



Free Life? Fantasy

IMMORTAL PRINCESS

Online

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ILLUSTRATED BY SHERRY

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“Right. So what’s
the deal with that,
Princess?”

“For some reason,
my scabbard
became a parasol.
I don’t really have
any other way to
explain it. It got
an added effect
called Ensol. It’s a
pain, to be honest,
but it doesn’t look
half-bad.”



A snake with wings
swoops in from above.

There's a loud hiss.

And with that menacing
sound, the battle begins.

The first food
with a buff goes
to my sister.

“Woo-
hoo!”





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Seven Seas Entertainment



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Afterword

Prologue:

HMM... *Morning already?*

I lie under the layers a little longer before I get up and open the windows. It looks like another fine day out there. Bathing in the sunlight, I stretch to wake up my body and head to the bathroom, getting my hair and such in order before going to the living room.

As I brew a cup of tea and kick back, my sister comes in with an incredibly drowsy look on her face.

“Ah ha ha! That’s quite a pineapple you’ve got going there,” I tease, pointing to the top of her head.

“Hmm...?” she mutters. “Oh! What the—?!”

Only the center of her hair is sticking up, forming quite a splendid pineapple.

“Eh, whatever,” she says. “It’ll go down when I put on my headset.”

“I suppose,” I reply.

“Oh, on that note, I saw a crazy character design the other day.”

“In FLFO?”

“Yeah, they were wearing a full-body plush penguin costume.”

“I didn’t know the game had—no, wait, they must have had it made to order.”

“I’d think so. It’s a game, so it should be fine once they get used to it.”

It’s definitely a game. As long as the proper materials were used in its construction, there would be no issues with its defense or performance.

“Would a suit like that count as a full armor set?”

“I would hope so.”

In that case, wearing every piece at the same time should give a sizable stat bonus.

“There’s an inhuman penguin class tree, but...they decided to wear a costume, huh?”

“Well, human races are more user-friendly, and you know what to expect from them... In a sense, I’d say they chose right.”

Inhumans are for hardcore players, after all... I guess a costume would have its benefits, if you ignore the fact that it would really stick out in a western fantasy setting. Still, the rest of the human player base is already wearing outlandish outfits, so I suppose it’s a bit late to worry about that.

“It was pretty surreal, seeing what looked like a park mascot carrying a weapon over their shoulder.”

“Yeah, I can imagine.”

“I mean, the proportions were all wrong. It was a fever dream...”

“Personally, I think a needlessly realistic penguin suit would be worse.”

“Hmm...maybe.”

The inside of a penguin’s mouth is pretty nasty, after all. I don’t want *that* level of realism.

“The penguin didn’t say ‘dood’ or explode, did it?”

“Hmm...? Oh, that. I don’t think any of the humanoids explode.”

“Maybe if it was a machinery player inside?”

“I guess that’s the only type that could self-destruct.”

That’s part of the joys of roleplay, but I’m not sure anyone would take it that far.

“Oh, but they had a two-handed longsword instead of twin daggers, so that’s probably not it.”

“Then they just like penguins?”

“Probably.”

Yeah, that’s about what I expected. There aren’t as many RPers out there as people think.

“Any plans today, Sis?”

“Hmm...I’ve only got three levels to go before my cooking evolves, and I think

a bit of hunting would be nice too.”

“So no plans, then.”

“Yeah.”

“Just the way I like it! Now off to the bathroom, then the game.”

I see off my little pineapple. Now to wash the dishes and then log in!

Chapter 1:

Party Hunting and Bosses

UPON LOGGING IN, I do some stretches to better familiarize myself with my body.

Your efforts have unlocked the Balance Control skill.

Conditions have been met to unlock the Waltz skill.

Oh? Is that the skill I've been aiming for? And it looks like I got something else along with it.

BALANCE CONTROL

A bonus will be added to your balance. It becomes easier to move as you want to and harder to get tripped up.

WALTZ

A bonus will be added to balance and footwork. It becomes easier to move as you want to, harder to get tripped up, and less tiring to trek on bad roads.

Perhaps Waltz is a higher level of Balance Control? That message that popped up on the log seems to imply it's special in some way. So unlocking Footwork alongside Balance Control, on top of my racial attributes, unlocks Waltz. All right then, I'll use my Skill Points on Waltz instead of Balance Control, then. It does sound more princess-like.

Due to the special movement modifiers of this skill, certain skills taken

before this skill was learned will be erased. Do you want to continue?

That's quite a worrisome pop-up. It looks like Footwork is going to be deleted. If I'm remembering right, that's one of the initial skills that I took when I rebuilt this character. I got it all the way up to level 26, so it feels like a waste, but...

Should I get it to 30 for the bonus Skill Points first, then? It rises just from walking around, after all. Yeah, I'll do that. I'll save Waltz until Footwork levels up.

I need to organize my inventory too. I don't need the wolf hides or claws, and I don't need deer antlers. But first and foremost, the spoils from the town defense are taking up space. I can sell the boar hides to Mr. Ertz.

All right, time to hop to it. First, I leave the inn and replenish my vegetable stock. I have 410,000 gold in total. As I have no intention of using it at the moment, it's going right into my savings. Should I head for the alley with the stalls for outsiders, then?

Hmm...? Oh! There's the penguin! The proportions are all over the place, and it's equipped with a two-handed sword. I see... How very surreal, indeed. And it's surrounded by resident children...

"Morning."

"Good morning, Salute," I reply. "There was someone in a penguin suit over there."

"For real? Isn't there a penguin race?"

"Yeah, in the aquatic family."

"But they made a suit instead of going for an inhuman penguin? Well, considering usability and weaknesses, that might be for the best."

Ms. Salute's shop is currently sold out. I'm sure everyone bought out her stock to replenish what they used up in the event. She's currently hard at work compounding, but every potion she makes seems to sell as soon as she sets it in the shop window. Business is booming.

Next to Ms. Salute is Mr. Ertz, who's crafting next to her.

“There we go... Oh, Princess!”

“Can you take some materials off me, Mr. Ertz?”

“You got it.”

I transfer some goods over to him. Oh my... It looks like my boar pelt profit went up—from 2,000 to 2,500 gold. The tournament’s coming up, so maybe everyone’s focused on upgrading their equipment. If profits are up, I have absolutely no complaints.

Afterward, I’m off to the trade union once again. Everything I left with them sold, so I go to get my profits and leave a few more things in their hands. Then comes the all-important inventory management. My bag’s in a pretty rough state thanks to all those goblin parts. It was already quite loaded with ingredients before then too.

The main problem is that the goblin materials are essentially trash. The south was already the prime hunting ground, so supply is much higher than demand. What am I supposed to do with all these stone weapons?

I guess I’ll just throw out the stone equipment. As for the iron, I’ll store that away with the monster cores. I think I’ll put the goblin general’s core in storage too.

I got roughly 3,000 gold from selling miscellaneous materials to the adventurers’ union, and I’ve claimed about 14,000 from my trade union sales. I’m gradually building a fortune here. It’s quite nice to see that number go up. Not to mention my cooking is more profitable than expected. I’ll keep saving up my gold for now.

For the time being, I’ll return to the road where the other crafters have set up shop and open my stall.

“I’m home!” I announce.

“Welcome back.”

“Can you lend me some firepower, Princess?”

“For distilled water?”

“I just don’t have enough...”

“Well, if you don’t mind using the corner of the burner.”

“Thanks for that.”

I rearrange my stall and deploy my cooking set. Then I light up the charcoal and lend a corner of the brazier to Ms. Salute. Distilled water is essential to potion-making.

“Morning!”

“Good morning.”

“Morning.”

“Howdy.”

Looks like Ms. Primura is here. I watch absentmindedly as she prepares her stall, all the while pondering what to make. Soon Mr. Cecil arrives as well.

“Hey, Princess. I heard you’re not taking part in the tournament.”

“Yes, that’s right. If I’m going to fight anyone, I’d rather it be a monster bigger than me.” I gaze at the meat I prepared before the event battle. “I was considering going off to see the eastern boss while everyone’s fighting.”

“The east... That boss is a bear, right?”

“So I’ve heard. I thought I’d try fighting it,” I say.

“I guess the east would be the best place to open up for someone with cooking skills.”

“The south would be nice too. I’m curious what I can do with seafood.”

“I see. You don’t use ore or medicinal herbs, do you, Princess?”

“My equipment is good enough already, and my race can’t use potions. I wouldn’t mind checking what’s up north, but you couldn’t pay me to head west. I don’t have any AoE magic yet.”

“Our party has some AoE, but our magicians are a bit squeamish, so...”

The two women with long staves behind Mr. Cecil chime in.

“There’s a limit to how much of that I can stand.”

“Right.”

Even if they are a bit cartoony, I don't want to deal with bugs the size of my palm. And if you use it as a hunting ground, you'll need to defeat massive numbers of them with area-of-effect magic to make it worth the trouble.

"At first, we considered conquering the south with all its quality lumber first, then heading west once we upgraded our magic weapons, but..."

"That came with its own problems?"

"The boss is a Coatl; it's like a snake with wings. Like the western boss, it's venomous."

"I see..."

Status ailments are pretty brutal in this game. I've heard that normal poison lasts sixty seconds and takes a percentage of HP based on intensity level every three seconds. Even worse, the timer is reset each time the intensity level increases, starting over with sixty seconds of poison. It's certain death unless cured in a timely fashion.

Unfortunately, no antidotes against poison have been found as of yet. This is, as they say, a dead end.

"Alf and Skelly should be trying to conquer the south, though."

They're both undead, so poison doesn't work on them. That reduces the boss to a simple flying snake. The problem is that neither of them can use potions, so they have to rely on natural HP recovery and Mr. Skelly's Dark Heal to stay alive. They've been complaining that they lack the healing power.

"Oh, right, there is one other reason I'm aiming for the east..."

"It's not just for food and materials?"

"Are you aware that trade has been affected?"

"Ah...I think I heard something like that from Akirina."

"She did say she told her friends. I heard it from the shopkeepers. Anyway, the east deals with food supplies. Most field rations come from there too."

"We could deal with a price increase, but a shortage will be harsh."

"Because of the hunger system, the human players will suffer from lowered

stats. The game will be even harder for them than it's been so far. I'd imagine only we undead and the plant races will be spared."

"I see. Then this is a matter of life and death."

"I don't know the situation in detail, but I do want ingredients, so it works out perfectly for me."

"The players have been desperately grinding levels for the tournament, so once that ends, they might be able to just wipe out the bosses."

I heard about the trade problems last week, so it wouldn't be strange if we started to feel the effects today. Oh, the meat's finished curing? That was fast. Well, it's all trial and error, so time for me to move on. Next, I need to throw the meat in water to extract the salt.

"By the way, what are you making?"

"Wolf jerky," I say. "I get the feeling it didn't cure for nearly long enough, but I don't know how much this game shortens the process. It gave me a signal in any case, so I'm going to go with it."

"Jerky, eh?"

"I heard that field rations don't taste good, so I thought I'd try it out."

"Yes, they're awful. I'd love to buy some jerky."

"It will take some time before I can produce it on a larger scale. Jerky's easy, but it takes time. Mostly doing the curing."

I rinse the meat several times, changing out the water and waiting a while more. Once that's done, I eradicate the moisture with the Alchemy spell Humidity Control.

Next, I place the meat in the smoker. As for the smoke...looks like the cooking set came with some smoke wood and smoke chips. I'll use the wood. I borrow some fire from the glowing charcoal before burning one face of the wood and swinging it to extinguish the flame. Then I stuff it into the bottom door on the smoker and leave it there.

"I'll need some more of those if I want to start serious production..." I say.

“The smoke adds flavor, right? Well, it’s wood, so ask Primura...is what I’d like to say, but the kind she uses doesn’t burn, does it?”

“Not on my watch!”

“As I thought.”

A carpenter’s wood doesn’t burn. I believe there’s a way to smoke with soot, though. Maybe the process could be reproduced with magic, but that sounds like a backbreaking amount of work to keep it up.

“Has anyone found white oak yet?”

“I think white orcs will show up a bit further down the line. Or they might be a rare spawn.”

“No, I’m talking about *oaks*, not orcs.”

“Ha ha...if it’s oak you want, you can get it pretty easily up north.”

“Oh! That’s what you meant.”

“Was I being a bit too cryptic?”

“No, I think the fact that orcs were the first things that came to mind means I’ve been playing too many games.”

The orcs are down south. Oak should be pretty cheap if it grows in the north.

Insisting that crafting was not his expertise, Mr. Cecil headed off to hunt alongside his party members.

“Primura, can you make smoke wood or smoke chips?”

“Hmm...I don’t have a recipe, so it would be trial and error. Do you have some left I could look at?”

“I do. This one...and this.”

“Give me a second. Searching, searching...”

She seems to be searching external websites rather than the forum. In short, she’s Googling it. I presume she’s looking up how the real thing is made.

“You get smoke wood from pressing wood powder into a cylinder shape, and chips come from breaking it up into chunks. Okay, I think I can do that.”

After beckoning for me to watch, Ms. Primura takes out some lumber and gives it a good punch, splitting it into smaller pieces. How powerful.

“Well, I just used the Pulverize art. Let’s do that a few more times...”

A few uses of Pulverize turns the normal wood into wood chips, and a few more make a fine powder. She adds water, places it into a mold, and once it’s dried, she ends up with a bar of smoke wood.

“Yep, that did it. I got a recipe to boot.”

“Can you make more with Reproduce?”

“Hmm, nope. I’d need Humidity Control for that.”

“I should have guessed. Which means they’ll be a pain to reproduce.”

“Princess, you have Cooking and Alchemy, right...? I don’t think either of them come with Pulverize.”

Well, if they don’t, then I just need to search for a different recipe.

As a result of our trial and error, two chips—not literally two, but two items labelled “chip”—are created with Synthesis. They’re not like seasonings, where each has a specified number of uses. They’re more like small bags that let you take out as many chips as you’d like to use, but they disappear if you try to use them for anything besides cooking. I should have seen that coming.

“The problem is the quality,” says Primura.

“Yes...in this case, it might change how easily they produce smoke, perhaps? It seems like that might drop the quality of the dish.”

“The quality of Synthesis items depends on your Alchemy skill level and the number of times you’ve synthesized before, right? And stats probably factor in somewhere. Either Dexterity or Intelligence.”

“By total, do you mean overall or per item?”

“We know there’s a per-item bonus. Whether there’s an overall bonus or not is a mystery.”

“That sounds like a pain.”

“As I recall, the rank goes up by one after you’ve synthesized an item ten

times, and it caps at rank C.”

“Which means I need to craft forty-nine more to reach C.”

“You started out at E+? That’s already pretty high.”

I take the opportunity to stock up on massive amounts of wood chips and complete my forty-nine Synthesis runs. Now, whenever I need the wood, I can just buy chips and make them myself.

Once that’s done, the jerky finally sends its notification.

[COOKING] WOLF JERKY

Rarity: NO Quality: D+

A preserved food item made with wolf meat. Chew well before eating.

Satiety +10

Chef: Anastasia

“Well, that bites. The quality’s terrible.”

“You’re breaking character, Princess.”

“I was never roleplaying with my manner of speech.”

“You actually talk like that?”

“I do. The only exception is with my family and, well...probably just Tomo and Sugu since I’ve known them so long.”

It might be weird for a child to speak formally, but it becomes the norm once you reach adulthood. For that reason, I’ve been told I don’t have to fix my speech pattern. Well, enough about that—time to eat some jerky. I’ll give Ms. Primura some as well, even if it’s not the best.

“Jerky, right...? I’ve never actually had jerky before, ha ha.”

“I know I shouldn’t be saying this, but honestly, I haven’t either.”

“Well, you’re both minors. In Japan, it’s mostly served with alcohol, and it

goes for a pretty penny.”

“It’s kinda hard to order a side dish by itself.”

When I ask who among us has tried jerky before, Mr. Ertz, Ms. Salute, and Mr. Dentelle, who just happened to arrive, raise their hands. I immediately distribute the trial pieces.

“Yep...it’s a bit lacking.”

“Yeah, the flavor’s too light.”

“Right. A bit... No, it really needs more flavor.”

“I knew I should have cured it for longer. But time stops if I stuff it in my inventory.”

“I’m fine with it, personally. It would be nice to chew on it while working. How about you sell me the rest?”

The jerky’s a hit with Ms. Primura. The quality’s low, so I’ll just sell it to her. I now know I can make quite a lot in one batch, but it takes time. The curing is the bottleneck. The biggest problem is that the flavors won’t seep in while I have it stored away.

My kitchen utensils are becoming problems for my other dishes too. It really is nothing but roadblocks in the early stages. I’ll need to find ingredients and seasonings or we won’t be getting anywhere.

As the players head off to hunt, the crafters work away in silence. Including myself, we have a smith, a carpenter, a needleworker, a compounder, and a chef—far too much of a mishmash to share the same street in real life, but this is a game, after all. Everyone has their own production set to devote their time to.

Naturally, some conversations fly as we work.

“Come to think of it, Princess...”

“What is it?”

“Before we all forget, I recommend picking a better time and place before you do any more...experimentation.”

“Ah...I guess it *is* cooking...”

“Not just that. You’ll also need to consider what you’ll be working on down the line. You’ve got Alchemy to practice too. Anyway, just be careful when you’re working on your own original recipes.”

“So that’ll have to be at the inn.”

“Get a facility,” everyone retorted at me.

A facility, huh...? Come to think of it, they do have those around. I never felt much of a need, so I’d completely forgotten about them.

Facilities are locations with all the necessary equipment for production. I hear they’re more game-like than realistic. You can rent a private room for a fee, and you get a slight buff to MP recovery.

“I see. I’ll definitely go there if I need to hide something.”

“Actually, do you have any plans to open a shop?”

“No? Housing interests me, but I have absolutely no interest in having my own shop.”

“A shop would be pretty hard to manage if you don’t main crafting.”

“I just picked it up as a hobby. If I had to choose, I’d say I’m a fighter.”

“So we won’t have a princess pâtissier, then.”

“A shame.”

All right, time for me to stock up on steaks. They won’t bring my skill level up anymore, but they’re currently the food that gives the most satiety. I’ll need them to sell.

I spend the morning making steak and replenishing my ingredient supply before logging out. Then, after lunch, I come back in for the afternoon.

“Hi, Princess.”

“Hiya.”

“Good day. Are you going hunting today?”

“We’re going to the east forest. Do you want to come?”

“Yes, I’d quite like that.”

“Glad to hear it. I’ll hand over the leader position.”

I form a party with Mr. Alf and Mr. Skelly, accept a hunting job from the union, and head for the eastern forest.

“I want to raise my magic skills, so can I take the back line? They’re falling a bit behind.”

“Alf can tank, so go ahead.”

“The enemies in the east only show up one at a time. It should be fine.”

“We might get some linked encounters eventually.”

“Yeah, there might be some chant aggro or other special actives.”

Enemies that react when you begin to chant magic are a staple of this game. It usually happens as soon as you get a charging gauge. Occasionally, they react when they hear the activation keyword—or rather, the spell name. In the latter case, I guess they’re set to react to the moment that mana changes into magic. In the former, they must be reacting to any trace of mana. Not that knowing the internal logic does much. The player base just calls them “chant aggro.”

“Probably. They’re standard fare for this game.”

“The most troublesome ones in this game are the links. They get triggered by sight and sound.”

“Sound links are the worst in dungeons.”

“Come to think of it, are there even any dungeons in this game?”

“They might just not be in the initial area.”

My catacomb home isn’t treated like a dungeon for some reason. It’s considered part of the field.

We walk as we talk, and soon we’re in the eastern forest. We venture deeper and deeper, stopping only to pick the occasional herb or mushroom along the way. Those will be quite useful to raise my Alchemy. I need to gather them when I can, or there’ll be trouble later.

Mr. Alf takes the lead with his large shield, while Mr. Skelly and I follow behind. Mr. Alf has a pure tank build. I—well, I can do anything. Mr. Skelly is purely backline support.

The almighty sun is up, practically eliminating the grace of our HP Regen, but Mr. Skelly and I know Dark Heal, and we have enough to cover Mr. Alf's recovery as well. When you really get down to it, though, there don't seem to be any enemies in the east capable of piercing that large shield.

The enemies here are isolated and don't link, so you don't have to worry about being surrounded. It's quite hard to die here as long as you're in a party.

Mr. Alf uses his Appeal art to draw the first boar we find, and Mr. Skelly blasts it from a safe distance. Quite a simple job, if I do say so myself.

"So what should we do about the drops?"

"What do you two usually do when you hunt together?"

"We take turns stabbing a dismantling knife into whatever we defeat. You get whatever you get. Splitting it up manually is a pain."

"We've been hunting together since the beta. That's about par for the course."

"I see. Then you could just include me into that lottery, but..."

"You want meat, don't you, Princess?"

"Correct. In fact, as long as I get meat, I don't need anything else."

"Then how about you trade your non-meat mats with the meat we get?"

Considering the price that meat goes for with the union and the other players, it's far less valuable than the other materials. The demand isn't high either, so it's not even easy to sell.

But I can use meat to raise my Cooking skill and sell the end products for a decent profit. Exchanging their meat with me for horns and hides would be more profitable than trying to sell the meat on its own. It doesn't look like anyone's losing out here, so it should be fine. We can do the exchange after the hunt. With that, we just get back to hunting.

We press on, taking down more as we go, crossing straight through the safe zone and into the depths. That's when bears start to appear—when we reach the main hunting ground. Around the same time, we begin to spot other parties. We haven't seen a single trace of any of them up to that point, but now the top players are finally showing up.

"We're seeing more parties around, but we're still fighting roughly the same number of battles."

"Yeah, well, it's a game. The spawn rate scales with the area population. That's why it can be better to come with a small group rather than coming with a hoard to take over a hunting ground."

"Is that to economize server resources, perhaps?"

"I'd imagine so. And that's better for us, so I've got no complaints. Although there seems to be a cap on the spawn rate."

"If there wasn't a limit, then the plains around the starting town would be terrible. Fully packed with rabbits and wolves."

"Actually, I'd love to see that."

The ability to chat while searching for enemies is the real benefit of having a party.

"One thing, though: Too many people means there's a chance of something spawning right next to you. A fully packed hunting ground might be a bit much."

"Shitspawns, as they call them."

"Though that saves you the trouble of searching for them."

"So there's a fine balance. The problem is that the game's in first person, so if something pops up behind you..."

"Right. It's important to listen for monsters too."

As if to affirm this, a bear chooses that very moment to spawn right beside us.

"One bear, coming right up!"

"He decided to fire off Chekov's gun right away. What a courteous bear."

"I'll have to subtract points because it appeared beside us. It would have

gotten full marks if it were behind.”

The bear is defeated and dismantled in the blink of an eye. It’s an enemy I regularly hunt alone, so there isn’t much issue if one shows up beside me. Even if another one spawns in the middle of combat, Mr. Alf can handle one, and I can handle the other. As a matter of fact, Mr. Alf could probably hold back a few of them at once.

“Having you around is a real load off my mind, Princess.”

“You boost our stats, and you can be an off-tank if something spawns.”

“Yeah, I can’t do anything in melee range.”

“Flattery will get you nowhere.”

Over time, hunting gradually becomes formulaic, and once that formula is established, it lends the process safety and stability. The players move in reaction to the enemies’ attack patterns, defeating them as quickly as possible before moving to the next one.

After fighting the same enemy again and again, the players’ movements slowly become optimized. They no longer do anything unnecessarily.

Enemy attack motions are generally set in stone. You can tell what attack is coming if you know what to look for. Then, if you know what’s coming, you know where to attack. Predicting an enemy’s attack is the fundamental skill of an action game. It would be impossible to fight at close range in this game otherwise. Not to mention your vision is pretty narrow because of the first-person view.

I’m quite certain that attack motions will become more ambiguous in the late game. And players can feint in PvP. It’s really quite interesting. I’m not moving my actual body, but I can still move with all my might, so it’s a good way to work off stress. But for the people who revel in the fatigue you feel after working up a sweat...this game might not be for them.

“Ah, can you wait a second?”

“Is something wrong?”

“I hit level 20, and it looks like I can evolve.”

“It’ll be just a bit longer for me.”

Mr. Skelly is just level 20 now. Either the EXP in the catacombs is incredibly high, or zombies need less EXP than other races. Maybe both. Yes, I’m sure it’s easier to level up a zombie.

After the light enveloping Mr. Skelly dissipates, his body has changed from red to metallic.

“I became a Metal Skeleton Mage! When do I get to my extra race...?”

“Did it give you a load of options?”

“Nah, just the one.”

“Look at that metal. Your defense must have skyrocketed.”

“I’m a bit stronger to blunt attacks now. Still, my modifier was negative to begin with, and it’s still negative. Honestly, it didn’t give me much.”

The skeleton line is terribly weak to blunt attacks. In exchange, it’s strong against piercing damage. In my case, the Decaying Body I had before my evolution made fire twice as effective against me, but I believe skeletons have a 4× weakness to blunt damage.

“Red was a bit out there, but metal’s really something.”

“I did tone down the gloss option, for what it’s worth.”

“That’s good. You’d stand out like a sore thumb if you started shining.”

“Do you feel any heavier?”

“I don’t *feel* heavier, but as for whether I’m actually heavier or not...”

Mr. Alf hoists him up to test that theory, but it turns out he’s quite a bit lighter than me.

Does that mean...?

“You’re just metal *plated*.”

“I don’t want to think about it. Can’t we just say I’m made of some incredibly light fantasy metal?”

“Right...let’s go with that.”



“Why don’t we continue hunting for now. I should evolve soon too.”

Mr. Skelly’s Dark Magic has evolved into Darkness Magic. It looks like he’s learned some AoE.

“Come to think of it, do you have any parts, Princess?”

“Parts...? Oh, you mean to replace missing body parts?”

“Yep, that.”

“I have three of them.”

“Where do you get them?”

“Back home. I think they’re rare drops.”

“Home... So the catacombs, then. I’ll have to go undead hunting if I want them, I guess.”

“Right. It’s nice to have a few on hand. They’ll definitely prove useful later on.”

He’s talking about Dark Parts, an item that can replace lost body parts for us undead players. Luckily, I haven’t had to use them yet.

“Bones, ghosts, and zombies all drop them. There’s a high chance it’s a rare drop shared among all undead.”

“It would be nice if we could produce them ourselves, though I don’t know the first thing about crafting.”

“Producing them, eh...? If any skill can do it, it’ll have to be Alchemy.”

“And we’re pretty much the only players who’d use them. If any go on the market, they should be pretty cheap.”

“That is, if anyone actually goes hunting in undead areas. Oh, a bear.”

Mr. Skelly snipes a bear with long-range magic. Soon, the bear is charging straight at us, turning its speed into a pouncing attack. Mr. Alf steps in to block it with his shield, and we all gang up on it to finish it off.

The light filtering through the trees gains a tinted hue, and it’s evening before we know it. What a picturesque sight...so I’d like to say, but quite frankly, it

feels very ominous in the forest at sunset. Once it grows even darker, the fear will likely triumph over awe for most people.

Not that that applies to *us*.

