

Tutorial 211

Chapter 211: Spellsmith

"You can't be serious, feral one. This is not something that's simple to do, nor is it something to joke about." Myrra waves her hand, gesturing at something.

I stay silent.

"The Calamity can't be killed, and it doesn't matter if it's The Colony, The Living Tree, or The Fallen Hero. None of them can be killed by us, not anymore."

I continue to listen.

"Do you even have any idea how many times we have tried? Even before I was born, there were hundreds of attempts, yet every single one failed, leaving us weaker and weaker. No one will join you and..."

"I will kill it alone."

She pauses, and the air becomes heavy, the silence taking over the room. Her eyes seem to be trying to bore holes into my head.

"Obviously, I need some time to prepare. Most likely several months for preparations, and then help to get there. After that, everyone can leave." I return her gaze and notice that she's looking at my veins, my chest, my eyes.

Is she trying to gauge if I'm lying, to see if my pulse has increased?

"Feral one, I do think you are powerful, but what you're saying is... impossible. Moreover, you've already annoyed multiple powerful people, and they'll see it as you dangling a promise you don't intend to keep, just to buy some time from their revenge."

“Then just help me set up a meeting with these people and let them decide after hearing me out. That much should be simple to do,” I shrug my shoulders.

I watch as Myrra's tail sways from side to side, this time in an annoyed manner. Damn, I really want to touch that tail and pull on it.

“How do you plan to kill the Living Tree?” she asks me.

I stay quiet, and Myrra seems to grow even more annoyed.

It's quite funny, to be honest. No matter how much she likes to observe people and their reactions to surprises or new things, she gets annoyed if she doesn't understand or can't control something. I think that's a trait many powerful people share – people not used to being denied or not being in control.

“Just imagine, Myrra. The old capital without the Calamity defending it. All the items, all the riches, all that history. I'm sure some powerful people escaped with their items, but our last expedition showed that there's still plenty left,” I tap on my chest pocket where I'm hiding a mana core sphere and gesture at the sword I hold.

I'm curious if that might interest her. She has some nice items and likes to wear expensive clothes and jewelry.

I watch her a bit longer and then change my mind, no, I don't think so. Myrra wants something else.

“Imagine living during the era when one of the Calamities fell. You being one of the few lynthari that helped with that,” I lower my voice to a whisper and move a bit closer to her, “maybe we could even do it secretly, without other lynthari knowing” I say.

She is dead silent, with neither her tail nor her ears moving. She just stares at me, her breathing speeding up almost imperceptibly, but I can see it while in my [Focus].

“Myrra, can you imagine yourself coming to the other lynthari after everything is done and telling them the Calamity is dead?” my voice is so quiet I can barely hear it, but I'm sure she can, “Imagine observing

all those lynthari. Most of them hundreds of years old, experienced, bored. Imagine all of them reacting – shocked, panicking, curious, annoyed, angered. All of them.”

Her eyes are dreamy, her mouth slightly open.

“And then there's you, Myrra, a lynthari who helped make it happen. Who saw it happen.” I whisper in her ear, “And I'll be there with you. A human who accomplished all of that, walking by your side, treating you with respect, complimenting you, saying that it would be impossible without...”

Out of nowhere, she shoves me away, and I absorb my inertia to make myself stop before hitting the wall.

Myrra is staring at me. She's breathing heavily, audibly enough for me to hear. Her tail is oddly twisted, and her ears are lowered.

“Dangerous, you are very dangerous, feral one,” she displays her sharp canines, as if ready to attack me. Her mana is swirling wildly.

Before I can say anything else, she swiftly turns to leave, “I'll think about it and will let you know in a few days!”

Myrra disappears, almost as if running away.

I've always been good at reading people. There are certain feelings that I read well, and some not as much. Sometimes I detect a feeling they have, but I can't comprehend it.

For instance, there's Min-Jae. I know he views me somewhat like an older brother; he looks up to me to the point where I've noticed him observing my movements and mimicking some of my behaviors. He adopts a similar stance, tries to have a similar haircut, or wears clothes akin to mine. He constantly observes me, as if trying to learn.

Min-Jae admires me. I can discern that much, but I don't understand why.

Sure, I'm stronger than him, and I'm also handsome, not to mention the high amount of the best stat that I possess. But I'm also moody, arrogant, and at times so erratic that I've been labeled a psychopath or sociopath on multiple occasions. I'm petty, obsessive when I focus on something... perhaps I should stop, I'm beginning to feel bad.

So yes, some parts of me are far from desirable. Yet the naive boy, even aware of these traits, continues to envy me, a sentiment confirmed by his sub-class.

I can read people, and even attempt to manipulate them a bit, but I do so infrequently. And unlike Tess or Izzy, I'm not as formidable.

It was enjoyable to see Myrra react the way I anticipated. Given her reaction, I should expect her visit in a few days, but before that, I'll take some time away from group 4. I'll also avoid the community and just unwind.

Once more, I blend into the crowds and head toward the nearest giant tree.

Giant trees and colossal disappointments.

Hehe.

Anyway, they're merely... well, big trees. They contain no mana I could feel, aren't sentient, and even their wood isn't special aside from being harder than a normal tree. There are some houses on certain branches, and to be honest, they look impressive. I'm quite wealthy currently; the number of valuables Serpent's Eye was able to obtain is astounding, so perhaps I should purchase one.

I step away from the tree and close my eyes for a moment.

It's already dark, and the ruins of whatever they once were are once again visible in the orbit, and a warm wind blows through the mostly empty streets. There are colorful soft lights glowing all around, creating a fantastical atmosphere. The leaves of the giant tree gently sway in the weak wind, and the city is pleasantly quiet.

Deciding not to sleep during my off-group-4 days, I delve deeper into the city.

After a few more minutes of walking, I stop in front of one of the buildings, sensing interesting mana movement inside of it.

The side of the building is open, offering an entrance inside to what looks like a simple workshop. Even though it's so late, it's open, and there's an older human man working inside.

Led by curiosity, I enter, and the moment I step into the area, the crystal I notice nearby detects my presence and sends a signal toward the bracelet on the man's hand.

"Just a moment," he shouts from the inside, continuing to work on something on the table I can't see because of his back.

While observing the way he moves his mana, I wait.

It takes thirty minutes, and only then does he sigh and step away from the item. He then takes another one, about to get back to work, but that's when I let out a cough, and he turns around, surprise evident on his face.

Did he really forget about me?

"Oh, I totally forgot about you!" he exclaims, an unapologetic smile on his face.

He takes a step towards me, an older man with graying hair, thin and moving slowly.

[Spellsmith - lvl 78]

"So what do you want, young man?" There's a hint of impatience I can discern in his voice. He surely wants to get back to working on the item.

"You made a mistake while working on that item," I tell him.

He tilts his head in surprise and then laughs, "There's no way. Do you know how many items..."

I interrupt him, "You were aiming to turn the mana stone into a heater, but when you activated it to test it, the heat wasn't continuous but was sent in pulses."

That gets a laugh out of him and a curious look my way, "Young man, that's on purpose. Can you imagine how much mana it would consume if it continuously radiated heat? Like this, the effectiveness is reduced by half, but it can be powered with less than half as much mana."

He gestures at me and leads me towards the heating mana stone on the table, "People usually don't have as much mana as you might think, so even that is plenty," the old man points at the stone, and I touch it, observing the circuits he etched.

They're similar to when I play around with mana stones, or when trying to create coordinates, or what I did to get through the barrier.

"Wouldn't efficiency be even better with a higher value mana stone?" I ask. The stone he's using is one of the cheapest ones.

"It would," he nods, "but it would also be much more expensive and take longer."

"Longer?" I ask.

"Obviously longer. The better the mana stone, the harder it is to work with them, to force your circuits and etch them inside. More valuable stones have some resistance, and it's hard to infuse your mana into them and then even harder to etch the pathways."

He puts a few stones on the table. The highest value ones could be around ten thousand dollars' worth back on Earth and lowest value one only a few dollars.

“This one is what we usually work with. There are maybe five people who can work on more expensive ones given enough preparation and a few months of time. I think one of the best is a man called Elydor, so try looking for him if you want to learn more. There are also very few people who can even work on this one,” he shows me the one worth ten thousand dollars, “and I'm one of them.”

“I see, it really sounds respectable,” I answer him.

The entire time, I think. I did work on the mana stone that Obelia gave me. I don't even know how much it was worth, but surely much more than the one I took from Hadwin and Tess. The ones I took from them were worth one or two hundred thousand dollars. Yet I was able to work with them.

Is this why Obelia gave me such weird looks?

I take out one of my mana stones, the one worth ten thousand dollars, and put it in front of the man, “So how would you usually work on it? Let's say I want to make a heating stone from it.”

“Well, young man, I would call you dumb and ask you why you need a heating stone that only people with terrifyingly high mana can feed and why you need to heat up or burn an entire house,” he smiles at me while reaching towards the stone and gestures for me to watch.

The older man is not careful at all; there isn't even a speck of distrust, nor is he worried about the mana stones he put on the table.

He just seems genuinely happy to talk about his craft and share some knowledge.

“You seem to be well off, so forgive me for actually taking your word and showing you how it works on something so wasteful,” he seems excited.

“Not a problem,” I answer him.

I know that the moment we etch the circuits, it will be difficult to use the stone for anything else. It's impossible to delete them and start over with the stone. You can only build on what's already etched or scratch it, leaving imperfections on the stone. That's something I have learned from my testing.

Curious to see how it's traditionally done, I watch as he does it, carefully and precisely, doing calculations where I did it by feel. He explains how some things change from stone to stone and identifies the imperfections each stone has and how to avoid the most common ones.

He shares all his knowledge without any worry in the world, voicing things I was always curious about and explaining things I had noticed and how they usually work around them.

Where I was guided by feel and by what I learned from ruining mana stones, he follows knowledge.

Not noticing the passage of time, we spend hours working on the stone, changing it, improving it, and clashing in our opinions, and I would like to say that I have shown him something new, just as he taught me a lot. I absorb all that knowledge, and it doesn't even feel forced. For me, it's fun the same way moving mana is. I'm creating something new, something with my own powers.

When I finally notice the passage of time, it's already morning. We spent the entire night working on the mana stone, and in the end, it's not just a simple heater.

“Well, if it isn't the most efficient heating stone there ever was,” he giggles excitedly like a small child.

Thermal Mana Core (rare): A refined variant of its lesser counterpart, this mana crystal boasts expertly crafted circuits. When filled with mana, it emanates a warmth, enhancing its heat-transmuting capabilities.

The stone we worked on now can extremely efficiently turn mana into heat. Where smaller stones waste around 40% of mana, this one wastes only around 5%.

Another thing is that it can handle much more mana, and someone with a big enough mana pool most likely can use it to melt iron or burn an entire building. It's like gaining a fire skill of their own; the only disadvantage is that that person would be in the heat as well.

“Thank you,” I answer honestly. I have learned a lot from the old man.

I put two mana stones of the same value we worked on, on the table, and he immediately starts complaining.

“No, no, I can't take it, that's too much. Just...” he says, seemingly embarrassed.

“I'm rich,” I tell him simply.

He stops in shock, staring at me like I'm some weird animal, and then starts laughing.

“In that case, I would like one more,” the old man says cheekily.

Oh, I quite like him.

“Two more, and I'll be taking some of your smaller stones,” I say as I put out two more mana stones.

“Deal,” he says, a smile still on his face.

Chapter 212: Young lynthari

Virelia during the morning is different from the night. The colorful lights turn off and people return to the streets, filling them with life. Humans are everywhere, going about their lives, merchants open their shops, and couples walk around holding hands.

And there are those annoying lynthari once again.

“Oh my, look at him. His expression!” A group of lynthari surrounds me and one of the women starts gushing.

“Isn't he annoyed? I would swear he was about to roll his eyes,” another one says.

As always, they are weird, yet they do not touch me; they don't force me to do anything. They are just annoying.

"His eyes are pretty," another one says.

Should I find a way to change their color? Maybe Lily can do it for me.

"I'm sorry, I have something to do, so..." I tell them.

"I would translate that as: Can you fuck off already?" one of them says, making the others laugh, seemingly not minding it at all.

Then I make a mistake. I release some of my mana to show them my level and exert pressure on them. It's not an attack, at most something like baring teeth or hissing. And oh boy, that makes them even more excited.

"Oh my, so cute!" one of the lunatics exclaims. She doesn't care that she is the lowest level out of her group and I could kill her with a single attack.

She's like a fool calling a black bear a dawg and wanting to pet it. I guess that's what the unspoken rule of never hurting lynthari does to you.

Not seeing any other option, I use my skill to push myself high onto the roof and escape. My most dangerous weakness, extroverts, still exist and this time it's an entire race of those weirdos.

Maybe the system is doing it on purpose. Maybe this is the second trial of Beyond masked as the 4th floor. That's how dangerous extroverted beings are. It's unnatural to be so friendly and talkative. There was some mistake in evolution and something went terribly wrong for something like this to happen.

