the tree's branches into a <Sylvanium Branch>, allowing the World Tree to produce one Shard a day.

(Author Note: Equipment and Buffs will appear merged in the sum to the basic stats.)

Name: Tianlian Liu Shu

Titles:

<Awakened>: A title that's gained when a tree gains sapience and evolves, gaining human-like intelligence.

<World Tree>: A tree that can grow to be an overlord, admired by many, hated by some.

Hidden titles: [9]

Race: World Tree.

Energy Method: Basic World Energy Gathering (Gathers experience points*Level per day.)

Level: 4 [0/1900]

Aether Mana Shards: 2962/2962 (+106.7/Hour)

Phoer Body Shards: 3959/3959 (+142.6/Hour)

Anima Energy Shards: 3034/3034 (+109.3/Hour)

Attributes: Aether 59 (28+31), Physique 73 (36+37), Anima 63 (32+31), Willpower 64 (40+24), Destiny 400 (400)

Affinity Percentage: Aether Resonance (25), Physique Refinement (35), Anima Affinity (20)

Resistance Percentage: Aether Resistance (37), Physique Resistance (42), Spiritual Resistance (38), Mental Resistance (41)

Talents:

<Enchanted Growth (E+ Rank level 1 [750/18000])>: Stimulates the rapid growth of nearby flora, creating vibrant and mesmerizing plant life. Use consumes Aether Mana and Anima Energy.

<Woodcrafter (E Rank Level MAX)>: The World Tree can create tools and similar items with basic effects. It costs Aether Mana and Anima Energy if there are materials. If the World Tree wants to use itself as material, it will also cost Phoer.

<Nature's Gift (F Rank level MAX)>: Produces small, magical fruits with unique and beneficial properties. It uses Anima Energy and Aether Mana to produce. Depending on the strength of the fruits, there is a chance that they will also need Phoer.

Current Fruits Available: <Delicious Berry (F- Rank)>: +1 exp to Level 9 and lower. Max: 3; <Basic Phoer Berry (F- Rank)>: +10 Phoer Body Shards. Max: 5; <Basic Mana Berry (F- Rank)>: +10 Aether Mana Shards. Max: 5; <Basic Energy Berry (F- Rank)>: +10 Anima Energy Shards. Max: 5; *<Basic Breakthrough Berry>: Can help the creature break through a small level in the F Tier (unable to help break through into the E Tier). You can ingest one every 10 years.

<Willow Strike (F Rank level 4 [510/9300])>: The World Tree is from a willow family, with characteristic long but thin branches. She can use Aether Mana to move them and strike a target. Range 25 meters.

<Willow Strike Barrage (F Rank level 4 [10/9300])>: The World Tree uses all her branches to strike at her enemy. She can use Aether Mana to trigger this skill, allowing her to attack for three seconds uninterrupted. Range 18 meters.

Passive Skills:

<World Tree Heart (A Rank Level 1 [0/589900])>: A core has formed in the middle of the Tree. As long as the core doesn't receive heavy damage, the tree can recover from any external injury. Depending on the damage, it will take longer. Innate Regeneration Increased, Innate Resistances increased, and Innate Affinities increased.

<World Tree Eye (C Rank level 1 [2100/144000])>: You can see as far as your roots extend.

<World Tree Wisdom (SSS Rank Level Max.)>: You can understand all languages as long as they are complex enough to be considered a language by the system.

<Charm of the Seedling (F Rank Level MAX)>: Attracts small animals and insects to the area, fostering a harmonious ecosystem. There is a very small chance of attracting a friendly, bigger animal or insect that will help protect you. Creatures below the F Rank will be affected with much ease.

Accumulated Experience: 0

Currency: Sylvanium Shards [140], Etherium Shards [140], Ascendium Shards [140], Celestium Shards [140], Cognium Shards [140].

Liu Shu became astounded. 'Wow~! Big numbers!'

Chapter 40. Tree vs Tree.

After Leveling up, Liu Shu opened her *<World Tree Eye>*, and her vision soared outward, but before she could continue to do so, a sharp pain came from her roots, making her lose concentration.

While Liu Shu could see the world around her with *<World Tree eye>* with extreme clarity, she naturally didn't only have that way of interacting with it. Humans have a sense of smell, hearing, and touch other than their eyes, and trees and other plant creatures can use their affinity with energy to feel the world around them.

Shapes and forms blurred in this vision, becoming a black world with glowing energy veins going around everything. White winds that touched and scattered when colliding, a gentle mist of another energy being expelled by creatures, and many more fantastical sights entered Liu Shu's mind.