“Oh, it’s evening. What should we do? How about a bio break?”

“Yeah, I’d like around ten minutes. I need to take in my laundry.”

“Agreed, I need to take mine in too. Let’s head to the Safe Zone.”

We beat up monsters all the way to the Safe Zone and each log out for around ten minutes. I stretch out a bit, hydrate, go to the bathroom, and bring my laundry inside before logging in once more. Mr. Alf returned first, then Mr. Skelly, who was teasing Mr. Alf when I got there.

“Your clothes are soaked, huh? Serves you right!”

“Same goes for you. I know where you live.”

“Ha ha ha ha... Dammit, you’re right...”

“Everything all right, Princess?”

“Oh, yes, fine. The skies were clear.”

“That’s good. It just started raining over here, but it came pouring down like a waterfall.”

“Now let’s go work off some stress, eh?”

And the best way to work off stress is ultimately hunting. Evening in-game starts at 3:30 p.m. and leads into night at 6:00. Thanks to that, the number of parties is dwindling. Visibility is poor in the forest at night. While others would have to do their best to scout with their Light spells and Night Vision, the three of us can operate normally.

A while after the hunt begins, we come across a strange clearing.

“Oh, this must be the boss area.”

“Must be. Wanna give it a go?”

“Hmm...”

“Do you want to try it?”

“Oh, you’re feeling up to it, Princess?”

“I intended to try it out during the tournament anyway.”

“How’s your money situation?”

“I deposited it this morning, so I’m not worried about losing it.”

“No problems here, either.”

“Then why not? If we get a death penalty, I’ll just log out for dinner.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

Challenging a boss on pure whim is not exactly uncommon. Before entering, we go over what we know. The bosses in the north and east are level 22, and the western and southern bosses are level 20. Though the northern and eastern bosses do not have any notable special traits, they boast high levels and stats. The western and southern bosses, meanwhile, are a little lower level but boast poison and flight abilities.

The north’s golem has higher attack and defense, while the east’s bear is faster and has far more attack patterns. We don’t have a choice but to defeat it in a head-on fight.

We wait to recover and enter after Mr. Skelly casts an Intelligence-raising Dark Enchant on me and himself. I decide to video capture this fight for nostalgia’s sake.

And so, the three of us enter the arena with Mr. Alf in the lead. All of a sudden, we’re unable to control our bodies as the system automatically walks us to the very center and ensures we get a good eyeful of the bear bursting out of the thicket at the back of the clearing. I regain control after the bear gives a great roar.

FIGHTING BEAR LV 22

An incredibly dangerous, belligerent bear. Look out for attacks that make use of its impressive speed and weight.

Attribute: —

Weakness: —

Resists: —

Genus: Animal

Species: Bear

Status: Normal

This isn't a raid boss, so it only has one HP bar. It's a size larger than the other brown bears in the area. I'm definitely going to use my full might in a boss battle. After confirming that Mr. Alf has drawn its attention with Appeal, I switch to Attack Stance and begin my assault. Identify doesn't show me any elemental weaknesses, but Detect does highlight some weak points to attack. I share that information with the other two as we plan our approach.

A Fighting Bear, is it? From what I can tell, it's like a martial artist. It moves unlike any bear I've ever seen, though there's no point in criticizing that, since it's just a game. As long as it's interesting, it's good.

"All right, we can do this!"

"The problem comes after its HP drops and it gets pissed."

There's no urgent need for healing; it seems I can stick to offense until its pattern changes. I focus on casting lance spells, switching to arrow spells only when I have a good shot at its vitals. Currently, I'm the one healing Mr. Alf. Mr. Skelly keeps up his offensive array and casts enchants and buffs instead. As the tank, Mr. Alf keeps up a Guard Stance and devotes himself to holding aggro.

The boss' HP is going down surprisingly steadily. Then, its front paws begin to emit a red light. That's a special action it takes when it has 60 percent HP remaining.

"It's going to rush us!"

"Come at me!"

Mr. Alf shifts his sword arm behind his shield for additional support. He drops down to his left knee, taking on a completely defensive stance to intercept it.

Both Mr. Skelly and I begin to chant Dark Heal.



After letting out a spirited scream, the bear takes a hefty swing at Mr. Alf. A right straight punch leads into a left hook, then a right uppercut and a left straight—it's a six-hit combo. Every time its fist strikes the shield, it lets off a tremendous sound and shaves away some of Mr. Alf's HP. However, Mr. Alf survives without issue. Once the rush is over, we both cast Dark Heal on him to get him back to full HP.

"That's the biggest hurdle dealt with!"

"Be careful from now on, 'kay, Alf?"

"Of course! Is it going to change its pattern now?"

From what I've heard, the tanks of all the parties before us couldn't withstand that rush, so there is no information on what comes beyond. Mr. Alf's race gave him full-plate armor from the start (still unavailable to the rest of the player base), and that, combined with his shield, means he boasts an impressive defense stat.

The Fighting Bear's pattern does indeed change. It's begun to throw in kicks—splendid flying kicks at that. Though they're being blocked by the shield, they're piercing Mr. Alf's defenses and inflicting damage anyway. Mr. Skelly and I do our best to keep his HP topped up.

"How's your MP, Princess?"

"I'm at 60 percent. I still have some to spare."

"I'm at 50 percent. It shouldn't be a problem."

It suddenly occurs to me that the undead can't use potions. What do we do if our MP runs dry? I only have an Automatic HP Regen skill. I do recover MP thanks to the effects of my equipment set, but it will be a bit rough waiting it out while it recovers naturally.

"Is this thing really a bear?!"

"You gotta roll with it."

Mr. Alf desperately fends off what has become a flurry of kickboxing. It's throwing in roundhouses now; it's admittedly a bit cute when it tries those with its short legs. Although the sounds it makes when it hits aren't cute at all.

With that said, Mr. Alf is still managing to block, and it doesn't seem to be a problem for him as long as we throw in a few more heals than usual. The bear's HP bar, which had turned yellow at 60 percent, turns red when it reaches 30 percent.

Its front arms glow again, and this time, its rear legs are surrounded by light as well.

"It's gonna use an art, Alf!"

"Ha ha! Just try breaching my defenses!"

"It's been breaching them on a regular basis!"

"Not a problem!"

Well, *someone* seems motivated. If they had faces, these two would definitely be grinning; unfortunately, bones and armor can't change their expressions.

The rush has begun again, and there are clearly a lot more attacks than last time—with added kicks to boot! Mr. Skelly and I are both forced to cast healing early.

"Hey, stop already."

"Your HP is dropping!"

"Isn't this a few too many attacks?! Ah? Ah!"

"Ah! Alf?!"

"Ha ha..."

A real bear hug? For the final attack of the rush, the bear breaks its stance, circles around back, and gets close for a hug. The Fighting Bear lifts the full plate living armor...and leads right into a German suplex. That's twelve consecutive hits before the final move. A splendid combo.

Smashing into the ground headfirst, Mr. Alf's upper half is buried in the dirt, and he's sent into a panic. I see a status ailment marker... Is it a bind status?

He took the rush at full HP, yet despite our healing, he's been reduced to 20 percent of his total. We hurriedly heal him as we approach the bear.

"Skelly, take care of Mr. Alf!"

“You got it!”

I fire Dark Ball and Dark Arrow in quick succession, but the bear stays on his target. Mr. Alf takes a clobbering from the Fighting Bear while still half-buried in the dirt, taking an insane amounts of damage.

“My healing isn’t enough!”

“Libertà! Rush! Oh...here it comes!”

“Nice, Princess! And you—get out of the ground already!”

“I can’t!”

I used up one orb, but that was a necessary expense. I can’t see myself using them outside of these situations, anyway. After three consecutive Rush strikes with Libertà, the Fighting Bear finally focuses on me.

It turns toward me with a backhand strike, but I drop so it passes overhead. It’s really staring me down now.

I switch to Parry Stance and take aggro for a bit. The bear’s even faster now. Mr. Alf was done for from the moment he could no longer guard, so I decide to divert the bear’s attacks with Parry Stance.

I use my rapier to parry while chipping away at the bear’s HP with magic. My magic is my main source of damage, so I really don’t need to use my rapier offensively. I don’t even have the speed for that. I’ll just get in a stab or two when I see the opportunity.

The problem is that, on closer inspection, I’m still taking damage despite parrying. My HP is slowly going down, even with my HP Regen. It should be fine—I just need to cast heal on myself—but I don’t think I even took damage against the General.

Not that I had the leisure to care about my HP back then.

“Good going, Princess! But...I can’t get him out!”

“What do you expect me to do in this position?”

“I don’t have the strength to lift plate armor... Ah, right. Psychokinesis! Hnngh...!”

“One, two... All right!”

“Back to battle!”

Mr. Alf is topped up and mobile, so I hold back my attacks and focus on parrying. He uses Appeal from behind, yet I’m still the main target. It takes a defense-ignoring Ironcutter strike on its back and another Appeal for the bear to finally shift targets.

“Okay, here it comes!”

“There were a few surprises, but it feels like we can do this!”

“Last stretch!”

Mr. Skelly recasts his Dark Enchantment on both of us. As the bear’s target changes, I shift to Attack Stance. Its special attack was triggered at 30 percent, and my Libertà and Rush dropped it down to 20-ish, so this seems quite doable.

“Mr. Skelly, I don’t think one healer is enough.”

“It’s attacking fast.”

“All right, I’ll start healing too.”

“Please do.”

The Fighting Bear’s attack speed has clearly gone up. Isn’t it even faster now than when it was fighting me...?

“Hmm...? Did its defense drop? I see an icon.”

“Berserk status? So it’s the type of enemy that loses defense but gets faster the lower its HP gets.”

“It started around 30 percent. Well, let’s take it down already. We won’t be able to heal fast enough.”

“Right.”

The more damage it takes, the faster it gets. It isn’t long before the sound of the bear’s attacks smacking against Mr. Alf’s shield is like a tempestuous drumroll.

“My arms would be numb if I weren’t undead... These impacts are insane.”

Partial paralysis, perhaps? Does that exist in this game?

Only 10 percent left...

“Whoa! Isn’t that a bit much?!” Mr. Alf explains.

“It’s like it’s fighting on fast-forward; it’s a bit interesting.”

“I get you. It’s amusing when you’re watching from the sidelines.”

“Hurry and kill it already!” Mr. Alf cuts in.

His HP is dropping like a rock, so we need to finish this. Not that we’re really doing anything differently. With one last blast of magic, the Fighting Bear lets out a scream before throwing its limbs out and toppling over face-first.

Your race level has increased!

Defend has reached Level 25.

Acquired Defend Art: Area Guard

Parry has reached Level 225.

Acquired Parry Art: Counter Parry

Light Magic has reached Level 25.

Acquired Light Magic spell: Light Resist

Dark Magic has reached Level 25.

Acquired Dark Magic spell: Dark Resist

Magic Assist has reached Level 30. Obtained 2 Skill Points.

Acquired Magic Assist Arts: Chant Reduction, Magi Amp

The subjugation of the eastern boss has unlocked the eastern area. As the first in the world to complete this hunt, you have been awarded 6 Skill Points.

You have fulfilled the conditions to unlock the title: Liberator of Belstead The party “Send It!” led by Anastasia has slain the eastern boss. Henceforth, the eastern boss will be weakened, and trade will be restored.

“Oh, wow.”

“That name we put as a joke...”

“The party ‘Send It!’ sent the boss...”

“Is management trying to make a joke?”

“Six Skill Points—not bad. And a title!”

“Right. Now let’s dismantle it. Who wants to do it?”

“How about the princess?”

“Aight, then I’m gonna evolve, so good luck.”

“Oh, finally there, Alf?”

“I will divide the boss’s materials equally.”

I head over to the Fighting Bear and stab in my dismantling knife. Behind me, I can see Mr. Skelly staring at Mr. Alf as the suit of armor is wrapped in light. I decide to change the party name to *Guess What’s For Dinner!*

Oh, and I end the recording there.

I hear a heartbroken scream from Mr. Skelly.

“Waaaaah! Alf, you betrayed me!”

“Ha ha ha!”

Mr. Alf is now a black suit of armor, holding his head in his right arm and a large sword in his left. In short, he’s a dullahan. He must have achieved an extra race.

“Well, I’m still just a mid-immortal. But I got an extra. Come to me, my steed!”

Beside Mr. Alf, a horse manifests wearing similar black armor.



“This bloody thing kept throwing me off during the race unlock quest.”

“Oh, that one. You got a mount, you lucky bastard.”

I’m envious too. I mean, it’s a horse. But this one certainly does match with a living armor. Just like Mr. Alf, it has no head and seems to be empty inside. The same goes for Mr. Alf—he’s not actually headless; his armor’s just empty. That’s pretty cool.

Mr. Skelly and I got extra equipment with our race upgrades, but Mr. Alf did not. He got a familiar instead.

“Umm...material-wise, we got one core, three hides, four claws, and one Strongarm Ring.”

“A Strongarm Ring?”

“As the name suggests, it increases Strength.”

“Ah. I don’t need it, then.”

“Then the ring goes to Mr. Alf.”

“You sure?”

“What’s Strength gonna do for us?”

“Oh, right. Then you two can have everything else.”

“Though with that said, we still don’t know what core stones are used for. Do you have any use for the claws and hides?”

The core goes to Mr. Skelly after a heated game of rock-paper-scissors, leaving me to sell the claws and hides to Mr. Ertz for cash. That means I’m probably going to come out with the biggest monetary gain.

“What now?”

“Do you have to ask...?”

“It’s time to go...”

“...to the next area!”

“I might record this, then.”

I glance back to see a fairy hovering behind Mr. Skelly as we head farther in.

Naturally, Mr. Alf proceeds on horseback. He's a mobile shield main... I wonder what his defense is like. I hear him curse "This head is getting in the way!" and realize he's able to store it in his inventory. I doubt I'll ever be seeing that head again. He can't swing a sword if his right hand is clogged up, and his left hand is for his shield. On that note, I don't see him gripping any reins. In fact, I don't see any reins at all, but I decide not to worry about that.

We proceed until the trees clear and we're out on the open plains. It's quite rural.

"It's like the countryside."

"I can see them farming a lot of food here."

"These plains are quite different from the ones around the starting town. They're very quaint."

"Right. Well, we don't know how it will be once the players arrive."

"That's, well... I can't deny that."

There's a gentle breeze, and Mr. Alf begins running circles with his horse. Mr. Skelly and I take our time and stroll at a comfortable pace. Mr. Alf did just evolve, so perhaps that put him in the mood to run. Meanwhile, Mr. Skelly seems to have no agility at all. He's one of my people.

As daybreak approaches, my vision is filled with a carpet of wheat stretching beyond the horizon.

"Oh...this is amazing."

"Amazing..."

"How does the game treat these fields? Are they owned by NPCs, or are they objects that players can interact with?"

"They probably belong to the NPCs."

"In some MMOs, they could be a harvesting spot..."

"I doubt it works like that in this game. There're probably farmer NPCs looking after them."

“They were selling wheat in the starting town, though I wasn’t able to bake bread.”

“Yeah, not without the proper tools.”

“I’d love to have an oven. Hmm...? Is that an enemy? I see a red mark. I’m quite curious what it will drop.”

“That cow?”

“Sirloin...skirt... Ah... I can’t even eat...”

“Well, there’s only one of them, so why don’t we defeat it and see?”

Unlike my companions, I can eat.

The marker’s red, so it should be fine, but Mr. Alf checks the surroundings just in case. We make sure there aren’t any people or fences around as we approach.

It seems to be called “angus.”

“Angus... Where have I heard that before?”

“Are you thinking of Angus beef?”

“Then I can expect some high-quality meat. Let’s hunt it right away.”

“R-right.”

Mr. Alf uses Appeal to draw it straight into battle. Although he remains on his horse, he somehow seems to block without issue. How peculiar. No matter how I look at it, the angus is smacking into the horse, yet that somehow counts as a block. Meanwhile, we attack with magic.

“Isn’t this strange...? Doesn’t it have a bit too much HP?”

“It’s me. I don’t feel like I’m doing any damage,” I say.

“Hmm...? You’re right. But I don’t feel anything wrong with my attacks.”

“That’s strange. It doesn’t have a Dark attribute... If it had magic resistance, it would be cutting Mr. Skelly’s damage too.”

“Alf’s attacks are getting through normally, though.”

What could this be? We’re all undead here, so that has nothing to do with it.

Maybe it's just strong against Zombies somehow...? No, I doubt it. I'd understand if it were a pigg, but not this. Neither Light nor Dark magic is working. My close-quarters attacks are hopeless too.

What else could be different about it...?

"Ah...don't tell me...?"

"Did you figure something out?"

"This is the second area, correct? To be honest, I don't have any second-tier skills yet."

"You serious?!"

"That's about the only thing I can think of. If that's the criteria, then I can understand why I'm the only one barely hurting it."

"Hmm, let's just beat it for now."

We're still doing a little bit of damage, so we chip away at it until it's out. It's partly because I have no firepower, but also because our foe has too much HP. It's a trial and a half to take it down.

"It's definitely meant for food, so let's let the princess dismantle it."

"I didn't really do anything this time..."

"We'll fight another one when you have second-tier skills. Good luck with that."

"Well...if you say so. I'm curious about what I'll get, and it's quite troublesome that I won't be able to hunt them solo."

[INGREDIENT] ANGUS RIB

Rarity: NO Quality: C

Boneless angus rib. Delicious meat with a wide range of uses. The angus has an aggressive temperament, so its meat is rare to find. It is often enjoyed by the noble class. Recommended for steak, sukiyaki, and stew.

[INGREDIENT] ANGUS SHANK

Rarity: NO Quality: C

Angus leg meat. Mostly muscle with little fat, but the gelatin gives it a rich flavor, and it is perfect for soup stock. Sought after by the chefs of the noble class and those working in high-class restaurants. Recommended for stew and pot-au-feu.

[INGREDIENT] ANGUS RUMP

Rarity: NO Quality: C

Angus rump. Delicious meat with a wide range of uses. The angus has an aggressive temperament, so its meat is rare to find. It is often enjoyed by the noble class. Recommended for steak, roast beef, and mince.

Two ribs, three shanks, and one rump. The angus was quite large, so it looks like I can get more meat from it than I can from boars and bears.

For now, we decide to call it a day, so we enter the town to open the portal. We have to walk toward the wheat fields for a while before I can see the wall rising behind them. These walls are lower than the ones around the starting town.

Mr. Alf spurs his horse onward and returns not long after.

“What, did you spot your first love from elementary school or something?”

“We’re supposed to be the first ones here, so it would be quite surprising if you found her. I’d call it fate at that point.”

“That’s what you’re focusing on?”

“So what did you go for, anyway?”

“I saw some cow pens, so I went to check them out. These have a yellow mark above them, so I think they’re fine—we’ll be able to tell the hostile ones from their red marks.”

“I see. That’s a load off my mind.”

We continue on our way until the gatekeeper stops us.

“Halt!”

“Is something wrong?”

“Those two beside you. Are they...?”

“Oh...we’re all not quite human.”

“Meaning inhumans. By ‘we,’ that means you too?”

“Yes. I’m a zombie, for what it’s worth.”

“Really... If you’re inhumans, that means you made it through the forest, right? I thought a Fighting Bear had taken up residence on the path.”

“Oh, we defeated it.”

“You did?”

“We can show you the materials if you want. We came here first thing after the battle.”

“Oh, no—just report that to the union. That should spread the news.”

“Could I ask where I might find the union?”

“Just go straight, and you’ll see it on the left.”

“Then we’ll stop by.”

“Please do. Now welcome to Belstead!”

If you saw a set of bones walking alongside a headless suit of armor atop a horse, you’d quite naturally want to stop them. How very logical and dutiful this gatekeeper is. We’re certainly suspicious characters.

We’re let into the town, which is bustling in the wee morning hours.

“Eeeek!”

“Please don’t make the kids cry, Mr. Skelly.”

“That’s beyond my power!”

“They’ll be spooked if they see bones walking around in the middle of the day. Though that’s better than at night.”

“A headless suit of armor is pretty out there too...”

“It’s the fate of all inhumans.”

“You have it nice, Princess.”

“You never know what might come next.”

“I guess...”

The skeleton bows his head apologetically to a crying girl who clings to her mother. It’s quite surreal. The mother has a bitter smile on her face.

We press onward to the union. Nothing we can do will make the girl stop crying. Incidentally, Mr. Alf put his horse away to continue on foot. It’s quite convenient to be able to take it out whenever he wants.

The union is smaller than the one at the starting town, but it has the same layout. We show the receptionist lady our materials and report our results. The reward is 120,000 gold; split among us, it’s 40,000 each. If we had a full party, it would only be 20,000 per person. While we’re at it, we report on our hunting quests in the eastern forest. That’s an income of 3,300 gold on top of a promotion to adventurer rank E.

After that, we head to the central square to open the portal, but it’s not working. There’s an altar laden with vegetables in front of a statue, but touching it doesn’t seem to do anything.

Hmm... I take a leafy green from my bag and place it on the altar.



The Portal to Belstead has been opened.

“Oh, that did it.”

“For real...?”

“Is it limited to vegetables? Let’s see, I have some wolf meat... Oh, it worked.”

“As for wolf hide... Oh, that does it too.”

“So you just need to offer something?”

“Maybe. And since hide worked, it doesn’t seem like it needs to be food, either.”

“I’m worried that raw meat will rot here if you leave it.”

I ask a few passersby, and apparently the people of the church frequently come to check on the altar and collect the offerings. Let’s pray they find ours quickly.

“Now then, that’s one thing settled. What now?”

“Oh, I should end the recording here.”

“Hmm...next is dinner, I guess? There’s still a bit of time, though.”

“Yeah, this is a dubious time to log off.”

“For starters, how about we sort through our items?”

“Yeah, let’s do that.”

Now, it’s item-sorting time. I trade my hides and horns for bear meat. Seventeen horns net me fifty-one slabs of meat. I can’t really use boar meat anymore; it doesn’t seem to raise my skill level. Maybe I’ll sell it on consignment rather than putting it in my stall. I’m sure there’s a fellow chef out there who wants it.

“What about our info on the boss?”

“Do you mean its attack pattern? It’s been weakened though, hasn’t it?”

“Apparently. You recorded it, Princess, so we could just post that to the BBS.

But if you don't want to, I can write down what I remember."

"I don't really mind posting the video. Is that easy to do?"

"Hmm...are you going to have dinner after this?"

"Yes, that's the plan."

"What about your sister?"

"Oh, I see. I'll ask her over dinner."

"Yes, that's probably the quickest way."

That's everything, so we disperse for the day. I log out as dinnertime approaches. As I'm helping Mom make dinner, my sister runs down the stairs.

"You defeated the boss, didn't you?! Were you going solo?"

"Nah, it was a three-person party with Mr. Alf and Mr. Skelly."

"Oh, those two."

"Yes, and I recorded it too, but I don't have an account so I can't post it. I wanted to ask you what I should do."

"Just leave it to me. Where's your board?"

My sister opens that video-sharing site and prompts me to make an account. I select the option to access my VR headset's video storage from the connection board. Then, I give it a title and a bit of a description, and finalize it. All that's left is to wait.

After I bring out the food, I check again and see that the upload is complete.

"Ah, it's done."

"Looks like it. All right, let's watch it on TV."

"Isn't that a bit gruesome to watch over dinner?"

"Don't worry! I set it to family friendly!"

Not that I really mind. Akina impatiently turns on the TV in the living room, even plugging in the speakers we use to watch movies. It's an 80-inch television—one of my dad's hobbies.

Then she links her own connect board and pulls up a video. Apparently, you're able to choose what graphics settings will be used for replay, and she set it to all ages. I see... It certainly is family friendly.

"It's already got a good number of views! I thought I could be first... Well, whatever. I'll settle for being the first follower. Fullscreen it, and..."

It's hard to describe the feeling I get when I see myself in third-person view on TV. Though it's my character, not really me, to be more precise.

"Is that you, Kotone? Isn't your skin a bit paler than usual?"

"My race modifiers made me pale. I'm a zombie."

"A zombie. Those bones... A skeleton, was it? And what was the armor called again...?"

"That's a living armor."

"Are they both players?"

"Yeah, and that noise is all the comment notifications."

"My daughter in a dress... Not bad. Though the color is a tad off. The long black hair isn't bad either. But what's this black fog?"

"That's the effect of my skill."

My board has been ringing nonstop for a while now, so I set it to silent. I can check the comments later. I can't wait to see Mr. Alf buried... But no spoilers. I want to see her genuine reaction.

I can see the first-person view in the corner, quite large because of the TV's size. I'm the one who took it, so I know everything, but it's interesting since my mom and sister are seeing it for the first time. It's also a little fresh for me, given the different perspective. I might check out someone else's clear video if or when I'm in the mood.

"Oh, he withstood the rush pretty easily...and wait, Mr. Skelly's not red anymore!"

"He evolved during our hunting. He says he's a metal skeleton mage."

"A metal skeleton, huh?"

It's quite strange having dinner while watching a zombie, a skeleton, and a suit of armor fight a bear. If we wanted to watch something cinematic, I'd probably prefer yesterday's event battle.

"That bear's a bit cute when he kicks with those short legs of his."

"It sounds pretty rough, though."

Honestly, I was worried that Mr. Alf's shield might break—though since it's a game, you don't really have to worry about that as long as it has durability to spare. Still, you never know what to expect with this game. Apparently, you can snap a rapier on a failed weapon guard, even if you should have enough durability.

"Hmm, the second rush? Oh...pff...nggh..."

"You held it in."

"That was close... I nearly burst out laughing."

She barely manages to contain herself. After that, my mom laughs as she watches the bear on fast-forward, and my sister slumps down in thought.

"What did it drop?"

"A core, claws, and a hide. Also, a ring that boosts Strength. We gave the ring to Mr. Alf."

"Yeah, you and Mr. Skelly don't need Strength, I guess. Did you see what's after that?"

"We did. Mr. Skelly recorded the rest of it."

"Hmm...Mr. Skelly's channel is... Oh, this one."

It seems he's already uploaded as well. We can see the peaceful pastures. This might be a bit better mealtime entertainment, as long as we disregard that fight with the cow.

"Huh? Alf evolved?"

"He became a dullahan after beating the boss."

"A-a horse...?! What I'd give..."

“Nice, isn’t it? He got it instead of the extra equipment Mr. Skelly and I received.”

“Dullahan...a headless rider with a headless horse...” my mom cuts in. “The fairy from Irish folklore?”

“That was what it was based on, but it looks like it’s treated as undead in-game.”

“He’s a mid-immortal, apparently.”

My mom’s more knowledgeable than I realized. Anyway, we watch the pastures as we eat. It looks like we’ll be done just as the video ends.

After dinner, I’ll grind my skill levels and check out that cow again. The problem comes down to how I’ll evolve my skills. Magic Assist got to level 30, but it didn’t say anything about any new route being unlocked.

As for my other skills... Footwork is at 29; nearly there. But that’s not something I can raise intentionally. Cooking is at 27, but it doesn’t rise from cooking bear meat anymore, and it takes time. Automatic HP Regen is at 27, but that’s also more of a passive thing.