And it's still morning, like, what the heck. Be sleepy and grumpy like normal people after waking up.

Sending my senses into the area, I notice a signature I haven't felt so far and, led by curiosity, I move a bit closer towards its source.

When I get closer, I'm surprised to see a lynthari, but this time, this lynthari is just a small kid. A girl even shorter than me, the first child of that race I've seen. She has red hair and a tail and ears of the same color. Unlike adults, her tail is even fluffier, and she walks on the street alone, without any worry in the world.

Like a wild animal, she senses my gaze and her eyes locate me nearly immediately. Her eyes are piercingly blue.

[Riftwalker - lvl 87]

The lynthari girl smiles at me and takes a step, disappearing from where she stands and reappearing behind me, stepping out of a gouge in the air that is filled with darkness.

"Hello!" she says, showing her sharp canines.

So, how the heck does a level 87 have a teleporting skill? I thought stuff like that was illegal. Is the system playing favorites here?

"Hello," I answer awkwardly, to her amusement.

"How old are you?" she asks.

Huh, that's a weird question, isn't it? "Twenty-one," I tell her, seeing no reason to lie.

"Ha! I'm twenty-nine so I'm older! You have to call me boss now!"

For a moment I fight against the confusion that hits me. The what? How does that even work?

Still, she's the first child lynthari I've seen and her teleporting skill is interesting, so I give in and decide to go with the flow, "I apologize for my rudeness! I will call you boss from now on!" I tell her.

The young lynthari seems surprised but then happy, and she excitedly nods her head, her red hair flying around. She seems too happy, as if plenty of people already rejected to call her that and as if she expected me to do so as well.

“Good!” she then pauses, embarrassed, probably not thinking that far, “Huh, what now,” she whispers quietly under her breath.

“Boss, I'm hungry. Will you buy a meal for me? It's a master's job to take care of their underlings.” I can't help but to want to bully this little girl. Someone gotta pay for all the weird lynthari around.

As expected, the young lynthari doesn't seem to have any mana stones on her. I sensed that much while scanning her. She falls silent, opening and closing her mouth like a goldfish, too ashamed to say it out loud.

I let it go for a bit longer and then decide that it's enough, “I apologize for the confusion, obviously, I will pay. Things like that aren't something a boss should do.”

“Obviously you should pay. Are you dumb or something, underling?” the lynthari child immediately shakes her head, acting all mature, something she probably learned from observing others, yet can't fully apply.

Even though she might be close to thirty, she's just a child. But that won't stop me from observing her skill. It might help me improve my [Tether].

So, I jump down from the roof and observe as she teleports with me, and then we continue on so I can get my breakfast.

It takes much longer than expected; the young lynthari is extremely picky and sniffs with a sharp nose like an animal, rating the smell from each restaurant. But in the end, we find one.

The prices are sky-high, but I'm rich, thanks to Elydor. May the gods bless his soul and revive him one day.

So I can kill him again.

"You are different from other dumb humans," the redheaded lynthari says. Her piercing blue eyes observe me once in a while, "you feel weird."

"I apologize, boss."

"But you paid for breakfast so it's fine."

"Thank you, boss."

"But actually, that's something underlings like you should do, so I don't need to thank you."

"I apologize, boss."

"But you are my first underling, so maybe it's fine?"

"Thank you, boss," I say.

Every time I call her 'boss', her smile becomes bigger and bigger, even though she tries to hide it. Somehow can't even get too annoyed.

Unlike adults, kids are something I can't bring myself to treat too harshly. Little Isabella is living proof of that after I ended up with her on the third floor. There's some sort of naivety, shine, and goodness that I find in most children. Or maybe I'm just treating them nicely because I also wish I was treated well while being a child. I don't know. I'm a weirdo.

Still, it won't stop me from teasing them a little bit! "Boss, if you allow me, I would like to recommend you something," I say carefully.

“Sure, underling! Go ahead. I allow you to do so!” the little redhead lynthari folds her arms on her chest and leans backward on the chair.

Oi, it will rain into your nose if you lift it higher, you silly kid.

“I’m not saying the boss isn’t majestic, but I think you could even improve on that if you allow me to help,” I pause and look at her with a question.

Barely able to hide her curiosity, she nods, her big eyes glued to me.

So silly.

I continue, this time in a whisper, “I heard about a boss from ancient times. A most powerful redhead lynthari woman...”

“Oh, like me!” she interrupts me, showing her hair.

“No boss, your hair is even more stunning!” I say, and that makes her open her mouth slightly as she listens to me, mesmerized, “She ruled over the entire city. The biggest boss of all.” I create a dramatic pause, “I heard she had one word she liked to say after every sentence, making all the people jealous and amazed by her.”

“Underling, tell me! Tell me what that word was immediately!” she stops leaning against the chair and stands up.

I pause for a dramatic effect. “Nya,” I then say in a somber tone, “Boss, that word was 'nya' and she said it after every sentence. Impressing her underlings and her enemies as well.” I finish up.

Surely she won’t eat that up.

“I like it, underling, I really do! Good job, nya!” she says, and the way she pronounces this word with her youthful voice makes it sound extremely cute and silly at the same time.

Oh boy, am I having too much fun now? Is it because of my good mood from last night and experimenting with mana stones?

“Exactly boss! You are a talent.” I tell her.

“Of course I am, nya!” she says and pauses, “I like it, I really do, nya!” she continues.

I reach out and take a sip of water.

“I can't wait to do it in front of my grandma, nya!”

Oh yes, do it. I just wish I could be there to see it! Huhu! I'm so evil. I take another sip of my drink while the young lynthari continues to excitedly repeat the word.

“Maybe I can have granny order everyone to never use that word so only I will, nya!”

Huh? Order everyone?

“It would be easy with dumb humans, nya. Oh, not you, underling, you aren't dumb, nya! But other lynthari might not want to listen and try to steal the word from me, nya, nya!”

Oh no.

“Well, it doesn't matter. Grandma will beat them up if they don't! She did it before, so all lynthari listen to her now, nya!”

Hehe. Maybe I should leave quickly.

Thankfully she turns to me, “I'll be going now, underling, nya! I will find you soon!”

As she teleports away, I don't even observe her skill. I watch the place where she disappeared from.

This can't be good.

This is when I decided I'd had enough of the city and decided to go back to our house. I check if there isn't any tracker on me, I use [Resonance] a few times, strengthen my Mantle, and quickly buy some stuff from the shops.

I already have plenty of etched mana stones for examining, but I buy multiple kinds of mana-conductive paint, some metals that seem to be able to be etched with mana circuits, a few more items that use mana stones to function, and other stuff the old man recommended.

In the end, I spend a lot, but back at the house, there is much more. All the stuff Elydor left us so gracefully. I wish he never died.

So I could kill him again, maybe while having Lily heal him constantly.

Plus, there are some valuables from the Champion's house that we plan to put into the auction to get as much as possible.

The plan is to finish the coordinates deal with Sophie and hopefully be able to buy another epic passive. If I don't have enough, I can sell some items until I get there. After that, I will start working on my plan to kill The Living Tree.

I already know how I will do it and how to get to that point; it will just take some time.

There's no speck of doubt I will be able to do it. In the same way I hate Elydor - I hope we both will get reborn and meet once again one day.

Well, the same way as that guy, I hate the Living Tree. I haven't forgotten about the time we spent down in the tunnels, and even though I was deep in the [Focus], I remember the faces of other members of my group and some of the feelings I had.

I will kill that tree. I don't care about Valorplate or the Colony, not even the mystery of the 4th Calamity or stuff in the orbit.

The tree will go down.

Getting closer to our house on top of the hill, I sense weaker threads of Sophie's web reaching even beyond the house and its garden. They are barely noticeable, yet functional. Her web has improved by leaps and bounds. It is stronger and more delicate at the same time, and there are even some fake-outs, hidden detections, and even some weak attacks that will activate under some conditions.

So I spend one hour standing outside the house, observing the web, obviously.

(Damn it, please get in already. I can feel your probing and Lily keeps asking why you don't get in and staring at you from the window on the second floor.) Sophie says in my mind after I allow her to create a link. When I look at the mentioned window, I really see Lily's face, hiding behind the drapes and staring at me.

(Tell her I said hello and that I can see her,) I tell Sophie, and soon she does just that because Lily jumps backward, probably falling down and pulling the drape down with her as I see it tearing and disappearing.

(Anyway, the guild master of Storm Brigade came here yesterday, and she should be coming here today. She came personally, saying that she would like to talk with you,) I get the info as I move towards the door.

Interesting, so Obelia is looking for me. She probably hasn't heard anything yet from Myrra, so what does she want from me?

Well, I'll see soon enough.

Chapter 213: Bullied

"Oh, you are back," Lily says the moment I enter the house, holding her hands behind her back.

It's almost amazing how shameless she is acting.

"Lily, I saw..." I start.

"Oh, I didn't see you coming. Welcome back." she interrupts, and we both fall silent.

I open my mouth to say something.

"Healing," Lily says, quietly coughing, as if trying to mask saying that, and I stop.

"Hehe, it's nice to see you, Lily, for the first time in a few days!" I say instead, and with a giggle, she turns around.

"That creepy woman, Obelia, was looking for you. Is she annoying you? I can scare her off with [Disintegration]," she says while walking towards the living room, and I follow her.

I give it a little bit of thought. Maybe I should be a bit nicer to Lily. To get on her good side the same way I'm getting on Biscuit's. Maybe she will also become extremely powerful the way the Absolute candidate, Biscuit, does.

"Lily, don't disintegrate people just because they are a bit annoying," Tess shouts from the living room.

"But Tess, she is bullying Nat!" Lily defends herself.

"As if, she is most likely scared of him and wants to have a good relationship with him," Tess says as we enter the room.

"Another reason to disintegrate her," Lily whispers under her breath, but I hear it.

Oh boy. This is getting scary.

“Asshole!” Izzy immediately comes and jumps into my arms, even though we haven't seen each other in just a few days. Her skill, as so often before, reaches out to me and examines my emotions.

“You seem in a good mood, something good happened?” she asks, letting go and returning to Sophie, who waves at me.

“I improved my skills,” I tell her before Lily gets the wrong idea, and then I move towards the armchair in the corner.

Before I sit down, I can hear Lily whispering to Izzy, “Is he telling the truth?” and Izzy nods innocently in response.

Okay, let's never become weaker than Lily. I mean, never ever. Things could get dangerous if something like that happens.

“Anything interesting happened while I was gone?” I ask as I sit opposite Tess.

“Well, you heard about Obelia already and not much else. We sorted the items and are mostly taking it a bit slower, getting some rest after the expedition. In a few days, we will start going to hunt again, and we plan to test the items we got. Especially the three epic ones,” she says.

She grabs some weird fruit from the table and takes a bite, “I want us to level up as much as possible, both levels and skill levels.” Tess then puts the fruit down, “I don't like this one,” she turns back to me, “We are quite rich, Nat, so we are looking into auctions and some expensive items that we could buy and continue to use. We are also paying a lot for as much information on Calamities as possible.”

I also grab fruit from the table, a different kind than Tess's, and take a bite. It tastes good, so I quickly finish it up, and when I look around, there aren't more of them.

“I will continue to practice with Sophie, and I made a deal with Myrra, so she will be coming in a few days,” I tell her.

“What kind of deal?”

“I will kill the Living Tree in a few months,” I say, and that's when I notice that everyone else is silent and looking at me, “I already know how I will do it, so I just need some time to prepare. In exchange, I will have people stop annoying us and maybe a little bit of support. Now that I think about it, I might have to beat one or two guild masters, but that much isn't a problem.”

“I see,” Tess says.

“That's it? 'I see'? Tess, he just said he wants to kill that tree alone!” Lily rushes towards us, looking between me and Tess, “I know you are strong, but that thing...” she shudders, most likely remembering the darkness of the tunnels.

“Nat wouldn't say it without a reason, Lily, and I'm sure he will tell us a bit more. He likes to act mysterious,” Tess says calmly.

Wow, that's a bit annoying, isn't it?

That's when I hear Biscuit shout at me. He uses a word I've never heard him use before.

(Bitch!) Biscuit shouts happily while hovering in the air and moving towards me from upstairs.

“Biscuit, what did you just say?” I look around, and there is one person that is avoiding my eyes. A petite black-haired girl, “Lily?” I ask her.

“Maybe I called Obelia like that once or twice, and Biscuit...” she says quietly.

What are you teaching the doggo? I mean, what the heck!

“Biscuit, don't use that word ever again, okay?” I say as I grab him from the air and pull him closer to my chest.

He looks at me and tilts his head a bit while his tongue is sticking out a little.

(Bi...)

“No! Don't say it!” I shake him a bit, but he seems to like it.

(Bitch!) he shouts while I shake him. His eyes shine intelligently, and I don't know if he really doesn't know or just enjoys bullying me.

A scary thought comes to my mind. Is it possible that Biscuit is learning from me? Not only skills but also somewhat copying my behavior? He learned mana arms before me, but that was so he could reach for food. He also learned telepathy, but that's also so he could ask for more food. He then continued to improve his mana arms together with me.