While it was less reliable than what *<World Tree Eye>* gave for rapid-paced battles or searching visual details, looking at her entire domain was much more effective with this natural vision.

Liu Shu spread her senses through her roots and reached the point where she felt pain. 'Oh? No wonder...'

Our tree looked at how one of her recently spread and weak roots had been crushed by another tree, making her feel annoyed. 'What, are you unhappy that I'm spreading past my territory?'

If she had lips, they would've arched in a sneer. 'That's not my problem.'

Her energy surged and went from her *<World Tree Heart>* toward her roots, rushing through the complex network until they arrived at that point. She didn't have any skills to manipulate her roots as she manipulated her branches with *<Willow Strike>*. Still, that didn't mean that she couldn't use them.

First, using her system, she analyzed the tree that attacked her.

Name: ----

Titles: ----

Race: Quercus rubra

Energy Method: Earthen Nutrient Subtraction. (Gain 2 Experience Points per day.)

Level: 8 [1253/3862]

Aether Mana Shards: 514/514

Phoer Body Shards: 2576/2576

Anima Energy Shards: 732/732

Attributes: Aether 6 (5+1), Physique 28 (24+4), Anima 9 (8+1), Willpower 10 (10), Destiny 8 (8)

Affinity Percentage: Aether Resonance (7), Physique Refinement (15), Anima Affinity (10)

Resistance Percentage: Aether Resistance (7), Physique Resistance (20), Spiritual Resistance (8), Mental Resistance (11)

Talents:

Passive Skills:

Accumulated Experience: 0

Liu Shu looked at its system page for a few seconds and snorted. 'No wonder you dare came at me. You have not awakened proper intelligence.'

However, did the World Tree care? It didn't. Everything that attacked a World Tree was an enemy to be destroyed. Only a very out-of-the-ordinary situation would cause World Trees to not retaliate against anyone who tried to hurt them.

The Rose Fairies outside were confused as Liu Shu's presence felt as if she was about to awaken, only to feel a strange distortion and then become silent again.

Clavel asked. "Did something go wrong as Liu Shu leveled up?"

Flor shook her head. She used her system to analyze Liu Shu's basic stats and saw that just one thing was out of order. "She is okay, and nothing is wrong except one very important thing..." The Rose Fairies looked at their queen with tight expressions and suddenly heard her scream. "WHAT ARE THOSE NUMBERS, HUH!? ISN'T SHE LEVEL 4? WHY DOES SHE HAVE MORE THAN 3000 SHARDS OF EACH TERNARY ESSENCE? HER PHOER IS EVEN AT 4000! SHE HAS MORE PHOER BODY SHARDS THAN ME!"

Seeing Flor clutch her hair as she looked at Liu Shu with incredulity. Flor continued; her tone was much more neutral. "I know that she is not normal, and those creatures are usually strong. But this?! This!? What is this!? Even if I were to take 12 points from each attribute from my buff, it wouldn't change that much!"

[Congratulations, you've learned the passive skill <Root Manipulation E- Rank>]

Meanwhile, as the fairies became stupefied by Liu Shu's stats and tried to calm down their leader, our tree managed to learn a new skill.

<Root Manipulation (E- Rank Level 1 [0/3900])>: Your control over your roots increases. They are more flexible and will be able to move through the earth without much problem. Your roots can slightly better resist extreme environments, and your sensitivity toward them will increase.

Liu Shu's roots dug through the earth much quicker than before while coated in a small amount of Aether Mana and Anima Energy. The skill expenditure was not enough to make Liu Shu feel it. Her regeneration was very high, after all.

Her root coiled around one of the trees and crushed it with her absolutely superior strength.

[-100]

Her other roots also moved, gaining terrain as they fought the tree off. As a normal tree, its root mobility was not only limited but also restricted by its intelligence.

[-120]

[-140]

Liu Shu rampaged underground, her roots slowly advancing as they completely destroyed the tree's roots.

Amapola outside paused and asked. "What is that sound?"

Clavel tilted her head. "What sound?"

Amapola frowned and looked toward the forest where the sounds she heard came from. "I'm not sure, but I think that Over's there? I think I can hear a strange crunching noise like wood getting twisted."

Flor looked at Amapola and looked over with curiosity. "Hm? You are right. What's wrong over there?"

They moved over and looked at the tree that was making strange sounds. Clavel commented. "Oh, I can hear them as well! Is it growing and becoming taller?"

Other Rose Fairies with less acute senses had to fly towards the ground and listen. Zinia tilted her head, looking up at the massive 15-meter-tall tree. "Hm. I hope it isn't sick. Reaching this height and level must have been difficult. Tens? Perhaps hundreds of years..."