Identify and Judgment are out of the question, so I really should start with Sword. I get the feeling Footwork will rise on its own if I practice close combat.

It’s a pain, but I’ll have to backtrack and hunt in the forest a bit before I can exact my bovine vengeance.

“Hmm...so it’s set to reduce damage if you don’t have second-tier skills.”

“We aren’t sure about that yet.”

“Are you going to raise your skills after this?”

“I plan to. Footwork should go up first, and then I should have some confirmation on whether or not it has to be a combat skill.”

“I see. I expect everyone’s going to challenge the boss now. What should I do...?”

“The first clear gave 6 Skill Points.”

“That’s enticing. Did the title give any effects?”

“Nope.”

“Hmm... ‘Liberator of Belstead.’ To commemorate the first person to clear the road from the starting town...is that it? So all you get is a commemorative title?”

The title is purely cosmetic. It doesn’t have any effects, but it must be quite rare if only the first people to beat the boss get it. I hear Akina mumbling about dragging me off to fight another boss, and I wouldn’t mind going. I do have something to gain in another boss battle. Titles aside, I want the SP. I’m going to go through a lot in the near future.

It was written that you’ll immediately run out of Skill Points if you don’t pick your skills methodically, but I may have taken too many of them. I thought I had only gotten what I needed. I have sixteen, including the ten initial skills, and then I have my race skills... It’s still not nearly enough.

“Oh, looks like Mr. Skelly makes the kiddies cry wherever he goes.”

“So he made them cry in the starting town too?”

“Yep. It’s a race penalty. Crying children, ha ha ha!”

That must be quite unpleasant to deal with.

Once the meal is over, I take care of my bath and whatnot before logging in. While I’m doing all that, Mr. Skelly messages me, ‘I spotted your video. Can I post it on the board?’ so I give him the okay. You could also say I just don’t want to deal with it.

Now that I don’t have any business with the BBS, I should get right to skill grinding.

“How much longer until you hit a secondary skill, Princess?” a message pops up in-game. I reply.

“One more for Footwork.”

“Then do you want to go hunting?”

“I took a look around, and it’s nothing but cows and pigs.”

“There are pigs too?”

“They’re needlessly cute in this art style.”

“And yet the cows look like angry bulls...”

What’s with that? Now I’m curious. I’ll level my skills with them as a form of investigation. My initial plan was to backtrack and train with the bears, but... I check my minimap and meet up with Mr. Alf and Mr. Skelly instead.

The moment we reunite, Mr. Skelly points in a different direction. I look over to see a round, pinkish substance.

“It has a red marker.”

“That’s a pigg. Incidentally, it’s not aggressive.”

“So that’s a pigg.”

It has short limbs and a round body topped off with circular, cute eyes. It seems to be munching on grass.

I see. It is indeed needlessly cute.

“Do you want to defeat it for the pork?”

That means it’s time for battle. It lets out a cute squeal as the magic strikes, but my nerfed damage output means it doesn’t lose any HP. Once attacked, the pigg totters toward us, its rump swaying left and right. It angrily stands on its hind legs, jumps toward us, and launches a spinning kick.



“Hold up!”

“Yeah, that’s a shocker.”

“Wh-what exactly are piggs?”

“That’s clearly a fighting pigg.”

“It’s a surprise, if nothing else.”

Once I take a calm look at it, I realize it really got the short end of the stick. Brawlers already have a short reach, and its short limbs make that even shorter.

“Could it be incredibly weak?”

“Yeah.”

“But it could be nasty if you get hit. It’s got high attack. Also, it’s an animal race, so it’s got Endurance too.”

“I see.”

I dodge a jumping headbutt, followed by another kick with a sidestep, then I slice. Its most troublesome attack is its normal punch. It throws hands quite fast.

It takes roughly five minutes of mindless slashing just to take out one of them, and it doesn’t even raise any skills. It looks like there’s even a penalty on the EXP I receive...meaning this is incredibly inefficient.

In the catacombs, it was ridiculously easy to raise my base level but difficult to raise my skill levels. However, it isn’t realistic to hunt in the catacombs; I only managed it because I’m a zombie. In most cases, it would be impossible to vanquish zombies without the proper magic. Luckily, individual zombies have low Intelligence, so you’re fine as long as you don’t get swarmed.

[INGREDIENT] PIGG MEAT

Rarity: NO Quality: C

The boneless ribs of a pigg. It can be used in a wide array of cuisine. Although it is commonly eaten in the area around the pigg’s natural habitat, it

can be sold for a high price if exported. Cook thoroughly. You can select an option to add the bones back when the dish is done.

Three of them, huh? The pigg seems to drop at the same rate as the boar and bear. It also bothers me that the meat only comes in one variety; it isn't separated into different cuts. Still, it looks like these are spareribs...

"If we're looking for meat, we might have to focus on the angus."

"Those cuts would cost a fortune at the supermarket IRL, but this is a game."

"In a way, it's lucky we can get our meat free from whatever we see."

"The problem is that the angus are strong, but not too strong to beat."

"No, the biggest problem is that we can't eat any of this!"

"You got that right."

Neither of them have a sense of taste—they don't even have stomachs. I'm the only one who can eat.

After hunting for a while, Footwork finally reaches its cap.

Footwork has reached its limit. You have unlocked Evasion.

I got two Skill Points when Footwork reached 30. As I initially planned, I'll pick up Waltz rather than evasion. It's going to cost me six SP.

Now that I'm looking closely, there seems to be a Dance skill separate from the Waltz skill. Dance is unlocked just through Footwork and Balance Control, but maybe Waltz is tied to my race. When I try picturing both skills, the former is more of what a dancer would do, while the second brings to mind nobles at social gatherings. It's all dancing, but it feels completely different.

You have learned a second-tier skill. You have unlocked Skill and Art Customization.

Oh? Something was added to the help menu.

SKILL AND ART CUSTOMIZATION

You can change the form of each art to better fit your preferences. While fighting with a set form, your thoughts during battle and combat style may optimize it to suit you even better. If you use it until it is distinct from anyone else's style, it will surely give a strong impression to whoever sees you fight. You can change customization any time out of combat.

Hmm...I didn't know that was a thing.

"I got some customization options after getting a second-tier skill."

"Yeah, that wasn't in the beta. I can't wait to see how everyone develops."

"Some of the developers clearly had too much time on their hands. It hardly gives any bonuses."

The styles I can choose from for offense are single-strike, multi-strike, conserve energy, and special. The names are a bit different for defensive skills. In short, it's about what I want each skill or art to focus on. For offensive skills, the effects are different depending on whether I want to lower the cooldown time to use them more, or lower the MP cost to get more mileage out of them. The same art can take a different form depending on what you're looking to get out of it. That seems to be the main purpose.

The problem is that the form can continue to change after you've equipped it. The help menu said something about them being influenced by thoughts and combat style. I get the feeling there might be a 'My manager's going to kill me if I actually put it on the list, so you have to find it for yourself' kind of form. Especially with this game.

I'll take a better look at that tomorrow. I have a secondary skill now, so it's time for battle.

"Moo... Moooo..."

“It’s clearly calling for its allies...”

Mr. Skelly was initially excited, but he faltered as soon as he saw his new foes: three angus. Incidentally, the angus are dark brown, maybe red, and about the same size as real bulls. The angus are fighting bulls, plain and simple.

The problem is that taking on three at once is too risky.

“That’s a bit dangerous.”

“It shouldn’t be a problem if you can fight properly, Princess, but we haven’t checked yet.”

“Right...if Mr. Alf can stall two of them, we’ll be fine, but if there’s a nerf to the damage I deal, there might also be a boost to the damage I receive.”

“I’d be surprised if there wasn’t.”

And so, we ignore them. I can’t hit them, and I might receive insane blowback. First, I need to see if my debuffs disappeared when I obtained a non-combat second-tier skill. I’m not fast enough to run from an angus anyway. I’d imagine only Mr. Alf is capable of that.

I have Mr. Alf scout for a safer battle on horseback and start testing. It isn’t long before it’s clear: Any second-tier skill will do, it doesn’t have to be a combat one.

“Well, otherwise, the crafting classes would have it rough.”

“True. But on the contrary, you can get rid of the restriction just by raising crafting skills.”

“So Mr. Ertz and the other pure crafters might manage through setting up traps.”

“Crafting gives high stat buffs, and they can make their own weapons. The problem is everything else.”

They can gather materials for production through combat, raise their crafting skills to their second tier, and then use those combat abilities to go straight to the second area...but wouldn’t they lack the firepower for that?

The world quest was a bit special, but whether you win or lose, your skills only

go up once the battle is over. This method seems a tad inefficient, although I imagine it was intentionally set up like that.

“Now that I’ve confirmed this, I’m going to sleep.”

“I’ll post it on the BBS.”

“Thank you.”

I return to town and log out. The boss materials were left with Mr. Skelly, and I’m counting on him to turn them into money. Next week is the tournament—not that I’m taking part in it.

In any case, good night.

Official BBS 1

[Onward] Comprehensive Thread 13 [Dear Conqueror]

1. *Passing Conqueror*

This is a thread for general discussion.

You can discuss whatever you want here

Past threads: http://****

>> 980 Continue this discussion in the next thread

273. *Passing Conqueror*

The tournament's next week, eh? How about we give the bosses another go before that?

274. *Passing Conqueror*

It might be a good way to raise skills.

275. *Passing Conqueror*

Huh? It can't be!

276. *Passing Conqueror*

Oh ho!

277. *Passing Conqueror*

But it is!

278. *Passing Conqueror*

The east of all places?!

279. Passing Conqueror

Anastasia... Wait, she's the princess, ain't she?

280. Passing Conqueror

What? What happened? I was out for a sec!

281. Passing Conqueror

Read it and weep. *The party "Send It!" led by Anastasia has slain the eastern boss. Henceforth, the eastern boss will be weakened, and trade will be restored.*

282. Passing Conqueror

Oh ho!

283. Passing Conqueror

Who did the princess party with?

284. Passing Conqueror

She was hunting with Mr. Alf and Mr. Skelly in the eastern woods. I think they headed for the boss after that.

285. Passing Conqueror

Oh, so it's the undead party. They have high stats. I can see it happening.

286. Passing Conqueror

Their race can't use potions, right?

287. Passing Conqueror

I see, so the potion shortage didn't affect them.

288. *Passing Conqueror*

Right. Though I'm sure it took a lot of guts to do it.

289. *Passing Conqueror*

The princess doesn't visit the board too often, but the other two should put up some info eventually.

290. *Passing Conqueror*

Yeah, if it's Alf and Skelly, they'll probably give up some info. If only they'd hurry up with it.

291. *Passing Conqueror*

Can't wait...

292. *Passing Conqueror*

Hey, go read the log again. The "sent off" part is stupid, yes, but the important part is at the end. Doesn't that bother you?

293. *Passing Conqueror*

Do you mean *"the eastern boss will be weakened, and trade will be restored"*?

294. *Passing Conqueror*

Trade will be restored... Really...?

295. *Passing Conqueror*

What does that mean?

296. *Passing Conqueror*

It probably means exactly what it says. Actually, doesn't that imply that trade's been stopped with the west, south, and north?

297. Passing Conqueror

That can't be good.

298. Passing Conqueror

We're screwed.

299. Passing Conqueror

Oh yeah, I think I heard someone talking about trade a while ago... Who was it again?

300. Passing Conqueror

Was there really?

301. Passing Conqueror

Just check your log!

302. Passing Conqueror

>> 301 Cleared it out ages ago

303. Passing Conqueror

>> 301 Bold of you to expect me to keep those

304. Passing Conqueror

Isn't that a bit careless?

305. Passing Conqueror

I had a look at my logs. It was old man Ertz who said it.

306. Passing Conqueror

>> 305 Good job!

307. Passing Conqueror

>> 305 Good work! You have my praise!

308. Passing Conqueror

Ertz, huh? He's the top blacksmith.

309. Ertz

Oh, I heard that from the princess. She got it from the NP...the residents.

310. Passing Conqueror

Here he is.

311. Passing Conqueror

I'm sure the top players came here as soon as they saw it was beat.

312. Akirina

My sis got one up on me! I'm so mad!

313. Passing Conqueror

>> 312 You mad?

314. Cecil

It looks like the princess took out the east. She was grinding her cooking skill, after all. According to her, most of our rations come from the east, so that's

why she was aiming for it. We'd all starve to death without them, ha ha ha.

315. Passing Conqueror

>> 314 Laugh all about it, why don't you.

316. Ertz

I heard about the trade stuff last week. We should start feeling the effects this week, I'd reckon. It's been quite a few days in-game already.

428. Passing Conqueror

Hey, did you see the video?

429. Passing Conqueror

Yeah, watching it now. That's the princess, right?

430. Passing Conqueror

Huh? There's a video?

431. Passing Conqueror

Username Anastasia. There's only one video. It's called "East Boss Battle" if you want to search for it. And judging by the upload date, it's fresh off the press.

432. Passing Conqueror

For real!

433. Honehone

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! I see you've watched it! I have her permission so I shall post it here! Also, I'll post the video I took of the next area!

http:// * * * * * /Anastasia/watch/ * * * * *

http:// * * * * * /honehone/watch/ * * * * *

434. *Passing Conqueror*

Hoorah! New video!

435. *Passing Conqueror*

We're getting new info now!

436. *Passing Conqueror*

...I'm too enticed by those alluring ravines in the first-person view to focus on the contents.

437. *Passing Conqueror*

>> 436 ...I totally understand

438. *Passing Conqueror*

That's some destructive power in the bottom left.

439. *Passing Conqueror*

Bottom left. Dangerous stuff.

440. *Passing Conqueror*

Agreed.

441. *Passing Conqueror*

I mean... I'm a pubescent guy...

442. *Passing Conqueror*

>> 441 It's a tragedy. My eyes drift there whether I like it or not...

443. Honehone

I shall refrain from commenting on that, but the battle got pretty desperate in the latter half. Mostly for the other two.

444. Passing Conqueror

>> 443 Meaning you didn't do much...

445. Honehone

>> 444 I'm a backline fighter! What am I supposed to do?!

446. Akirina

My sis's tits belong to me. You can't have them. None of you. I'll hack it off, I will.

447. Passing Conqueror

>> 446 Eep!

448. Passing Conqueror

>> 446 Eep...

449. Management

Please put an end to this conversation. Our female GMs just apprehended a repeat offender. So good luck with that... As for all you good boys and girls, please just enjoy this secretly so you don't wind up in that kind of trouble.

450. Passing Conqueror

Wow...

451. Passing Conqueror

Wow...

452. Passing Conqueror

Flat is justice.

453. Passing Conqueror

>> 452 Stand strong.

454. Passing Conqueror

Err, I just got here, but why are all the guys getting such cold looks from the girls? It's scaring me.

455. Passing Conqueror

>> 454 Look up

456. Passing Conqueror

>> 455 Oof...I'll pretend I didn't see... The silence is killing me.

457. Passing Conqueror

>> 456 Wow...

458. Passing Conqueror

Size doesn't matter!

459. Passing Conqueror

Shut up and stare at your man-boobs, why don't you.

460. Passing Conqueror

Wonderful! What a splendid bust line!

461. Passing Conqueror

Is this guy for real?

462. Passing Conqueror

Oof...he's down.

463. Passing Conqueror

Pff! The bear buried him...

464. Passing Conqueror

A suplex! It's incredible.

465. Passing Conqueror

A splendid finish...

466. Passing Conqueror

Whoa...that's intense.

467. Passing Conqueror

Now we can see that bear up close without dying...

468. Passing Conqueror

Her parries are as incredible as ever.

469. Passing Conqueror

It's true. So she's like a parry tank. They would have been wiped out without the princess.

470. Honehone

>> 469 I would have died instantly! We wouldn't have healed Alf in time either!

471. Passing Conqueror

>> 470 Recovery's the only thing stopping the undead, after all...

580. Passing Conqueror

Hmm...so you don't deal any damage. That's concerning.

581. Honehone

>> 580 We're waiting for the princess to return from dinner to look into that.

582. Passing Conqueror

>> 581 Good luck with that!

583. Passing Conqueror

Inhuman evolution is so dreamy. Not that I have the backbone to do it.

584. Honehone

>> 583 Join us! Come on...

585. Passing Conqueror

>> 584 I can't cross that line.

586. Passing Conqueror

Horses are nice, aren't they? They're pretty expensive, though.

587. Passing Conqueror

There's a gate in town, so you don't really need them. But I'd love to take one for a spin.

588. Passing Conqueror

I know, right?

Chapter 2:

Monday through Wednesday

NOW, WHAT TO DO today? I could hunt down cows for food in the second area, but... Oh, I'll need to scour the town before that. I'm hoping to find some new ingredients.

With a plan in mind, I take care of various things IRL before logging in.

It's time to search Belstead—though I'm really just checking the shops. The place is a lot smaller than the starting town...although maybe that place is simply too big.

Hmm, the shops for ingredients seem to be over there. I'll check what's at this one first.

"W-welcome."

"I'm an outsider; don't worry."

"Hm...? Oh, you're the one who defeated the Fighting Bear! Take your time!"

The residents' reactions change based on what you're wearing. They put so much detail into this game... Though it's really just a pain in my case.

On to shopping. They're quite well stocked here, and there are plenty of vegetables I couldn't find in the starting town. They're from a bunch of different seasons and regions, but that's what makes the game different from real life.

Let's see, they have...

Nappa, daikon, bean sprouts, tomato, eggplant, green onion, cucumber, burdock, and sweet potato.

Milk, butter, margarine, cheese, honey, eggs, raisins, potato starch, and three types of wheat.

Tomato ketchup, three types of mustard seed, and three types of vinegar.

I should be able to replace the cabbage in my soup with nappa, and I can throw in some green onion too. It might be nice to swap out potatoes for

daikon as well.

With so many types of wheat, there must be some way to bake it around here. The problem is I don't have any yeast... But if they're selling raisins, I could try to make it naturally. Incidentally, the starting town only stocked whole-wheat flour.

The number of uses for each seasoning seems to be based on appearance. There are pouches, boxes, and bottles. The honey and mustard seed are twenty uses each. The eggs and raisins give you ten. Everything else is fifty. The raisins are in pouches, while the potato starch and wheat are in large sacks. The milk comes in earthen jugs, while the mustard seed and honey come in small bottles. The butter and margarine are sold in glass boxes, while the eggs are simply sold in packs of ten.

Items with limited uses function so that even if you need to use three eggs in a dish, it only takes up one use. Otherwise, I'd be going through ingredients like crazy. Incidentally, petty as it may be, if you try to fill up an empty bottle with one of your limited uses to try and trick the system, it will explode.

I think I'll buy a little of everything.

Huh? Oh dear...my inventory's too full. I started off with fifty slots and brought that up to sixty with my pouch. If I want everything, I'll need seventy-two. That's not quite enough.

"Is something wrong?"

"I don't have enough space, so I'm wondering what to do."

"Oh, I see. Do you not have vegetable storage?"

"Vegetable storage?"

"It can only hold vegetables, but it is quite convenient."

"I would love to have one..."

She gives me directions to another shop. It seems the storage isn't rare; it's just a standard tool. The shop also deals in other cooking appliances, so I decide to go have a look. It's not far.

"Can I help you?"

“I heard I could buy vegetable storage here.”

“Sure you can.”

[STORAGE] PORTABLE VEGETABLE STORAGE (SMALL)

Rarity: NO Quality: C Price: 12,000

A portable box to hold vegetables for cooking. It can hold up to 6 varieties.

[STORAGE] PORTABLE VEGETABLE STORAGE (MEDIUM)

Rarity: NO Quality: C Price: 24,000

A portable box to hold vegetables for cooking. It can hold up to 12 varieties.

[STORAGE] PORTABLE VEGETABLE STORAGE (LARGE)

Rarity: RA Quality: C Price: 40,000

A portable box to hold vegetables for cooking. It can hold up to 20 varieties.

Oh, what’s this I see? Let’s buy the large one. I already have fourteen varieties to deal with, which is really clogging up my inventory. If it can actually hold twenty different types, then 40,000 gold is cheap.

The other items are piquing my interest as well!

[TOOL] BREADMAKING SET

Rarity: NO Quality: C Price: 20,000

A set of tools for those who want to bake bread in earnest. Can fuse with a cooking set.

[TOOL] PORTABLE STONE OVEN SET

Rarity: NO Quality: C Price: 60,000

A stone oven, plus accessories for those who know how to use them. Can fuse with a cooking set.

A breadmaking set and stone oven... I could certainly start making bread with that. They have cheese too, so I could even make pizza if I wanted. I'll need to get used to a stone oven first, though.

In any case, although I can buy them, they're expensive. I'll need to withdraw some gold from the union.

I take out 80,000 gold from the union to purchase the storage, stone oven, and breadmaking set. That's 120,000 gold right out the window. I spare no time linking both new items to my cooking set.

Then I return to the store and purchase my vegetables, sending them all straight to my vegetable storage. I have six inventory slots left in the large storage. Somehow, I'm still using fifty-nine of my inventory slots—I only have one to spare. This is quite the predicament.

I should post about these miraculous items on the cooking board; I'm sure my compatriots will rejoice. They go for quite a bit of coin, but I'm certain someone will buy them. And when you're sharing information, it's just good manners to use your name rather than posting anonymously.

All right, that should do it. I've written what I can, so now I'll clean out my inventory and go hunt some cows. They owe me their meat.

I'll store a few things in the adventurers' union inventory and put some items on consignment at the trade union. I take care of the consignment first so I can pick up some quests at the adventurers' union without backtracking. I list 1 cm steak and boar soup on consignment, and I put my alchemy reagents away in storage.

The quests that are always available are mostly hunting piggs and angus. There are also some for fighting the same enemies as the ones in the starting town, though from Belstead's perspective, I'll be hunting in the western forest rather than the eastern forest. It's the same forest, in any case, so I should have

expected that.

New enemies to this area are the accel hawk, forest wolf, aquilegia, king slime, army horse, banty, and troll. I'll put them all on hold for now—I don't know where to find them, anyway.

All right, onward. I'll have to avoid any link battles where they summon more allies. Fighting multiple foes is still impossible for me solo. It would have been easy on the previous map, but this one seems to have scaled up the difficulty.

Oh, there's a loner there. I'll lure it with magic. We're flying solo now! Since I'm alone, might as well work on raising my close-combat skills. It was easier to raise magic while with a party.

The angus' weaknesses are their necks (as usual) and legs; it looks like most animals share the same weaknesses. I presume its chest is also a weak point, but as it's down on all fours, that's fundamentally impossible for me to target.

After taking on my magic, the angus charges straight at me, attempting to impale me on its horns. I parry the dash and guard myself from a headbutt. Its attacks are quite plain at close range; it's just swinging its head around to bash me with its horns. Its attack power is high, though, so I can't risk taking a hit.

As my goal is to raise my close-combat skills, I don't cast any magic. Our fight is practically turn-based as we exchange blows back and forth. I lose a surprising amount of HP when I guard, so my options are either to keep watch on my HP gauge or to parry. I don't take damage when I parry, and I have my HP Regen, so I can last as long as it doesn't attack too often.

I've lost around 40 percent of my HP by the time I defeat it. Perhaps I wouldn't die against two of them, but I suspect the parry difficulty will go up when I face multiple foes. And even worse, the link battles involve three of them.

Oh, that's right, I should customize my skills and arts. It would be a waste otherwise. Let's fiddle with Sword, Defend, and Parry. Hmm...Single-Strike focuses on attack power. Multi-Strike focuses on cooldown time. Conserve Energy focuses on MP usage, and Special has multiple effects, mainly focusing on status ailments.

Hmm...I should set my attack arts to Single-Strike. I'd like my defensive arts to raise my defense even more. As for Parry, cooldown and consumption are more important than boosting its performance. I'm doomed if I can't parry, so I'll reduce the cooldown.

Now back to securing meat for my next production day.

[MATERIAL] FLESH OF THE LIVING

Rarity: EP Quality: C

The flesh and bone of a living creature. Treasured by the undead...but for what?

Oh...? Looks like some kind of epic drop just popped out. It's treasured by us... Flesh and bone... Oh, is it a material used to make replacement parts? If that's it, it certainly is valuable. But I don't know what else I'll need, so it's not of much use right now.

Limb recovery is important. I'll need to find a way to craft spare parts eventually; unfortunately, I don't know where exactly I'll find that recipe, and I'm quite certain I won't think it up myself.

It's pointless to worry about it, so I put it on hold.

I spend three days sending piggs and cows to a better place.

Sword has reached Level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Acquired Sword Art: Delay Slash.

You have met the requirements to advance Sword. One-handed, Two-handed, Rapier...etc. have been unlocked.

There are many paths that the sword skill can take, but the one I know how to

use is Rapier, so I spend 6 SP on that. Delay Slash is a damaging art that inflicts additional damage to the same location after your first slash. You won't do any extra damage if the first slash misses.

After Sword goes up, my three defensive skills are quick to follow suit.

Your Race Level has increased.

Defend has reached Level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Acquired Defend Art: Blocking

You have met the requirements to advance Defend. Light Shield, Heavy Shield have been unlocked.

Parry has reached Level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Acquired Parry Art: Break Parry

You have met the requirements to advance Parry. Attack Diversion has been unlocked.

Blocking momentarily stuns an attacker if the damage taken upon a block is below a certain threshold. Break Parry inflicts the Unbalanced status when you successfully parry. Although Break Parry is priceless, Blocking is a stinker. I don't have a shield, so a surprising bit of damage slips through while I'm guarding. It's overall quite useless to me.

Additionally, Armor has advanced, and I can choose Cloth, Light, or Heavy. I had set the notification to off, so it didn't tell me. My armor is considered light armor, so I pick up Light for 6 SP.

As for Defend and Parry, they both encounter a new wrinkle.

Conditions have been met to unlock the Art of Self-Defense Skill.

Specific requirements have been met. A specific skill has been modified.
Modified skill: Art of Self-Defense

This seems to be a derivation of Defend, Parry, and Footwork. I don't know who's out to get me, but if I advance Defend or Parry, then I can't acquire Art of Self-Defense. What bothers me more is that there isn't any information about Art of Self-Defense on the BBS. Meaning...if either skill is advanced, it won't even show up on the list?

But if it does show up for anyone who advanced both skills at once, it would be strange not to find it on the board. Well, perhaps it's strange for someone to take Defend, Parry, and Footwork all together. You generally just need one of them.

Defend is for people with shields, Footwork is for nimble types, and Parry is for insane people. You take increased damage when Parry fails. If you fail a weapon parry, you lose weapon durability, and you take even more damage if you fail to parry with a shield. What tank would ever go for that?

Or so I've read.

Additionally, the Art of Self-Defense skill received a modification as soon as it was unlocked—it changed into Princess-style Protection. It clearly must be because of my race—as I'm sure you guessed. It says "Princess-style," after all.

Now then, about the Art of Self-Defense... Though it was unlocked by all three skills, it seems to combine the effects of Defend and Parry. It's the best of both worlds...is what I'd like to say, but I doubt it. I mean, that doesn't seem likely, given game balance and all.