Later, he started resisting my [Disruption] at the same time when I started experimenting with defending against such attacks.

I learned to float and somewhat fly, and he did so a bit later. Even his tentacles seem to be able to disrupt mana slightly similarly to my skill. And now this personality. Is he trying to bully me in the same way I like to bully him and others?

We can't have that!

I shake him a bit more while pleading, but nothing helps. The cute corgi continues to shout his new favorite word while his eyes look as if he's making fun of me.

Goddamn it, Biscuit.

Two days pass in peace. For an hour or two a day, I interact with others. I spend another three to five hours a day working with Sophie on coordinates, and I have a feeling that we are on a good way.

I also spend around three hours sleeping, and the rest of the day I use to practice my skills and inscribe mana stones with construct-like circuits. I don't forget to examine the stones the old man gave me.

Sure, I could go and get some books with more theory, learn about inscribing stuff into mana stones and more about what works and what doesn't, but there are a few problems with that.

The first one is that I just straight up hate studying and prefer learning stuff from practicing and repeating if possible. I don't mind learning from my mistakes.

Another and the main reason is that I don't want to be tied down by the knowledge they have and their perception of what is and is not possible. From talking with the old man, I did learn that one of the best, and probably the best enchanter or inscriber, was Elydor, and in some ways, I'm already better than him.

In large part, it's thanks to my skills that are really good for this kind of stuff.

[Perception] that allows me to perceive what's happening inside of the stone. [Mana Manipulation] allows me to move mana with the delicacy that is needed for this kind of work.

[Mana Domain] creates a small field around the stone I work on, increasing my control over the mana even further.

[Mana Infusion] thanks to which I can push my mana even inside higher-quality mana stones that people usually have trouble with.

[Resonance] to inscribe it all inside and most importantly, [Focus] that grants me nearly inhuman concentration, allowing me to keep switching between skills while keeping the construct from dissipating before I decide to inscribe it.

Oh, and there are also my constructs. They are something similar to inscribing the stones, but instead of using mana stones, I'm inscribing inside my body. Almost as if it's an item.

Some might consider it a bit creepy, treating the body as if it's an item, but I'm not like them. I don't mind losing an arm or two; Lily can restore them. I can get hurt; it will heal, and I constantly push and abuse my body.

Similarly, I don't mind throwing away items and don't want to be tied to them; I partially don't mind doing something similar to my body.

I cut off my thoughts and stretch my body while connecting to Sophie's net. Just yesterday I learned how to do so without destroying it, and I even started helping her to improve it. Unlike her, I don't know how to anchor the net and make it semi-permanent, so I just make some changes that she goes through and applies them.

It's still fun, especially when Sophie gets annoyed as I keep finding small mistakes she didn't notice.

Hmm, maybe she isn't annoyed because of the mistakes but because of the way I tell her about them, but that's her problem, isn't it? If she doesn't want me to make fun of her, she shouldn't make mistakes in the first place.

I open my hand and look at the stone I was working on.

Thermal Mana Stone (uncommon): An azure mana crystal etched with intricate circuits. When infused with mana, it radiates a comforting warmth, a useful tool for those braving cold environments.

"I want to sell it,"

Do you really want to sell the following item for 20 shards?

Thermal Mana Stone (uncommon): An azure mana crystal etched with intricate circuits. When infused with mana, it radiates a comforting warmth, a useful tool for those braving cold environments.

Yes/No

I confirm, and the stone disappears from my hand, sold to the system shop.

In the past two days, I was able to create a few more of them and sell them. Unlike items we sell that come from the floor, the ones we create are sold for 50% of the amount we can buy them for.

Uncommon pieces of gear are usually around 40 shards, so getting 20 is 50%. When selling items we get from the floors, without working on their ratings, the amount of shards is much less.

For example, the epic equipment we got from the third floor is sold in the shop for around 4000 or more shards, and we can sell it for 200, which is 5%. Sometimes it's 10% for some items.

I feel someone carefully touch Sophie's net, and then there's a hint of surprise. I send back something like a greeting, and that person uses the net to connect to me, and I let their voice sound in my head.

(You should have some locks and mana signature detections so people won't be able to connect to your field,) the voice says calmly.

(Probably,) I send back and wait.

(I see. Can we talk? I came alone.)

(Sure, you can come into the house.) I finish and cut off the connection, then spring to my feet. I yawn, stretch, and then put on a shirt that I find comfortable and that has become my favorite one.

I create a domain that reaches downstairs. Within that domain, I create an anchor and use [Tether] to teleport there. Immediately, I take a step and gently slap the back of Lily's head that already waits there.

"No [Disintegration] allowed until I say so," I say as I pass by her and open the door.

Obelia greets me with a short nod, and when I step to the side, she enters the house.

Chapter 214: Five energies

Obelia enters the house, and in the room, only Tess and I remain. Everyone else who is currently in the house is shooed away.

I enter the living room and, after gesturing to her, she sits on the couch. Both Tess and I sit opposite her.

Obelia looks around curiously, and somehow, she doesn't seem to fit in here. She's the guild master of one of the biggest 5, now 4, and maybe 5 again when I think about it.

"I could help you find a better place now that you will become one of the five big..."

"Nope," I interrupt her, "I like it here."

The house isn't too big, so most of the rooms are occupied, and it feels full most of the time. But in a good way. It feels alive and cozy, and when I need privacy, I can just lock my room.

"I apologize for that. I also apologize for recommending you as one of the 5 guilds to Miss Myrra. I thought it would be something you would want," Obelia says, and as I observe her, I don't think she is lying.

"Well, I didn't back then. I also got really mad at you, you know. So that's something you should work on," I tell her, and I notice that even Tess is somewhat surprised by my shamelessness.

Yet Obelia seems to have been expecting that and puts a box on the table.

Without much hesitation, I take it and open it. Inside, there are multiple high-quality mana stones, a few pieces of metal that seem to be extremely rare and mana-conductive, and a few other materials.

"I'm not angry anymore," I tell her, and Obelia nods as if also expecting that.

She seems to understand me well. If you don't cross the line, a lot of things can be fixed with me by giving me good stuff or some other helpful services.

“There will be an auction in a few months, the biggest one in the past ten years, and I can help you get some items or assist you in getting in,” she offers.

“Sounds good,” I don't even have to think about it. The timing is also good. I should be able to finish working on coordinates and probably before or after the second trial of Beyond.

“Storm Brigade would also like to establish a cooperative relationship with Angry Kittens,” she says the guild name in a much different way from Elydor, and that's what I like.

No matter how silly it is, I don't want other people to disrespect our guild name. Other people, other than me, obviously. Those three little twerps that picked it are still going to suffer a bit longer for that.

Damn, we could have had some amazing guild names like Biscuit and Friends or Nathaniel's Underlings. And they stole it from me!

Anyway, I gesture at Obelia to continue.

“There isn't much I would expect from you for now. We could cooperate once in a while. Trade. Meet once every few weeks or months. There would be no attacking between us or other similar actions. I'm asking also because there's an expedition I have in mind.”

Obelia pauses for a while, and then after giving me a long examining look, she continues, “It's something I would need Elydor for, but hesitated to have him join. He wasn't exactly the right person to work with. You, on the other hand, I prefer much more and seem to have a similar skill set to Elydor, and that's what I need.”

This is also something that sounds interesting and could be fun to do.

“Okay, I have something else to do right now, but in a few weeks or months, we could talk about it more?” I look at her, “Is it time-limited?” When she shakes her head, I continue, “Good then, for now, you can give some information here to Tess or Hadwin, and we will check it out.”

They will check it out; I will be locked in my room experimenting.

"Will do so. Then there is another thing," she turns and looks at Tess, "This young woman, you called her Tess, I would like to take her in as one of my apprentices."

Oh? Isn't that interesting? Did she like Tess's lightning? Obelia's class name is Stormshaper, so maybe.

The silence stretches, and only then do I realize that she is waiting for my answer.

"What? Just ask Tess, it's not something up to me to decide." For that answer, I get a curious look from Obelia and a small smile from Tess.

"I'm not saying no, but I would like to know first what it includes and why," Tess says. She also seems to be curious.

"It's quite simple. I already have two disciples, and you would be the third. The main reason for that is mostly to help you in hopes you will become stronger, and that way I will create a strong relationship with someone like that," Obelia is honest as heck. I don't know if that's how she is or if she judges this to be what will be appreciated more.

"Sure, there are some things I would ask from you. Maybe we can work together to improve both of our skills. Light sparring. Observing your skills. In exchange, I would share information with you, some that you have no chance of learning anywhere else. Information about classes, requirements for stronger classes, training methods." She is calm and doesn't force anything.

"As for why, I saw you using lightning, and if I'm right, it could be lightning that is, or is close to being, one of the Primordial energies. I want to observe it, and I think it will help me a lot to do so."

"These Primordial energies, I heard about them from Nat, but can you tell me how many there are and what they are?" Tess asks.

Back then, I was offered the Energy Conductor class, and there were Primordial energies mentioned: Thermal and Kinetic. To be honest, it still sounds strong as hell, and sometimes I think about what it would do to my class, but I still like my current one more.

"I'm not the right person to talk about it. There have been hundreds of people discussing them over hundreds of years. Theorizing and testing them. We just know for sure that they are called Primordial energies by the system. We don't know how many there are. Some say that they are energies that create and influence the universe, others say they are just a categorization for energies you can control within the system, others say each energy has a being that rules over that energy."

I notice that Tess is paying as much attention as I am. That's good; it's nice to have someone else that will try to find out more about them.

"There are five energies we know about, and there are most likely more, just rarer and not available for someone as low-level as us. We know about the lightning you probably possess, then there are thermal and kinetic," she looks at me. Such an annoyingly perceptive and smart woman, "then there is gravitational and void energy."

"What's the difference between Primordial thermal energy and normal fire created by a skill?" I decide to interrupt Tess, who is about to ask something. But I'm just that curious.

"That's hard to say with certainty. They are mostly more pure, and using them requires a deeper understanding of the energy than the skill offered by the system."

"So maybe the Primordial energy is original, and the skill created by the system is a copy?" Tess asks.

"That's a good way to put it, yes. But we don't know for sure," Obelia answers.

Silence ensues, and Tess offers to make tea for Obelia, to which she agrees. We spend some time waiting in silence while Tess makes the tea in the kitchen.

I continue to observe Obelia. She looks young, maybe around thirty. Her hair is pale brown, and her eyes are of a silver color with visible circuits that I bet have mana flowing through them. Her eyes are somewhat similar to Ruby's. Most likely a trait of some sort.

Should I just ask her? Would it be considered very rude? I know if someone asked me that, I would tell him to fuck off and probably add a bit more.

“Was Elydor strong?” I ask instead, to her surprise.

“Elydor was strong, but probably the weakest of the five guild masters when it comes to combat. His specialty was creating items and inscribing. In that, he was probably the best in the city, and that skill made him one of the richest people in the city.”

That can mean only one thing.

I should have looted his mansion.

Damn it.

It also means that I can probably become similarly rich.

“Who is Myrra?” I ask another question.

“If she didn't tell you, I will take it as it was her intention and will not tell you as well. I hope you understand.”

“I see.” Hmm, so someone high up there.

“Who is Lorven?”

“He is the guild master of Voidwalkers. He has a terrifying stealth skill, so be careful if you ever meet him. Thanks to that skill, he became strong at a really young age, and his guild is a smaller one but an elite force. There are rumors he often works with lynthari.”

Hmm, so it's like Myrra said. Damn, isn't my [Perception] quite amazing to see through it on the second try? I should look into that skill a bit more!

When Tess sits back on the couch after placing the tea in front of Obelia, I ask again, "How does lynthari leadership work?"

Obelia takes a sip of the tea and then looks at me for a while. For the first time, she seems genuinely curious.

"That's something everyone somewhat powerful in the city knows," she says carefully.

I just give her a blank stare, not falling into the trap and trying to come up with reasons why I don't.

"There is a matriarch that has led the lynthari for hundreds or thousands of years already. She is the strongest being in the city by far. But she is quite hands-off and only acts if needed. Otherwise, there are some basic rules lynthari follow and rarely break. If they do, there is a special group of them that deals with it."

"What are their rules?" I ask.

"We human don't know all of them. But there is most likely one for not killing humans without a strong reason, not forcing humans to do things, or not touching them if it seems like it's against their wishes. There are more but nothing special. Older lynthari rarely deal with humans, so it's mostly younger ones that we interact with."

"What happens if you hurt or kill lynthari?" Tess asks Obelia.

"You die. There is an elite force of lynthari that deals with it. They investigate, they gather proof, and then they logically and methodically deal with you instead of being driven by anger. Lynthari can be really cruel if pushed there," from the way she says it, something tells me it's a notion that terrifies her.

We talk a bit more, and then I leave the room so she can converse more with Tess. Damn, lightning energy surely sounds cool. But I'm not jealous at all. I have two of them!