Amapola asked. "Do we ignore it?"

"No, wait a second." Flor analyzed it, just in case.

Level: 8 [1253/3862]

Aether Mana Shards: 481/514

Phoer Body Shards: 1354/2576

Anima Energy Shards: 725/732

**

Her face changed greatly as she looked at its Phoer Body Shards. "It's dying somehow. Oh, it lost another 140 Phoer Body Shards."

The other fairies were stunned. Clavel looked toward the ground and frowned. "What could be killing it?"

Flor frowned. "I don't know, but being that strong, even under the earth, is pretty terrifying."

BANG!

A loud sound was heard when a large chuck of his roots exploded below the ground. Flor frowned and was about to shoot a wind crescent into the ground when she suddenly felt a pulse of energy coming from the ground.

The pulse hit her and asked her to retreat.

However, what surprised Flor was not the meaning but the sense of familiarity. She hastily looked sideways at the relatively small tree and focused on her. After around 5 seconds, she finally found out that the energy she usually uses was going into the ground.

Flor quickly sent out an order. "Wait!"

The Rose Fairies that were preparing to bombard the place with wind crescents paused. One of them asked, confused. "What's wrong, Queen?"

Flor pointed downwards and commented. "The one causing the ruckus is Liu Shu."

Everyone became a bit speechless, but the earth below suddenly burst as a large part of the red-leaved tree's roots could be clearly seen getting strangled by beautiful roots with neon-blue veins going around them.

The Rose Fairies were stunned for a second, not managing to react, before Liu Shu's roots finally tightened enough, obliterating it into pieces.

[-248].

Liu Shu looked over with <World Tree Eye>; she had that much leisure while fighting it. 'I thought Flor would attack me. Thankfully, I realized and was able to send a warning.'

Seeing the Rose Fairies look at her actions with complicated expressions, Liu Shu was confused. 'Why are they looking at it like that? Shouldn't they be happy?'

Boom!

The earth exploded as Liu Shu's roots coiled around the trunk, which was almost three times larger than hers. Then, using her powerful Physique, she pulled sideways.

A creaking sound spread through the forest as cracks opened through the tree's trunk, and the earth on the other side started to get lifted.

The Rose Fairies looked on as the tree was uprooted, and five roots burst from the ground, giving it the killing blow by strangling the trunk in different places and pulling it downward as if she were using ropes.

BOOM!

Using the ground as support, the roots tore through the trees, splitting them into chunks and making splinters fly everywhere.

Some low-level rose fairies got lightly hit, but at most, the splinter would lodge in the skin upper layer of the skin, so there was no severe damage.

The untouched Rose Fairies floated above the corpse of the tree with complicated expressions. They were, after all, lovers of nature.

Naturally, they knew that vegetation was not as innocent as it seemed. However, knowing and seeing were two things. The brutal sight of Liu Shu destroying the roots of the tree around it before fighting and eating them outside was quite an interesting yet disturbing sight for them.

An older Rose Fairy approached Flor and asked. "Q-Queen Flor, what did this tree do to anger Liu Shu?"

Flor shook her head. "I can only speculate, but it should be one of those territorial issues." Flor paused and explained. "You should all know by now that Liu Shu is not that simple."

They all nodded, and Flor spoke. "Liu Shu is a tree that will... grow—a lot. The big thing you are thinking about is probably not enough. As she grows, there will naturally be trees that come in her way and need to be dealt with. However, she will know not to kill indiscriminately, only for the need of expansion... Or so it seems."

The other Rose Fairies nodded, accepting her explanation. Flor clapped once, bringing their attention to her. "Pick up all parts that are usable and place them in the <Vault>. For those that aren't, we should use them as ingredients for the next compost for Liu Shu.

Meanwhile, Liu Shu received a message after killing that tree.

[Congratulations on defeating <Quercus rubra Level 8>. You've gained 48 Experience Points.]

Liu Shu felt happy after quickly crushing the Level 8 tree. 'Not bad~, hehe. Now... Let's expand our roots in that place and not allow others to be nearby.'

Flor approached at this time, and Liu Shu looked at her with the <World Tree Eye> skill.

Flor smiled and spoke. "First of all, because you are doing it out of your necessity, I won't say much. However, Liu Shu, can you try to reconcile more often and maybe subordinate the trees around you instead of killing them? Of course, this is not an order nor a request. It is simply an observation. Think about it."

Liu Shu looked on with confusion. 'Why should I do that? That tree attacked me first, so I'll kill it. That's it.' She really thought so, and all the rewards were secondary and a welcomed plus.