Maybe it gives you the arts of both but doesn't offer as much movement assistance from the system, making the user put in all the work? I mean, the moment someone takes all three of those skills, it's dubious whether they can master them all.

Unfortunately, I now know they prepared a skill for my specific race, so I can't really ignore it, can I? The main issue is that it takes 10 Skill Points, but...I should take a proper look at it first.

Of the many techniques passed down through the royal family, this skill specializes in protecting oneself using ■ ■ ■. Set it to “strong” for the skill to scale with Strength. Set it to “supple” to make it scale with Dexterity.

Oh...? I'll take it!

Do you want to learn Princess-style Protection?

Yes.

You currently possess Rapier. Would you like to link it with Princess-style Protection?

Yes to that too.

You have linked Rapier. Please choose between “Strong Sword” and “Supple Sword.”

I don't really have an option on that one. Supple Sword.

This will turn the skill into: Eloquent Princess-style Protection: Rapier. Continue?

So the supple style is called “eloquent?” It seems this is the royal family's eloquent style, which focuses on Dexterity, and this is the version specifically specialized in rapier. Well, whatever it is, I'm going to take it.

You have learned Eloquent Princess-style Protection: Rapier.

Now then, I'm sure it has some arts...

ROYAL DEFENSE

***Block attacks with the designated equipment and divert their force.
Overwrites Guard and Parry.***

I see, it replaces skill arts from the lower tier. I'll lose Guard from Defend and Parry from Parry, replacing both with Royal Defend. As Royal Defend takes care of both, I presume it'll scale with Dexterity. Before, Guard was based on Strength, and Parry on Dexterity. It'll be nice to have them on the same wavelength.

If I keep leveling my skills, will it keep replacing my lower-tier arts? I've come across something nice. So nice, in fact, that I wouldn't mind keeping it to myself. Ah, perhaps that's precisely why it's not on the BBS. I'm sure the regular version of Art of Self-Defense functions similarly.

Time to get right to testing. Onward! To battle!

Battle skills should be tested in battle; I don't see how else I could give them a try. Come to think of it, my Movement Assist: Royalty has been influencing my stance ever since I started using a rapier, and Princess-style Protection seems to be subtly changing it as well. I presume whatever fighting style it's supposed to be is being applied.

I'll be moving quite awkwardly until I get used to it. For now, I'll need to concentrate on each movement.

When I'm standing normally, it's like the arch of my right foot is joined to the heel of my left. It's the opposite once I draw my sword, with my right heel touching my left arch. Is that so I can lunge?

I wonder what it looks like from the side. It's a first-person game, so I can't really tell.

Now then, my test target is obviously an angus. The regular strategy against a single angus is to lure it in with magic, sidestep the charge, and guard against the headbutt.

Not bad. Blocking is far easier than it was before I got the skill. I'm still taking damage but not nearly as much. It must be because of the Dex scaling. And thanks to Waltz, it will take a very powerful attack to knock me off balance.

I can guard without issue now, but I'd still like parrying to be my main defense. There's no real need to go out of my way to guard, is there? The skills are fused now, so they'll level together. I'll probably only guard against surprise attacks.

Now that I have the Rapier skill, my damage has quite clearly gone up. I'm looking forward to seeing what second-tier magic can do.

I channel and chant while avoiding attacks, deploying magic at the tip of my blade for the counterthrust. Safe and reliable.

If I want even more firepower, I'll add combat arts over that. With that said, I can't go through too much MP at once, since I can't use potions. Undead are strongest in long, drawn-out battles.

I'm regularly using the Spiral Magi Amp ability of my weapon, so I don't often turn to combat arts. There's a dangerous moment of immobility after using an art.

When all's said and done, close combat is rather fun. I can draw the battles out longer if I don't use the arts, and though I worry that I'm losing some efficiency, a slight lack of optimization isn't going to bother me.

There we go... Now, to dismantle it.

[INGREDIENT] ANGUS RIB ROAST

Rarity: RA Quality: C

Angus rib meat. Delicious meat with a wide range of uses but not so easy to obtain. The angus has a rough temperament, so its meat is rare to come across. It is often enjoyed by the noble class. Recommended for steak, roast

beef, sukiyaki, and stew.

Oh, I hit the jackpot...is what I'd like to say, but I've already found a few of those. I get one nearly every time I take on an angus, and it's rarer not to. Because of this, I suspect there are still other varieties of meat I haven't found yet. So far, I've gotten ribs, shank, rump, and rib roast. It's a rare drop for what it's worth, so I decide to just call it a day.

I get one every so often, so I'm not sure if it's really right to call it rare. Seeing how I can get two kilograms of ribs, two kilograms of shank, two kilograms of rump, and only one kilogram of rib roast with each cow...I guess it's rarer than the other cuts?

Oh...I completed another orb. That makes twenty-five. I consume one every time I use Libertà, so I need to save them up.

The party "Does Anyone Even Care If We Kill This Thing?" led by Cecil has slain the western boss. Henceforth, the western boss will be weakened, and trade will be restored.

Oh wow. The west was a killer bee, as I recall. I remember Cecil saying he didn't want to go, but I guess he did it anyway in the end. The trade restrictions started baring their teeth this week, so perhaps he didn't have much of a choice.

Mr. Cecil's party had two magicians with AoE, so they had an advantage in the west. I'm not going to say anything about the party name. The limit is fifty characters, by the way.

I should fiddle with my customizations a bit more. Now that they've fused with the Eloquent Style, Guard and Parry have been set to maximum performance. I can live with that. As for the arts that haven't been overwritten yet, the guard ones are set to performance, while the parry ones are set to reduce cooldown time. It's no laughing matter if I can't parry when I need to. In fact, it'll be fatal in my case. I'm sure I'll be faced with long-range attacks soon.

All right, time to hunt my way back to town and sleep.

Today is Thursday. I can log in as soon as school is out.

I think I can get three skills to their second tier today. I'll save Cooking for Saturday, since I'm going to open a food stall while the tournament is running.

I only noticed when my sister pointed it out this morning, but the details of the tournament have been updated. Starting from 10 a.m., it will become possible to teleport to a special event field from the statue of Goddess Stellura in the central square. You can set up a stall inside, and I see no better chance to sell my food. It's not like I'm participating in the tournament, anyway.

What's this...? Something just moved in the corner of my eye...a bird? It was headed toward the forest south of Belstead. I can't get it out of my mind, so I go to check it out.

It's certainly a bird, and not the sort they have in town.

BANTY LV 22

Very short-tempered. Watch out for its powerful kicks. Its meat is odorless and refreshing.

Attribute: —

Weakness: —

Resists: —

Genus: Animal

Species: Cuckoo

Status: Normal

Oh...? There's something clearly off, but...is that a fighting cock? Its species is cuckoo—does that mean the ones kept in town will evolve into this?

The cuckoos in town, although large, are just chickens. This banty in front of

me has black feathers, longer legs, and more bulk, though I imagine it will give me chicken meat all the same. I could open a grilled chicken stall.

Looks like meat's back on the menu! Charge!

[INGREDIENT] BANTY MEAT

Rarity: NO Quality: C

The feathers have been plucked to reveal the supple meat beneath. Odorless and refreshing. Unfortunately, the offal is inedible.

[MATERIAL] BANTY FEATHERS

Rarity: NO Quality: C

Feathers plucked from a banty.

Ha ha! I obtain processed meat and feathers after stabbing in my dismantling knife. Somehow I only get three feathers from a large bird, but they're more of a byproduct, so it doesn't matter. Shall I roast it whole?

I have spring onions, so I can make chicken and scallion skewers. No, wait. I could try finding tuna and roast the chicken on demand. Hmm...we'll need to open the south to get any seafood. I'll put that on hold.

All right, I'll spend the day hunting banties. I could stick to beef skewers, but I'll stock up on chicken just in case. Honestly, I have way too many angus drops. I don't think I'll be needing any more for a while now.

The grass isn't too high, and I have a decent field of view, but the trees here are just as thick as in the forest. It's not exactly a jungle though, and I don't have too much difficulty walking. Perhaps it's because of my Waltz skill, and the Way of Walking from my equipment.

I've only seen banties so far, but I doubt there's only one type of monster in this forest area—and I'm soon proven right. A troll. How should I put this...? It's like if a goblin was both scaled up and fattened up.

The goblin general had a muscular build, but these trolls...yeah. Only their arms are muscular, and the rest is quite a contrast to that.

It carries a club as a weapon... No, it would be more accurate to call it a log. A tree trunk with the branches haphazardly ripped off. Can it actually swing that around in a forest? Is this really the right spawn point for them?

I doubt it can use it properly. Or maybe this is the game telling me to use the terrain to my advantage...? In any case, I decide to give it a go.

As usual, I position myself in front of a tree and fire off a shot of magic first. This immediately makes me the troll's target, and it comes toward me at a snail's pace. I get in another spell before the troll can enter close-combat range.

It lets out a roar as it takes a great swing with its log. Its horizontal swing collides with the tree behind me, and I move just a bit out of the way before attacking. The sounds of shattering wood coming from behind me do put me off, but I continue stabbing it with magic mixed in.

Then comes another swing, so I dodge once more. This time, I can't help but take a glance toward the jarring sound behind me. Neither the troll's log nor the rotten tree trunk look like they will hold out much longer.

Could the troll have automatic HP Regen? It's definitely recovering. It's holding out better than I thought it would. I should have expected this from its appearance.

After around three more of the same attacks, I hear a snapping sound behind me, and the tree falls with a *thud*. The troll still has around half of its HP, and its log managed to survive longer than my tree.

I ultimately have to sacrifice two trees to defeat it. Incidentally, these fallen trees don't stay broken, nor do they become items—they vanish in an array of polygons. Is that because the troll didn't have the Log skill? Or maybe the tree was too damaged? Both options seem equally plausible, so I'm not sure.

My conclusion: Trolls have high Endurance, HP Regeneration, and muscles for brains.

Automatic HP Regen has reached Level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Automatic HP Regen has reached its limit. You have unlocked Super HP Regen.

Faded Rapier of Protection has adapted to its user.

Oh? Let's check the drops first.

[MATERIAL] CHAMAECYPARIS

Rarity: NO Quality: E-

Wood that can be gathered in the east, also known as cypris. Lumber with incredible durability. It has average hardness and is good for processing.

Wow! Raw lumber! I don't need it! And the quality is low!

Is it because it was smacked against the tree so many times? That tactic made it easier to beat the troll, but that probably means a lot of wood quality is going to be sacrificed in future battles. I mean, it's not like I'm using it. You can just cut down cypris in the eastern forest anyway. It seems that there is absolutely no need to go after troll materials. There's nothing good about fighting them.

Now then, on to the weapon. It did say it would change based on its master's fighting style.

[EQUIPMENT-WEAPON] FADED RAPIER OF PROTECTION

Rarity: EX Quality: S+ Durability: —

A magic weapon altered to fit the desires of its new master. The slender blade is double-edged with a sharp point. It is well suited for both slashes and stabs. Although it feels very light to its master, to anyone else, it is far heavier than it looks.

A weapon made to answer its master's deepest desires, its abilities will

change based on its master's fighting style. Although it has faded, it is made from a mysterious metal and gives off a strange, mystical presence. This blade deals physical damage based on Dexterity and Spirit, and magic damage based on Intelligence. It additionally functions as a magic catalyst.

Libertà: Consumes an orb to add additional damage to the next attack

Spiral Magi-Amp Lv 33: MP poured into the blade will generate a spiral around it, increasing damage.

Ensol: The sheath may be used as a parasol.

Appraisal Lv 10

ATK: △ MATK: △

DEF: △ MDEF: △

Attack type: Stab, Slash

Affected by Skills: Rapier, Eloquent Princess-style Protection, Magic Assist

So, compared to before... Where's that screenshot...? Oh, got it. Before, the physical damage was based on Strength and Spirit, but that's changed to Dexterity and Spirit. Also, the weapon got a new skill called Ensol, and Eloquent Princess-style Protection was added to the affected skills. That seems to be it.

ENSOL

The sheath may be used as a parasol.

Deploys a membrane of light to protect the user from the sun and rain.

Undead will take reduced sun damage in its shadow.

Pointing it in the direction of an attack can also reduce the effects of light magic.

ELOQUENT PRINCESS-STYLE PROTECTION

When the skill is active, a bonus is added to guarding and parrying.

That's a very unweaponlike ability. It's turning into a rapier-shaped magic catalyst and shield, or at least that seems like its main purpose now. There doesn't seem to be much benefit to actually attacking with the rapier. At least Guard and Parry have been enhanced, but only by the weapon. I main magic, but I just roll with it.

I'm more intrigued by Ensol. I can apparently use it if I point the tip of the scabbard toward the sky like an umbrella. I can maintain it in combat if I hold the scabbard with my left hand and my rapier in my right. Ensol just needs the scabbard, so the rapier itself is free to do what I want.

Incidentally, its graphic effect displays as a gray membrane that spreads from the tip of the scabbard and takes on a parasol-like appearance, and quite an elegant one at that. Like my equipment, it's a combination of black-ish gray and white-ish gray. There is a slight difference between the two colors, and I can make out the patterns covering it.

Adding a parasol has made me more princess-like, but isn't an attendant supposed to hold the parasol rather than the princess herself?

Even if I move the scabbard, it seems to only cover me. It must only be effective for the user. Though convenient, it will make it harder to level up Automatic HP Regen.

Oh, that's right. Automatic HP Regen evolved into Super HP Regen. That will take 3 SP because it's a race skill...

Aah! The sun! Aah aaah! I'm going to die! I'm dead!

I would have died there without Ensol. The sun really is my mortal enemy... Show some mercy, would you, game devs? It totally slipped my mind. My regeneration fell upon skill evolution and was no longer enough to compensate for sun damage. My actual regen value is hidden, so I didn't realize how little I was recovering. Although the sun is about to set, I'm going to need Ensol for a while.

Come to think of it, I'm using Ensol in my left hand without issue.

My left should be equipped with my orb-producing ring. But it seems like the scabbard is considered part of my right-hand weapon, and the system doesn't care what I do with it.

Should I ask about that?

...Okay, it's apparently intentional. It's not a bug. The reason is just as I guessed, and I can use it without issue.

So, I'll be wielding my rapier and scabbard in battle. There isn't any actual vinyl or cloth forming the parasol, so I can swing it around freely.

Now back to hunting... Honestly, I'm praying I don't meet any more trolls.

Perception has reached level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Perception has reached its limit. You have unlocked Danger Sense.

Detect has reached Level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Detect has reached its limit. You have unlocked Instinct.

Of course, I'll learn them both. They cost 6 SP each, for 12 points total. I have 41 left.

My magics are getting close to evolving. I haven't seen a need for Mine yet, so I haven't picked it up, but it'll likely become necessary soon. I'm running short of points.

I get the feeling I wouldn't have enough if I hadn't rebuilt this character.

I'm sure my Cooking will advance on Saturday. I can spend Sunday working on my magic, and I'll devote a bit of time next week to Alchemy, perhaps.

Now then, about Danger Sense and Intuition... It looks like I will get an even stronger assist from the system. Danger Sense displays an enemy AoE range in a different color, just like in old MMOs. It becomes more precise the higher the level. Its ability to locate enemies also becomes more precise. Intuition clears up what was once just a vague sense. Enemy weak points are colored distinctly based on the damage multipliers I'll get from a hit at each point.

It's good to know that my skills are growing. I can't say this was all for nothing.

Now then, back to sending off monsters.

[MATERIAL] TROLL CORE

Rarity: RA Quality: C

The crystallized mana of a troll. Used for various things.

Oh...I'd really like to know what those various things are. And because I don't know what it's for, it's quite hard to throw it away. Well, it's about time to log off and sleep. I'm still training, but is there really any point in it? I already got a skill.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Ah! Some wild ingredients burst from the thicket! Yes, yes, wait your turn. Thank you for the fresh meat.

Official BBS 2

[Another Good Day] Production: Cooking Thread 4 [With Good Food]

1. Nameless Cook

This thread is for cooking! Talk about cooking here and keep the other conversations elsewhere.

Past threads: [http://*****](#)

General Production Thread: [http://*****](#)

Caution! Boiling Knowledge and Stewing Knowledge both exist. They're different arts! Also, no food terrorism!

>> 980 See you in the next thread!

621. Anastasia

Good day. I come with cooking-related information from Belstead, the town east of the starting town.

622. Nameless Cook

Seriously?! That's the princess, ain't it?

623. Nameless Cook

Here it comes! Thanks for the info.

624. Nameless Cook

Don't worry about spoilers! People who care about that don't use the forums.

625. Nameless Cook

Hmph.

626. Anastasia

Understood. I'll tell you everything I know. Give me a second.

627. Nameless Cook

Glad to hear it!

628. Anastasia

First, the enemies include piggs and cows—called angus. The piggs drop spareribs, and the cows always drop ribs, shanks, and rumps. The piggs drop as much as the boars in the eastern forest, and the cows drop a little more than that. You can also occasionally get rib roasts from the cows, but I think you need to have the Cooking skill for that. Mr. Skelly and Mr. Alf never get any when they dismantle.

On to what you can buy from the stores: Nappa, daikon, beansprout, tomato, eggplant, green onion, cucumber, burdock, and sweet potato. Milk, butter, margarine, cheese, honey, egg, raisins, potato starch, three types of wheat. Tomato ketchup, three types of mustard seeds, three types of vinegar.

The flour comes in bread, all-purpose, and pastry flour. The mustard varieties are oriental, yellow, and brown. The vinegar is grain vinegar, apple vinegar, and grape vinegar.

In addition, while expensive, they sell vegetable storage, breadmaking sets, and stone oven sets. Let me post a screenshot of the store list, meat drops, and set prices.

http://****

629. Nameless Cook

Wonderful! What a wonderful summary!

630. Nameless Cook

What? Breadmaking sets and stone ovens?! Expensive as hell, though...

631. *Nameless Cook*

But you're still going to buy them, right?

632. *Nameless Cook*

Of course I am.

633. *Nameless Cook*

Not buying them isn't even an option.

634. *Nameless Cook*

You got that right.

635. *Anastasia*

I just finished shopping, so I have yet to see how it all works.

636. *Nameless Cook*

A stone oven... That's going to be a hard one to master...

637. *Nameless Cook*

Right, how high is your cooking, Princess? I'd like some arts info if you have any.

638. *Anastasia*

Sure, I don't mind. I got Reproduction and Frying Knowledge at 20, and Smoking Knowledge at 25. I think. I'm at level 27, so I don't know what comes at 30.

639. *Nameless Cook*

Thanks for that! 27, huh? That's pretty high.

640. Nameless Cook

What knowledge are we missing now...?

641. Nameless Cook

There's grilling, boiling, stewing, steaming, frying, and smoking...

642. Nameless Cook

Roasting, maybe...?

643. Nameless Cook

Oh...roasting...slow roasting...

644. Nameless Cook

Honestly, is anyone going to use that?

645. Nameless Cook

That's troubling. Do we even have any ingredients that need roasting?

646. Nameless Cook

You mean like coffee...or green tea?

647. Nameless Cook

We haven't found either of them yet.

648. Anastasia

No coffee or tea yet... I would love a spot of tea.

649. Nameless Cook

Come to think of it, Princess, did you find any yeast for the bread?

650. Anastasia

No luck. Ha ha, how about we try our best making it naturally?

651. Nameless Cook

Oh, okay. Well, the fact that there are raisins probably means that's what we're supposed to do.

652. Anastasia

I thought so too, so I bought a bit. I think I'll give it a go once my cooking reaches second tier. I'll come back with more arts information then.

653. Nameless Cook

I'm counting on it!

654. Nameless Cook

That'll be huge!

655. Anastasia.

Well then, I'm going to go hunt some cows. On another note, you need a special processing method to use the meat from the eastern forest. Try asking the neighborhood grannies.

656. Nameless Cook

Wh-what?!

657. Nameless Cook

Please elaborate!

658. Nameless Cook

So that's why it was so low-quality and unappetizing after I went through all the trouble!

659. Nameless Cook

I see, you need cooking skills if you live here... The residents must know a lot about cooking.

660. Nameless Cook

I'll ask a few I get along with. Yes, definitely.

661. Nameless Cook

A game-specific, or rather, world-specific method... The bears and boars were treated like monsters. I guess real-world methods aren't enough.

662. Nameless Cook

I still can't shake off my experience from other games.

663. Nameless Cook

Well, this game's only been around for a month.

Chapter 3:

The Day before the Tournament

IT'S FRIDAY. There's one thing that's been bothering me, so I'm going to spend my time figuring out Ensol while searching and gathering information in Belstead. I have to raise my recovery skill, or I'll die.

As for what I'm looking for, I guess you could call them farmers. I'm going to find the people who raise cuckoos. These farmers need land of their own, so they live outside of town. It's actually quite a pain to visit them. Though Belstead isn't as large as the starting town, it's still pretty big. I listen to the residents' conversations along the way.

Come to think of it, I'm starting to see players here and there, though there aren't many of them. The east doesn't have much for players who don't have Cooking.

This should be the place. A lone wooden building stands in the fields outside of town. It's quite a bit larger than the other houses.

The bell rings as I step inside.

"Oh, welcome."

"Good day. I heard I could buy meat-related items here."

"Are you looking for anything in particular?"

"Actually, I wanted to try making sausage..."

"Sausage... Well, we have some here, but it will be a bit pricey if you want to make it yourself."

[INGREDIENT] PICKLED SHEEP INTESTINES

Rarity: NO Quality: A Price: 1,200

Sheep intestines used to make sausages. These ones have been pickled in salt for preservation. Expertly processed by a professional.

[INGREDIENT] PICKLED PIG INTESTINES

Rarity: NO Quality: A Price: 1,000

Pig intestines used to make sausages. These ones have been pickled in salt for preservation. Expertly processed by a professional.

[INGREDIENT] PICKLED COW INTESTINES

Rarity: NO Quality: A Price: 800

Cow intestines used to make sausages. These ones have been pickled in salt for preservation. Expertly processed by a professional.

Hmm...are they really that expensive? I mean, the quality is A, somehow. As expected of a professional, perhaps. It's not a bad deal if I can buy it at that quality... Although I don't know how the game counts the casing, so I'm not sure how much I need to buy.

"How long are they?"

"Two meters each."

If I make each sausage around nine centimeters, I can get twenty out of one casing. If I'm remembering right, when you're using natural casing, sheep makes wieners, pig makes frankfurters, and cow makes bologna. I'd usually make wieners, but I'm cooking for a festival. You need frankfurters for hot dogs. In that case, I'll need to buy the pig intestines. It shouldn't be too hard to procure filling. That just leaves the bread for the bun...and maybe figuring out the filling ratio.

Also, based on the number of intestines in stock, it will be difficult to make this my main concession during the festival. That's unfortunate.

How long should I make them, anyway?

The main difference between wieners, frankfurters, and bologna sausages is the girth. It seems that this difference originally came from the size of intestine

used, but eventually everyone switched to artificial casing.

I'd like to keep it at a length that won't leave any material unused, since any leftovers will just vanish into a sea of data. Since they come in two-meter sections...hmm, how about fourteen of them, fourteen centimeters each? Yeah, I'll go with that.

"Do you have one of these already?"

[TOOL] SAUSAGE SET

Rarity: NO Quality: C Price: 50,000

A set of tools required to make sausages. Includes a meat grinder and sausage stuffer. Can fuse with a cooking set.

That's a must-have! I would die to have a meat grinder, though it's going to hurt my wallet. Oh, they're even selling the meat version of the vegetable storage. My inventory is in a pretty nasty state, so it's tempting. Now if only I could find one for seasonings as well.

Now I'll need to withdraw some money. If I buy fifty of each intestine, it'll work out to 200,000 gold. That's more than half of my savings, which will really sting.

All right, I'll buy 170,000 gold's worth. Twenty-five sheep intestines and fifty pig, alongside the sausage set and meat storage. I'll stop by again tomorrow to stock up on more pig intestines before the event.

That leaves me with 150,000 gold.

"Come again."

"I'll be back tomo— Er, in three days, that is."

"I can prepare a bit more if you tell me what you want in advance."

Oh, this AI will go that far for me? Perhaps the other shops are the same. There's a chance that your favorability rating influences it, but this is the first time I've ever been here... Ah, but I've heard that Mr. Alf, Mr. Skelly, and I each

have a high favorability for some reason. Maybe defeating the boss gave a bonus to our first impressions.

That aside, how much should I buy...? I guess that depends on how many frankfurters I think I can sell. I expect they'll sell relatively well, but the initial investment is going to be high.

"I'll be here three days from now, at night. Can you prepare a hundred pig intestines for me?"

"Three days should be fine. Though it'll cost you 100,000 gold..."

"I'll withdraw it from the union first; don't worry. I'm counting on you."

"Got it. I'll have your order waiting."

"Come to think of it, do you sell tallow?"

"Tallow... You mean beef fat? We usually throw it away."

"I'd be grateful if you could spare some for me."

"Please give me a minute."

The shopkeeper goes to check the back. If they have tallow, I'd love to use it for steak. I don't mind charbroiling, but I'd like to expand my options.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. We usually discard it, but you did defeat the Fighting Bear to the west, so please just take it."

"Thank you. I think you'll be able to sell to outsiders, so you might want to keep some on hand."

"So there's a demand among outsiders... Understood. I'll have a talk with the owner."

"Then I'll be on my way."

As I leave the livestock farmer, I ponder my other ingredients. I should have enough meat to make hot dogs my main attraction, and the production process shouldn't be too difficult with the sausage set.

I'll need bread ingredients, ketchup, and mustard... If I'm going to make fourteen 14 cm frankfurters per casing, will that be 2,100 total?

One ketchup has fifty uses, so I'll need forty-two. Mustard seeds probably won't be used up in bulk. I assume the mustard I make from one use of mustard seeds will be an item with its own set number of uses.

Although I'm working toward stocking my stall for tomorrow's event, there's no reason I have to limit myself to that day, and leftovers shouldn't be a problem. Honestly, the biggest issues are the bread and the sausage ratio. I need a leavening agent for the bread, and I'll have to research how to use the stone oven. Then I'll need to make mustard.

I head to a corner of the square to test out the oven. Before deploying my kitchen, I should fuse my sausage set with it. I take out the cooking set cube from my bag and look at the preview. Now that I have so many additions, it seems I can tamper with the setup. I'd like the oven in the back... There we go.

All right, time to deploy it. Now, how do I use the oven?

ABOUT THE STONE OVEN

Heat is a basic requirement to use the oven. First, insert burning firewood into the oven. The color will indicate the temperature, and the accuracy of this indicator depends on your Cooking skill level. Move your food to your desired heat zone and add fuel as you cook.

The firewood is in a pile beside the oven and will never run out. However, you might want to search for alternative types of fuel. There may be better materials out there. The oven will be cleaned when you put it away.

I see. There are quite a few systems at play with the oven. With the meat grinder, you just put the meat in and it converts it into ground meat. Put in a fish, and it will debone and skin it for you. It's pretty convenient. It comes with two settings: rough and fine.