Surely having two Primordial energies is better than one, whatever the energies actually are. They are strong, and that's enough for now.

I open the community.

Noname (Hell, group 4) -anyone with Primordial energy?

Lootenant (Hell, WhiteWing) -huh, what is that?

FoodFood (Hell, group 4) -Food!

Biscuit?!

Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing) - What, it sounds cool. I want one!

Noname (Hell, group 4) -Amateurs.

Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing) -Oh come on! Did you just want to show off?

Noname (Hell, group 4) -Nope.

I totally wanted to. It always makes one feel better to flex on some people. I should totally try to get lightning.

Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing) - Oh, btw, fuck ants. Dude, I might hate them more than Cinderbear. The sound their legs make as they walk is creepy as fuck.

Hadwin (Hell, group 4) -Did you guys run away?

Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing) - You bet, Hadwin! I probably won't be able to say more because of censorship, but fuck 'em!

I let the poor people without Primordial energy talk, close the window, and quickly locate Biscuit.

The doggo somehow unlocked my door and is currently on my bed, burrowed in my blankets. He is staring into the air as if reading the Community, but as always, there's the question of how. How does he type or read what others say?

I enter my room and stop in front of him.

But most importantly, "Biscuit? Do you have Primordial energy?"

(Food!) he shouts at me.

Oh boy.

"Which one is it? Thermal? Kinetic? Lightning? Void? Gravitational?" I continue to ask him, but he doesn't react to any of them. Either he's hiding which one he has, or... or he has a different one.

I get on the bed and lean my head closer to him, my nose almost touching his, "You have to tell me, Biscuit. I need to know!" My curiosity will kill me if he doesn't!

(Food!) he just shouts happily and boops my nose with his, then he burrows himself under my blankets with only his head poking out.

Chapter 215: Time heals all wounds

A few more days pass, and I'm slowly getting used to it all.

I wake up after four hours of sleep. I practice while most of group 4 sleep, and then I practice a bit more while they have breakfast and make plans for hunts.

Then I go downstairs just before they leave, getting some important info and eating as well, and then I spend more hours in the big mana-shielded room under the house or in my room. If Biscuit is there, I tease him a bit while training, and if he's not, I fully focus on experimenting with coordinates or new mana stones and materials I got from Obelia.

Sometimes I feel like going on a hunt for a bit, but decide against it. I keep reminding myself how terrible, in my eyes, people from Hard difficulty were in handling their stats or skills.

Even now, I'm by far the highest leveled member of our group and probably of our entire round of the tutorial, with only maybe Savant being close.

If I take into consideration the stats I got from active tempering, I'm at a high enough level to make the current Hell difficulty tutorial somewhat easy, with only Beyond or "bosses" of the Floors being the challenge. Hell, I beat up quite easily two guild masters from two out of the five big guilds, both of them over level 200.

The biggest boost for my strength I can currently get is the second epic passive skill, and I should be able to get it before the second Beyond trial.

Things are going quite well, and Sophie and I now spend a few hours every night working together. She doesn't tell me, but I can see that her skills are improving as well, and one more thing also changes.

Sophie was right, and me treating her this way also makes others feel a bit more relaxed. I see them talking with her more and without constant worry about her skill. Sophie is trying to hide it, but I can see Izzy happily smiling while reading Sophie's emotions, so that's quite telling how she feels.

It also translates into her better mood and some sort of thankfulness towards me as she works harder to help me.

Well, it's not something I will complain about.

I feel a movement of mana signature and stop my thoughts, using my [Perception] to watch it. This time it's Maya going to Sophie's room, late at night.

The first time it happened, I almost fell from my bed over such a show of late-night adultery, but I quickly realized that it was not it.

My curiosity got the better of me, and I used [Perception]

Being myself, I didn't notice it, as something like that doesn't trouble me at all, but some members of our group have nightmares or anxiety attacks. All the result of 20 days down in the tunnels. Constantly treated harshly by Serpent's Eye, not knowing when they'd die, darkness, and the three-question-mark monster do that. Even to Maya, who couldn't keep [Focus] constantly running.

Tess told me that some of them have nightmares that wake them up shaking in the middle of the night or make them sleep with lights on or sometimes just straight up cry, remembering that.

I think it's not unexpected, but it surprises me; it's not something I thought of.

Sophie is someone they now trust, and after talking with Tess and seeing me treat her somewhat nicely, they sometimes go to her, asking her to dampen some memories. As Tess recommended, they never ask Sophie to delete them, and mind-blender missy doesn't even offer to do that.

Instead, she just manipulates the memories to make them feel as if they happened months or years ago, all fitting the saying that time heals all wounds.

I watch as, after a few minutes, Maya leaves Sophie's room, and there's a bit of the mind manipulator's mana on her.

A part of me wants to stop it, worried that Sophie might mess with them in a way that would make them into her puppets, but there is also a part that thinks she won't dare to do that. A part that is sure she won't do that.

However, it once again reminds me how terrifying and powerful her skill is. From some point of view, Sophie is much more powerful than Lily with her [Disintegration].

I can only dislike the decisions of others to let Sophie get into their mind, but not too much. Their situation isn't something I can fully understand and in the end, it's their decision to make.

Yawning, I close my eyes, stretch on the bed, and spend the rest of the night practicing Mana Cycling and even creating an orb made of mana that I continuously shape and move in ways that make me train my [Mana Manipulation]. Shaping exercises Lissandra used to do almost constantly even though she was at the level she was.

The orb in my hand expands and then instantly shrinks, and I continue to do that, keeping the same amount of mana while making it as big and small as possible. As I expand it, I also try to spread out mana equally to create a perfect surface.

It's annoying and fun at the same time.

A few more hours pass, morning comes, and I sense Myrra's signature outside of my house. The tall lynthari weirdo is alone, and I stand up, put on my trousers and when I reach out to put on the shirt, Myrra lands on the balcony. She touches Sophie's web, but it's as if she is not there. The lynthari woman skillfully manipulates the mana and avoids detection.

"Somewhat amateurish, but really nicely made," she nods with satisfaction as she turns to me, "Feral one, let's talk," she says.

I put my shirt on under her eyes that stare at me and sit on the edge of the bed, "Sure, go ahead."

Myrra moves in from the balcony and sits on one of the bigger chairs elegantly. The scar across her face is somewhat even more piercing as the morning light lands on her and her white hair. The fluffy tail moves in a way that seems to imply her interest and curiosity.

"Against my better judgment, I have decided to trust you, feral one," she starts with it. The look she makes signifies how important the decision is to her, "I will be the only lynthari you talk to or work with. I will help you deal with ongoing stuff and have other guild masters meet you so you guys can... talk things out," she starts.

So far, I really like everything and nod at her to continue.

"This isn't part of our deal, but lately, ants started leaving their territory so that will be part of the guild meeting," she puts some papers on the table nearby, "you can check the details a bit later. I just wanted to get it out of the way."

Hmm, I see. I bet it's something that happens once in a while, so I'm sure it's fine.

"This is something that hasn't happened ever since one of the calamity wars that happened a few hundred years ago, so make sure to give it some thought."

Hmm, I see. Very weird indeed.

"As for the killing of the Living Tree. I will need to know how you plan to do it and an estimation of when. It's something I will keep to myself so there is no need to worry. Then we will talk about more details of our deal." Myrra smiles at me, and I can see that she doesn't trust me fully, but she is a gambler and decided to risk it.

The possible prize is just that irresistible to her.

"I won't tell you everything, but most of it. Plus, there are some things I still need to learn and practice to make it fully work, but I gave it a lot of thought and I'm capable of that, given some time," I tell her.

Myrra nods, and then while resting her chin on her hands, she looks at me, "Tell me, feral one, why do you hate the Living Tree that much and want to kill it? I can sense it from you, I can see it in your eyes."

To that question, I don't answer and only return her a blank stare. But it's not that special. I think it's a calamity I have the highest chance of killing right now, and there is so much to gain from looting the old capital.

Then there is one reason. A single thing, really. The quest we received back then, after being trapped by the Calamity, was simple: Survive. There wasn't even a hint at the possibility of killing the tree or fighting with it. The system didn't mention it in the quest. It all clearly says that something like killing the tree back then wasn't even considered an option.

I don't like that and it pisses me off.

It all made me feel as if the system was looking down on me, telling me to run, hide, escape, crawl, and beg for my life after barely escaping.

That tree is going down no matter what.

I look at Myrra, who stood up and moved closer to me, her golden eyes observing every twitch of my face, and movement of my eyes.

"Oh my, you are so angry," she says softly, reaching with her hand towards my face. Yet she doesn't touch me and pulls it back.

Her eyes seem to be glowing, "I should be laughing at you, but it somewhat makes even me feel a twitch of fear when I see you like this. Feral one, you truly are interesting." The way she says it feels somewhat off. It's as if she still isn't taking me fully seriously and sees me as a cute angry kitten.

"Myrra, do you want to get stabbed again?" I ask her, much to her amusement, and she quickly moves back and sits down on the chair.

"Anyways, here's half of what I got for Lorven's dagger when I sold it back to him. He was also angry, but not in such a fun way," she smiles, showing her sharp canines.

Ignoring her remarks, we then spend some more time talking about how I plan to kill the Living Tree, which earns me a few curses from Myrra. I get called a weirdo, dumbass, liar, and dumbass again, and she even shamelessly asks me to give the items I plan to use to her, instead of wasting them on what she calls silly attempts.

Myrra is the dumb one, not me. I'm the smart one here, but as always, the world is holding us smart people down and we have to deal with such weirdos talking about useless things like common sense, probability, and the like.

As always, nothing ever goes according to plan, so I will prepare multiple of them. And then, when all of them inevitably fail because this is goddamn Hell difficulty, I will just bullshit my way through.

This is something I don't tell Myrra; she wouldn't like it.

"You could at least dress somewhat more presentable as our guild master," Tess pokes at me as we walk towards where the meeting with the guild masters of the big guilds is.

She herself is wearing Edwal's epic chest armor. It doesn't have any effects now that it's not connected to the Saint from the third floor, but it's extremely durable and conducts lightning.

Tess spent a lot of money, probably my money, to have it fixed to fit her body. And by a lot of money, I mean a LOT of money. Epic-rated items are extremely hard to work on.

Now that I think about it, was I robbed?

I want to say that, but Tess seems happy with it and, to be honest, the silver armor with simple ornaments and a nice design fits her really well. Why isn't she the guild master? I don't want to deal with annoying stuff.

I just sigh and continue. As always, held down by a cruel world, "If they complain about my clothing, I will beat them up," I answer Tess.

Obviously, I'm lying. I will do it even if they don't. I will find the badest, biggest guy in the room and beat him to show dominance.

First impressions are important, aren't they?

After passing by multiple guards and even some lynthari, we finally stop in front of a giant wooden door inlaid with silver metal filled with mana circuits. When they slowly, soundlessly open, Tess and I enter the room where Myrra sits on a chair in the corner, drinking some alcohol from a glass.

Inside the room are Obelia from Storm Brigade, Lorven from Voidwalkers, as well as one more man and woman, the guild masters of Obsidian Circle and Luminous Order. All of them are nicely dressed, with each having one more attendee, similar to me having Tess. Their eyes are anything but friendly, with the exception of Obelia.

I like it.

Feeling the pressure of their mana, I release some of mine as well, with my now-filled Mana Reservoir full to the brim.

Chapter 216: Five big guilds

All of them turn towards us, and I quickly examine the people in the room.

Obelia from Storm Brigade. Pale brown hair, silver eyes with circuits.

[Stormshaper - lvl ??]

Lorven from Veilwalkers. His face is hidden under the cape, yet his eyes glare at me hatefully.

[Veilstriker - lvl ??]

Thalen from Luminous Order. Older, friendly-looking red-haired man. His figure is thin, and there is a slight smile on his lips as he nods to greet me.

[Pulsebinder - lvl ??]

And Isola from Obsidian Circle. A short woman with pale skin and short black hair. As if bored, she just sits there and keeps yawning.

[Stoneheart - lvl ??]

“Why don't we make it short? Whoever wants to fight can attack me,” I throw into the room.

Obelia straight-up ignores it, while Lorven jumps to his feet, his shadowy mana already swirling around his body. The epic dagger he just bought from somewhere is already in his hand, unlike the last time.

Isola, a black-haired pale woman, laughs out loud and glances at me. Then, to the surprise of everyone else, she gets to her feet and stands by Lorven's side. The guild master of Veilwalkers seems to be the most surprised out of them. Isola stares at me, and I can see competitiveness glowing in her eyes.

Oh, she is one of these. A battle maniac. Did my challenge poke at her?

“Miss Myrra, is this really necessary?” the only healer in the room said, red-haired Thalen.

I do not even bother to look at Myrra to gauge her reaction. I already know what expression she is making.

After a short exchange, both guild masters attack me.

All the shadows around me become darker, and at once turn into spikes that attack me, even my own shadow.

I redirect most of my mana into a Reinforcement construct and let them hit my body and watch how they are unable to pierce my skin.

