

Ascension of the Sylvan Cosmos.

Chapter 66. Communication.

When Liu Shu woke up, she realized that she had been asleep for four more days. The reason she could tell was the messages coming from her energy-gathering technique. Since it activated automatically daily, she just needed to count how many times it activated to know how many days had gone by.

With this extra week of checking her surroundings and absorbing the knowledge, her experience made another small leap, increasing by 160 points and also gaining another 8 Sylvan Shards.

Liu Shu giggled, feeling happy. '1382 Experience Points! I'm really close to 1900!'

But what was more important was that Liu Shu finally learned how to create buildings! The world tree was happily humming in her mind, which spread around an aura of cheerfulness from her body.

The Rose Fairies trimming her branches and polishing her trunk smiled when they realized. One of them giggled as she carefully used her fingers to pull out crooked leaves. "Oh? You woke up, Liu Shu. How was your sleep?"

Liu Shu answered that fairy with a refreshed feeling. 'It was great~. I learned many new things! Hehehe.'

The Rose Fairy smiled. "I'm glad you slept well. It is great that you learned.... learned...." The Rose Fairy's eyes widened to the limits as the realization of what just happened hit her. "HUH!?"

Liu Shu was confused about the Rose Fairy's reaction, who suddenly showed a tremendously shocked face. 'What's wrong? Are you okay, little friend?'

The Rose Fairy snapped out of her shocked state. "F-Flor! QUEEN FLOOOOR!"

She flew away while shouting, leaving behind a confused World Tree. 'Did something happen? Why is she so agitated?'

Out of curiosity, she extended her <World Tree Eye> to the limits, which had already reached 130 meters in radius. 'Oh? Flor is not around? Strange... Hm. Well, I can feel her Royal Pollination skill affecting me, so I guess she went do something?'

Liu Shu was quick to move on from those thoughts and began reviewing what she had learned. Those books contained a lot of information, and she had many new concepts swirling in her head.

While she was eager to start building, as she had gained enough knowledge actually to do so, there were changes she needed to check first. The first and most important one was the two extra abilities she had gained.

One was a <Talent>, and the other was a <Passive>. Liu Shu finally learned the proper distinction between the two. Talents were abilities that needed conscious thought to be used. For example, the movement of a hand was an active action taken with proper thinking.

Passive abilities, on the other hand, gathered all skills that were activated subconsciously, even if they could be activated consciously as well. A good comparison would be breathing. You can, if you think about it, breathe whenever you want. However, usually, breathing is done subconsciously.

Following these definitions, hand moving would be a <Talent>, and breathing would be a <Passive>.

Both skills she gained were F Rank, but they were prone to quickly increasing as she would utilize them often.

The first skill, her new <Talent>, was called <Land Modifying>. It was a F Rank skill that allowed her to manipulate the soil, mud, and rocks faintly. With her new understanding of how skills developed, Liu Shu knew that this skill could become something incredibly useful as long as it reached higher tiers.

While not all skills had the potential to become high-level skills, as they were limited by their original structure and the talent of their user, the possibility remained there. Moreover, as a World Tree, almost all the skills she unlocked would have enough potential to reach high levels.

The <Passive> skill, called <Mind Call>, allowed her to modify her energy pulses more efficiently and clearly. She didn't know to which extent they changed, but they did. This skill could be actively activated if she wanted to focus her thoughts on a single person. It helped her do what she had been doing until now, but better.

These were the descriptions that appeared on the system page.

<Land Modifying (F Rank Level 1)>: This skill allows the user to manipulate non-enhanced terrain. It uses Aether Mana and some Anima Energy. The range is limited, and the user must be touching that terrain.

Liu Shu couldn't help but complain in her head. 'All skills use Aether Mana the most, my weakest stat between the ternary essences...' She was not unhappy that Physique was her strongest attribute; after all, it had helped her resist attacks from groups several times.

Still, she would like it more if these skills used Anima Energy instead since that attribute was rarely used by any of her skills. And those that used it used it as a secondary energy source, with Aether Mana as the main source.

<Mind Call (F Rank Level 1)>: It allows the user to enhance the meaning and range of their shared thoughts while gaining more emotional perception. It can be used as long as the user has learned any type of mental communication skill. When actively used, Anima Energy is used to increase the range and penetration power.

Liu Shu paused and laughed. 'Well, here is an Anima Energy skill~. Hahaha.'

Then, she pondered about this new skill. While she could see the future in the others because of her objective of expanding and becoming bigger and taller, she couldn't really find any benefit from this skill in that area. 'So... is it useless?'

She was unsure, but that didn't discourage her. 'Well, it will be very useful if I can properly communicate from now on~.'

While thinking about that, she heard Flor's voice, which made her refocus on her <World Tree Eye> vision.

"Liu Shu! I heard that you've woken up. How are you?"