Hmm, I remember that I can do web searches while in-game... There it is. There's a warning displayed in big letters: "Your browser usage in-game will be monitored by AI. In some cases, your account may be temporarily suspended or deleted, so please familiarize yourself with the terms of service."

I just want to look up how to make bread and sausages, so that has nothing to do with me. Apparently, you can't look at anything 18+ or any external BBS.

I probably don't need any baking paper or trays since I'm using a stone oven. There weren't any in the breadmaking set to begin with, so I couldn't even if I wanted to.

The breadmaking set consists of a scale, measuring spoons, measuring cups, a wooden bowl, and a wooden spatula. There's also a wooden board to knead bread on, a wooden rolling pin, and a semi-circular wood plank on which to cut the dough. What else... Thermometer, hygrometer, sugar duster, a cloth of some sort, cookie cutters, bread knife, brush, and a water sprayer. There's quite a lot in there, actually. There are no molds, but so be it.

The scale and thermometer make me question the world-building, but when I think a bit on it I remember that the game has a machine race. I'm pretty curious how they're treated in-universe.

Okay, from what a passing aunty told me, the thermometer and scale were made in the likeness of something that came from a dungeon, but she doesn't know the specifics. Then again, she's clearly a housewife, so it would be strange if she did know the details. I don't know much about the machinery race, but they're classified as humans. She even laughed at me and said, "It's not like they're harming anyone."

I'm naturally curious about that dungeon she casually mentioned, but she brushed it off, saying she didn't know where it was. It might not be implemented yet.

I gave her 1 kg of angus rib as thanks, and she was quite delighted by that. Judging by the description, it's a high-class ingredient. Though I have around three hundred pieces of angus meat... Perhaps I hunted a little too much, but quite a few of them drop with every kill.

Hmm...I should use that angus meat for cooking already. I'm honestly anxious about whether I have the right knowledge for breadmaking. If there's a Baking Knowledge art, then...

Oh, right, I didn't check to see if there was any wine. For the time being, I put the kit away and ask another passing aunty for directions. From the shop she directs me to, I purchase red wine, white wine, and brandy. The red wine is 180 gold, the white wine is 200, and the brandy 600. I get three of each.

I've been completely surrounded by cooking items since I came east. Beating the boss was worth it. In exchange, though, my wallet has been feeling quite drained.

I get back to frying steak. As for my parasol, I can't cook while holding my rapier. Hmm...my HP is going down, but I have time to heal while I wait for the meat to cook. Looks like I can manage as long as the dish doesn't keep me too busy. There's not much I can do about that.

As for what meat to use, I decide to go with rump. This time, I won't worry too much about the thickness, but I'll try to cut the pieces as uniformly as I can.

Frying pan, check. Lid, check. Brandy, check. Meat preparations, check. Garlic, check. No children around...check. All right, here we go.

I heat up the frying pan and throw in the tallow. Then, I sauté the garlic. Just before it burns, I take it out and keep an eye on the heat as I add the meat. I keep it covered, fry it on both sides, and then in goes the brandy. A little fire, and it bursts into a flambé.

It's a flambé right in the middle of the town square. Ha ha ha ha! Food terrorism, here I come! Once the pillar of flame dies down, I remove the steak and place it on one of Ms. Primura's lovely plates.

[COOKING] RICH AND LUXURIOUS ANGUS RUMP STEAK

Rarity: NO Quality: B+

***A supreme steak prepared by a skilled cook through a special process.
Delicious enough to make royalty groan.***

Satiety +35

Utensils: Plate, Fork, Knife

Chef: Anastasia

Utensil Maker: Primura

Oh, that came out splendidly. Quality B+ and Satiety +35 are both a record for me. Rich and luxurious... Perhaps the luxurious part comes from the thickness. “Rich” must be the effect of the flambé. I did use brandy, after all.

Now to do the same to the other cuts.

Once I’ve cooked through a kilogram, it’s finally time to taste it!

...Yes, it’s just as done as I like it, so I’d say the flambé was a success. It’s in close competition with what I make at home—perhaps even better. Even Rina wouldn’t complain about it.

If I want to do any better than this, I’ll need better facilities and higher quality materials. But this is the best I can do with what I have, so I’m going to sell it for a fortune!

It’s easy to calculate the price of this steak. I don’t know how much beef tallow will be sold after this, but it won’t be too expensive, and the garlic has ten uses. The only real material cost is the brandy.

Brandy is 600 gold per bottle, but it has a hundred uses, so that’s practically nil.

This will sell. I sold the bear soup for 800 gold. This dish gives even more satiety, and with that taste... Will 1,200 gold work? Both taste-wise and satiety-wise?

My material quality problem comes from the fact that enemies generally drop C-grade materials. If I want meat over grade C, does that mean I have to raise the animal myself?

I’d need the animal husbandry skill, land, and, most importantly, an animal. I’m certainly not motivated enough for that. If any other player decides to go in that direction, I’ll become their regular customer.

Anyway, I get the feeling the steak will sell, so I’ll keep producing it until I get a second-tier skill.

Cooking has reached level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Acquired Cooking Arts: Roasting Knowledge, Fast Reaction

Cooking has reached its limit. Unlocked Chef skill.

Conditions have been met to unlock the title: Chef

Chef: A title bestowed upon first-rate cooks

Oh, okay. It's the sort of title that the crafting classes can obtain. It doesn't really matter, so I'll go over the arts... Wait, most of my arts have been overwritten. I've lost practically all of my knowledge skills!

MAGICAL CHEF

All cooking methods are possible, and your food may hold a mysterious power. Food you cook can give added buffs.

LOCAL SOURCING

When cooking manually, the system will display guiding lines. Rare ingredients will drop at a higher rate.

FAST REACTION

Only usable with food ingredients. Speeds up the production time of the target but consumes MP in the process.

So Magical Chef is the advanced version of all the knowledge arts. And we've finally got food buffs! Cooking Wisdom was probably overwritten by Local Sourcing.

The best gift, though, might be Fast Reaction. I get the feeling I can properly

make that dubious jerky from before now. Also, I might be able to produce natural yeast with it. If all cooking methods are possible, that means I don't have to worry about anything going *boom*.

The only other cooking art I currently possess is Reproduction, and it doesn't look like I can customize that.

While I've been cooking, my Super HP Regen has been increasing as well, and it's finally matching sun damage... Or not. I'm still being hurt, just very slowly. This super regeneration is quite effective, though. I'm getting a lot for each level, but it's taking a lot of time to raise it. It's a second-tier skill, after all, and given my race bonuses, this might actually be one of the easier skills to raise.

My rapier skill hasn't gone up at all, and I haven't made any progress on my self-defense, either.

Now for some breadmaking—but before that, I'll need yeast. It's time for that cooking wine and that empty bottle the shopkeeper goaded me into buying.

I don't need to disinfect anything; one use of the Clean art is enough. Then, I add water, and use the Heat art to raise the temperature before throwing in raisins and sugar, stirring, and closing the lid.

Now, it's time for Fast Reaction. It works by selecting the amount of time I'd like to advance, limited to cooking ingredients. I'm not sure if I can use it again on the same dish if I don't go long enough the first time, so I should test it out first.

Oh, that's right—I should try it on that smoking I did before, the one that I pretty much slapped together without a care. I slice rabbit meat, onions, and garlic, and then add it to the same brine as before with a bay leaf and pepper.

Now for the test. I use Fast Reaction. First, I'll set it to one day. This is in-game time, by the way. One real day would be four in-game days. That would be overkill.

And...it makes off with my MP!

I was quite confident in my mana pool, but this skill takes almost half to move forward just one day. As for the visual effect, a clock appears above the item, hands spinning at a breakneck pace. Once it's done, the clock disappears. Now,

for a second Fast Reaction... The menu is popping up, so it looks like I can stack it. This way, I can stir it as I advance time.

Once again, I stare at the clock as my MP leaves me.

Once that's done, I take out the meat, then wash and soak it in water to remove the salt. After advancing another hour, I cut off a corner and fry it to check the flavor. Yes, that's about right. I take it out of the water and use Alchemy's Humidity Control to remove the last bit of moisture.

Now, it's finally time for smoking. I hang the meat up inside the smoking cylinder and ready the smoking wood. I use the thermometer I got to ensure that the temperature is kept around the low seventies.

Although I'd like to skip time again, I want to keep checking it and changing its positioning.

From time to time, I look inside and check the temperature as I move on to the yeast making, although all I have to do is use Fast Reaction on the concoction I already made. Instead of going for a day all at once, I'll do it in twelve-hour increments. I need to stir it, and my MP won't hold out otherwise.

When the time is up, I lower the temperature, open the lid to let in air, check the scent, and shake the jug to mix it up. I repeat this until the raisins float to the surface.

Once they're floating, I cool the mixture down and advance time again. Finally, the item name changes, and sediment pools on the bottom, so it should be finished.

[MATERIAL] NATURAL RAISIN YEAST

Rarity: NO Quality: B-

Yeast made from raisins to make bread rise. Easy to make, easy to use, odorless, tasteless, and all-purpose.

So the raisins make it odorless and tasteless. I don't think there are too many types of natural yeast out there, though. Well, the yeast itself is just a

prerequisite item, so I should get right to bread.

Meanwhile, the smoking should finish soon.

To use the yeast, I'll make a starter. For that, I need bread flour and salt. Again, I don't have to disinfect the container; I can just use magic. For everything else, I follow the process from an external website.

My only worry is time. In fact, time is the most limited resource in this game. I use Fast Reaction to skip ahead even more. This art is incredibly convenient, but I wish I could do something about the MP use. Can any pure chef actually keep up with that?

Is the game trying to say it's not easy to manipulate time? I understand where they're coming from. The fact that temperature remains constant while using it makes it even more useful.

For now, I see that the starter is foaming up, so the yeast seems to be working properly. The real problem is that I've never actually baked bread at home. It's my first time using a stone oven too. I want to make hot dog buns, and I could make sandwiches out of French bread. All right, I'll go for a baguette.

Nothing good ever happens when a beginner overextends. Stick to the basics. You can blend in other things once you're used to the process.

French bread uses simple ingredients: bread flour, pastry flour, salt, water, and the starter I made. Mix the salt and bread flour and subtract your starter volume from the water...all right.

I follow it step by step, then into the oven it goes. I'm going to cry if I slip up at this stage.

It's not an automatic oven, and unfortunately, the baking time is going to differ from what it says on the website. Yes, I understand that a different environment and a different model will produce different results. I'm not that stupid. And my oven is a stone oven. I can't fill an open stone oven with steam. Will my humidity control be enough?

I'm lucky that I can even tell the temperature is around 230 degrees Celsius. I think I can do something about the bread if I watch it closely. Since this is just a game, I'm sure the baking time has been shortened.

The oven is surprisingly high-spec, and it's fairly easy to change the temperature. It depends on the amount of fuel you throw in. Once I get a knack for it, it might be pretty handy.

Also, the temperature rises quite rapidly as soon as you add wood, just as expected.

As for the crucial interior, there are fuel spaces inside. There are three slots for firewood: two on the sides, and one in the back. The fuel is ineffective unless it is placed in those slots.

The areas closest to the firewood are the hottest and darkest in color. The color grows lighter the farther away you get from the fuel. My job is to find the spots with balanced heat; if I place bread right next to a heat source, only one side will be burnt black.

To complicate things, the colors move around. They actually shift over quite a large area. This must be what the directions meant when they said the accuracy depended on my cooking skill level. I highly doubt there's really this much fluctuation within the oven. Since my Chef skill is low, the colors are just a general guideline.

The tool I have for the oven is like a long, flat shovel—I've seen ones like it at pizza shops before. It's designed so ingredients are sucked in and stick to it and you can move them without worry—you don't have to worry about bread rolling into the back. You can even use it to rotate the bread. How convenient.

I set the oven to 230 degrees. I think I'll string the bread along the places that are decently red and see what happens. It would usually take between twenty and twenty-five minutes in real life, but I don't know how it works here.

I should also take the jerky out and age it another day.

[COOKING] SMOKED RABBIT JERKY

Rarity: NO Quality: B+

A preserved food item made with abundant seasoning and rabbit meat. The

more you chew, the more flavor gushes out.

Satiety +20

Chef: Anastasia

I'm glad to see the quality went up. As I thought, I must not have cured it for long enough last time. I can check the taste when the bread is done.

I watch the rapidly changing bread as I tidy up the smoker, although I just have to throw away the brine and use the Clean art on the container. Cleaning up sure is convenient in this world.

I leisurely observe the four pieces of dough I've started baking. These four are the sacrifices for the information I need. I put two on the left and right, rotating only one of each. This should teach me whether to rotate them or not.

One is in the very center, receiving heat from three directions. The last one is placed near the fuel to scorch the outside before being moved to the middle. I'm looking forward to seeing how it turns out.

In the end, the one I scorched came out with quality B. The rotated one was B-. The one I didn't rotate is C+, and the one I left in the center is C. I think I can just leave them in the center if I want to bake them en masse.

[COOKING] HANDMADE BAGUETTE

Rarity: NO Quality: B

A simple bread with a hard outer crust and a soft interior. It is also known as French bread.

Satiety +25

Chef: Anastasia

Now that I think about it, I have that Reproduction art if I want to mass-produce them. Can I use it on bread? Let's see, how to register a recipe for reproduction... Ah, there's the menu. It doesn't look like I've registered any

recipes yet, so I fill in the ones I just cooked up: the B+ steak flambé and jerky, and the bread using the B-quality method.

Looks like my recipe history will disappear when I log out. If I want to register recipes, I'd better do it before I forget. I'll do it right after I make them from now on.

Next is the sausage. I'll start with a simple mustard.

I use a mix of yellow and brown mustard seeds, then I add salt, sugar, vinegar, and white wine. So far, I've been able to follow online recipes, meaning I can use methods from the real world. My only concern is time. Also, there's no guaranteeing the method when using monster meat.

With the mustard done, it's on to the frankfurter. First, I remove the salt from the pickled intestines. Now, what should I use for the meat...? Pigg should work fine. Add salt, sugar, pepper, and perhaps garlic? A bit of water too.

For the next steps, it says here I need to watch the temperature carefully. Hmm...I should be fine if I use the Cool art. It's nice that I'm already undead with a low body temperature.

First, I feed the meat into the grinder and set it to fine. Careful mixing will give it a smooth texture, but you need to work quickly so your body heat doesn't spread. It's easier to deal with the heat here than in real life, so I put my back into mixing it. Once it's well blended, I add a bit of water and seasoning, then mix it again.

It's getting a tad white-ish, and it's starting to stick, so that should be enough mixing. Next, I prepare the sausage stuffer and the desalinated casings. I make sure to pat the air out of the meat. Now I stuff the casings, taking care that it doesn't break and that I don't get any air in. Once they're stuffed, I tie off the ends and twist sausages off into roughly equal size.

Finally, to cook them. I can either boil or grill the sausages. There's also the option of smoking. I think I'll just do them all and register the recipes.

By the time my inventory is nearly full...

[COOKING] HANDMADE FRANKFURTER

Rarity: NO Quality: B

Stuffed with pigg meat and boiled, it does not have a long shelf life. The filling is well seasoned, and the sausage can be eaten as is.

Satiety +15

Chef: Anastasia

Though they have slightly different descriptions, grilling them and boiling them produce similar results. The smoker is still running.

I have quite a bit of freedom in recipe registration. I can create categories, subcategories, dishes, and even different cooking methods for each dish. Since there's so much freedom, I'll need to give everything distinct names, or I won't know what's what.

The maximum number of registered recipes can be expanded with real money. I have 100 slots for each branch of production, but it probably won't be enough. That's a hundred dishes, just to be clear. If it was 100 categories, I wouldn't have any trouble, and if it was cooking methods, it would be far too little. I can get another hundred slots for 1,000 yen. I might buy them if the need arises.

Once the smoking is done, I register it, and that's it for the frankfurters. I input a recipe for jerky as well, but that one takes a toll on my MP thanks to Fast Reaction.

"What are you doing, ma'am?"

"Hmm?"

I glance over to see two resident children, a boy and a girl. They are well tanned and give off a cheerful sort of vibe. The boy seems captivated by the fluffy clouds rising from the smoker.

"Oh, don't touch that. It's hot."

"I see. What is it?"

“It’s a smoker. I’m cooking meat inside.”

“Mmm!”

“You shouldn’t bother her too much... Sorry, ma’am.”

“I don’t mind. Kids should live their lives to the fullest. I was just about to try it, anyway. Do you want a taste?”

“Really?! I want some!”

“You never learn...”

“Ow ow ow!”

Now the girl is pulling the boy away by the cheek. I thought she looked like a docile kid, but she’s pretty powerful.

“Now now, I’m offering. That was unfair to that young boy. I’ll stop him if he gets too persistent.”

People will start to hate that girl if she doesn’t learn that there’s a correct time and place for violence. It’s a hard lesson, but I’m sure she can do it.

I give them three pieces of jerky each and two slices of a baguette.

Now on to the taste test!

“Hmm...not bad for my first time.”

“It’s great!”

“Delishus...”

It seems to be well received—and children do tend to be honest. The jerky I gave them isn’t one of my old, bland pieces. These were properly seasoned.

The kids are both smiling as I see them off. I start making some bread for the hot dogs. I made the baguettes both as a test run and to use for sandwiches. For hot dog buns, I just have to lower the pastry flour ratio, add more bread flour, and mix in a bit of butter.

Once the dough is done, I place it in a 180-degree spot. I know it will take around half the amount of time to cook, so I bake for six minutes, turning them halfway through.

The result is a B+ hot dog bun. I'll register the recipe as...I guess "dog bun" works.

I carve a slit with the bread knife, stick in the frankfurter, and garnish it with ketchup and mustard. I didn't put any work into the presentation, so it's an incredibly normal hot dog. The only thing it has going for it is the fact that it's freshly cooked.

The smoking should be done by now, so I check.

Chef has reached level 5.

Acquired Chef Art: Set Menu

SET MENU

Multiple food items can be registered as a single dish.

Oh? So that's what that is. Now that I'm looking at it, the hot dog isn't really a hot dog. It's a piece of bread with a frankfurter, ketchup, and mustard inside, meaning they're all classified separately. In real life, it might become a hot dog as soon as you put the sausage in the bun, but here, they're two separate cooking items splattered with miscellaneous materials. The system does not recognize it as one item.

Since it's already half-eaten, I can't use my new art, so I prepare a new one. I place the frankfurter in the bun and pour ketchup and mustard on it before using Set Menu. The food name has to be manually set, so I just go with "hot dog."

[COOKING] HANDMADE HOT DOG

Rarity: NO Quality: B

Bread has been cut and stuffed with sausage. A simple dish. This food item was made in the pursuit of convenience and is popular with the youth.

Satiety +35

Chef: Anastasia

If I can store multiple food items in one slot, this art is a treasure. Satiety +35, is it? That's the same as the steak. However, it looks like satiety is not just the sum of its parts. I'll need to look into this.

I'm still quite enjoying using Fast Reaction—it'll let me make bouillon and other time-consuming dishes. Though I'd like to do something about the MP cost... My only option seems to be increasing my max MP.

With my experiments out of the way, I decide to go stock back up on vegetables.

The party "Furry Legion" led by Lucebarm has slain the northern boss. Henceforth, the north mountain boss will be weakened, and trade will be restored.

Oh, it's Mr. Lucebarm this time. "Furry Legion," though...? Well, he *is* a bear. Maybe he'll make a guild. Putting that aside, that just leaves the southern coatl.

It's about dinnertime, so I log out for now.

After logging out, I stretch a bit and make my way to the living room.

"Oh, Dad. I didn't know you'd be back."

"Hey, Kotone. Did you miss me?"

"Will you be here for a while?"

"I wish, but the boss seems to be plotting something."

"Huh? Yours too?" Mom asks, reacting to the mention of Dad's boss.

"Wait, yours too?" Dad replies.

The two share a somber look.

“Since when?”

“Hmm...since about three weeks ago, I think.”

“It started around the same time for me.”

“I have a bad feeling about this.”

Meaning the boss at my mom’s company and the boss at my dad’s company started planning something at around the same time. They must be in cahoots. Those two often get together for their money-making schemes.

My mom is an actress and a model. She belongs to a big company overseas and doesn’t appear on any local variety shows. She’s mainly in movies or doing her modeling work. I’ve been keeping up with the stretches and skincare routine she taught me for years. My sister is...well, she’s trying her best.

Meanwhile, Dad is a fashion designer. Like Mom, he works for a big company overseas. The clothes in our house are his products, and they’re all made to order. I try my best not to think about how expensive they’d be if we had to buy them.

The presidents of both companies are old friends—rather, they were apparently classmates at some point. They often drag their employees along on their flights of fancy, yet the companies still manage to achieve results. Thus, no one can complain.

Things especially heat up when the two of them start something together. One of their companies has plenty of celebrities on its payroll, and the other is on the cutting edge of fashion. One prepares the models and the other dresses them. It’s a win-win situation.

That’s apparently how Mom and Dad met, or so it was smugly explained to me. But Dad, why would you brag to your daughter?

That’s when my sister arrived.

“Whoa, it’s Dad!”

“I wanted to see my daughters so badly, I came back to haunt you!”

“We need a vacuum! Where’s the vacuum?!”

“Ha ha ha, a vacuum isn’t enough to vanquish me! I’m not your dad for nothing!”

“Curses! How can you be so strong?!”

They’re as lively as ever.

“Oh, right, Sis. Do you want to go south after dinner?”

“Are you talking about the coatl?”

“Yeah. The south is the only place left, huh? So this is my last chance...”

“Sure, I can do it. What time?”

“Nine.”

“All right, got it.”

So it’s a coatl battle next. I know a coatl is a flying snake, but I wonder how big it is.

“Are you talking about a game?”

“Yeah, it’s a VR MMO that came out about a month ago.”

“Hmm...a month, huh...?”

“Wait, come to think of it... Hey, do you think the presidents are...”

“Akina, does that game allow players from overseas?”

“No, it’s restricted.”

“How’s its reception been?”

“Very positive. The second patch will be coming out at the start of summer, and console production can’t keep up.”

Mom and Dad both stare off into the distance. Japan’s VR technology has been quite impressive ever since Dive VR technology was established. It was called the result of lovable idiots who put their heart and soul into it.

FLFO replicates all five senses, and it stands head and shoulders over every VR game that came before it in realism. In exchange, it has to be online at all times, and new laws had to be written to account for it. But that gave the developers more time to complete the game, apparently.

All that means is the game has garnered foreign attention.

“I have a terrible feeling about this. Oww, my head... No, wait a second. If they decide to come here for the game, I might actually be able to stay home.”

“I can easily imagine them saying, ‘If we can’t play over here, we’ll just have to move to Japan,’ or something like that.”

“They take too much initiative. Well, maybe that’s what got them where they are.”

“And it’s hard to complain if it means we can commute from home. The kids are going on summer break, and I was thinking of calling them over, but the president’s been eerily silent.”

“I was sent back for a while because there weren’t any big jobs. Well, let’s just take it easy for now.”

“Oh, Dad, that’s a commercial for the game... Wait, it’s the event! That’s Sis!”



She's right; they're showing the battle with the goblin army. I did say the company was free to use it however they wanted, so naturally they'd use footage of the first major battle for publicity.

"It was four weeks ago, right? Even if this game's just starting out, that dress is a bit out there... The design is relatively nice, but that makes the colors stand out for the worse. You're not bad with black hair, Kotone. As expected of my daughter—you're adorable!"

"Oh, I'm there too!"

"It's like you two switched your real hair colors."

Isn't this commercial going on for too long? It started with my pre-battle speech, then showed the scattered players. Then it ended with my last few lines and a pan to the title in the sky. I thought it was over, but just then, the title disappears for one last shot of a flock of owls.

Ah...those are the owls that brought our rewards.

"Oh..."

"Ha ha..."

Akina and I laugh, but Mom and Dad don't know what's going on and can only give half smiles. They should have just cut it off at the title. Only players will know what the owls meant. We're the ones who actually saw that from below, and the ones who got the reward. Seeing it brings back memories.

But owls are birds of prey. One must never forget that.

It's been a while since the four of us had a meal together. After dinner, I take a bath, among other things, in preparation for the boss.

My battle style is relatively flexible, so I think I can fit in quite well with a temporary party. But if my build and my style aren't a problem, then my main concern should be getting along with the other people.

With that said, my sister's party only has five members, and two of them are my friends from school. Meaning there are only two people I don't know. And since Akina is friends with them, they should be fine.

I don't like people who don't listen—and don't even *try* to listen. My sister hates people like that too.

There are twenty minutes left until nine, but I've finished all my business in the real world, so I'll log in early. She said to meet at the south gate.

I logged out as soon as I finished cooking, so my spawn point is Belstead's central square. I just have to use the portal to get back to the starting town, so time isn't an issue.

Now to prepare... There's not really anything for me to do. My race can't use potions, and my equipment has no concept of durability or maintenance. I don't have to eat either, so food is also unnecessary. This really is a low-maintenance race.

Nine o'clock is the exact point when evening sets in. Until then, I'll spend some time raising Super HP Regen. It's becoming annoying when I cook. I'm currently still taking more damage than I recover, so I'll die without the parasol.

I don't know how much the effectiveness has increased, but I'll need about double to survive. Between the deadly sun and useless potions, the undead races really have it hard if they don't raise their recovery skills.

For now, I'll just teleport to the starting town. According to the help menu, I need money and mana to warp. I have plenty of money, so I only see a notable drop in MP.

Your base level apparently has an influence on the money and mana required. It's not based on distance; rather, it depends on how many warp points there are in between. So far I've only recorded the starting town and Belstead.

It's like I've been holed up in Belstead this past week. I was so busy gathering ingredients that I haven't been to the starting town in a while.

Town is as lively as ever. I step off the southern path onto what's now being called Stall Street. It's the place where Mr. Ertz and the others have set up their stands. I think it's about time they had stores of their own, but...hmm.

Come to think of it, I haven't gone to a realtor, so maybe I just don't know the market value of a store. How much does one go for in this game? I thought I'd be able to buy one with a million gold... Maybe I'll have a look when I'm bored.

“Good day to you all.”

“Oh, howdy.”

“If it isn’t the princess.”

Mr. Ertz, Mr. Primura, Mr. Dentelle, and Ms. Salute are present. It was Ms. Primura and Mr. Dentelle who greeted me. Mr. Ertz and Ms. Salute are preoccupied with crafting.

“The north and west are open, right? They’re gleefully working with all the new materials coming in.”

“Oh, I see. I remember you still need the south. What about you, Mr. Dentelle?”

“I haven’t heard a peep yet. Silk...oh silk, where art thou, silk?”

“I saw your post on the BBS, Princess. Did you figure anything out after that?”

“I absolutely did. I was considering posting it.”

Yeah, I’ll put my new info on the BBS. I post about the level 30 Cooking arts, the Chef arts, and information about banties. I also let players know where to find chicken meat, as well as a bit about how to use the oven. I’ll keep the livestock farmer a secret for now. I’ll tell people that I want to surprise the event hall with my new product, then I can just spread that information during the event.