Already, Isola is in front of me, tattoos glowing on her forearms, the most intricate ones I have seen up until now. There is a slight haze around her fist as she punches at me.

Ignoring more shadowy spikes, I push myself away from her with a blast of kinetic energy and send a disrupting wave at the shadow near me as Lorven tries to use it to appear behind me.

Isola is once again in front of me, tanking a significantly strong blast of kinetic energy, mana roaring through her body, and her feet tearing apart the floor.

I let her grab my arm, and she pulls, almost surely wanting to tear it off my body.

Nothing happens.

Her eyes widen in surprise, and more mana fills her body, skills activating one after another, and she squeezes and pulls again.

My body doesn't move at all.

“Well, fuck,” she says just as my fist hits the middle of her face, sending her flying through the room.

My body is strengthened by nearly the entirety of my mana and some. To say shortly, I don't think I will lose easily to anyone when it comes to physical strength. Well, at least while I have my mana. If I don't, even Isabella might be too much for good ol' me.

I redirect some mana and send a pulse of disrupting attack through the room, making Lorven materialize. Then I continue sending pulse after pulse towards him, disrupting his attempts to hide or strengthen his body.

It reminds me of good old times when I was hunted by mage hunters on the third floor. Just this time it's me bullying someone.

Before I reach him, Lorven pulls all the shadows around him towards himself between my pulses. The shadows enter his body, his eyes turning pitch black. He slashes the dagger in his hand, and invisible attacks carve deep holes into the floor and walls as I continue to use [Perception] to detect them. A few projectiles I shoot at him, he cuts apart, the mana dissipating into nothing.

Meanwhile, Isola reaches me as well, this time mana covering the entirety of her skin, creating some sort of extremely dense, skin-tight barrier. She deflects my mana projectiles, tanks two blasts of kinetic energy pushes through the flames, and when she reaches me, she punches at me, using the strength of her entire body.

Just before the hit lands, I redirect all the mana into physical stats and grab her hand. This time I feel the attack and its terrifying strength; the woman surely having upgraded her strength attribute.

"What the fuck," she complains, and I punch the middle of her face again, sending her flying through the room once more.

Lorven adapts and starts shooting shadowy projectiles at me in between my pulses of [Resonance], while moving closer, holding an epic-graded dagger with a sickly aura along the blade.

Not worried, I step towards him, releasing a bit more of my mana and finally activating [Mana Domain].

"Miss Myrra, are you sure?" I hear somewhere in the background.

The mana around me becomes easier to control, and I keep creating projectiles, shooting them at Lorven from every side, and soon, overwhelmed, he spends most of the time deflecting them, and I can see that he wants to tire me out.

He is waiting for me to start saving my mana.

Amused somewhere in the back of my mind, I just release more mana and create more projectiles. They aren't that strong, almost as if someone is throwing pebbles at a normal human.

With full power and while aiming at the crotch.

Yup, that's me.

Lorven surprises me once more. A pulse of mana from him passes through my [Resonance], disabling it for a moment, and he disappears, appearing much closer, his body covered in shadowy armor that traces his body. His stab is deadly, quick, and direct, right at my mana heart.

A strong blast of kinetic energy tears off even more flooring and sends him flying away, where he lands on his feet. Before he can react more, I stand in front of him, and a single punch to his stomach sends him against the wall, groaning with pain.

The epic-graded dagger I grabbed from his hand while breaking a few of his fingers, I throw at Myrra's feet, "You can sell it again, same deal," I tell her as her tail moves in an amused manner.

"Okay, I'm ready, try again," I hear from behind me. It's Isola, the barrier around her changed now, tattoos glowing in a different color, and a big smile still on her face. Her face that bears no signs of wounds.

She charges at me again, and I redirect all my mana into Reinforcement and then pull some from Mana Reservoir, my epic passive. As her attack is about to reach me, I pull even more, powering my body to a terrifying degree and feeling the pressure it puts on me. Using any more mana than this will hurt my body.

Yet still, as her fist hits my palm, I feel the immense pressure behind the hit, a shockwave sent into the room. A shockwave created just by the strength of her body only.

"For fuck's sake," she sighs and closes her eyes as I'm about to punch her again.

That is when Myrra stops me, "I think this much is enough," she says shortly, and immediately I notice all the people in the room tense up.

The tall Lynthari stands up and slowly walks through the room, her steps echoing from the wall, and she drops the dagger in front of Lorven, who still holds his belly. She then checks on Isola

"More than this would be boring," Myrra says simply, yet even that seems to, if not terrify, then disturb some of the guild masters.

"As you said, Miss Myrra, that much is enough," Obelia says simply while looking at me in an asking manner.

I just nod, and she returns it, gesturing to the spot near her.

When I sit down, Tess stands behind me in a similar manner to the other attendees.

Isola passes by me, not hurt at all. The woman with short black hair smiles and there doesn't seem to be any ill intention behind it, nor does she seem angry at me.

"We will have to fight sometime," Isola says, and unlike her uninterested behavior from before, she feels almost friendly.

Should I agree to that? Having such a durable punching ba... such a durable sparring partner could allow me to test some skills.

"Sure," I tell her, and she hands me a small mana stone with a few addresses and ways to contact her.

Red-haired Thalen watches it from where he sits, almost like a grandpa having to deal with silly kids. Somehow it makes me want to punch him too. It's enough that I have to socialize with people, and then one of them looks at me like that? Even what Lorven does, I prefer more.

Lorven is an asshole and already tried to steal from me and kill me. Our relationship is clear. If he tries it again, I beat him up and steal his dagger to sell it. If he tries it on someone from my group, I kill him.

Simple, harmonious relationship with clear roles, as it should be.

But looking at Thalen and feeling his mana, I can say that he is quite a strong healer, and a hint of competitiveness rises up inside me. Lily should level up more, so I can show her off and wipe that smug smile off his face.

I feel Tess tapping on my shoulder, and I look up to her. "What?" I ask.

Tess leans to my ear and whispers, "You should limit your mana a bit; you might be scaring people."

Huh?

I start doing that and notice relief on the faces of the attendees.

Did they think I was threatening them? Is there some acceptable way of dealing with mana and rules that people in some circles follow?

Well, who cares, that's for Tess to learn and deal with. As my vice guild master, she will do so while I only show up once in a while.

"I think we should start with the Colony," Obelia says simply and explains.

Apparently, the ants started leaving their territory, not too far as of now, but they were seen by us and multiple other people watching the area outside of the anthills. Multiple people with detection skills were sent to the area, observing the ants and even checking if they weren't digging tunnels underground.

So far, nothing happened, so it's fine. It's totally fine.

The reason for their behavior was still not found, so the mystery lasts. The Colony and its ways are truly mysterious.

They talk about ants a bit longer, and I mostly only listen, leaning in my chair and cycling mana inside my body, doing shaping exercises with an orb hovering over my hands. A few people don't like it, but that's their problem.

Tess is listening well enough for both of us, and I notice that she holds a gravity anchor thing made from mystical metal or something. I already forgot its name. That makes me curious who got the cloak and the ring. Maybe I should ask a bit later.

"So Elydor is dead," Thalen says, and all eyes turn to me and then towards Obelia.

"Damned asshole, I already paid him to make an item for me, and then he just goes out and dies like that," Isola complains. She seems bored too and also creates a mana orb in front of her and starts copying what I am doing.

When she catches my gaze, she smiles at me and shoots the orb at my head with strong enough force to explode the head of a normal human.

I send my mana towards the orb and slow it down, holding it in front of me. [Mana Infusion] activates, and I fill it with my mana and take over, then I push even more with [Redistribution], and the orb turns dark blue. Finishing, I boost it with kinetic energy and shoot it back at Isola.

The woman tries to do the same thing I did, but the orb is too dense and moving too quickly, and it hits her shoulder, moving her and almost making her fall from the chair.

"We all knew Elydor; he got what was coming to him," is the only thing Obelia says, mostly ignoring what Isola and I are doing.

"I would like to know what happened to his and your expedition to the old capital and where you got so many Epic items from, Obelia," Lorven says from under his cape.

"I don't think that's your..." Obelia starts.

I interrupt her, "I killed Elydor and a few of his elites. Then I took the loot he got from the old capital."

The silence that ensues is almost deafening.

"I also called him an asshole," I whisper, to no reaction.

"Miss Myrra, what..." Thalen starts, but when he sees Myrra watching us with amused eyes and her swaying tail, he just gives up, "I guess there was a good reason for that?" he asks.

"Self-defense," I say.

"Ely was always kind of weak and an asshole," Isola sighs, "only his skills with inscribing were top-notch."

"Storm Brigade will be auctioning off one of the epic items we got from the expedition," Obelia says out of nowhere, and that turns all the attention back to her. Expressions of sheer surprise on every face.

Myrra's tail starts swinging quicker, and her ears perk up.

Chapter 217: Siblings

Obelia continues, "The reason is simple," our guild has no use for it, and we hope selling one of the epic-graded items we got will reduce the attention that we might be getting now because of it. We also hope people will turn their attention to the auction and will try to get the item that way instead of starting useless fights."

She explains it in her typical calm and logical manner.

"What kind of item is it?" Isola asks first.

"Spear," is the simple answer Obelia gives.

"What effects?" This time it's Lorven.

"That's all the information I was willing to give right now," the Storm Brigade guild master answers.

"What about you, newbie, are you selling some as well?" Isola asks me in an amused manner. Her face is telling that she already knows the answer.

"Elydor's wallet was quite full, so I'm not in need of cash," I tell her, and she laughs shortly.

"That reminds me, there was a rumor that you know how to kill the Living Tree, newbie. So how is it?" Isola rests her chin on the palms of her hands, and her eyes look at me like I'm some sort of interesting animal.

Just that simple sentence brings all the attention back to me.

"As you said, and heard from Myrra, I will kill the Living Tree," I dissipate the orb I was using to practice mana shaping and give them my full attention, "The deal is simple. You guys leave me and my guild alone for a few months so I don't have to deal with you and kill you," at that Isola chuckles, "In that time, I will prepare all I need. Obelia and her guild will help me use the array to get near the old capital and disappear. After that, it's all up to me, and I will either die or the calamity will fall."

"Forgive me for not fully believing that you would be capable of doing that," Thalen says.

That's when I decide to use my trump card. A weirdo sitting in the corner, "Myrra trusts me. Oh, and I believe you know the consequences of letting out anything that was said here today, so keep it to yourself" I say, having no idea what these consequences are.

Thankfully, it seems they know, and I see a few flashes of fear.

Damn, Myrra, what did you do?

"That still doesn't give us anything of worth," this time it's Lorven who says that.

"I think an old capital without the Calamity defending it sounds quite interesting, doesn't it?" Myrra finally joins the conversation and stands. As she walks around, it's clear that she is towering over anyone in the room, and her golden eyes shine.

"The Feral one isn't too good at this kind of stuff, so allow me to continue and explain. It isn't too difficult to understand. The calamity will fall, and the Feral one and his guild will have a day or two to go through the city and get themselves something nice. They could end up with more epic items, or just some trinkets. No one knows," she stops in front of the table and shows her canines, "After that, I and a few of my reliable friends will join too and try to find something pretty for ourselves. A few days will pass like that, and we will let you guys in."

"Miss Myrra, that might be nice and all, but during the first few days, you and his guild most likely get all the good items," Lorven complains, and unlike when he talked to us, his voice now is full of respect.

"Young Lorven, I think Obelia can tell you how big the old capital is and how difficult it was for them to get into the place they... visited. Traps, rooms covered in metal that shields detection skills. Missing map that won't allow us to find the best locations. The sheer size of the city. I wouldn't be surprised if it takes years to just superficially search the city."

The greed that appears in their eyes is fun to watch. Even calm Obelia and Thalass, who tries to act dignified, show it.

But I think it's quite understandable. In the entire Virelia, there are only less than 20 epic items. Only so many of such items are in a city of hundreds of thousands. Each item has a long history and legends said about it. Just how amazing it would be to get just one of them.

Another round of talking starts, and I filter it out already. Bored, I once again start mana-shaping an orb in front of me and cycling mana through my body.

This time it takes a bit longer. They complain, they make deals. They offer more help, they ask if it's even possible. Then they ask to be let into the capital much sooner.

In the end, it's Myrra who gets annoyed, and the sound she makes almost sounds like a hiss. After that, it goes much smoother, and then we land on details.

In exchange for being let into the city a bit sooner, they supply me with materials I might need and deal with middle and small-sized guilds that could look into annoying us. Not a bad deal, especially when my main objective is killing the Calamity and not the items inside the city.

When we leave the room after a few hours, I'm tired. It's as if I fought bus-sized ants for multiple days in a row. Hell, maybe even longer. Nothing drains me more than useless chatter.

"Tess, do you have time?" Obelia and her attendee walk by our side, and after Tess agrees, they split up, and I'm left alone with Obelia's attendee.

"I'm Jenna," the woman greets me.

"Nathaniel," I tell her, and the silence ensues.