Liu Shu looked at Flor and the nervous fairy flying behind her with curiosity. While Flor's tone was like usual, gentle and caring, there was a hint of curiosity and anticipation that could be distinguished by the quickness of her words.

Surprised that she could even discern that, Liu Shu took a little bit of time to answer. However, remembering the explanation shown on the system page about <Mind Call>, she understood.

With that in mind, Liu Shu sent an answer to Flor like she usually did, but focusing on her. 'Hi-hi, Flor~. I'm feeling super nice and comfy~. Hehehe.'

Meanwhile, on Flor's side, her mind was instantly shocked. At first, when the Rose Fairy came and told her that she could understand what Liu Shu was saying, there were two contradicting emotions.

First, if the ability to understand her was personal, that meant that she would be freed from her "duty" of taking care of the young World Tree. However, when she thought of

that situation, the usual happiness from being able to slack filled her, but a complicated bitter sensation spread around her body.

Was it a hassle to take care of Liu Shu's needs? Flor couldn't deny it. Needing to wait for sometimes hours to get an answer was somewhat tiring. Sometimes, she almost lost the thread of what she asked for, making her feel guilty.

The difference in life spans between them was something that translated clearly during their conversations.

Therefore, when Flor asked her question, she was nervous. 'What if I can't hear her? What if it is something that only young fairies born with Liu Shu's energy can do?'

She didn't want to admit it but had become very fond of Liu Shu. If someone asked, it was clearly not romantic feelings but something a bit unknown for Rose Fairies. They were feelings akin to those of a mother toward her child.

So, getting her role stolen because she couldn't understand was like a punch to the gut for the Fairy Queen, who had become attached to the somewhat problematic but endearing World Tree.

However, after the question, Liu Shu's energy enveloped her with a cheerful feeling, and a soft-like nature and young-sounding voice echoed in her mind, making the entire world feel more alive and vibrant. 'Hi-hi, Flor~. I'm feeling super nice and comfy~. Hehehe.'

The clearly spoiled tone and the cute, innocent laugh made the heart of the Rose Fairy thump as emotions tangled in her throat. 'Ah... Such a pretty voice.'

Flor felt that Liu Shu's voice was the most adorable and tender voice she had ever heard. It just tickled the right spot, making her want to hug and protect her. Her face bloomed like a flower's, showing a gentle smile as her jewel-like red eyes glistened. "I'm glad, Liu Shu. You feeling nice and comfy is how it should be, after all."

Liu Shu's ethereal yet adorable voice reached her again. 'Right? Hehe. Also, also. I've learned how to make the houses! I just need those materials I told you to gather! Hm! Hm! Oh, by the way, did you know that I've gained new skills, Flor? They are really nice!'

Flor, who perfectly understood the barrage of thoughts that would previously hurt her head, couldn't help but laugh as she flew over and sat on her branch. "Is that so, Liu Shu? Tell me more about it. How are they nice?"

The Rose Fairies around looked at Flor's face with wonder. It was the first time they had seen her make such a face. The way her hand patted the World Tree's trunk as she

exchanged worlds with the World Tree made them feel as if a peculiar yet beautiful bond was being created between them.

Flor listened attentively, thinking to herself. 'How many of these words did I miss during the last months? Was she always speaking like this when I couldn't understand her?'

She regretted it. She deeply did. 'The first book I got should've been the one to let her communicate with us. Who knows how many words I missed as she grew into the cheerful child she is today.'

The notion of Liu Shu being a World Tree was placed in the back of her mind, making the large and powerful tree look even more childish than before. Right after, the image of Liu Shu being mauled by a horde of beasts flashed in her mind as the World Tree desperately fought with them, and her heart almost burst into uncontrollable rage.

However, she hid that anger inside her heart and did not show it outwardly. Still, in her mind, she made a promise. 'No more attempts at peaceful resolutions. If someone messes with Liu Shu, I'll slaughter them all.'

In truth, Liu Shu's mental age was around the same as that of a young 14- or 15-year-old human girl. She was young mentally but not as young as Flor made it out to be. She would mature as her intelligence and levels increased, but she was innately innocent and curious, making her look much younger than she was.

Flor also remembered Cinderelle and Verdantia, making her face become a bit black. 'I'll have to block their attempts for a little while, at least until Liu Shu matures enough. I don't mind if they want to try and court her, but they must understand that it is not time yet!'

'Floor! Floooooor! Are you listening? Are you listeninggg?'

Flor blinked and looked at the tree with a gentle smile. "Sorry, little one. I got distracted for a second. What did you want to tell me?"

Chapter 67. Building materials.

Having listened to the World Tree rant for a while, Flor was now clear about what Liu Shu wanted. "Hm. I see. We need to gather quite a few things."

Liu Shu agreed with a cheerful tone. 'There are many!'

Flor sighed. "Let me get a list and write them down."

Liu Shu patiently waited, and around twenty minutes later, Flor returned with a stone tablet and a carving pen. "Although I don't know how to write proficiently, I can at least write the materials you discussed."