That should do it.

“So you got a second-tier skill? Now we know that food buffs exist. Depending how powerful they are, we might get a fresh batch of cooks.”

“I’m dying to know what your new product is!”

“Heh heh, it’s a secret.”

“What a shame!”

“As for buff strength, I’ve only done a few tests so far. I don’t know the conditions to proc it yet.”

“I see. So that’s a matter for another day.”

I consider giving them a sample of the new product, but decide to keep it under wraps. Ms. Salute takes a break from her compounding.

“Phew... Hello, Princess.”

“Is business going well?”

“I’d say it is. I’ve got far more materials to work with, so I need to find the right ratios. Right now I’m in the middle of the trial and error phase!”

“I see. Unlike Cooking, Compounding is unique to the game.”

Nothing can be found on external sites about it, and since everyone here is a top crafter, their discoveries probably aren’t even on the BBS. I can imagine people writing down their material lists, but there aren’t many who’d put down their ratios as well.

As the top group, I guess they’re the people writing the recipes for those to come.

Recipes actually come in multiple types. There are the original recipes used for Reproduction and the basic recipes that are just lists of materials. You cannot use Reproduction with basic recipes; they’re more like pages out of a cookbook, and it’s up to you to read them and follow each step. Once you’ve made it yourself, you can register the method you used as an original recipe and mass-produce it after that.

The methods for obtaining basic recipes are still vague, but one way is to ask the residents of a town. I’m sure there are also a few recipe books in the library. Cooking aside, I’ll need to check out the library before I can advance my Alchemy.

“Ha ha, behold my workmanship!”

“Mr. Ertz, you finally have iron to work with?”

“That I do! A still’s still a dream, but now I won’t lose out to goblin drops.”

Right, the goblin army used iron equipment in that defensive battle. I didn’t need it, so I left it in storage, but it’s likely stronger than most bronze equipment, depending on the bronze items’ quality. Over a certain level, perhaps bronze is stronger, but for such high-quality equipment, the work

required to reach that point would make it much more expensive.

Even for the top players, it costs quite a bit to commission top crafters. There are parties that can't prepare equipment for all their members, and those people have to use the dropped iron equipment.

It's a sad tale for a smith, but now that the boss has been defeated, the price of bronze has inevitably fallen. And it's also possible now to melt down iron equipment and use it as material. The top players will all want iron, and now that bronze is cheap, it should fly off the shelves.

In short, Mr. Ertz is excited.

"But it's not good enough for the top parties yet. I need to up the quality a bit more."

"Same story here. I'd like the quality to be a bit more stable."

"Right. So what's the deal with that, Princess?"

Mr. Ertz and Ms. Salute turn the conversation to me. Where exactly are they looking—oh.

"For some reason, my scabbard became a parasol."

"I see... Okay, actually, I don't see."

"I don't really have any other way to explain it. It got an added effect called Ensol. It's a pain, to be honest, but it doesn't look half-bad."

"That's a weapon, right?"

"In a way. I only need the scabbard to activate it, so I can still fight while using it."

"I see... I wonder if I'll ever be able to make something like that. Or maybe only extras are like that..."

"It would be the stuff of dreams if I could make armor like that! Loincloths that project armor! Imagine!"

"We'd definitely get a lot of joke items."

This time, Mr. Dentelle is getting heated. If players could make things like this, it'll mean a ton of progress for crafters—the problem is that our only example is

extra equipment, so my items might be special. Tragic.

“Ah, Sis!”

Looking toward the voice, I see that it’s Rina. When will she get over that habit of hugging me as soon as she sees me? I guess first she’ll need to *want* to get over it.

“I can’t get enough of this! Hey, Salute, do you have antidotes?”

“Not many, but yes.”

“Can I have...six?”

“Hmm...the quality is all over the place. But if you’re okay with that, they’re all yours.”

“What does the quality do for status recovery items?”

“Cooldown time. There’s a delay before you can use them again.”

“So they all have the same effect, then?”

“The number is fixed when it gets to C level and all improvements after that only affect cooldown. A and beyond are still a mystery, though.”

“I’ll totally buy your whole stock.”

It became possible to craft antidotes after the west opened up. If there is a way to cure poison, which is the biggest threat of the southern boss, then all that remains is dealing with its flight. It’s a flying snake, after all.

“If you’re buying antidotes, does that mean you’re headed south?”

“I’m dragging my sister with me!”

“Oh, I see. Good luck.”

“See you down south!”

Rina’s preparations are finished, and I only came by to say hello, so we’re quickly off to the south gate.

Judging by my friend list, Mr. Cecil and Mr. Lucebarm are in the west and north towns, respectively. Tomo and Sugu are also up north, while Ms. Kotatsu is in the west. Do none of them have any interest in the boss? I assume the

south boss will give 6 Skill Points, another title, and perhaps an accessory to increase Dexterity. The north gave Endurance, the east gave Strength, and the west gave Agility, apparently. I doubt the boss will drop a Spirit or Intelligence accessory, so it has to be Dexterity.

To be honest, apart from the Skill Points, the rewards aren't that great. The title makes you feel special, but that's about it. Right now, everyone's more focused on tomorrow's tournament. Since the routes were just opened up, there's also a high chance of receiving special quests from residents.

Though it's not like my friends are the only top players. There might be someone else going after it.

Thinking about it, boss battles happen in instanced dungeons, and you don't have to wait your turn. But what happens if another party beats the boss while you're still fighting?

"Do we have any info on what happens to parties in combat if another party beats the boss?"

"We do. The battle continues, but you don't get the title or the special drops. There's still a bonus to SP and materials, though. The special drop here is the stat-boosting accessory."

"That's a bit dicey. But I guess 6 skill points and materials are better than nothing."

"Pretty much. We haven't found any bosses in the second area yet, so they might be pretty rare."

So, although someone else can outdo you, you'll still beat the boss without extra info, so you still get the SP and materials. You just miss out on the special rewards.

6 Skill Points is enough to learn one second-tier skill, which isn't bad. You normally get 3 SP, so it's worth it to challenge such a strong boss. It is, quite simply, 6 levels worth of points.

However, in the tournament, you can earn even more Skill Points than if you beat a boss. There will be commemorative titles given out as well: Liberator and Champion. It's up to the individual which title they want more. As I prefer

fighting monsters over people, I'd be happier with the Liberator title.

"Oh, she's here."

"Hey. I got some antidotes and found my sister."

"Good day. It's a pleasure to work with you."

I reach the south gate with my sister. The other members are already there.

My sister is a human with silver-blue hair, blue eyes, and a halberd. The machinery with black hair, black eyes, and katana is Ms. Noellia. The red-haired, red-eyed dwarf with a hammer and shield is Ms. Griselda. The tawny-haired, golden-eyed fox beastman with a ukulele is Ms. Nadia. Finally, the red-eyed, white-haired rabbit beastman with a longbow is Ms. Helen. All five members are here.

The two beastmen are my sister's friends in real life. One is a fox, the other a rabbit. They just have the ears and tail, which is the default appearance for beastmen. You can modify it from there if you want to, as Mr. Lucebarm did.

After introductions, my sister sends a party invite and transfers leadership to me. As for the party name, I leave it as is.

Two antidotes go to my sister and Griselda, as she's the tank. Then one each to the rear guard. Noelia and I can't be poisoned thanks to our races. One of us is undead, and the other is a robot.

"We're coming for you, Coatl!"

My sister's enthusiasm spurs us south. The main hunting ground is apparently the two forests sandwiching the road. The southeast side has goblins and orcs, while the southwest side has spiders, snakes, and ants. Everyone uses the southeast one, naturally.

The road hasn't been paved, but hardened and flattened by countless horses and carriages pressing down on it. As we travel, the smell of salt gradually fills the air—proof that we are nearing the boss arena.

We take out the goblins and fighting ants that occasionally pop out and press on.

As this is a full-dive game, there's quite a bit of difference from town to town.

Perhaps I should find a means of transportation soon. Apart from my sister and Ms. Noellia, none of our party seems too agile. There's a notable difference in our movement speed.

"Come to think of it, the races are all jumbled up in this party."

"Yeah, fox and rabbit beastmen have different traits, so we're all essentially different."

"It's my first time being acquainted with a machinery player."

"Playing machinery is pretty nice. I have an easy time choosing my skills. And even if an enemy resists physical attacks, the rest of the party can use magic."

"I see. Your specialization makes you strong, as long as you're not alone."

"It's easy to find parties too."

"Right—you have a clear, unique role."

Being specialized makes one quite strong in their particular role. It would make no sense if it made them weak, after all. That should be impossible in a full-dive game, right? I guess if it did happen, it would be due to user error. User error stands out more here than in most games.

"It's been a while since I last saw you, Nadia, Helen."

"Lately, we've been playing this game as soon as we get home."

"Right, right. I rush back whenever I don't have any club activities."

"I'm glad you're having fun. Just let me know if Rina is ever bothering you."

"Eh..."

The girl seems dissatisfied with the question, but I know my sister can come on quite strongly. Still, there's no reason to let stress get to you in a game if you just play with people you get along with. But "a hedge between keeps friendships green," as they say. If I want to stop my sister from being a nuisance, I need to move fast.

Putting aside the usual exchange, it's time to draft up a plan.

Griselda the tank will pull aggro. When the Coatl is flying, my sister, Ms. Helen, and I will fire at it. Ms. Griselda knows Fire Magic, so she'll take a few

shots as well. Ms. Nadia will support us with her music skills. Ms. Noellia will be on standby near Ms. Griselda. Once we knock it out of the sky, Rina and Noelia will rush in to beat the crap out of it.

This time, I've been stationed near Ms. Nadia and Ms. Helen on the backline. The boss sometimes shoots out poison, so I need to protect them. Poison won't do a thing if it hits me.

This party generally does not have a healer. Everyone besides Ms. Noellia has magic, so they can heal themselves. I'll also be self-healing.

I guess I should record this fight.

"Oh, I see it now," Ms. Griselda says, and I can indeed see the boss arena ahead. We already prepared before coming here, so we head straight in. Like last time, the system takes over our movement, showing a short cutscene.

A snake with wings swoops in from above. There's a loud hiss. And with that menacing sound, the battle begins.

"C'mon, look over here!"

As planned, Ms. Griselda makes herself the focus with Appeal while Ms. Noellia stays on standby.

"It's smaller than I expected."

"That's pretty large for a snake, I'd say..."

"I think it could be a bit bigger. Though I don't know if those bat wings could lift it if it was."

"There are real snakes that can grow up to ten meters, apparently, so it could definitely be larger. Now then, it's time to join the fray."

We wait until the tank has racked up sufficient aggro before attacking. My sister uses Light, I use Light and Dark, Ms. Griselda uses Fire, and Ms. Helen uses her bow. As for Ms. Nadia...

"Ukulele Classic!"

She starts playing a classic ukulele song I've heard somewhere before. Seeing as no one's saying anything about it, this must be normal. It's working to boost

our magic offense.

Our anti-air bombardment gradually whittles away the Coatl's HP. Ms. Helen's Arrow Flak deals especially high damage.

The Coatl's attack patterns involve a charge and a tail whip. It descends during its charge, offering Ms. Noellia a rare opportunity to strike. Its tail sprays poison and comes down from above like a whip. There's essentially no window of attack. It fires its move off quite fast, and the attacks don't always come from the same angle, so it's impossible to wait for them and far too risky.

The poison intensity it inflicts is +2 from the mouth and +1 from the tail. Usually, the repeated tail attacks and poison splash will eventually start to deal more damage than can be healed. As for races that cannot be poisoned, the tail whip deals higher physical damage than the charge and is quite troublesome.

The Coatl's HP falls, and it begins its special action once its health bar changes from green to red.

"There's a rush coming!"

"All right... Heavy Stand!"

Heeding my sister's warning, Ms. Griselda uses a heavy shield art. The Coatl starts repeatedly striking with its tail, and it's spitting out poison as well. Our vanguard must avoid or block it. This is where my Arrow Parry becomes useful. They're not exactly arrows, but the skill lets me divert any long-range, non-magic attack.

Danger Sense and Instinct give me a general sense of where the poison is going to fall.

"To think I could parry a liquid with a rapier. And if it's not using magic..."

That poison must be an art of sorts. The fact that it's not magic means there's a shorter delay for me, and I can easily deal with this attack speed. Time for me to test out Arrow Parry and Magic Parry. I'm using them for the first time here.

At the end of the rush, the Coatl's serpentine body coils around Ms. Griselda, doing continuous damage and inflicting Bind. Additionally, it bites down, poisoning her. However, it can't move while it has her grappled, which makes it

a sitting duck for our attacks.

“Slice it up!”

“Finally, my turn.”

My sister swings her halberd while Ms. Noellia unleashes a flurry of slashes, holding her katana with two hands. Ms. Helen and I concentrate magic around them.

I spot a weakness and instruct her where to attack.

“Oh, Rina, you should go for the membrane on its wings. Not the base, but the membrane.”

“Got it.”

The moment my sister begins attacking, the Coatl shifts its wings to try to avoid her, but my sister uses the long shaft of her weapon to reach them anyway. Meanwhile, Ms. Noellia continues slashing away at its face.

When it has about 40 percent of its HP left, the Coatl releases its grip and flies into the sky. Ms. Griselda takes advantage of the break to use an antidote.

“Its flight abilities have been reduced more than I expected.”

“It’s worth it to destroy its body parts, then!”

“I’ll aim for the right wing.”

“Counting on you!”

The right wing has become quite tattered thanks to my sister, and the beast is visibly teetering in the air. Ms. Helen intends to mess with it even more with her bow.

The problem is that its teetering makes it harder to aim at. It would probably be better if we all started firing. There’s no telling when we’ll get another chance.

“Gravity Arrow, leading into...Arrow Flak!”

Ms. Helen’s Gravity Arrow lowers its Agility, and once it’s slowed, she catches its right wing in the burst of her Arrow Flak. Unable to maintain flight any longer, the Coatl crashes down, taking fall damage when it hits. It begins a

special action, slithering on the ground.

Naturally, this is the perfect chance to gang up on it. The BGM speeds up and becomes a bit more intense—well, as intense as a ukulele can be. This song is an overall damage boost.

“Ha ha ha! A Coatl that can’t fly is just a snake!”

Everyone ignores my sister’s statement and focuses on hammering the writhing Coatl.

“This tail has been a pain in the neck. Let’s see if I can take it off!”

Either to vent her frustration or just as plain harassment, she focuses all her attacks on its tail. It’ll be easier if we don’t have to deal with that, so she has my support.

The Coatl is no longer writhing, and even though it’s up, it’s not flying anymore. Its attack pattern changes as it shifts to bite attacks and tail swipes. It continues to spit poison at the back line. It’s gotten quite a bit easier to deal with, and I repel all the poison.

My sister continues to torment its moving tail with her long weapon.

“You mad? You ma—ah!”

There is a visceral sound and a cry of anguish. The tail is slashed apart and begins spraying blood rather than poison as the boss thrashes. Although it recovers its stance quickly, its HP gauge has gone down far into the red, with only 20 percent remaining.

“Eww! It got blood all over me!”

My sister is not the sort to let out cute screams. She is, after all, the one who gleefully sliced away at it for her own petty reasons.

Now that it’s lost its tail, the Coatl’s methods of attack have been reduced to bites and poison spray. The loss of its tail also seems to have stopped it from going into a third phase. In short, after that, the battle is basically over.

“Phew, easy as pie...”

“We already lost a few times before.”

"I can't hear a word you're saying."

Your race level has increased.

Dark Magic has reached level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Acquired Dark Magic Spell: Dark Burst

Dark Magic has reached its limit. You have unlocked Darkness Magic, Shadow Magic

The subjugation of the southern boss has unlocked the south area. As the first in the world to complete this hunt, you have been awarded 6 Skill Points.

You have fulfilled the conditions to unlock the title: Liberator of Imbamunte

The party "The Sisters and Their Merry Friends!" led by Anastasia has slain the southern boss. Henceforth, the southern boss will be weakened, and trade will be restored.

"Rina, do you know anything about Shadow Magic?"

"Oh, you maxed out Dark? Darkness magic is purely offensive, but Shadow focuses more on stalling out the enemy. If you level up Light, you'll get Radiant and Holy."

Shadow Magic probably has some offensive capability, but it seems to mainly focus on support and stalling. There's Darkness for attack. So far, I know there's a Shadow Bind and Shadow Fang art. The first binds the target in shadows, the second makes a wolf shadow emerge from your own and bite the enemy.

I could take all forms of Dark magic, but I get the feeling Mr. Skelly is going to do that. That's his only attribute so far. I think I'll just take Darkness Magic for now.

I pay 3 SP to learn it as a race skill. At Level 1, I get the Nox Explosion Art.

"Now it's dismantling time!"

My sister sticks her knife in and comes out with one core, two poison glands, four fangs, six hides, and a ring that boosts Dexterity.

I end the recording there.

“All right, let’s head straight for the next town. It’s almost Sis’s bedtime.”

“That’s early.”

“Early to bed, early to rise. That’s Sis for you.”

A ways down the southern road, the types of trees slowly begin to change. I don’t know what kind they are exactly, but I should tell Ms. Primura about this.

My Gather skill starts reacting to certain places in the forest. Those must be harvest points. You can harvest several times from the same spot. If you use Log to fell the tree, you can get multiple items as well.

“Rina, do you know what material they’re using for needleworking?”

“Wasn’t it wool?”

“I think I see linen, so I’ll pass that on to Mr. Dentelle.”

Further down, I’m able to identify bay trees and olives. I’d heard about them from a merchant woman not too long ago; they’re specialties of this region. There’s also a sea, so I might be able to get seafood.

I wonder how linen is treated. There will definitely be demand, but I wouldn’t quite call it a regional specialty.

“Welcome, ladies. We don’t get visitors often these days,” a guard says.

“Keep up the good work. We’d like to report that we defeated the Coatl. Can you tell us where the union is?”

“My word! If you want the union, go straight down the road, and you’ll find a cross-shaped plaza with a statue of Stellura. Follow the cross north for the adventurers’ union and south for the trade union.”

“I see. Thank you.”

“Don’t worry about it. Welcome to Imbamunte!”

We head into town—feeling like tourists—as we drop by the adventurers’ union.

“I guess that’s a port town for you. Most of the people have a tan.”

“They give off this ‘man of the sea’ vibe.”

Along the way, something seems a bit strange. But what? It’s sort of irritating, like something’s poking at me. Not that anyone’s actually touching me.

“What’s wrong, Sis?”

“I feel a bit strange... I wonder why.”

This is the first time I’ve felt like this. It’s gradually growing stronger, but what could it be?

I soon catch my answer in the corner of my eye. The direction is correct, so there’s little doubt in my mind that this is the cause.

“There’s a church to the northwest...”

“Hmm? Oh, yeah, there is.”

“I think the church is passively exorcizing me. I don’t know if I have a resistance or if the parasol is helping me.”

As a test, I try putting away my Ensol, and the vague irked feeling gets even stronger. But although it puts me on guard, the effects don’t seem to be that strong.

“You seem calm despite that, Sis.”

“I can’t do anything about it at the moment. I don’t even know what being purified will do to me.”

“It’s a debuff for all undead. Low immortals have all their stats reduced just from being near a church, and their natural recovery rate goes down. They also take damage over time. During the day, most die instantly due to that debuff coupled with the sun damage.”

“It doesn’t seem to be doing much to me.”

“Even at night when there’s no sun, you’ll take more damage the closer you get to it. I don’t think that changed after the official service began.”

“Maybe high immortals have a much higher purification resistance.”

“Meaning it takes more than that to exorcise you.”

“To take me out, it would probably be easier to blast me with Light Magic. You can’t even learn high-tier Purification yet.”

I recall Mr. Alf saying he got minor purification resistance. So mid-immortals get minor resistance, high immortals get moderate resistance, and supreme immortals get high resistance. Not that I even know if supreme immortals exist.

There don’t seem to be any immediate effects, so for now, I ignore it and report to the union. The reward is 120,000 gold, split among the six of us into 20,000 each.

I touch the statue of Stellura to open the portal, and we divvy up the boss’s drops.

“Take this, Sis. A reward for helping us out.”

“That’s the Dexterity ring, isn’t it? Can’t Ms. Helen use it?”

“Helen has skills for that.”

“I have Precise Shooting, so my Dexterity doesn’t matter all that much. I took Dexterity Boost too. I’d rather have a poison gland.”

[EQUIPMENT-ACCESSORY] EXQUISITE RING

Rarity: RA Quality: A

A ring dropped by a coatl. It is said to make its wearers deft of hand.

Appraisal Lv 10

DEF: △ MDEF: △

Appraisal Lv 20

Dexterity Boost: Minor

For bows, I believe the attack power is based on Strength, the accuracy is based on Dexterity, and the range depends on equipment, Strength, and Dexterity combined.

“Honestly, I’ve never seen Helen miss before. I thought it could be like

payment for your services.”

“Then I’ll gratefully accept; I need as much Dexterity as I can get. In that case, I’ll follow Mr. Alf’s example. You can split the rest of the rewards without me.”

Mr. Alf had renounced all the rewards besides the ring. It’s a first-rate piece of equipment, in a sense, so I’m sure that will work out fine. Even if I got any of the other materials, I would just sell them, after all. I have my dress set for equipment, but I still have a free accessory slot.

“Okay, let’s head back to the old man! Ah, Sis, please upload the boss battle before you go to sleep. I’ll take care of the rest.”

“Got it.”

Everyone warps off to see Mr. Ertz. I, on the other hand, will upload the video and then go to bed. I retrieve my consignment profits before logging out.

Official BBS 3

[Fight On] Comprehensive Thread 13 [Dear Conqueror]

1. Passing Conqueror

This is a thread for general discussion.

You can discuss whatever you want here.

Past threads: http://****

>> 980 Continue this discussion in the next thread

373. Passing Conqueror

The Sisters and their Merry Friends... Which sisters does that refer to?

374. Passing Conqueror

Well, if Anastasia's leading it, then you know the ones.

375. Cecil

Based on my friend list, they're both in the same location. Akirina must have invited the princess. Her party does have five members, after all.

376. Honehone

Yeah, if you've got the princess in your party, you'd understandably hand over the leader slot.

377. Akirina

Hey, yo! I invited her during dinner and bought some antidotes from Ms. Salute. We didn't have any real problems.

378. Passing Conqueror

Everyone's been busy grinding skill levels, so I guess that's what you'd expect.

379. *Passing Conqueror*

What did you do about the poison spray? Your party had a bard, right?

380. *Akirina*

I stationed Sis on the back line.

381. *Passing Conqueror*

Oh...

382. *Passing Conqueror*

Oh...

383. *Cecil*

Yeah, she must have parried it.

384. *Honehone*

Worst case, she can take the attack herself. Poison doesn't work on the princess.

385. *Passing Conqueror*

Is there a video?

386. *Akirina*

Sis is the one who recorded it, so give her a bit. She'll have it up before she goes to bed, and I'll post it.

387. *Passing Conqueror*

She goes to sleep early, right?

388. Akirina

It's already her bedtime.

389. Passing Conqueror

That's early.

390. Passing Conqueror

This early? So she's a good kid? Never would have guessed.

391. Akirina

It's for her skin.

392. Passing Conqueror

Oh right, I sometimes see her on early in the morning. She must be an early riser.

393. Akirina

Early to bed, early to rise. Come to think of it, she said something about seeing linen trees down south. Do your best, carpenters and needleworkers!

394. Primura

Really?!

395. Dentelle

Oh, linen. I can make some nice summer pieces.

396. Primura

We have to head south

397. *Passing Conqueror*

The south means the sea, and the sea means swimsuits! Where are the swimsuits?

398. *Akirina*

We just got here. Don't ask me!

399. *Dentelle*

Swimsuits...swimsuits... Can I make equipment with water skills...?

400. *Passing Conqueror*

Shipbuilding, sea fishing, swimming... That's what dreams are made of!

401. *Passing Conqueror*

Blueback! White fish! Sharknado!

402. *Passing Conqueror*

What was that last one?

403. *Passing Conqueror*

Where's the chain saw?

434. *Akirina*

Coming to you with a fresh new video!

http://*****/Anastasia/watch/*****

435. *Passing Conqueror*

Hoorah! Content!

436. Passing Conqueror

Bottom left! Bottom left!

437. Passing Conqueror

Bottom left time!

438. Passing Conqueror

Is that seriously why you're here?

439. Passing Conqueror

D-d-d-definitely not?

440. Passing Conqueror

Who are you trying to convince?

441. Passing Conqueror

What are you talking about? Look into my pure eyes and say that again!

442. Passing Conqueror

They're sparkling, all right—with lust. You can't fool me.

443. Passing Conqueror

You're definitely the sort of guy who goes up to the drinking fountain and says, "Heh heh, at least your body is honest," before you push the button.

444. Passing Conqueror

I'm not pressing any buttons!

445. Passing Conqueror

What sort of roleplay is this?

446. Passing Conqueror

Humiliation is the name of the game.

447. Passing Conqueror

I...see.

448. Passing Conqueror

What exactly did you see?

513. Akirina

Should I pick up the Detect Skill?

514. Cecil

It's good to have someone with it in any party. I'd recommend it most for archers. I believe Mead has it.

515. Akirina

Archers, huh? I'll ask Helen. Now that I beat the boss, I want it.

516. Cecil

Yeah, getting bonus SP makes you want to spend it immediately.

517. Musasabi

My liege is looking as fine as ever.

518. Akirina

Hello, this is Rina. I'm right behind you.

519. Musasabi

Don't worry! You're pretty good too, Rina... Huh? You're seriously behi—

520. Passing Conqueror

There he goes...

521. Passing Conqueror

You sneak attacked a ninja.

522. Akirina

I used the back of my blade.

523. Musasabi

You stabbed me! I'm lucky I was in a safe area.

524. Cecil

That was your fault.

525. Kotatsu

Guilty.

526. Passing Conqueror

Is the princess the sort of person who worries about that?

527. Akirina

Honestly, no. If that ninja tried that line on her, I think she'd probably say "Thank you."

528. *Musasabi*

Wow! That's a princess for you!

529. *Passing Conqueror*

Why would she thank him...?

530 *Akirina*

My sister takes everything you say about her body as a compliment. She wakes up early, tans, does core training, and is careful about every meal. Even if the other girls say it sarcastically, she sincerely thanks them and they just end up shooting themselves in the foot. Happens all the time.

531. *Passing Conqueror*

I see... She's strong.

532. *Passing Conqueror*

So regardless of what anyone says, the princess takes it all as a reward for the effort she's put into her body. Since she actually is in good shape, you can't directly insult her, so it has to come out sarcastically. And sarcasm doesn't work on her, because it's a fact that she's working hard on it.

533. *Akirina*

Right, right. If you actually insult her body, everyone's going to think you're the crazy one. So it has to be a backhanded compliment, which never works. It's a mistake to go after her body to begin with. You can't win against her after all the money and time she's put in since kindergarten.

534. *Passing Conqueror*

Wait, kindergarten? That's hardcore.