It seems to make Jenna nervous, but I just sit on the bench nearby, yawning against my will. Damn, did anyone maybe have an energy drain skill and used it on me?

This time it doesn't take much longer, and Tess returns, and Jenna disappears to Obelia while waving to us.

"Congratulations on your apprenticeship?" I ask Tess.

"Thanks, and yes. I already got something to look into," she waves a small notepad at me, "Notes made by Obelia herself. Some experiments she made, findings, history, and such stuff. Mainly focused on Primordial lightning."

"Interesting."

"I will let you read it later," Tess says with a smile, as if reading my mind.

"Sounds good," I reply.

While we walk by the city, she also asks me, "How is your plan with selling coordinates doing?"

"It's more difficult than expected, but in a few months we should be done. Tess, I tell you, if the system shop tries to scam us somehow, I will get so mad."

"Don't jinx it then," she pokes at me and quickly leaves to buy something from the merchant nearby. When she comes back, she hands me a small bag with some sort of dried fruit, "Maya said you might like this one. It apparently tastes similar to the one you liked on the third floor."

I taste it, and it seems that Maya was right. The fruit is delicious. Should I give Maya a rare item or two? Finding such a tasty snack should be worth that much.

"Do you also have nightmares, Tess?" I ask her after a bit of silence.

The young blonde stares at me for a moment and then shakes her head, "I still don't like places that remind me of tunnels, but I'm much better than some others." As if knowing what is going through my head, she continues, "You have to understand, twenty days down there took a toll on everyone. Aaron and Dennis sometimes wake up screaming. I saw Kim crying a few times. Maya's hands started shaking when we went to hunt in the old mines."

Both of us stop and Tess sighs, "Sophie is helping a lot, so I hope you don't hold it against her or look down on people who accepted her help."

"Not really, it's just..." I stop.

"Yes, I know." Tess answers simply.

We pass a few streets and when we start walking uphill towards our house, Tess slows down and asks, "Nat, how... how was your sister doing, you know, before the tutorial happened?"

"Oh, I think you only met Victoria once or twice, so you don't know her that well. She will do well anywhere and it doesn't matter what is happening around her. So it's stupid to worry about her."

"I see, and your mom?" This time Tess asks that even more carefully.

"Hm? She still hates me, obviously."

Flashback: Nathaniel Gwyn, 16 years old

The door to the small room opens carefully. They open so slowly that it takes a good minute for them to open enough for a figure to walk in. Afterward, it takes even longer for them to close.

When they click, that's when the light turns on, revealing a young woman sitting on the edge of the bed. Black hair that is carefully brushed falls to the middle of the back of the woman who looks around twenty years old.

Her expression is blank as she stares at her younger brother, "So you did it, Nat," she states simply, for a moment glancing at her brother's hands that have a little bit of blood on them and scratched joints.

Nathaniel hides them from her sight and moves into the room, sitting on the bed opposite Victoria and returning her gaze, "Our father... Rob... won't be coming back home," he says in a similarly simple way his sister did.

The silence that ensues is interrupted only by the sounds of cars moving on the road outside the window. It's late at night, so there aren't too many of them, and light shines into the room every time a car passes by.

"I see," Victoria says.

"I don't care if mom hates me."

"You are lying."

"I did it for her, for us. He won't hurt her ever again. I don't care if she hates me for that," he repeats again as if trying to persuade himself.

"That's how you are."

"Yes, that's me."

The silence that ensues is even longer.

"But Nat, you made a mistake," Victoria stands up, a small smile on her face. It's a gentle and loving smile. At the same time, police car sirens sound far in the distance, slowly getting closer.

Victoria sits on the bed next to Nathaniel and hugs him tightly, kissing the top of his head, "You poor, hurt little soul," she whispers gently, "You couldn't do it, right?"

"I beat him, Vic, I broke his bones, I made him bleed. I forced him to swear he won't ever come back. I even used Tess as an alibi." Nathaniel says quietly.

"Tess will hate you if she finds out." Victoria leans onto him, "You still saw him as your father and couldn't do it, right?" Victoria hugs him even tighter, "You still remember him being nice when you were young, and you still think of him as your father. That's how you are," she repeats, "If you like someone once, you are way too forgiving to that person."

The sound of sirens is slightly louder, yet the boy doesn't notice it. They are still far in the distance.

Victoria stands up and walks in front of the mirror, "That's why even beating him was so hard for you. The thought of being hated by mom as well, and you spent a few hours walking around to calm down."

Slowly fixing her clothes and hair she continues, "While you were gone, Nat, our father changed his mind and decided to come back. To punish you, mom, and myself for what you did," she says in a calm tone.

Nathaniel just stares at her, unable to say anything.

"That's why I had to kill him," she admits simply, and then sighs slowly, "You should really try to control your emotions a bit more. How many times did I tell you to wait until I find a good job and take you and mom away from him?"

The police sirens now sound louder, and Nathaniel finally notices them, guilt and realization appearing on his face, "No..." he barely gets out.

"It will be a bit difficult, but I will try to tell the police that I beat him as well, but I will try. As for his... passing, self-defense will be a bit hard as I went a little bit overboard while... dealing with him. I guess I also should improve my control," there isn't even a hint of regret in her eyes.

"Vic, I will tell them. I will tell them it was me who did it."

"That's enough. Do I look to you like I don't know what I am doing?" With her clothes fixed, she stops in front of her brother, "Nat, it's you and me. No one else in the whole world can be trusted," she reaches and ruffles his hair, "I'm your older sister and I will protect you, so just wait a few years, okay? I can spin it into second-degree murder, and for that, I should get maybe ten years? I will behave nicely, so most likely even less." She doesn't seem to be too bothered.

At that time, lights start flashing outside the window, blue and red ones, and policemen start shouting something. Thalia, their mom, also wakes up and starts shouting and trying to get into the room that Victoria locked.

"Mom is silly but not stupid, so she will most likely know and hate you as well, but still, check on her once in a while, okay?" Victoria says.

The sound of a broken door sounds inside the apartment, and more shouting ensues.

Victoria moves to unlock the door when Nathaniel says something, "Vic, you, me, and mom. No one else matters."

"No Nat, that's for me. You do whatever makes you happy."

Chapter 218: Two months later

Almost two months passed, and during that time, I went hunting a few times, but not too much, so my level increased by a little bit. It could be even less, but at some point, I got into a big fight.

Who wouldn't get angry, having to fight against a big group of invisible snakes somewhere in a jungle-like forest? Well, I kind of burned it down, so it's not that much of a forest anymore.

And less than five days remain until I can enter Beyond once again.

My status also looks nice as heck.

Name:Nathaniel Gwyn

Difficulty:Hell

Floor: 4 - Waning Realm

Time left until forced return:4y 130d 16h 21m 16s

Traits (1/3):Mana Circuit (Passive)

Lvl 170

Strength: 83

Dexterity: 86

Constitution: 221

Mana (Stage 1/3 - Vast Mana): 650 + 650

Primary Class:Focused Channeler (epic)

Sub-class:[Initiate of Pride]

Active skills:

Focus (Dual Focus Consolidation) - Lvl 39

Mana Manipulation (Advanced Mana Manipulation) - Lvl 41

Perception - Lvl 39

Redistribution (Symbiotic Transference) - Lvl 38

Armament - Lvl 36

Mana Infusion - Lvl 35

Resonance - Lvl 31

Mana Domain - Lvl 11

Tether - Lvl 9

Constructs:

Reinforcement (Construct)

Kinetic Mana Heart (Construct)

Mana Regulator (Construct)

Mana Sovereignty Mantle (Construct)

Passive skills:

Cerebral Harmony (rare)

Mana-Fortified Resilience (rare)

Pyrokinetic Resurgence (rare)

Mana Reservoir (epic)

Tokens:

Beyond Difficulty entrance token

Shards:2990

I did another round of active tempering that got me only 30 stats in constitution, 10 in strength, and 10 in dexterity. As Lissandra said before, the effect is getting weaker. I'm not complaining; even that much is amazing, but I almost died back then. I got really annoyed with tempering not working that well, so I again turned off my passives and constructs and even reached into Mana Reservoir.

A totally unexpected incident required the help of Lily. It took a while afterward to regrow my arm that somehow... well, it exploded.

My skills increased, [Focus] by only 1 level, and [Mana Manipulation] by one as well. That leaves [Focus] and [Perception] at a bottleneck to level 40.

Most noticeably, [Mana Infusion] leveled 4 times, [Resonance] three times, and [Mana Domain] 4 levels. [Tether] also leveled a bit.

I also doubled my shards from selling some stuff into the shop and from some side quests I got while hunting.

My not-too-much-higher level is annoying, but the growth of my skills will be worth stalling on that front. The sheer amount of work I did is amazing, if I have to say so, and I slept only 2-3 hours each night, spending most of the day working on stuff.

At some point, there was another incident where Lily used [Disintegration] on my door to force me out of my room while I was in the middle of inscribing a mana stone, which caused it to explode. After healing me, Lily said her [Rejuvenation] leveled up, so that's at least something.

After that, I started experimenting with mana stones in the living room, every night, in the company of others. As always, I ignored them most of the time, only rarely joining the conversation, but it has become something like a habit for our group, sitting in the group and talking about their day, successes, and annoyances.

I have learned that I am not the only one improving. With Tess and Hadwin having a shitload of information, they set up a great regimen for everyone, from training to hunting. Apparently, if you have a lot of money, you can even pay other people to help you create some really nice regimen. Who would have known?

The regimen were set to help members of Group 4 improve their skills or work on their weaknesses, sometimes hunting only to level as quickly as possible, sometimes putting their lives in danger to keep them sharp.

I went through a few of them, and they are works of art, to be honest. A lot of time was spent on them, and some professionals helped as well, especially Obelia and her guild that is trying to keep Tess close, singing praises about Tess's Primordial lightning.

It's annoying. I have two Primordial energies, so why is no one praising me?

New equipment was bought or ordered to be made, and tailored. Once again, paid by what's probably my money, and to be honest, I have no idea how much I have. I just know I'm rich, and Tess and Haddy deal with that instead of me.

From what I know, they could be stealing from me like crazy and not going to hunt, but on expensive holidays or whatever rich people like to do.

It's night, and I'm once again sitting in the living room. This time, I'm taking a short break and just waiting for Sophie to finish examining the coordinates I inscribed into the mana stone I gave her. I have a feeling that we are getting really close.

Min-Jae taps my shoulder, and I turn around and look at him standing behind the couch I sit on.

"Level 110," he says with a big smile on his face, "When Tess lets me focus on leveling instead of on my skills, I will leave Dennis and Aaron in the dust!" the young boy shows off.

As always, he is waiting for praise or a piece of advice. He is also getting a bit cocky. Just a few days ago, I heard him saying that he might be able to beat my level if I "continue to sit on my ass and do nothing," yup, that's what he said.

Little jerk.

"Tess, Min-Jae said your hair is pretty today," I say out loud and lean back to watch as Min-Jae's face turns pale and red at the same time. Tess pretends she didn't hear it, and the twins instantly smell weakness and attack Min-Jae, making fun of him.

Biscuit starts woofing, to which Isabella starts shouting something as well.

I stand up and move towards Tess, who sips on a drink she seems to enjoy lately. There is weird blue smoke coming out of it, and she says it's apparently really tasty and reminds her of coffee a little bit.

When I sit next to her, I activate [Resonance], which blocks the sound of the group in the living room, and turn to her.

Tess has a different haircut from before. If I'm not wrong, this is the second in the past month or two, and she says she is enjoying trying new ones. When I look around, most of us are similar. How to say it, they look more civilized. Nice tailor-made fitting clothes, expensive haircuts, smelling of luxurious soaps. Some even paid tailors to create custom clothes that resemble those on Earth and apparently even made some mana stones by selling the ideas.

"This really doesn't feel like Hell difficulty," I say to Tess.

"I know what you mean," she sips on her drink and then gives me her full attention, "I think it's just because we are trying to enjoy it as much as we can before things go to shit again."

"We might have jinxed it right now."

Tess laughs shortly, "We did, didn't we?? But Nat, do you still want to continue to other floors, even after seeing how this floor is? I believe we can slowly kill one Calamity and then just not use the entrance. Level up, kill other Calamities. It would be easy enough, I believe."

Even though she says that I can see that she is not serious. Tess is in some ways similar to me. She has tasted the power the system offers her, mana flowing through her body and lightning bending to her will.

No, Tess would be itching to leave, to continue to higher floors.

So I do not answer, and even that is enough for us to understand each other. The silence that ensues is comfortable.

Well, until Lily steps closer, passing through the field I created that blocks sounds. Before she says anything, I stand up and pinch her nose.

Lily also changed a bit during that time. Her left arm is still pale white, as well as mine, and she refuses to change it. Her hair is a bit shorter now, and she is a bit taller. She says she didn't mess with her height and it's just how she grows, but I have my theories.

Her [Rejuvenation] improved greatly and apparently, she got another skill but refuses to share its name with me, as well as her subclass.