Curious, Liu Shu looked over and saw Flor scribbling on the tablet. The language was not the same as the one used in the books she had absorbed, but understanding was not a problem thanks to her SSS rank skill.

What was written as the following.

Materials List (F- Rank):

Spalignwood

Yellow cotton

Earthmud

Pebbleheart

Material List (F Rank):

Sprout Heart

Earthspire

Yellow Cotton thread

Dustheart

Material List (F+ Rank):

Budbark,

Gustbark, Mistbark, Soulbark, Astralbark.... (Any F+ Rank wood of any Aether Element).

Flor nodded and showed it to her. "No materials other than these?"

Liu Shu asked. "Don't you need to know the quantities I need?"

Flor blinked, looking between the list and Liu Shu. Her lips twitched, and she asked. "Tell me about the Budbark. That one is the most important, right?"

Puzzled, the World Tree asked. "Why don't you want to know about the rest?"

Flor sighed. "Aren't they probably in the thousands of units? We probably won't gather enough even for the foreseeable future. I would rather focus on the high-level and scarce materials so that we can focus later on the ones we need a ton off."

Liu Shu didn't understand that logic, but she agreed with her words and spoke to her. 'I need at least 43 units of Budbark plus two units of any elemental bark like Mistbark.'

Flor scratched her head. "Units? How big is a unit? Can't you tell it by weight or size?"

Liu Shu thought she actually had a point, so she lowered one of her branches and moved it along her trunk from the base up to the breasts-like protrusion of her trunk. 'A log around as tall as this if it is as thick as my trunk. If you can't find one as wide, it doesn't matter as long as the volume is similar.'

The Rose Fairy Queen's eyes couldn't help but linger on the definitive voluminous chest. 'Will those... grow?'

Flor imagined a massive tree with an alluring womanly body, and her face darkened. 'We need to create clothes or something. I can let the little one be naked!' Flor remembered hearing about Fortuna City's World Tree also wearing cloth-like vines around the chest and waist area, solidifying her decision.

Still, thinking about creating something so big, her head ached. 'Moreover, whenever she levels up, she grows exponentially taller, bigger, and thicker...' Flor clicked her tongue. 'Thicker in all senses of the world! I can swear that her body was not this... this... this much boing!' Flor gestured around her chest to make a comparison, making her face darken more. 'In the past, I was bigger!'

Clavel approached and saw Flor making strange gestures, so she coughed. "Cough. Queen Flor!"

Flor jumped, startled, and glared at Clavel. "You didn't see anything."

Clavel blinked several times, stunned. "O-Okay?"

After clearing her throat, she asked. "So, what's wrong, Clavel?"

The Level 8 Rose Fairy nodded and spoke. "Here is the summary of the Level ups. I just finished it."

Flor picked the list carved in mud-like stone, which was different from the one Flor had just used. Honestly, the Rose Fairy Queen was a bit uncomfortable. A few weeks ago, there was nothing like these tablets; it was something Cinderielle and the humans introduced.

Flor believed that she wouldn't forget anything important, but their arguments about reassurance and the ability to look at them at any time eventually convinced her. They even helped create a few.

The rock one she just used to list Liu Shu's material needs couldn't be altered after craving. It was, after all, a rock-like material.

However, the one Clavel was using could be reused using new mud, clay, and water to soften it.

'Well, I can't deny that it is quite handy. Being able to record these things gives it more of a... How would you call it? A profound feeling?' Flor was confused about the attempts by Cinderielle and the humans to civilize their Rose Fairy group.

After all, if they really wanted Liu Shu to build successful, they needed to build a town around her and expand from there. A lone World Tree could grow fast, but it was too vulnerable to attacks.

Even without natural predators, a World Tree's body was incredibly nutritious, and many species coveted it.

Flor nodded, feeling that their general strength had grown quite a bit. Zinia managed to reach Level 9, while other Rose Fairies also leveled up. Clavel was equally on the verge of Leveling up.

Flor sighed at the War's loses, feeling that it wasn't worth it. But at least they were not all bad news. She passed the stone tablet and spoke. "Hang it in the <Lignified Vault>. All Rose Fairies are to carry back these items if they find them in nature. They are for Liu Shu."

Clavel looked at the list and exclaimed. "So many! Is Lady World Tree doing something special?"

Flor paused and looked at Clavel strangely. "How did you call her?"

Clavel tilted her head. "Cinderielle told me that's the appropriate way of calling World Trees... Speaking of which, Queen Flor, why didn't you tell us about it?"

Flor snorted. "It is dangerous to know about it. Even then, going back to our conversation, forget those words. Liu Shu will be sad if you alienate her so much. She is already a solitary tree with different perceptions. If we start treating her as if she is a venerated and sacred being, I fear Liu Shu might degenerate and believe that nonsense!"