535. Akirina

When I was using my allowance to buy two games a month, Sis saved up two months for one bottle of lotion! That stuff was crazy expensive...and just imagine how feminine she is now. It's pointless to compete with her.

356. Passing Conqueror

Aah!

537. Kotatsu

...I just got hit by a stray bullet!

538. Passing Conqueror

Aaah! I can't hear you, la la la la!

539. Passing Conqueror

I think you just took out someone else...

540. Management

I'm hurting too, so can we get back to talking about the game?

541. Passing Conqueror

Yes, ma'am.

542. Management

Beauty... Do you think she'll give me tips if I ask...?

543. Akirina

You can't actually see how nice her skin is in-game, but I think she can give you some tips. Up to her, though.

544. Management

All right, sounds like a plan!

545. Passing Conqueror

No fair!

546. Passing Conqueror

No fair!

547. Kotatsu

Maybe I'll ask too...

548. Passing Conqueror

I guess this is the talk of the hour now.

549. Passing Conqueror

Well, there's nothing wrong about being beautiful.

Chapter 4:

Some Call It a Tournament, Others Call It Business

IT'S FINALLY THE DAY of the tournament. I log in as soon as I get up and retrieve my order of pig intestines. Then I log out for a bit to eat breakfast in real life.

I'm in again just before 10 a.m., which is when the event should start.

"Oh, Princess!"

"Morning."

"Good morning."

Mr. Alf and Mr. Skelly are in front of me as soon as I log in. They aren't the only ones, though. A few other players have gathered in front of the Stellura statue in the square. We're in Belstead, so there aren't too many of them, but I'm sure the starting town must be quite hellish.

"This is as good a chance as any. Let me give you your cut from selling the boss materials." I receive a bit over 30,000 gold from Mr. Skelly. It seems we got 60,000 total from that hunt—not too shabby. That puts my life savings at around 110,000 gold now.

"You were going to open a stall today, right? What are you selling?"

"The usual soup and steak, and my brand-new hot dogs."

"Hot dogs, eh? Did you buy sausages, then?"

"I found casings on sale, so I made them myself."

"So they're handmade."

As I speak with Mr. Alf, Mr. Skelly breaks into a peculiar dance, although I roughly understand what he's doing.

"Are you warming up?"

"Ha ha ha, isn't it obvious?"

"You don't have any muscles, do you?"

"You've got me there."

“Not to mention we’re in VR. What’s more, the event area opens at 10:00, but the event itself starts at 1:00.”

Is he trying to make a skeleton joke? Warm-up exercises...how silly. Well, they might actually be applicable to quite a few races. Maybe even the undead and machinery.

“The countdown is about to end...”

“This game’s countdowns are as intense as ever.”

“Honestly.”

In front of the waiting players, the numbers bounce around above Stellura’s head just as they did before the game’s official service began. It’s night in-game, so they really stand out. Once the time comes, the numbers explode. Everyone shambles toward the statue and warps to the event field. We follow closely behind.

Our destination is an open field. There are several circular platforms around it, which I presume are the PvP arenas.

“They made it nice and simple, I see.”

“How was it during the beta?”

“We had a full colosseum.”

“Meaning we got a downgrade?”

“You could call it that. There must be a reason.”

According to Mr. Alf, this tournament event seems like a downgrade from what they had in the beta, but I guess all you need for a combat tournament is a ring. This must have been nice and easy to prepare.

“With how this game’s management is, I don’t think they got rid of the colosseum just because it was a pain to manage. There has to be a reason.”

“I mean, they might have just reused the beta assets somewhere else. I could tell a lot of work went into it.”

“Hmm...maybe they plopped it down in one of the towns the players haven’t discovered yet.”

“I can see that. Maybe in the empire?”

“Right, there’s that empire in the south. I’d say there’s a good chance.”

So there’s an empire down south. That means it would have to be across the open sea.

I decide to check out the library after the tournament is over. I’m lacking quite a bit of information at the moment. Though I could check the BBS, this game has really cut into my reading time, so I’d like to take it easy at a library.

Putting that aside...

“Where should I put my stall...? Oh, Ms. Primura. Good day.”

“Oh, howdy.”

The rest of the crafters aren’t far behind. They must have joined the massive crowd that came from the starting town.

As I’m checking the map with Mr. Ertz to decide on the best place to set up, there’s a change in the sky.

“Ha ha ha! Welcome, one and all! I’m GM Yatsuzuka.”

His introduction began rather energetically but petered out about halfway through, and he introduced himself fairly normally.

“If you’re going to play a character, at least maintain it. I’m Mitake, likewise a GM.”

Game masters are the in-game characters for the game’s management. They must have come to conduct the event. Yatsuzuka’s character is a well-built man. Given his introduction, he must be trying to play a rowdy, overly enthusiastic sort of character.

Mitake is a standoffish woman. They both seem like angels of sorts. They have small, cartoony wings on their backs and halos over their heads.

“We’ll go into the details later, but first, here’s a general summary. As long as the tournament participants are in the event area, they’ll see a pop-up when their turn comes. Press ‘yes’ on the pop-up within the time limit, and you’ll be automatically teleported into the correct ring.

“If you just came to watch, you can either gather around a ring or watch on a monitor like this one here. There’s also a tower that will display the fights at random. As for all you merchants out there, please place your stalls so they don’t get in the way of the audience.”

There are quite a few fighting rings, and four monitors manifest around each of them. There’s some distance between the rings and the monitors to give the spectators some space.

In the very center of the event area is a tower with multiple screens. The screens randomly shift between fights.

“All right, we should set up around the tower, then,” Mr. Ertz suggests.

No one has any objections, so everyone moves toward the tower. After finding a nice spot, we all begin to prepare our stalls.

Our members include Mr. Ertz, Mr. Dentelle, Ms. Primura, and Ms. Salute. I set up shop in the corner, deploying my cooking set. Since the addition of the oven, it’s begun to take up quite a bit of space.

I start making my merchandise with the stone oven and Reproduction. Also, I need to get some seasonings besides salt. I don’t have the right ingredients for bouillon. I’ll make a chicken bone broth, then. I take out a large pot and set the fire to feed six.

Then, I produce a chunk of banty meat and divide it. Perhaps I’ll use the meat for grilled chicken. It won’t be as messy as it would be in real life. The remaining bones are thrown into the pot. I also add the top halves of the green onions and skewer the remaining white parts alongside the banty meat. I don’t have ginger, but there’s no use crying over what I don’t have. I’ll throw in garlic, onion, carrots, and a little bit of cooking wine.

In real life, you can make around a liter of stock with one wing, but I’m not so sure how it works here. I’ll need to test it first, so I start with the real-world ratio.

As it stews, I take out the wood skewers I had Ms. Primura make me once before and get to work. These just need salt. I don’t have any sauce to pour over them.

Then I heat up the oven by lighting some wood with the Burn spell and throwing it in. I take out my bread starter and my condiments.

“You look busy, Princess.”

“I need to start making my wares.”

“My satiety’s getting pretty low...”

“Oh, right, I didn’t set up my stall yet. I’ll get that going right away.”

Ms. Salute’s words make me realize that I can’t sell anything I’m making if I don’t open a stall.

My dishes consist of the usual steak, the rump steak I made yesterday, and bear soup. The prices are 600, 1200, and 800 gold, respectively. To ensure as many people try my food as possible, I’ll set it so that each player can only purchase three items per in-game day—in other words, they’re limited to three meals.

“...”

Ms. Salute silently purchases a rump steak. After seeing her holding the plate, the other crafters buy some food as well. I thank them for their business.

While I have mana, I’ll use Reproduce to make ingredients—intermediary material. I’m making the things I need to make things. When my MP recovers, I do it again. And as I wait for my recovery, I work by hand.

“It’s great! This rump’s amazing! What about the rib roast?”

“I made that rump steak when I got a second-tier cooking skill. I haven’t touched the rib roast yet.”

“A shame...”

It’s not every day you come across a 4 cm rump steak. I do actually want to try my hand at roast beef, but can I do it with the oven? It should be fine temperature-wise, and I do have the materials.

Leaving Ms. Primura to herself as she gushes over the meat, I check on the broth. It’s no longer generating scum, so I move the clock forward bit by bit. I register the chicken broth I get as a result. It used a lot of intermediary

ingredients, so it's quite valuable. Using this chicken broth, pig ribs, and nappa, I'll throw together a mille-feuille hotpot. First, I pull apart the nappa and slice the pig meat thin. I lay down a piece of nappa, then a slice of pork, then nappa again, layering it several times before slicing it evenly and adding it to the pot to stew. It's a very simple dish.

"Is the steak the new product you were talking about?"

"No. It's the first time I'm selling it, so it is new in a sense, but my main product is this one here."

"A hot dog!"

"When you think about concession stands, it has to be hot dogs, right?"

Using Reproduction, I mass-produce the dough which would usually take an hour, then I manually set it in the oven as I wait for my MP to recover. I can generally just abandon the simmering pot for a while, so this lets me cook multiple things at the same time. Right now, I'm working on bread, skewers, and hot pot all at once.

I'd like to fry more steak as well, but I don't have any more space on the burner. The bread is baking at a temperature that's too high for roast beef, so it will have to wait.

"I need some meat, Sis!"

"Here."

"Huh...chicken and spring onion?"

"What, is my chicken skewer not good enough for you?"

"The princess is acting up," teases Mr. Skelly. I ignore him and give my sister some rump steak.

There's a bit of chatter thrown around, but my hands never stop. As time passes, more and more players arrive, and soon the event venue is packed. There are other stalls out besides ours, and it looks like many of the spectators have begun to investigate. There's another two hours until the tournament begins.

"Come to think of it, there's something I wanted to ask."

“Hmm?”

“What’s up?”

“Did you ever manage to reach A-level quality?”

I’ve been cooking quite a bit, but I haven’t seen anything beyond B+. That means there must be some rule behind it.

“Oh, that... It’s been going around the production forums, but we’re not certain yet. They’re saying it must have to do with material quality.”

“Yeah, you’ll need good materials to make something good. Otherwise, what’s the point of materials having quality in the first place?”

“Then no one’s done it yet?”

“There haven’t been any reports of A-level items.”

“I see. So far, B+ has been my limit too.”

“We might be stuck like that while our Discern skill is low.”

The casings I’m using are A-level, but it looks like having one high-quality part isn’t enough.

Now then, the bread dough should be just about ready, so I take a few notes as I make sausage. Last time, I managed B. Whether they’re grilled, smoked, or boiled, they all come out the same quality. I’m sure the stuffing plays a large part.

Oh, the buns have come out nicely.

“Fresh bread!”

“Hmm...bread straight out of a stone oven must be nice.”

It’s not done yet, so they can’t have any.

I slit the bread and add mustard, ketchup, and frankfurters. Now to use Set Menu and...what?!

[COOKING] HANDMADE HOT DOG

Rarity: NO Quality: B

Bread has been cut and stuffed with sausage. A simple dish. This food item was made in the pursuit of convenience and is popular with the youth.

Satiety +35

Additional Effect: Strength is boosted by 5%

Effective time: 4 hours, 30 minutes

Chef: Anastasia

I take a screenshot. The first food with a buff goes to my sister.

“Woo-hoo! Hey! Hey, GM!”

“Ha ha ha! Do you need something?”

“Are food buffs valid during the tournament?”

“Of course they’re not! You finally made one?”

“My big sis made it!”

“Oh, the princess! That’s cause for celebration! The effects are random, though they do partially depend on the ingredients and cooking method. The values and effect time are based on quality! Figure the rest out yourself!”

“I see. That’s nice to know.”

“They’ll get mad if I tell you too much! Fare thee well!”

Well, it’s essentially a spoiler when management tells you.

“Hey, even the GM is calling you ‘Princess,’ Sis.”

“I’m sure they’re reading the BBS.”

I finally season and finish the soup.

[COOKING] MILLE-FEUILLE SOUP

Rarity: NO Quality: B+

Made from layered pork rib and nappa cabbage in chicken broth. The umami of the chicken, pig, and even the vegetables permeates your body.

Satiety +25

Additional Effect: Dexterity is boosted by 5%

Effective Time: 5 hours

Utensils: Bowl, Spoon

Chef: Anastasia

Utensil Maker: Primura

Oh, it's Dexterity this time. Do buffs appear more frequently on food items I put more time into?

I serve them up, selling the jerky for 400 gold, chicken skewers for 400, and mille-feuille soup for 800. I also change the purchase limit for the jerky to six per person. I'm shooting myself in the foot if I make too much, and my inventory is getting pretty crowded, so I throw everything I don't need at the stall.

The ones with buffs naturally have a higher cost. This specific batch of soup is 2,000 gold—two-and-a-half times the norm.

I leave the boar meat I have no plan to use in the stall as well. Perhaps my fellow chefs will need it. 1,000 gold should do it. I've lost quite a bit of money on production equipment, so today's the day to make it back.

"It's hard to resist that smell from the chicken broth right next to me."

"I'm worried about food terrorism."

"You can buy it if you want some. I'm broke from buying all these appliances."

"No, we're pretty broke too at this point..."

"Everyone bought all the new stuff when the town opened up."

Well, there's no way these professional crafters wouldn't buy new tools for their specialties. With that said, they're opening stalls and crafting every day, so they should have more money than I do.

"Ah, come to think of it, please sample some more jerky."

I hand jerky—high quality this time—to the four of them and have them try it.

“Oh, it turned out nice this time.”

“The flavor’s there, unlike the last batch.”

“Yeah, it makes me want some beer.”

It receives a strong reception from the three adults. Ms. Primura is still just as positive. They all seem to like chewing on it while working, so they’ll put in a large order. I’ll get to making that once the event is over. Smoking takes a bit of MP, after all.

“400 gold each. The satiety is the same as rations, so the jerky might take over.”

“If you can buy something like that from the princess, why buy anything else?”

“Ah...well, right. It’s not like we’re short on eating time.”

“The problem would be solved if we had more cooks. You can sell more food if you want to, Princess.”

“I think I might sell my jerky on consignments, but maybe I’ll do the same for my other dishes. Considering the production time, I can’t make too much, though. I get a lot out of every batch of jerky, so it’s easy to produce.”

“There will be some fierce competition for your food if you leave it with the trade union.”

According to Mr. Ertz and Mr. Dentelle, there are more and more people who will buy proper food given the chance but would rather not spend the time making it themselves. That’s precisely why specialized crafters exist. I’m sure there will be more of them now that we know buffs are a thing. Should I put a purchase limit on my consignment sales as well?

My hot dog business should kick off in the afternoon. Until then, I’ll mass-produce and stockpile the materials I’ll need. I increase my bread stock with Reproduction, then take notes on the ratio of each sausage’s filling and carefully play around with it. My goal is an A-rank frankfurter, not that I know the conditions to reach it.

Why don't I mix some beef into the pork, as I would with a hamburger steak? I'd like to make a hamburger too, but experimenting on that can wait until the hot dogs are done.

A mixed hamburger is pretty tasty, so I'm sure it will enhance the frankfurter flavor too. I mean, it *is* a game, so I'll splurge a bit. I use the same ratio I'd use for hamburgers: 70 percent beef and 30 percent pork. But since it's a frankfurter, I'll grind it fine rather than coarse. I add the seasonings and garlic, mix it well, and stuff it into the casing.

The raw sausage is delicate. If it bursts, it lets out all the nice juices, so I brown it carefully and with love. I'm not taking my eyes off it for a second. I want to watch its body change miserably as the flames burn it to the core... All right, I'm just grilling sausages, that's a bit dramatic. I cook them slowly over low heat, then finally raise the heat to char the outside.

"The princess is making something real tasty looking."

"It's a prototype, so it's not for sale yet."

"That's unfortunate..."

"I don't have too many casings to spare."

I ignore Ms. Salute's hungry-sounding voice. Once it's evenly grilled, I take it out to examine the quality.

B+. I see... Unfortunate, indeed. I just register the recipe for now and move on to the next experiment.

After laboring the hours away, the clock strikes noon. I'm ultimately unable to make anything A-rank. It's presumably hopeless if only one of the ingredients is A. There's a chance it has to do with the appliances I'm using as well, so I can see a long road ahead. I wonder if anyone's farming or raising livestock yet.

I leave my store to Ms. Salute and temporarily log out for lunch. I'm sure she wants to eat too, so I finish up quickly. My sister is in her own rush to participate in the tournament.

Once I'm back in, I take over Ms. Salute's stall for a while.

I use Reproduction to make more hot dog buns and continue making

frankfurters by hand. The tournament is about to begin, so I post what I've learned on the BBS: the hot dogs I'd been keeping secret, the screenshot of the food buffs, information on the livestock farmer, and how to use Fast Reaction.

After I've made as many frankfurters as I can, Ms. Salute comes back, and I return her stall.

"Ladies and gentlemen! Players far and wide! It's time! Ha ha ha! It's time! Let the tournament begin!"

"The fighting tournament will now begin. We will now explain the rules. There are two major divisions: solo battles and party battles. Both follow a tournament format with randomized brackets."

"The AI will split you up randomly and generate the ladder at the start. When it's time for a match, all participants will receive a notification. You'll be disqualified if you don't respond in time, so be careful!"

"You can warp to your ring when the time comes, so you don't need to stick around. Just stay in the event area."

"Spectators can either watch at the rings or see the match on the monitors around the ring! If you aren't cheering for anyone in particular but still want to watch the matches, you can go to the central tower!"

"The top eight fighters will be determined from the solo and party brackets. Then we'll have a brief recess before the top four are decided."

"After that, the rings in this event area will all be fused into one! We'll have the semi-finals and the match to decide third place! After that, we'll finally host the finals for both the individual and party matches!"

"It seems that cooking buffs have finally been discovered, but they are, of course, ineffective during this tournament. Recovery items are restricted during the match, limited to ten consumables per party. Recovery magic is not restricted."

"Friendly fire is on during the tournament, so be careful! Don't stand in the line of fire! No misfires, please! But feel free to sacrifice yourself to take out all your enemies in one big play! That would be so cool!"

“Yeah, yeah... So that’s all the important parts. I ask all participants to please go over the rules on their UI. Now let’s make the tournament brackets, starting with solo battles!”

The monitors display black bracket lines. Each slot is filled with a stream of letters like roulette, until finally, the names are locked in. This is where the fate of the participants is set in stone. It’s the very first tournament, so there are no seeds, and famous players are thrown into the pool with everyone else.

“Next, the party battles! Here we go!”

Once again, the names are scrambled, then locked into the bracket.

“All right, then! Let us begin the first official event: the martial arts tournament!”

Mitake’s announcement comes with a sudden burst of fireworks. It’s afternoon in real life and noon in-game as well, but they still stand out quite nicely.

Now then, it’s time to sell hot dogs. I’ll sell them for 1,000 gold each, restricted to one per person. The ones with buffs will go for 2,300, depending on quality. I have three types: ketchup and mustard, only ketchup, and buffed with ketchup.

As the competition begins, I continue my crafting, only occasionally glancing at the display.

“Are you raking in the big bucks?” Ms. Salute jokingly asks.

“Hey, it’s a living.”

“Can’t complain, can’t complain! You’re pretty good at playing along with bits, Princess?”

“Well, it’s a game, after all.”

I certainly am making money. There was a heavy initial investment, and the crafting took a long time, but the sales are quite spectacular when all is said and done.

“I’ve just about reached the limits of the ingredients I purchased with my initial investment. The bottleneck is still the bread. Even with Reproduction, I’m

not making it fast enough.”

“You can’t speed it up with Fast Reaction? Is it because of the MP?”

“That’s right. I need to use it on the yeast, the starter, and the dough, so the MP use is quite insane.”

“That’s why you’re using Reproduction for some parts and doing the rest manually?”

“That, and because the smell is good for business!”

“We’ve got a salesgirl here!”

I can’t stop laughing at how each pig intestine casing only cost me 1,000 gold! I had more than enough meat to stuff them with, so that didn’t cost me a penny, though it did take a long time. But I don’t mind that since that time spent hunting raised my levels.

“Hey, you. No cutting! Get in the back with everyone else.”

“Huh? What’s your problem? I’m from one of the top parties.”

“Yeah, so?”

“They’ve got food buffs here, right? The top parties should naturally get top priority.”

It looks like someone cut in line for my food and is now picking a fight. Would it be all right to let them handle it? I mean, the one he’s picking a fight with is Mr. Lucebarm—deputy during the world quest and the one who liberated the north town.

“That may be how you see it, but it’s not how things work here. Go to the back.”

“Do you know who I am? Huh?”

“No, I don’t. Who are you? Come back when you’re at Cecil, the princess, or Ertz’s level.”

“Bastard!”

I mean, Mr. Lucebarm is pretty famous himself; although I guess he’s so bear-like that it’s hard to tell him apart from any other bear. The beastmen seem

aware of that issue, so they've started wearing accessories to differentiate themselves.

"Drop dead!"

"Hah! Bear punch!"

"Bwuh?!"

He smoothly dodges the troublemaker's blade and lands a punch on the man's face. This guy doesn't know a real top player like Mr. Lucebarm? Even if he is one of the better players, he's probably just barely part of their ranks. And the public should be the ones calling you a top player. You don't introduce yourself like that.

Secondly, this is a safe area.

"A top player who doesn't know the bear at the top. Really a top player, are you...?"

"You got that right!"

Mr. Lucebarm's turn comes around.

"Do you know him, Princess?"

"No, not at all. If you don't know him, there's no way I would know him, ha ha."

"As I thought. You don't have a very wide circle of friends, do you, Princess...? Or rather, there are a lot of people posting that they're not worthy of talking to you. I don't know if they're serious or not."

"That's...hard to say."

My character is royalty, for what it's worth, so I can understand why they'd say that. But there's an equal chance they're just wimps in real life. So there's that.

"I wouldn't want people to start flocking to me, so I would rather maintain the status quo."

"Oh...well, right. Oh, you've got a Strength buff."

"Thank you for your patronage. That's 2,300 gold. What about the

tournament, Mr. Lucebarm?”

“I’m taking part, but there’s some time to go. I’m killing time by shopping.”

There are plenty of rings but far more participants, so a lot of people have to wait around. Huh, I wonder how many people are taking part. There seem to be around 6,000 people here, and there were roughly 20,000 copies of the game produced for the first patch release. I guess that’s what you’d expect for PvP. Nearly everyone took part in the world quest, but I’m sure there are plenty of people like me who would rather fight monsters than people. Although it’s pretty fun to watch.

Putting that aside, I need to get cooking. I’d like to secure the money I’ll need for my next kitchen upgrade.

“The match is decided! The winner of the solo tournament is Cecil!”

“Whoooooa!”

“Grr...I lost again.”

“You’re as deft with that halberd as ever... Whoa there, easy now!”

Oh, Rina was in the finals? I’m sorry I wasn’t watching. This should be the last hot dog... There we go. I did well, if I do say so myself. Too well, even. Next, I should do a beef stew! I have the ingredients—well, not all of them, but the missing items haven’t been discovered yet, so there’s not much I can do.

I place two kilograms of shank—a meat I have yet to use—on a tray and shove it into the oven that’s served me so well for breadmaking. 180 degrees sounds about right. It should cook fast in-game.

In a pan, I heat up onion, garlic, and coarsely chopped carrots. The veggies will be ready when the onions have some color.

“Sis, did you see the match?”

“Huh? What?”

“Did you see me?”

“I’m tackling dishes that would be a pain to do at home. Do your best in the

party battle.”

“Yeah, I definitely will! I’ll be right back!”

“Wow, she’s easy to handle.”

“I feel for her...”

I flip over the meat in the oven and follow the steps from the web. First, I put the roast shank with the vegetables, then add red wine and water. I place it where it’s not hot enough to boil over, skimming off the scum and unwanted fat for ten hours. While that’s going on, I sauté more vegetables, using the speed-up function to its fullest.

I filter it once, then put the remaining meat and vegetables in a new pot with the fresh stir fry. Another ten hours. When that’s done, I filter it again and stir in the soup. Yet *another* ten hours.

I’m currently making fond de veau. But my end goal is beef stew, so I make it into a demi-glace. For that, I skip forward a whole week. It’ll all be ruined if it burns, so I need to keep a close watch on the flame and thermometer.

It’s reduced to half its original volume. I’ve overcome the hardest part, so now I just need to add the finishing touches: salt, red wine, and sugar. It’s already incredibly rich and delicious at this point.

Hmm...should I throw in cubed angus rib? I’ll have to brown the surface in the pan and remove the excess fat first before adding it to the pot. Skimming off the scum and fat, I stew it for three hours.

I decide to keep the last step simple. I roughly chop potatoes and carrots and let them simmer for thirty minutes. Finally, it’s done.

That was a hellish amount of work... No, it was a hellish amount of time required.

[COOKING] NICE, THICK HANDMADE BEEF STEW

Rarity: NO Quality: B+

A skilled cook spent several days completing this dish. A supreme stew that

would make even royalty groan. This rich dish has multiple flavorful tastes melted into it.

Satiety +35

Additional Effect: Spirit is boosted by 5%

Effective Time: 5 hours

Utensils: Bowl, Spoon

Chef: Anastasia

Utensil Maker: Primura

I did it! I'd better register it before the recipe flies out of my skull.

"That's the match! The winner of the party battle is Akirina's 'My Sister's Home Cooking is Waiting for Me.' What's with that party name...? Well, whatever!"

"Woooo!"

My sister silently raises her fists in victory. Congratulations, Rina; your sister was so desperate to make this dish that she didn't see any of it.



“Now let’s get straight to the award ceremony.”

“We’ll need a podium and a boom!”

There’s an actual explosion sound as a podium appears, but not on stage. The stage itself has turned *into* a podium. It’s like everything that wasn’t necessary for the podium exploded.

“Huh?! That’s not the reaction I was looking for!”

“I told you, blowing up the stage is just going to startle them.”

“Well, I got a few good faces, so let’s roll with it!”

“Ha, you really are...”

Perhaps Ms. Mitake has her share of trouble. My sister, for one, bursts into laughter.

There’s only room for three on the stand, but the top eight were called up. I’m personally acquainted with quite a few of them.

Ms. Kotatsu, Mr. Lucebarm, Mr. Musasabi, and Mr. Alf are up there. Then there’s Mr. Cecil in first place and Rina in second. I know six out of eight of them. How curious... Though thinking about it, that’s not unusual.

I met Kotatsu, Lucebarm, and Musasabi because of their commanding roles during the defensive battle, and I heard that Cecil took first place in the beta tournament.

Mr. Alf is probably the only one who I didn’t meet because of their strength. And Mr. Skelly didn’t make it to the top eight... Well, he’s a complete back-line fighter, and he’d go down the moment someone hit him with Light magic.

Since Sugu and Tomo are right next to me, I might as well ask them how they did.

“What rank did you get, Tomo?”

“I placed twelfth. Couldn’t make it into the top eight. I’d say that’s pretty far for a pure magician, though.”

“And you, Sugu?”

“Sixteenth. It was a bad matchup, and they peppered me from a distance.”

“Giants are large targets, after all. You might have been fine tanking, but it would be rough for you as an attacker.”

“You should have joined too.”

“I was busy making money.”

“So business is booming?”