Surprisingly, she doesn't change her mind even if I offer to sell her Biscuit.

Not having anything more valuable, I can only give up and let her keep her secrets.

Lily can now regenerate missing limbs much faster, and apparently, she is using something similar to my Active Tempering to make her body stronger and muscles tougher. She says she increased her physical stats this way.

Unlike Active Tempering, her version that uses her skill to change her body takes much longer. But slowly and surely, she is gaining some free stats.

Being adult-like, I am not jealous at all.

I let go of Lily and send her to Tess so they can talk about training.

"Lily is so silly!" Isabella says while passing by me on her way to grab some sweets from the kitchen. Over her head, a blue fire orb hovers as she continues to shape it and make it denser.

Currently, the orb is filled enough to explode the entire house and take a big chunk of the street with it.

That's my girl!

It was my idea, obviously, and Izzy seems to love it. Especially the name of the orb that I came up with. Us, two fire enjoyers, call it the ANTomic bomb, to her amusement.

Sophie doesn't like it, and apparently, Izzy is allowed to train that way only when I am around so I can disrupt the orb in case something happens.

It's silly, a little bit of danger will only make her improve faster! Maybe we should get her an epic passive a bit later. Something similar to my Mana Reservoir to store her fire. Unfortunately, epic passives start at 8 thousand shards and much more for some of them so it might take a while.

I also found out what Izzy's subclass is and bought information on Sophie's.

Isabella picked one of the seven Blights, Kindness. She refused to tell me more about the effects as I was unable to sell Biscuit anymore. Sophie went with Greed.

It looks like I'm still the only one with Pride, even after talking to others in the community who were willing to share their subclass.

Surely my subclass is the best one! Just looking at how much it helps me to improve my control over skills and class, I can say it must be one of the best when it comes to improving personal power, and I'm curious to see what higher stages of it will prove.

Initiate, adept, and master. The difference should be huge.

I lean over Maya and take some dried fruit from the bowl in front of her while she fiddles with some musical instrument on her lap.

She has been nice lately and supplies me with nice snacks, so I ask, "How is your practice going?" I gesture at the instrument, similar to a violin.

"I used to be really good ten years ago back on Earth, so I believe I can do well here," she says.

From past conversations, I even know she hired a teacher in Virelia who helps her learn to play.

"What happened that you stopped playing?" I ask.

"I have learned that a few of my friends constantly called me a fat bitch behind my back, so I dropped it and started going to the gym," she turns to me and smiles. Black hair, dark skin, and a figure that only proves what she said.

Even though Maya is close to thirty, she starts to look younger with each passing week. It's something that is even more noticeable on Haddy. It's not like they are turning to teenagers, but their skin looks better, and some wrinkles are disappearing. Not too much, but if you look deeply enough, there is a difference.

“Gym can be really addicting,” I tell her.

“Yes, after two years, I called them fat bitches and made their boyfriends leave them. Then I ditched the guys before they got what they wanted,” she smiles even wider, “But it's as you said, the gym is really addicting,” she laughs shortly.

After saying a thing or two more, I quickly leave.

Heck, even Maya is scary. All Hell difficulty people are scary. I am the most normal one here.

Nommimg on the same snacks that I got from vengeful Maya, I reach Hadwin, who is diligently taking care of his armor and epic sword from the 3rd floor that I gave him. His armor is only upper rare grade, but not bad at all, and the older man takes care of his equipment extremely carefully.

It's something I do not understand that much. Having his [Strengthening], I would just walk around without armor at all. I saw his fight a few times during hunts, and he is really extremely durable, and rarely do enemies draw blood from him, even when they are at a higher level.

Hadwin has already used his attribute upgrade token on constitution, and that made him even tougher. The cheeky ex-policeman even asked me for help, and he learned to use his [Disruption] to create a barrier of disruptive mana on his skin.

Instead of using it to directly attack, he creates a disruptive barrier that reaches only a little bit over his skin. That allows him to ignore plenty of magic-based attacks, and when he attacks, it also disrupts the enemy's defense magic.

When I finally get to create a construct for him, he will become even scarier. His only weakness is a somewhat weak attack, but with a strong item that he uses [Strengthening] on, he becomes quite cool.

And that item is the epic sword that I gave him! Epic-grade weapons cost around 4 thousand shards in the system shop, and even though this one isn't too strong, its effect was lost after all, it still is nice of me to share it, isn't it?

Old Haddy is even taking some swordsmanship lessons in Virelia and apparently, he has a talent for it.

“Nat, I think I got it,” I hear out of nowhere. It's Sophie's voice, and when I turn to her, there is a big happy smile on her face.

There is no fear towards me in it anymore, and Sophie looks happier and more comfortable than ever.

She shows me the mana stone I gave her, “I finally did it! Finally!” There is excitement and happiness from success in her voice.

It looks like after months of hard work, we can finally try to sell coordinates to the shop and get ourselves a huge amount of shards.

Just in time to buy an epic passive before the 2nd Beyond trial.

Noname -Hey, weirdo, any advice on the second Beyond trial?

Savant -Nope, just don't die.

Noname -Simple as that?

Savant - And maybe invest some stats into your brain.

Noname -It didn't help you.

Savant -Screw you.

To make it hurt, I do not answer and just close the window, absolutely sure it will annoy Savant more this way.

I look at the mana stone in my hand and then at Sophie, "Okay, let's sell the coordinates."

Chapter 219: Selling Coordinates

"Are you sure?" I move back to the living room and sit on the couch opposite Sophie, who still holds the mana stone in her hand.

"Yes!" Sophie is still smiling brightly and says it without any hesitation. She seems confident.

"Okay, let's do it then," I tell her and open the system window, "I want to sell..." I start when Sophie interrupts me.

"Wait! Wait, wait, wait!" she nearly screams and stands up, putting her hand on me, "What are you doing?" her voice is urgent, nearly scared.

"What else? I'm going to sell the coordinates. Don't you remember, that was the deal," I tell her.

"I know! But right away?" she hesitates, somewhat unsure.

"There is no need to wait, and you just said you remembered the coordinates, so what's the problem?"

"I could screw it up somewhere, what if I'm wrong and I made a mistake. What if we are wrong..." she pauses and looks at me.

Ohhh, so mindblender Missy is getting cold feet.

So weak!

"I see, so allow me to ask. Are you sure you did it right and you tested if it works by putting the coordinates into the mana stone and then checking the 'pocket' in your mind?" I ask simply.

"Obviously, I did! Multiple times, over and over again until I was absolutely sure."

Sophie can be surprisingly timid and unconfident at times when she is not defending her little sister. But I trust her when it comes to this. Over the weeks we've spent together working on coordinates, I've come to recognize her skill. When it comes to handling mana and inscribing, Sophie is really good, and that was confirmed even by her creating inscribed mana stones to sell to the system in her spare time.

So there is no need to hesitate.

"Sell coordinates," I say and amusedly watch Sophie's horrified expression.

Do you really want to sell the following item for 10,000 shards?

Eladore Coordinates: The precise address to the world of Eladore. While they provide a pathway, travelers must be wary of Eladore's inherent and man-made defenses against intrusion.

Yes/No

Okay, let's not panic! Everything is according to plan!

So Lissandra's world is called Eladore. It somewhat feels weird to learn that.

And why the heck is there so much? Is this real? I expected a bit less as most of the coordinates start at 20,000 and even more, and when selling to the system, the stuff usually goes for 5-10% of their shop price.

We didn't create these coordinates, so in the past few days, I was worried that I might have big eyes back then, thinking I would scam the system shop a little bit.

Sure, I saw most of the coordinates for 20 thousand with some coordinates for 100 thousand and a few even for 200 thousand.

So there are two options.

Option one, the coordinates to Lissandra's world are worth 100-200 thousand shards, and we are selling them for 5-10 percent as we usually sell items gained inside the tutorial.

Option number two, they are worth around 20 thousand and are sold for 10 thousand because they are considered as something we "made," even though I only gave them to Sophie and then remembered them again.

Well, that's for later. Future Nathaniel can deal with that, really, screw that weirdo.

"Sell coordinates," I quickly say before the system changes its mind, and the weirdest feeling hits me, and I feel lightheaded for a bit.

After a moment, I try to check the coordinates I used to remember, and they are gone, totally gone. It's the weirdest feeling. I just can't remember them.

I check my shards.

Shards:12,990

Huhuh, I'm rich! Suck it, system and Cockroachsandra!

"The coordinates are gone from the mana stone," Sophie says and throws it away. Then she pulls out another one and starts inscribing it while I wait patiently and carefully observe as she does so.

When she finally hands me the mana stone, I look at what is inside and learn it again. It's close as if inscribing it into my mind, and soon I know them again. Or at least I think I do. I can't remember how they felt before, so it's hard to compare.

To test it, I also pull out another mana stone and inscribe what I learned, wasting a huge amount of money in the process as it ruins the mana stone as currency.

When I hand it to Sophie, she starts comparing it with what she inscribed and remembered.

"It's the same," she sighs, relief clear in her voice, "It actually worked."

"Go on, sell them," I tell her, and she does so.

"I want to sell coordinates," she says, and I see her eyes moving, reading the notification.

She opens her green eyes so wide open it looks like they will fall out, which makes little Isabella laugh and hit Sophie's arms a few times while doing so.

"Ten thousand..." she sighs out, "sell. I want to sell." She says hurriedly and then also acts confusedly for a moment, checking her mind for the coordinates.

Once again, I inscribe the mana stone and have her learn the coordinates. When we confirm everything, I say again, "I want to sell coordinates."

Unable to sell the same coordinates twice.

A simple message pops out unsurprisingly. Well, I guess I would have wanted way too much.

I shake my head, and Sophie also looks unsurprised, yet a bit disappointed, but I am already thinking about what poor soul from group 4 I will bully and force to learn and sell coordinates.

Aaron, Dennis, and Min-Jae all have [Mana Manipulation], or maybe Maya? [Focus] could help her. Tess is a musclehead who only cares about her Primordial lightning and [Psychokinesis]. Haddy is even worse. Isabella is too impatient, and Lily... well, she is also a musclehead in a similar way to Tess, even though she seems to be making some progress with the epic crown from the 3rd floor.

"What should I buy?" Sophie asks me, and only then do I remember the entirety of our deal.

All the shards she gets she will spend to buy what I want in exchange for a clean slate with me and, by extension, with others that might follow my “lead”.

When I look to the side, I see Isabella looking at me with big green eyes. She doesn’t say anything. She just stares at me... menacingly. As always, her [Empathy] probes the feelings of people around her.

She isn’t pushy, nor asking for anything. She just looks seriously curious, waiting for my decision.

So annoying! I know. I KNOW!

It would feel... weird to just take all the shards, even if that's the deal we made. Although she also improved her skills thanks to experimenting with me, it would feel annoying.

Haaaa, that's why I don't like dealing with people.

I sigh, “You can keep half of the shards,” I tell her, immediately realizing how much it is. With a bit more saving and adding to the ones she got from side quests, she can get an epic passive. Or, immediately, she can buy an epic item.

In reaction to my words, Isabella stands up and walks in front of me, a big smile on her face and her hands shyly behind her back. Her skill is still connected to me.

She is just a kid, barely ten, and the spitting image of her sister. Same tanned skin, black hair, a similar nose, and only her eyes are a bit lighter in color.

“What?” I say, trying to get some annoyance into my voice.

That makes her smile even more, being still connected to my feelings. Then the little girl hugs me and whispers in my ear, “Thank you, Nathaniel.”

She quickly lets go and rushes to her sister, immediately telling her what to spend 5 thousand shards on.

Meanwhile, to feel manly once again, I put my legs on the table and start loudly chewing on some snacks that I stole from Maya. Should I also burp or whatever manly men do?

I ignore the weird looks Sophie is giving me.

It takes some time, but in the end, Sophie buys something, and a small egg appears in front of her. A simple white egg, covered in circuits, and inside it, I can feel the heartbeat of a living being.

Before I can ask anything, Isabella shouts, "Not telling!"

Tsk. I'm sorry, Biscuit, I might have no other choice.

Sophie smiles at me apologetically but also doesn't say anything. What a siskon.

"Keep 5 thousand shards for now. I don't need anything right now," I tell her.

Unfortunately, she can't transfer them for me to buy another epic passive, only maybe some items, or mana stones, or materials. I already have an idea of what I need from her to buy, but I will deal with it after the Beyond second trial.

First, I need to spend my 13 thousand shards.

I activate my domain, and as it reaches my room, I place an anchor there and then use [Tether] to get there. The process is mostly smooth and much faster than before, and I sit in the chair and open the window. Once again, I scroll through the passives.

I've already done it so many times, yet I do it again. The list is long, very long, yet I think there are some epic passives that do not show for me. I confirmed it by others having significantly different rare passives than I do, so maybe it's slightly personalized to some extent. There is nothing I can do about it, so I once again open my three current favorites.

There are more passives I would like and even more than these three, but I think the ones I picked can help me the most right now.