Clavel scratched her head when a gentle, cheerful, and nature-like voice reached her. 'That's right, I like it when you call me Liu Shu, Clavel.'

Clave's eyes widened, and then she launched her body forward to hug Liu Shu. "Ahhhhh! Why is your voice so adorable!? You are so cute, Liu Shu!!!"

Flor's eyebrow twitched. 'So much for Lady World Tree, eh.' She turned around with a sigh and commented. "Anyways, tell the others the same."

Clavel, who was rubbing her face on Liu Shu's pleasantly rugged bark, responded. "Aye, aye! Who can be formal with such a cute-sounding World Tree? If you were a Rose Fairy Child I would carry you around everywhere~. Adorable, cute, lovely!"

Liu Shu giggled. 'Hehehe. You are also pretty, Clavel.' Then, Liu Shu looked at her and mentally smiled. 'Thank you for being so gentle since the beginning, Clavel.'

This Rose Fairy was the one who found her and instantly tried to protect her. Moreover, she took the initiative to call the other Rose Fairies to live with her. While Flor had usually acted as the guardian role, if it weren't because she was the strongest, Clavel would've probably been in that position.

Clavel commented. "Speaking of which, Liu Shu, there are a lot of materials. Why do you need so many?"

Liu Shu agreed. 'There are a lot! That's right! But I need those materials to build houses and other things!'

Clavel exclaimed. "Oh! Houses! Those things Sylvans, humans, and other city dwellers live in! Will they be Rose Fairy size?"

Liu Shu coughed. "They won't be there at the start." When she saw Clavel pouting, Liu Shu continued. "But I can create them later! When there are extra materials!"

Clavel hummed. "I see~. Well, good enough, I guess."

Flor suddenly asked a question that made Clavel's ears perk up. "There is so much wood; what are you trying to build, Liu Shu? Isn't it uncomfortable to see buildings that are made of wood?'

Liu Shu looked at Flor with a confused gaze and asked, her tone clearly doubtful. 'Why would it be uncomfortable?'

Flor and Clavel deadpanned, feeling incredulous. 'How... you ask?'

Flor insisted, wanting to deliver the point across. "Well, seeing a house made of Rose Fairy skin would honestly creep me out. Don't you feel the same?"

The World Tree imagined that kind of house and commented with disgust. 'That would be an awful house!'

Clavel and Flor were about to nod and agree when Liu Shu continued. 'It would not block the rain and would rot very quickly! No wonder flesh creatures don't use their skins to build houses and use ours. Hmph, useless skin!'

The Rose Fairy Queen felt that, in some aspects, it was really difficult to match the thinking process of a tree.

With an awkward cough, Flor changed the subject. "Other than the buildings, how is the rest going, Liu Shu? Do you need help with anything?"

While the World Tree wanted to share her skills with Flor and speak about them, there was an innate feeling of reluctance and resistance toward such actions.

The subconscious fear about the ever-changing nature of living beings meant that the chance of betrayal from everyone was ever-present. While Liu Shu was young and didn't understand these matters, World Trees were inherently doubtful and cautious.

It was extremely rare to give a good first impression to a World Tree that went any deeper than those of curiosity. That's why there was a saying that stated: "A World Tree's friendly gaze will give luck to nine generations!"

Liu Shu didn't discuss her skills per se, but working on their use was not that much of a problem. 'Well, I am growing plenty of berries, but I wonder if you need more.'

Flor sat on a branch while Clavel waved goodbye and went to place the Rock tablet on the Lignified Vault.

Swinging her legs playfully, Flor commented. "From what I know, we should have a surplus even when we deliver them to everyone. However, if anything, I would love it if you created more of those <Delicious Berry>. The ones that give experience. I can feel that they are a bit more than just an experience resource."

Liu Shu was curious. 'What do you mean?'

Flor clarified. "The energy they have is beneficial toward Level Caps. Do you know what are those?"

Liu Shu enthusiastically answered, like a child who was asked about something they had recently learned. 'Yes! <Level Cap> is the state of being unable to Level Up even if you have enough experience points. This often means the stagnation of that person's progress, and it is generally limited by either talent, lack of hard work, or genetics!'

Flor laughed. "Impressive! You are learning so many things, Liu Shu." Then, she continued. "So, I think that the energies inside the Delicious Berry have the ability to break these shackles if taken continuously. To see if this is the truth, I need quite a bit of them to prove it with an elderly Rose Fairy who is stuck at her level."

Liu Shu understood Flor's explanation and readily agreed. 'Okay, I'll focus half of my production on growing <Delicious Berry>.'

Flor smiled. "Thank you, Liu Shu. Ariel and the caravan people should be arriving here soon, so we can ask them for more things." Flor paused and commented. "Liu Shu, try not to speak with them like you are with me. Use me, Ignatia, or a Rose Fairy as a middle-man for your words."

While our young World Tree didn't understand why, she didn't ask because she felt that there was no malicious intent and just worry behind Flor's words. 'Okay, I'll listen to you, Flor.'

Flor smiled and patted the big tree. "Good."

Chapter 68. Two Sylvans Meet.

Walking down Fortuna City's streets, a red-haired tall Sylvan with orange eyes ambled toward the Academy with a gloomy face. 'This Verdantia... She is really sly. No wonder I was attracted to her staff. It has Tiantian's branch used as material!'

Speaking of which, Cinderielle couldn't help but be in awe. 'Just one of her branches managed to increase the staff's level by quite a lot. Honestly, I would love to have one myself, but...'

Cinderielle remembered that Verdantia was a potion maker, so she was proficient in weapon enhancement. The embedding of the branch was probably done by herself or with the help of one of the Academy's teachers, whom she trusted.

She didn't really believe that someone as clever as Verdantia would make the low-level mistake of showing a branch as special as Liu Shu's to a random person. Who wouldn't react about someone bringing the branch of a World Tree, after all?

It was with great consideration that Cinderielle refrained from asking for a fallen branch for her own equipment. 'Crafting something like that requires a master's touch... Hm?'

Cinderielle's mind was suddenly illuminated with the thought of the majestic World Tree. 'Wait a minute... Isn't she a master wood crafter?'

She felt like falling on her knees and smacking her forehead against the ground. 'I should've asked her when I had the chanceee! I'm so stupid; I could've used this chance to become closer to her. Ahhh!'

While her mind was lamenting, outwardly, she didn't show much. Anyway, she was happy because of one thing that appeared right after the war: she fought to defend Liu Shu.

[Quest Completed!]

[You've been given the following items straight into your pouch: Sylvanian Shards (2), Etherium Shards (10), and Ascendum Shards (10)]

She couldn't help but feel elated. 'I can create another Aether Basic-ranked Flawed Equipment~. I can even create an Anima one!'

Using one Sylvanian Shard to stabilize and ten of another was helpful in creating F-Rank items. However, Cinderielle was doubtful. 'Since Liu Shu is an expert, isn't it better if I share them with her and ask her to create my equipment? I can even use this chance to ask for the branch and interact more with her!'

The gloomy Sylvan became cheerful again, feeling that the future was filled with flowers. 'Hehe, wait for me Tiantian!'

"Oh? Cinderielle, long time no see!"

Cinderielle's recently improved mood dropped again. 'Why is he here?'

She turned to the side and saw a charming and tall, muscular man with blue eyes looking at her with happiness. However, for Cinderielle, those characteristics were nothing much. After all, compared to one leaf of her Liu Shu, they felt lacking. 'Tsk, tsk. He hasn't given up?'

Cinderielle answered flatly. "Theodore, what are you doing here? Didn't you go to that sect or power to do an internship?"

Theodore scratched his head. "Honestly, a senior brother sent me here. He took a caravan to go unnoticed, but his group was attacked in the middle of his journey back. Of course, with the guardians by his side, no one managed to put a hand on his body. Still, when he spoke about it, he couldn't help but mention a Sylvan that controlled Fire Aether in the group because of how rare they are."

Cinderielle frowned, and suddenly, the face of another handsome man and the muscular guard smashing a bandit into a pulp flashed in her mind. 'That person!?'

Cinderielle was cautious because she knew that when that man approached her at first, his thoughts were not that pure. Theodore continued, "Well, he seemed to know that a Fire Aether Sylvan was in my class, and he wanted me to confirm if you were the one who traveled at that time."

The Sylvan looked at the human, asking her this with a smile, but she could see further. While he looked nonchalant, Theodore was a bit nervous. Humans underestimate the senses of a Sylvan by a lot, and one of the senses they underestimate the most is the sense of smell.

As creatures that descended from plants who didn't have a sense of sight in the most natural way, their sense of smell was spectacularly sharp. Which was another reason the human-sylvan bond was so rare.

Humans generally had strong body odors that differed significantly from flora and fauna, and many Sylvans with sensitive noses didn't like that.

The point was that Cinderielle could smell nervousness coming from Theodore; it was a particular scent released when a person was not comfortable with what they were doing.

The body language was perfect, hiding this face. With such a brightly smiling face, one would never guess that he was nervous. Moreover, his tone was normal, and his voice had no significant changes that could be discerned to tell that something was wrong.

Considering these signals, Cinderielle went alert and answered with a tilt of her head. "Well, that's not really possible. I've been in the forest for weeks, so meeting with that senior of yours is impossible for me."

Then, she smiled. "Anyways, Theodore. I need to go and see Verdantia because I have urgent matters to speak with her. See you later."

Theodore opened his mouth and closed it. He smiled and nodded. "Sure. Go and be careful."

With a wave of her hand, she calmly walked away while thinking about what had just happened. 'It seems that I'll need to be alert around him. Who knows if he will develop into one of those crazy people?'