Passive Skill: Phoenix Embrace (epic):The user harnesses thermal energy, channeling controlled bursts of heat to accelerate the healing process, using the primordial energy's transformative nature to heal their wounds.

Passive Skill: Mana Affinity (epic): The user has a natural bond with ambient mana, subtly drawing it towards them in places of high magical concentration.

Passive Skill: Arcane Resilience (epic):The user's body has adapted to resist the side effects of powerful spells, significantly reducing the physical toll of casting.

Phoenix Embrace is a stronger version of my current passive.

Passive Skill: Pyrokinetic Resurgence (rare) -The user taps into pyrokinetic energies to fuel their regeneration. By channeling controlled bursts of heat, they expedite the healing process, using fire's transformative nature to mend their wounds.

It sounds stronger and it's more connected to thermal energy instead of just some fire. The healing effect could be much stronger as it's one of the Primordial energies and should be more "pure" as Obelia once said.

Arcane Resilience could allow me to experiment more with my mana and maybe once again try to create the black mana that I created with the help of [Focus] and didn't die only thanks to the saint's healing aura.

Mana Affinity could allow me to delve deeper into absorbing ambient mana. I don't think this passive is strong; it's probably the weakest out of the three, but when thinking more about the future it could become much stronger.

I already started experimenting with the Ethercrystal shortsword, the epic item I got from Elydor, but I have yet to actually absorb external mana or turn it into my own.

Unfortunately, all of these passives seem to be the better ones as each of them costs around ten thousand shards while most epic passives start at eight thousand, so there is no way I get enough shards that soon to buy any.

Hmm, maybe if I go all in and sell everything I have and steal some other stuff.

Actually, should I do that? It doesn't sound like a bad idea. Yet, something stops me from doing that. That sounds like a lot of trouble for a low amount of shards and we already have enough with ants appearing further and further away from their territory. A few days ago, they even caught some of the ant scouts halfway between their territory and Virelia.

We still have to learn why they actually do that, but I'm already worried that it will forever stay a mystery. The colony and its ways truly are mysterious.

I just wish Tess would stop looking at me like that.

Once again, I realize that I am just putting off a decision that I was unable to make over a few weeks. All three passives are just that good and I already know how I could change my fighting style a bit to fully utilize it.

Okay, let's pick the passive.

Chapter 220: Congratulations on reaching a milestone

You only live once as someone smart said, so taking care of yourself is the best you could do. Making sure your body is healthy is a must. And how better to do that here in Hell difficulty than by obliterating your enemies before they can hurt you?

I pick Arcane Resilience (Epic):The user's body has adapted to resist the side effects of powerful spells, significantly reducing the physical toll of casting.

I will fuck up anyone before they get close to me and be able to hurt me, yup.

My genius sometimes terrifies me.

Black mana thing, just wait! Soon! From experiencing it on the 3rd floor, I know I'm still far from ready, but I'm getting there!

10,958 shards disappear and a new passive appears in my stats. Now that I think about it, I could buy more passives, rare ones, but I think it will be a better idea to start saving up. I'm sure the second round of Beyond will give me some juicy rewards and probably some shards as well.

There's also a side quest that I got some time ago.

Side quest: Reach level 200

Reward: 2nd Trait

Yup, finally the second trait. Seeing how amazingly well Mana Circuit serves me, the second one surely will be strong, especially with the fact that traits can be strengthened up to three times and I already strengthened my trait once.

Another side quest that appeared is this.

Side quest: Get five skills to level 40

Reward: Skill upgrade token

Even the side quests are getting harder. Breaking through the bottleneck to level 40 isn't easy at all, and even after all this time, I have only a single skill over level 40, [Mana Manipulation].

Sure, I still plan to sell the skill upgrade token for a nice amount of shards. Or maybe I just use it for some of my less important skills. My decision to not upgrade my most important skills still lasts, and I think I'm getting better and better, the decision showing also at how easily I got rid of Elydor, damn, I miss the guy. I wish I could see him again.

I stretch and yawn and check my body. The new passive is already changing and affecting it, but as often, and similarly, with stats, it isn't an immediate change but a slow, gradual one. Looking at the progress, a day or two should be enough, just in time for a few days of practice and testing before Beyond.

In a good mood, I open the community.

Noname (Hell, group 4) -Mana is the best stat.

AnotherOneHere (Hell, TheGuild) - I don't know, I prefer not dying.

StrongestOne (Hell, group 4) -Skill issue!

Min-Jae joins in and stands by my side. Nice one.

Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing) -Noname, at this point I'm sure your brain is replaced with mana.

Savant (Hell, Alone) - That would be possible only if he had any to begin with.

BenDover (Hell, IDK) - Nice one, Savant! Also, fuck you, Noname.

My favorite member of the community still seems lovable as always. He and his group also came to the 4th floor some time ago. His IDK group and group called TheGuild which lost one member on the 3rd floor.

Noname (Hell, group 4) -Tournament when?

Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing) - Probably never? To be honest, it's getting annoying.

BenDover (Hell, IDK) - Such a shame. I would really like to see you with my own eyes, Noname.

Notification! Congratulations on reaching a milestone, the required number of groups has reached the 4th floor in all the difficulties.

Preparation for the Community tournament is in process!

All the groups from all the difficulties within the 5th round of the Tutorial from planet Earth will be able to join.

The tournament will start at the end of the year one in the Tutorial.

Then the notification disappeared.

Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing) -Ooooooh, shit. Hehehe.

Brainiac (Hell, WhiteWing) - Hey, Nname, as we said before, the moment the tournament is announced, I will apologize for everything, right? Do you remember that? So sorry, dude! I will make sure to buy you something nice. Hehehe.

AnotherOneHere (Hell, TheGuild) - Wow, finally!

StrongestOne (Hell, group 4) -OMG!

Hadwin (Hell, group 4) -I just joined, did you guys also get the notification?

I don't say anything else and just close the community after seeing no reaction from BenDover. Somehow, for some unknown reason, my mood is even better now.

Just a bit over 4 months. Wait for me.

I continue to stare at Maya and can't help but think of how dumb I am. How the hell did I not think of that?

She stands in front of me, a big wide smile on her face, and I have to look up to see into her eyes.

The young, dark-skinned woman is currently surrounded by her [Armament], but it's not as it usually is. No, this armor that surrounds her body is much bigger than usual. Maya is three heads taller than me right now; her [Armament] is big and bulky, looking more like some sort of mech or power armor. The mana is of a darker shade of blue than usual, and I can sense that it's powered by a few rare items she bought.

She uses mana batteries that are able to store mana. There are some losses, and efficiency is worse, and they are really, really expensive. But as rich as I am, Maya doesn't seem to care as she bought multiple of them and then spent a few days filling them with her mana.

Maya moves; the movement is a bit awkward, but she quickly gets used to it as the smile disappears from her face, and she slides into [Focus]. It's somewhat unnerving to see such a massive object moving so quickly as she even continues to improve on what she is doing. Her armor is changing slightly and becoming thicker or slimmer at places, each change draining more mana from her mana batteries as she doesn't have enough of her own to power it fully.

When she stops, the armor disappears, and she lands back on her legs, canceling [Focus] and smiling at me, "Say it."

"That was goddamn cool," I say honestly.

"Right?!" she takes a step closer, her eyes nearly shining with excitement, "But imagine if I improve on it and get a better mana battery. In the future the armor I create could end up being as big as a house."

I can only nod and clench my teeth. That... really is cool.

"Say it again!" she pokes my shoulder a bit, and with a sigh, I repeat how cool it is.

Letting her bask in her glory a bit, I then ask her to show me how she did it, and she starts explaining, happy to share it with me.

The next person to kidnap me from my room is Lily. After threatening to use [Disintegration] on my door, I leave the room.

I've started strengthening my door with my mana and even imbued a few mana stones into it, painted it with mana-conductive paint, and then inscribed some circuits into it, making it probably more valuable than some houses in poorer parts of the city just from the cost of the materials themselves.

Yet, it's still too soon to test them against [Disintegration]

Lily leads me outside to the garden, where she stops and turns to me, "Now watch! This is [Reshaping]," she says.

I feel her collect her mana and activate her new skill, immediately the contours of her face start changing. Her nose becomes longer, her eyes seemingly bigger, and even her lips and cheeks change. It takes a bit of time, but soon enough someone different stands in front of me.

"What do you think?" the woman asks with a smile.

For the second time today, I say, "That was goddamn cool."

"Liar! It can't be used for fighting, so you probably don't like it that much." Lily giggles while her face starts changing back, and when it's turned back, I notice a few things.

Lily's hair shines beautifully in a dark black color, her skin seems soft and extremely clear. Her eyes and their color even seem prettier than before and her lips a bit fuller, not too much.

Is this silly girl slowly changing her face and making herself more pretty? She is, isn't she? That sounds exactly like something she would do.

Not knowing my thoughts Lily continues, "But no worries, I only got it so I can combine it with [Rejuvenation]," she tells me with a flash of determination.

"You still haven't changed your mind?" I ask, feeling a hint of curiosity.

"I did not. I will fulfill all 4 requirements and then enter Beyond. Tess will probably get there before me, but it doesn't matter; I will catch up."

"So why are you doing it?" This is the first time I'm actually asking her the question.

"I killed Kevin," Lily says shortly. "There's no way of going around it. I killed him, unable to control my skill."

She reaches out with her hand, a gray smoke-like mana swirling around it and slowly changing shape into that reminiscent of an arrow. Lily then, with extreme focus, waves her hand, and the arrow shoots toward a tree in the corner of the garden.

When the arrow hits, it doesn't pierce the tree nor stab inside. The arrow is weak, and smoke-like, so it instead crashes against it and disperses like smoke hitting it.

The grayish residual mana soundlessly splits the tree, etching out a big chunk of it, and a few wisps of the attack even eat up some stones on the ground after landing on it. The attacks disintegrate everything without leaving anything behind.

The size of the attack itself isn't that scary. It's the level of destruction I would be able to achieve a few days after the start of the tutorial.

No, the scary part is that Lily, just a bit over 100 now, and that this attack would be enough to kill a human or monster at around level 200. I have no doubt about that, not even a speck of it. That's how scary [Disintegration] is.

“So Nat, I will learn to control my skills. I will become stronger. I will heal and save anyone I want to save, and I will kill anyone I decide to. Not by mistake or lack of control, but because I choose to,” Lily says.

Back in my room, I'm about to practice again when a third person interrupts me. As annoyed as curious, I get on the balcony and look at Myrra standing on the street.

She waves at me, and somehow, I want to create a tricolored orb and throw it at her. I will need a lot of slacking to calm down after all this attention. My weak introverted heart isn't built for it.

I push myself with kinetic energy and land on the cobblestone next to the tall lynthari, and without saying a word, we start walking side by side.

“It's been a long time since I saw you, feral one. A few weeks,” Myrra starts first, and I detect her bodyguard nearby, as always.

That once again makes me curious. I've seen her getting a lot of respect from the strongest human in the city and even from other lynthari, yet her level isn't that high. She has leveled a few times but is still under 200.

“I was training,” I say simply and quickly grab some sweets one of the merchants is selling while throwing him a mana stone probably worth as much as his monthly earnings.

I'm rich.

“I see,” Myrra answers simply, and for a while, we continue to walk in silence, and I slowly feel myself calming down as Myrra even picks quieter streets with a lot of calming greenery.

Is she maybe doing it on purpose after sensing my mood? I squint and look at her. Is... is she trying to tame me?

“Feral one, why is the matriarch’s granddaughter looking for you?” finally, she gets to the reason for her visit and turns her golden eyes towards me as we stop in the middle of the park, surrounded by trees with pink leaves.

Oh boy.

“Why is she going around and saying that she is looking for her underling, a strong, regal human with two differently colored eyes?” as Myrra says so, she shows a bit of her canines in a slightly threatening manner and leans closer to me.

Myrra continues, “Feral one, you are mine,” she nearly hisses, not really angry at me, but more annoyed that someone is trying to take her toy, “I don’t care if she is a once-in-a-millennium genius or the matriarch’s pampered granddaughter. You. Are. Mine.”

“No, Myrra, I’m my own person, and if you want, we can talk about our opinions on that again in a fight,” I answer her simply while returning her gaze.

Her next words will decide if I blast her away with a cone of kinetic energy or not.

In the end, Myrra looks away first and sighs, her fluffy tail swaying around in an annoyed manner, “You know what I meant, feral one! I found you first, so I won’t allow any other boring lynthari to take you away from me,” she just says, “Little princess will have to get through me to get to you, nya!” Myrra adds.

The last word she says makes me freeze and forget about everything; even the thought of a fight disappears from my mind.

“N-nya?” I ask carefully.

Myrra, as if realizing what she said, smiles apologetically and somewhat shyly. An expression I had yet to see on her face.

“Excuse me, feral one. It’s something a lot of younger ones lately like to add to their sentences,” she waves her hand as she starts walking, and I follow her, “to be honest, it’s getting really popular, and plenty of lynthari use it, you know how trends go.”