Cinderielle went to the Sylvan's dormitory and walked toward Verdantia's room.

On the way, she received many shy looks from other Sylvans, but Cinderielle ignored everything. She was tall, slim, elegant, talented, intelligent, cheerful, and friendly. While she was not perfect and had faults, Cinderielle knew how to hide them, appearing even more charming than usual.

It was not done to attract anyone but to maintain a reputation that might come in handy in the future. As she walked, she spotted one petite Earth Sylvan walking by. 'Hm, if I remember it correctly, this woman must be close with Verdantia.'

"Excuse me."

The petite Earth Sylvan with earthen yellow hair turned around and was welcomed by an elegant and perfectly curvy chest, making her blush. Her eyes raised upward and met with the smiling face of a fiery woman, making her little heart pound. 'She is so pretty...'

"You are close with Verdantia, right? I've seen you around her before."

The Earth Sylvan scratched her cheek. 'I wish I was closer... B-But I'm close enough to be considered a friend, right?'

"I-I am close, yes!"

Cinderielle paused at her reaction, lifting one eyebrow. 'Perhaps I was confused? Well, asking doesn't hurt.'

"Do you know where she is? I want to speak with her, but I don't know where she is."

The Sylvan's eyes glittered. "Yes! She is in the library!"

Cinderielle raised her eyebrows, a thought flashing through her mind. 'Right, Flor told me that they got books before to help Liu Shu learn Woodcrafting...' Her face became gloomy. 'Tsk. This Verdantia is a problem!'

Then, after a quick thanks, she quickly left toward the library.

The Earth Sylvan was stupefied, not knowing why Cinderielle's face suddenly became so gloomy. 'D-Did I say something wrong?' She couldn't help but pray. 'Oh, great branches above, give Miss Verdantia strength!'

When Cinderielle arrived at the large library, she couldn't find her at a glance, so she approached the librarian. "Hello."

The librarian was a middle-aged man with glasses. He lifted his head and nodded. "Welcome. What may I help you with?"

Cinderielle asked. "Has a green-haired, tall, and voluptuous Sylvan entered? I'm searching for her and can't find her."

The librarian laughed. "Quite a way to describe a person. However, yes, I know who you are speaking about. She must be on the second floor, section WT."

Cinderielle nodded and walked to the stairs. The section "WT" was clearly an acronym for World Tree. It was not a reliable place for proven facts about World Trees because each of their existence was quite unique, even when they were from the same World Tree races.

One of the few things that World Trees, and only World Trees, developed was that peculiar female-like trunk shape. Moreover, it was so characteristic that even when other people wanted to fake that and trim other trees as one, it was easy to see how it was fake.

Throughout history, many people have tried faking World Trees for profit or other reasons, even as a cause for a declaration of war. However, at least during recorded history, most, if not all, fake World Trees were eventually discovered.

First, that sense of incongruity was prevalent, and then, using the system to check a typical tree was quite fatal. World trees had a lot of protective measures against them from being analyzed, while typical trees lacked them, not to mention the inherent strength and size of World Trees, which was the most challenging part to replicate.

An average World Tree at Level 20 already measured around 100 meters in height.

Cinderielle arrived at the place and saw the beautiful and gentle Sylvan sitting on a chair with a few stacks of books around her. Even when she was reading, the staff she always carried was hugged between her arms.

Cinderielle, who had come to confront her, felt a bit lost. At the side, she could see a thick notebook full of scribblings, probably complete with information about World Trees that she had been researching.

Inevitably, a frown appeared on her face, and Verdantia saw that facial expression when she raised her face. She had felt a gaze but ignored it for a while, thinking that the person's gaze would eventually move away.

Still, when that didn't happen, she lifted her head to look over and saw Cinderielle looking at her with a complicated look. She was confused and asked. "Is there something wrong, Miss Cinderielle?"

Cinderielle walked forward, sitting across Verdantia. "Well, I wanted to ask about that branch you showed me the other day, or well, the one you are currently holding."

Verdantia squinted. "Why? Miss Cinderielle, are you coveting my staff? It is not for sale."

Cinderielle shook her head. "Just recently, I went on an expedition into the Golden Sap Forest. As you might know, there were signs of Beast Tides. I investigated that for the Explorer Guild."

Verdantia's clever mind spun as her heart suddenly jumped. 'Did she meet her?'

Cinderielle commented. "The Beast Tide was true, and I reported as such this morning. However, it was solved by itself when there was an internal fight between forest creatures."

Of course, Cinderielle didn't technically lie. She said the truth about what happened, but vaguely. Verdantia lifted one hand and asked. "Would Miss Cinderielle want to come to

my house this evening? I don't have any plans, but I would love to invite you to drink nectar and speak further."

Cinderielle paused and got thoughtful, then she nodded. "Sure. Let's go and talk."

Chapter 69. Verdantia's Mansion and Mother.

Cinderielle had to take a carriage from Fortuna City to a neighboring city. Verdantia's house was quite far away from Fortuna City, unlike Cinderielle's parents, who bought a residence in Fortuna City to help her attend the Academy she was currently attending. Verdantia's parents just sent her over there in carriages.

With the carriage ride prepared and a few weeks of vacation still at their disposal, Cinderielle seized the opportunity to venture to Verdantia's place. The prospect of getting to know each other better was a needed one if she wanted to speak about Liu Shu.

From the quality of the wood and metal used for the Carriage, Cinderielle could tell that Verdantia's family was anything but simple. She had always given that aura of not being a normal person.

Her attitude was polite yet elegant. When she spoke, her word choice was casual, but there were times when that classiness of high-born people showed up.

Cinderielle's family was the most common type. Her parents had a decent income, and her house was big enough for them to live comfortably. She could afford some luxuries during her childhood, and she never had any real hardships.

Looking across her, she saw Verdantia carrying a few books with her. Interestingly, the books were about a wide variety of themes: potion-making, creature summoning, politics, Woodcrafting, economy, basic infrastructure, self-sustainable energy sources, and much more.

There were around 25 books with complex and diverse themes. "Do you like to read?"

Verdantia looked up from a potion-making book, and her verdant green eyes looked around before she answered. "I don't dislike it. I've gained a few interesting hobbies lately, though."

Cinderielle smiled and teased. "It feels like you are trying to learn how to lead a city or something of a similar nature."

Verdantia smiled calmly. "Why might Miss Cinderielle be curious about my interests?"

Cinderielle crossed her arms with a laugh. "It's not quite nice to be on guard with a guest, right?"

Verdantia lifted an eyebrow. "What if I don't treat you like a guest, Miss Cinderielle?"

Cinderielle snorted. "Don't try to scare me. We both more or less know why we are having this meeting. I'll wait to ask more direct questions later. However, know that I can tell why you are like you are and what your general intentions are."

The voluptuous woman placed the book aside after leaving a page marker between the page she was reading and looked at Cinderielle seriously. "Miss Cinderielle. The reason I've invited you was to show your faith and intent to speak and reach a conclusion. I didn't want to stay in Fortuna City because of several reasons, but the main one is that Fortuna City is..." Verdantia paused and said meaningfully. "...guarded."

Cinderielle's orange eyes flashed with deep thoughts. 'While it was expected, this is nothing but an admission about or confirmation of my doubts.'

Verdantia continued. "So, Miss Cinderielle, let's wait until we reach my residence, and we can speak in private."

The journey was a few hours, and by the time they arrived, it was near lunchtime. After they stepped down from the carriage, Cinderielle's mind was not focused on her increasing hunger. Instead, she was looking at the large mansion with her mouth agape.

The large building, made of beautiful wood branches, was crowned with several large canopies that provided natural shade while allowing sunlight to pass through. It felt as if the manor was a mix of several trees whose trunks interlocked to form a building-like shape.

Verdantia spoke when she saw Cinderielle's startled expression. "Our house was built by using our family's hereditary skills to manipulate life. I am a Life-related sylvan, and so were my mother, grandmother, and previous generations. Moreover, our family has never mixed with human lineage, making us pure Sylvans."

Cinderielle frowned. "Are you calling me impure?"

Verdantia looked at Cinderielle deeply. "You are an exception. You seem to be completely pure while being born from the mix of a Human and a Sylvan. Either your mother's genes completely overpowered the father's genes or..." Verdantia smiled but didn't follow her words.

Cinderielle frowned, not getting her hidden meaning. "Or what?"

Verdantia shrugged. "Don't worry about that, Miss Cinderielle. Let's go inside... Oh!" Verdantia exclaimed. Since you are here, how about you eat lunch with my mother, her partner, and me?" She clarified. "Of course, if Miss Cinderielle feels uncomfortable, we can eat in my room."

Cinderielle blinked. "Do you have servants?"

Verdantia shook her head. "Nothing as such. Our family has plenty of techniques to summon creatures. Between them, there are many who were created to summon house-cleaning beings."

As they walked through the path that crossed the frontal garden, Cinderielle asked with curiosity. "What's your stance about summoned creatures?"

Verdantia looked back with a puzzled expression. "In what meaning?"

Cinderielle commented. "Aren't there people who said that summoning creatures to do your bidding is evil?"

Verdantia snorted. "Ignorant people who don't know about the matter, but because their lives are worthless if they don't get themselves to be known, they rather spew nonsense than research about the matter." Verdantia shook her head. "Don't tell me that explaining can do anything, though. Do you think someone who didn't bother researching a subject and has a strong and unbending stance can be reasoned with? Naïve!"

Cinderielle was startled when Verdantia raised her voice. It was the first time she heard something like this coming from her. Until now, even when she was annoyed in class, she always kept an elegant and somewhat soft approach to her words. Yes, her way of speaking became sharp when she was annoyed, but Cinderielle could swear that she had never heard Verdantia raise her voice.

As if the tall and voluptuous woman had realized as well, she cleared her throat and spoke. "Excuse my rudeness, Miss Cinderielle. I didn't mean to elevate my voice. However, such matters have always been a delicate spot for me."

While she was surprised, she was quick to regain composure and smiled. "Don't worry, Verdantia. It is normal to get agitated about things you truly hate." The fire Sylvan remembered her fight against those Level 11 monsters and sighed. "Recently, there was a moment when I also lost my cool, and I did an idiotic thing. Well, everything went well in the end."

They entered through a hole covered in clean vines that acted like a curtain and a door. The vines had three layers: an outer one with thick vines, a middle one with extremely thin vines that looked like greenish hairs, and then another one behind made of regular vines.

This surprised Cinderielle. "There is not a door?"

Verdantia smiled without explaining. "Whoever tries to enter without permission will not have a good time."

Cinderielle's hand stopped before touching the vine curtain, looking at Verdantia carefully. "I have permission, right?"

Verdantia placed a hand on her mouth and smiled. "Who knows~?"

Then, she entered without waiting for Cinderielle.

The fire Sylvan's eyebrow twitched a few times, but she just sighed and extended her hand. The touch of the vines was smooth and comfortable. However, there was a strange sensation on her hand, as if something was moving around her palm.

Curious, she looked and saw the vine's very faint movement. 'Oh? They are active vines.'

Curious, she analyzed it.

Level: 20

Aether Mana Shards: 13,006/13,006

Phoer Body Shards: 40,290(40,290)

Anima Energy Shards: 21,651/21,651

Her heart skipped a beat, finding these numbers quite terrifying. 'No wonder she said that intruders won't have a good time. Because one wouldn't expect it, even higher-level creatures would fall prey to this thing. Scary, scary. Verdantia's family is really not simple.'

After crossing the vine door, Cinderielle was welcomed with a charmingly adorned front hall. The beautiful nature-like ambiance around the house gave Cinderielle, as a Sylvan, a really positive, welcoming feeling.

Moreover, there was a scent in the air that relaxed her senses, making her feel at home. Verdantia's voice reached her ears, snapping her out of her reverie. "Welcome to my humble abode, Miss Cinderielle."

Looking over, she saw Verdantia looking at her with a courteous expression. Since she was a guest, she decided to return the courtesy. "Thank you for inviting me as well, Miss Verdantia. It is a pleasure to enter such a magnificent house."

Verdantia chuckled. "It really doesn't suit you."

Cinderielle asked with a frown. "What do you mean?"

Verdantia smirked. "Being lady-like. It's quite the contrast."

Cinderielle's lips began twitching. "You really like teasing me, don't you?"

"Let's go. We are just in time for lunch. Mother and her partner must be waiting."

'Verdantia's mother, eh.' Her gaze couldn't help but roam the green-haired woman's curvy body once. 'She really is... full where it matters. Moreover, she looks slim beside those places. Tsk, tsk. What a body.'

"Mother, I've arrived with a friend."

"Oh? That's rare. Welcome, and don't be shy. If you are Verdantia's friend, you should treat this house as if it were yours."

Cinderielle was instantly mesmerized by the woman's calming and gentle voice. Even before she could land eyes on her, her aura was similarly powerful and profound, eliciting a sense of respect within the comfort her aura provided, like a gentle ruler.

As she raised her eyes, unlike the bombshell body that she expected, Verdantia's mother was relatively slim. Her body type was much closer to Cinderielle than Verdantia.

Regardless, when she compared Verdantia's and her mother's faces, she couldn't help but exclaim in her mind. 'Alike. Incredibly alike.'

Other than the body, their faces were almost identical. Verdantia's mother had soft almond eyes with green irises. Her long eyelashes and beautiful eyebrows highlighted the elegance and softness of her facial features, while her beautifully shaped jaw and neck added grace to her overall appearance.

Cinderielle smiled politely. "My name is Cinderielle, Madam. I'm sorry for coming so abruptly. Madam must've been surprised."

Verdantia's mother laughed and gestured to the chairs on the other side. "Don't worry, pretty girl. It is really rare for my daughter to bring someone with quite a lot in common."

Verdantia and Cinderielle were puzzled at her words. If anything, they were pretty different from each other. One of them controlled Aether Mana and Fire, while the other focused on Anima's energy and Life.

Of course, the mother added. "I'm not referring to your appearance." She chuckled softly and smiled. "So, there is a new World Tree around? Quite an interesting find you both did."

Cinderielle's body tensed up as her heart constricted, but with quick acting and perfect wording, she acted curious. "Madam, I don't know any new world tree."

Instead of adding a long explanation, a short and concise denial would come a long way.

However, Verdantia's mother sipped on the tea and smirked. "I can smell the same World Tree fragrance from you, the same one my daughter has around her staff."