“You don’t know the half of it.”

I earned far more than I had anticipated. Those buffing hot dogs sold like hotcakes. All my sales together netted me roughly 4,000,000 gold, although I believe the four crafters beside me made even more than that.

Mr. Ertz deals in metal arms and armor, Mr. Dentelle in cloth armor, Ms. Primura in wooden weapons, and Ms. Salute in potions. Equipment is indispensable and a lot more expensive than food. Potions are indispensable and consumable. There’s no reason they wouldn’t sell.

“Now to award the SP and titles!

Third place and up get 10 SP! Eighth and up earn 6 SP! Everyone who won at least one battle gains 3 SP! Now, the top eight may choose whatever they want from the prize list!”

“You don’t have to do it right away, but please choose your prize within one real-time month from today.”

Looks like Mr. Cecil and Rina will get 20 SP from their solo and party battles.

“And that concludes our first official martial arts tournament!”

“But...the event continues!”

“Huh?”

Can you hear me? I will bestow an oracle upon you.

I suddenly hear a voice. It doesn’t belong to either GM. Seeing as it’s an

oracle, is it coming from the gods of this world?

We have watched how the outsiders have been received in this world. And since the world has remained stable, we are preparing to receive new outsiders. A month from today, we plan to take in twice the number. Please prepare yourselves.

“And so, we’ve shoehorned the second patch release of the game into the event!”

“Please don’t put it like that.”

“Huh? That’s word for word what Yamamoto said.”

“Yamamotoooo...”

Yamamoto... Do they mean Yamamoto Ittetsu? He’s the lead dev on FLFO. You have it rough, Mitake.

By the world being “stable,” do they mean server stability? If the next release is going to be twice the size of this one, that means we’ll be getting another 40,000 players. We’ll have a total population of around 60,000.

“Forget about it. Let me explain the event to you now. It will take place one month from today—in-game this time, so one real-world week. As for a specific date, the second patch will come out on August 1.”

“You’ve been having a rough time so far, haven’t you? Mainly with consumables! But soon the system will have to support three times more players, so do your best to stock up! And that’s the event! We’re mainly focused on the crafters right now, but rest at ease, my fine fighting folk! The union will give out more escort and gathering quests, and you might see some bonus rewards!”

“During the event period, it will become a little easier to increase your favorability with those you help, and event monsters might attack a convoy you’re escorting. The details will be released in an official announcement at 6:00 p.m., so please check it out.”

“Any questions?”

So to sum it up, this tournament was targeted at the combat players, and the city event that follows will be for the crafters?

It looks like Ms. Salute has a question.

“Here.”

“You’re Salute, the compounding master, right?”

“When you say you want us to prepare consumables, you mean beginner HP potions and the like, right? Will they receive a bonus during the event?”

“Yes, although for a limited time.”

“Limited?”

“Items of the same or higher level than the crafter receive no bonus. However, if you make a lower-level item... For example, Salute, if you make beginner items, you’ll receive bonus EXP.”

“So the work won’t be for nothing.”

“Yes. We’re mainly focused on quantity here, so the bonus isn’t too big, but you’ll see a noticeable boost. This is not limited to compounding. It goes for all forms of crafting.”

“By the way, I have good news for those of you who own fields! Your crops will grow faster during the event, so crank out the goods!”

“Woooo!”

A cheer rises from a portion of the crowd, including one player quite close to me. Wow, that’s a farmer if I ever saw one! Decked out in overalls and a cap made of wheat or some other vegetation, with a hoe over one shoulder.

A farmer, plain and simple! Please sell me your crops.

I see the word “Farmer” over the player’s head as well—the Farmer title.

“There will also be maintenance on August 1! And an update!”

“Huh? Update?”

“The event area will remain until 6:00 p.m., but you can return to your

original location from the menu at any time.”

“Fare thee well!”

“Wait, what about the update?!”

The two GMs disappear, melting into the blue sky.

“Hey!”

They’re teasing us... It’s currently 5:00, and it’ll be some time until the official site is updated. Chef is close to level 10... Today is supposed to be a cooking day, so I’ll raise it all the way.

I can’t imagine what art I’ll get out of it.

“Sis! Food!”

“Yes, yes. I have enough for your party.”

Rina has a five-person party, and that leaves one portion for me. I should serve it with bread. I produce a baguette with Reproduction and cut two loaves into thirds, creating a set menu with the stew.

“Beef stew!”

“I didn’t have all the ingredients, but it should be close to restaurant quality.”

“Let’s dig in...”

She’s enraptured from the first bite—it’s quite a nice reception. But if I want to sell it, it will have to go for a lot. It took an absurd amount of MP. Even ignoring that, it is plainly delicious.

Now then, how about I use the rump to make roast beef? I’ll also use Reproduction to stock up on another two batches of rabbit jerky.

Chef has reached level 10. You have earned 1 Skill Point.

Acquired Chef art Tableware.

TABLEWARE:

You can generate tableware. Each item will cost 1 MP. Utensils disappear once the food is finished. Does no damage if used as a weapon.

So I don't need Ms. Primura's utensils anymore. I've just run out of stock in any case, so this is a good time to change over.

I'll post this art information to the cooking board.

The roast beef is a B. Not terrible. I'll use the juices that came out in the oven to make gravy. My ingredients are limited, so I mince some onion and stew it with red wine and butter. Then I add a bit of mustard. Once I tweak the taste, the sauce is done.

I'll register both recipes.

"A Spirit increase...and the effective time must be in real time. It'll last a whole in-game day. You'll probably be able to extend that even more if you improve the quality."

"There are still six levels above B+."

My equipment quality is S+. That means there should be A and S above B, both plus and minus. However, the wall to reach A is a daunting one. I'll also need to figure out how my ingredients determine the buffs. I'll jot down which dishes end up with a buff; once I gather all that data, I might see something.

This time, I subtly add some boar and bear meat into circulation. I'm sure the players from the cooking board will buy it, so that's more people who will be able to experiment with me.

The meat might seem expensive on its own, but it's being sold right next to the completed dishes which are selling well, so they don't hesitate to buy some.

Even doing some basic calculations, it's quite easy to turn a profit with completed dishes—as long as you ask the residents for the proper cooking methods. I already told that to the people on the cooking board, and I hope they listened to me.

With bear and boar meat to use, it shouldn't take long for them to climb to Chef. Once they're passed level 20, they can start leveling on angus meat. It's high level, and it's the simplest to cook. Hard to fail and gives loads of EXP. That's what got me to second tier.

Oh, I should put that on the board. Now do your best, my successors!

Now I plan to work on Alchemy for a while—specifically until I get to a secondary skill.

“It’s almost 6:00. Should we return to town? I need to leave my money with the union.”

“What do you plan to do after this, Sis?”

“There’s going to be an event, so I plan on raising Alchemy.”

“Alchemy, huh?”

“I’m hoping I can make replacement parts.”

“Oh...right. You did lose an arm.”

“You don’t need a replacement part if you pick up the lost limb, but I’d like some insurance.”

I say my goodbyes to everyone, open the menu, and take my leave.

Official BBS 4

[The First] Tournament [Official Event]

1. Management

This is a thread for the first official event: the martial arts tournament.

Please use it for general conversation about the event.

632. Competing Adventurer

The results from the beta tournament:

1st place: Cecil. Good guy, handsome, drop-dead normie. Crazy with twin swords.

2nd place: Akirina. Energetic pretty girl. Crazy with a halberd.

3rd place: Lucebarm. Total bro. Crazy with his bear punch special.

4th place: Musasabi. Ninja RPer. What can I say? He's strong.

5th place: Kotatsu. Big sis who likes fluffy things. Crazy with projectiles. Looking for a partner.

6th place: Mead. Pretty elf hunter. She's got a sharp glare! Crazy with a bow.

7th place: Alfred. Living armor and a shield main. A crazy guy who can solo as a tank.

8th place: Daruma Otoshi. He raised his stats until he can pummel things with his fists. Crazy muscle.

9th place: Fairellen. Cute, but an air-to-ground missile. Crazy gal who dumps everything into magic.

10th place: Steiner. The farmer uprising. Crazy farmer.

633. Competing Adventurer

>> 632 Oh, It's barely comprehensible, but good work.

634. Spectating Adventurer

>> 632 So I'm the only one not considered crazy...

635. Spectating Adventurer

>> What do you mean Kotatsu's looking for a partner?

636. Spectating Adventurer

>> 635 She's searching for fluff in her life, so she's focusing on her taming skills.

637. Spectating Adventurer

>> 636 Oh, I see.

638. Spectating Adventurer

Looking at it like this, there are only two inhumans up there.

639. Competing Adventurer

>> 638 I'd say it's impressive two inhumans made it there at all.

640. Spectating Adventurer

Well, it's only the crazies who stick it out with the inhuman races...

641. Spectating Adventurer

>> 640 Can you really say that after looking at the princess?

642. Spectating Adventurer

>> 641 Come to think of it, she's inhuman too! She looks way too human.

643. Spectating Adventurer

>> 641 Her weapon parry's crazy, for one. It's hard enough to use a shield, but look at her...

644. Spectating Adventurer

>> 643 Right.

645. Spectating Adventurer

I'll show you a real weapon parry! Parry into a hit and weapon break (lol)

646. Competing Adventurer

>> 645 Don't push your luck... I don't recommend emulating the princess. She makes it look easy, but her parry should be impossible. Not even Cecil does that regularly.

647. Competing Adventurer

>> 646 Cecil's a dodge tank, right?

648. Competing Adventurer

>> 647 He's a loon who slips through all the attacks. The little sister Akirina is also insane.

649. Spectating Adventurer

I don't plan on participating myself, but I'm looking forward to watching a heated battle. The world quest was like a festival.

650. Spectating Adventurer

>> 649 I getcha.

5316. Spectating Adventurer

The farmer lost!

5317. Spectating Adventurer

Of all the farmers, he was the... What was it again?

5318. Spectating Adventurer

He's the second strongest in the farmer party.

5319. Spectating Adventurer

Well, during the beta, he tested all sorts of things, but now that the game's begun, he's been spending all his time farming.

5320. Spectating Adventurer

I here's he's been hunting here and there too, though.

5912. Spectating Adventurer

Huh? Come to think of it, where's Fairellen?

5913. Spectating Adventurer

WORK.

5914. Spectating Adventurer

O-oh... I see.

6321. Spectating Adventurer

Mr. Skelly! Nooooooo!

6322. Spectating Adventurer

Always so brave.

6323. Spectating Adventurer

He makes a cool exit.

6324. Spectating Adventurer

Swallowed by light, like he's got no regrets left in the world...

6325. Spectating Adventurer

After being cut down by his own partner, the living armor...

6326. Spectating Adventurer

Alf's not as flashy, but he's still pretty strong.

6327. Spectating Adventurer

He's reliable. He's got a high-level playstyle, even if it's not much to look at.

6328. Spectating Adventurer

Well, he's a tank. You can't blame him for being plain.

6749. Spectating Adventurer

There's something off about the little sister.

6750. Spectating Adventurer

True. Is that really the same person?

6751. Spectating Adventurer

I mean, her big sister's also pretty crazy in battle.

6752. Spectating Adventurer

Halberds are supposed to be hard to handle, right?

6753. Spectating Adventurer

They're difficult?

6754. Spectating Adventurer

They're asymmetric, so the balance is off. You can use them as an axe, a spear, and a club, but more versatility doesn't necessarily make you stronger.

6755. Spectating Adventurer

If you can't master it, you're better off with a normal spear, axe, or mallet.

6756. Spectating Adventurer

And she's getting in consecutive blows with it. There's something wrong with her head...

6757. Spectating Adventurer

I've had this question for a while now, but it's got a spear at the tip and an axe on one side. I get that. But what's that spike on the opposite side from the axe?

6758. Spectating Adventurer

Maybe it's just in case a spear thrust misses? Or to impale the enemy on? It's

a mystery.

6759. *Spectating Adventurer*

Who knows?

6750. *Ertz*

Oh, that. It depends on the halberd, but the little sister uses that as a hook to pull enemies in.

6761. *Spectating Adventurer*

Hey, it's the old man. So you're the one who made it?

6762. *Ertz*

To put it simply, the spike lets you swing it around both ways like a sword. By spinning it, you can generate centrifugal force to smash it into the enemy. Though she doesn't really use it like that. Honestly, it's better to use the axe side instead.

6763. *Spectating Adventurer*

I see, I see.

6764. *Ertz*

You can also use it to aim at the back of the enemy's legs—their thighs and Achilles tendons. If you do that, you can slice through or sweep them off their feet. It's quite effective if the enemy isn't wearing greaves.

6765. *Spectating Adventurer*

I see... That's pretty gruesome.

6766. *Ertz*

There's more. You can use it to pull a rider off their horse. It's a polearm, after all. Since it has a blade, it depends on the enemy's equipment, but if you hit their neck, you can kill them just like that.

6767. Spectating Adventurer

I can see that.

6768. Ertz

Even if they don't die, they take quite a lot of damage if they fall off a horse in heavy armor, then you can get them while they're down. The problem is, it's pointless if you can't make the call at a moment's notice. It just becomes a cumbersome stick. If you can't make those split-second decisions, you're better off using a normal weapon.

6769. Spectating Adventurer

So the spike is pretty important.

6770. Ertz

There are quite a few halberd designs out there, though! By the way, the sharp end can be planted into the ground, allowing you to swing the shaft for blunt attacks. The little sister will smack you like that if you get too close.

6771. Spectating Adventurer

Halberd, war hammer, poleaxe, war axe, glaive, and such...

6772. Ertz

Right. A war hammer is a two-handed hammer. A poleaxe is a two-handed axe. The poleaxe becomes a war axe if you stick a spear on the tip. If you stick a sword on it instead of a spear, it becomes a glaive, I think. There are lots of varieties, or maybe lots of variations. If you're curious, why not check the smith board?

6773. Spectating Adventurer

And wait, what skills does that thing use, then?

6774. Spectating Adventurer

The polearm tree, of course. But the little sister took both Two-handed Spear and Two-handed Axe from there. It's strong if you can master it. She's using two art trees like it's no big deal.

6775. Spectating Adventurer

Seriously?! Maybe I should give it a go...

6776. Ertz

Halberds must be made to order. Thank you for your business.

6777. Spectating Adventurer

The old man's custom stuff is a bit too much for me.

6778. Spectating Adventurer

She said she was considering taking Two-handed Club to see if she could use that as well, but she decided not to because of the SP cost.

6779. Ertz

Yeah, weapon specialization is second-tier. It's hard to spend 6 SP just to test something.

6780. Spectating Adventurer

Aah!

6781. Spectating Adventurer

Oof...

6782. Spectating Adventurer

That one was too much, little sister...

6783. Spectating Adventurer

Smacking the blunt end into his crotch was a bit...

6784. Spectating Adventurer

I think I'm in more pain than he is...

6785. Spectating Adventurer

That depends on what he set the pain level to...but it's painful to look at.

6786. Lucebarm

Lol, it's the guy who tried to cut in line at the princess's shop.

6787. Spectating Adventurer

What? Guilty. Take him away.

6788. Spectating Adventurer

Kick his butt!

6789. Spectating Adventurer

Had a sudden change of heart, eh?

6790. Spectating Adventurer

Hey, if he's causing trouble for people, have at him.

6791. Spectating Adventurer

It doesn't matter that it was the princess. And, you know, that hit could have been an accident.

6792. Spectating Adventurer

Oof...

6793. Spectating Adventurer

The second hit hurts just as bad. She knows who he is...

6794. Primura

She loves her big sis, and he's a nuisance, so she's totally ready to slaughter him.

6795. Spectating Adventurer

She happened to be in the right place at the right time...

6796. Salute

The princess is so focused on cooking she's not even looking...

6797. Spectating Adventurer

RIP

6798. Spectating Adventurer

RIP

6799. Spectating Adventurer

Everyone's saying RIP, but is she ever going to land the finishing blow?

8910. Spectating Adventurer

This is seriously inhuman.

8911. Spectating Adventurer

She has the reach advantage, but it's amazing how long she's holding out against those twin blades.

8912. Spectating Adventurer

And it's amazing how well he's mastered those swords...

8913. Spectating Adventurer

Usually, I'd tell her to bring a shield.

8914. Spectating Adventurer

Ah, the little sister lost.

8915. Spectating Adventurer

Oh, she's rolling on the ground now.

8916. Spectating Adventurer

She wanted to win that badly, huh?

8917. Spectating Adventurer

It was a close match during the beta too.

9246. Spectating Adventurer

Oh! Oh? Oh?!

9247. Spectating Adventurer

She won the party battle!

9248. Spectating Adventurer

That's the Columbia pose of all things.

9249. Spectating Adventurer

This time, Cecil's holding his head.

9250. Spectating Adventurer

They got him good, and they didn't even have a full party.

9251. Spectating Adventurer

What's with that party name?

9521. Spectating Adventurer

To hell with your boom!

9522. Spectating Adventurer

My heart nearly stopped!

9523. Spectating Adventurer

What a tryhard, lol.

9524. Spectating Adventurer

Update?

9525. Spectating Adventurer

Update!

9526. *Spectating Adventurer*

Wait, no info?!

9527. *Spectating Adventurer*

Screw you!

9528. *Management*

It's still a secret.

9529. *Spectating Adventurer*

Ah, okay...

9731. *Spectating Adventurer*

Well, that solves the mystery of the party name.

9732. *Spectating Adventurer*

What was it about?

9733. *Spectating Adventurer*

Homemade beef stew.

9734. *Spectating Adventurer*

What? I need me some of that.

9735. *Spectating Adventurer*

That rump steak from the princess's place was way too good.

9736. Spectating Adventurer

That's the one that ran out right away, isn't it?!

9737. Salute

She only made thirty of them.

9738. Spectating Adventurer

The jerky was nice. I'd like to switch over from rations.

9739. Spectating Adventurer

I getcha. I'd like some ale too.

9740. Spectating Adventurer

Do you see how nice cooking is now? You could be a cook if you wanted to. With added buffs.

9741. Spectating Adventurer

The princess sold a bit today, but please someone put more meat from the eastern forest on the market. Those ingredients are the first hurdle for us cooks.

9742. Spectating Adventurer

Huh? Really? I have a decent amount on me.

9743. Spectating Adventurer

The princess sold boar meat for 1,000 gold and bear meat for 1,200. It sold out.

9744. Spectating Adventurer

Huh? Each?

9745. *Spectating Adventurer*

Each.

9746. *Spectating Adventurer*

Take my entire stock.

Chapter 5:

To the Library

I'M BACK AT THE SQUARE in Belstead. First, I head to the union to deposit my money; I have no intention of leaving a safe area with this much on me. Let's take care of that before I forget. I leave 4,040,000 gold with them, which puts my bank balance at 4,090,000. I keep about 18,000 on hand.

I also shove my replenished jerky stock onto the consignment seller.

After I leave the union, I return to the plaza and use the statue to warp to the starting town. My destination is the library. Unlike cooking, it isn't realistic to work on Alchemy without assistance. I need this game's fundamental recipes.

My instincts tell me that those cores I occasionally obtain are probably used in Alchemy. However, there hasn't been any official information yet. We just don't know how they're treated in-game. Are they catalysts for some special skill, or fuel for magic tools, or accessories? There are so many possibilities that no one can say for sure.

There's no information about the library on the BBS, but I can't imagine the players haven't found it yet. Mr. Greg from the union didn't hesitate to tell me about it. That means I probably won't find anything too useful in there.

My main objectives are Alchemy recipes and info on the gods of this world. I might be able to survive being near the church thanks to my resistance, but I really should learn more about that effect. And anyway, I haven't had much reading time lately.

Using the mini-map marker I've left untouched for a while, I head for the library. A large building comes into sight around the middle of the southwest part of town. The building's outline is glowing like it's an in-game objective; that must be to help me identify the place. The light disappears as I approach.

Though the building itself is large, it's rather plain. I suppose that's what one should expect from libraries—the important part is the book selection inside. I head in.

“Oh? Welcome, little lady.”

I’m greeted by a dandy old man with a somber voice, the kind of man who would look great in a butler outfit. It’s my first time seeing a resident with this kind of model.

“Mr. Greg from the union told me I could find a library here.”

“Well, you’ve come to the right place. Would you like an explanation about our facilities?”

“If you would.”

To use the library, you need something that can prove your identity—the union card is acceptable. You must pay 10,000 gold on your first visit to use the facilities.

It is possible to borrow books, but you have to pay 1,000 gold per volume. You’re allowed to keep them for one week in real life, which is one month in-game. When the time is up, the books will return on their own.

No food or drink is allowed in the library, except for one exception: You can eat in the courtyard. The man tells me that if I want to read over a cup of tea, I’d better head there. He must be assuming that because of my outfit. I suppose I do fancy the thought of an elegant teatime. If only I had the tea.

I present my card and pay the fee for my entry rights.

“Do you have books about the gods?”

“Of course. Do you want religious texts or something more detailed?”

“I’d like the details.”

“Allow me to show you to the proper shelf.” He leads me there and hands me a book.

“This is where you’ll find all sorts of information about the gods. For starters, I would recommend reading this book for the general gist before choosing what else you’d like to study.”

“Understood. Then I’ll start by—hmm?” One of the books is glowing. Are my instincts reacting to it?

The book's spine says: *Stellura and the Darklight Race*.

"Oh, you might want to read that if you don't know about them. You're in for a load of trouble if you attract their attention."

"The Darklight race... I'm an outsider, so this is my first time hearing about them."

"Oh, is that so? Then I highly recommend this one."

"Does Stellura have something to do with the undead?"

"I think you'll find your answers in this book."

"Then I'll read it as well."

"Take your time. Call for me if you need anything else."

"I will."

I'll start with the first book he handed me. I take a seat on the bench near the shelf.

Summarizing the main points, there is a supreme deity called Creall with golden hair and golden eyes. He is the god of creation and destruction, the great being who created the world and its three pillars.

The first pillar and the start of everything is Stellura, goddess of the life cycle. She is a gray-haired goddess with iridescent eyes. She governs light and dark, life and death, time and fate, contracts and judgment. The Darklight races are at her beck and call.

She is the second-ranked goddess, and her symbol is the gate and key. Her appearance changes each time she appears. Is she supposed to be Yog-Sothoth or something?

Next is the goddess of war, Sigrdrífa, whose eyes and hair are red as blood. She governs fire and wind, battle and victory. It is said she has command over animals.

The goddess of love, Haventhys, boasts green hair and green eyes. She rules over water and earth, growth, nature, and rest. She is said to have authority over plant life.

That seems to be the basic gist. For some reason, there's barely any information about the supreme deity, Creall.

It's generally Stellura, his second-in-command, who hands down revelations. I can see that having to do with the "fate" part. Although she has come in all shapes and sizes during revelations, she always has the same gray hair and iridescent eyes.

It wasn't quite clear what races Stellura has command over; perhaps I'll find that in the other book. She seems to have the most information of anyone. Is that because she's the one with the most contact with humanity? Not that anyone gets to touch her directly.

There's a concerning part in Stellura's entry. "If a vow sworn in the goddess's name is ever breached, then fearsome monsters shall emerge from the depths of the earth. They are her followers. There is no escape." That is certainly concerning, right?

As for the mythology, there's a picture book. I'll jot down some notes from it. It's all written in very simple sentences and makes me feel a bit stupid for reading it at my age.

Creall was born into a void of nothingness and created the world. From the boundary of Light and Dark came Stellura, who then began to carve time into being.

Now that existence could progress forward, Creall created a planet. The water and earth of the planet he formed gave birth to Haventhys. From the wind and fire came Sigdrífa.

Your efforts have unlocked the Linguistics Skill.

Oh, that sounds like I'll need it to read books.

LINGUISTICS

A skill that displays your level of understanding of the text and assists with decryption.

But wait, I'm reading just fine without it. I can read the union quests too. If there's a skill, there must be *some* reason for it. I decide to take it anyway. It'll go up on its own while I'm reading, so it's better to pick it up early. There goes 3 SP.

Next on the list, let's read through *Stellura and the Darklight Races*.

I did not know at the time whether to call it luck or misfortune, but thinking back on it now, I was undoubtably lucky. I cannot die without passing on what I've learned. I believe this will serve as my show of gratitude.

This book exists to inform the world of the following: the undead, the immortals, the outer ones, the Darklight races, the Nether, the Abyss, the Medium, and the Astral.

First, I shall write about the Nether, Abyss, Medium, and Astral.

The Nether is a place like an underground city where all souls are fated to gather. In the middle is a great structure called the Evernight Castle. Souls are judged before entering the Nether, and those that are bound for the Abyss are sectioned off.

The Abyss is an underground city similar to the Nether, but it is for people who did bad things or thought evil thoughts. They cannot leave until they repent, and the time it takes to repent differs depending on the crime.

The Medium is a detached world where the outer ones gather. A paradise of monsters. They follow almighty Stellura, who graced them with a place of their own and blessed them, or so I've heard.

Once a soul has settled all its accounts, it goes to the Astral, where it joins the cycle of death and rebirth.

The Nether and the Abyss are called the afterlife, and they fall under the domain of the immortals. The Medium is governed by the outer ones. All

together, they make up the realm of the dead where the goddess of the life cycle, Stellura, reigns supreme.

Incidentally, we humans exist within the realm of the living.

Next, I shall write about the undead. There are two methods by which an undead might come to be.

The first type is, to put it simply, a form of golem. The effects of lingering mana produce a magic lifeform capable of movement. What separates them from standard golems is the bodies that they use. Animal corpses become zombies. If they have already been reduced to bones, they become skeletons. If the body has withered to nothing, a ghost is born.

The second type is created from an amalgamation of negative emotions produced by living beings. Resentments and regrets felt right before death, and other such strong negative emotions, may stimulate the surrounding mana. This can lead to a corpse rising as undead. Undead formed in this way are characterized by their sinister nature and powerful offensive abilities. You can picture them as a sort of curse.

The reason the undead are so feared is mainly due to the belief that they are cursed. The ones who preach this are mostly adventurers and villagers, who are more likely to have direct interaction with them.

But the main reason the undead are seen as a target for immediate elimination has nothing to do with Stellura at all. To be quite blunt, they spread disease. They are the bodies of animals that were not properly taken care of. Just imagine what would happen if one of them fell into the town's drinking water.

The bear had a ghastly appearance, and not much good comes from leaving them be. Regardless of how they were born, they still attack people and spread plague. The clergy sees them as an insult to Stellura's cycle of life.

That is about all I have to say about them. For the aforementioned reasons, it is recommended to lay them to rest as soon as you encounter them.

Next are those that bear some resemblance to the undead: immortals.

There is a greater design behind their birth. I'm sure Stellura is involved in

some way. In fact, Stellura's involvement is the main thing separating them from the undead.

From their appearance, however, you would think they were simply undead with wills of their own. Regardless of how they look, they are not much different from humans, and it is possible to reason with them. In fact, many of them were once human.

As I previously wrote, immortals generally stay in the realm of the dead. They are sentient, and their strength can seemingly be divided thusly:

- 1. Those who were just born into the world of the dead, or newcomers searching for one of the few gates to the Nether that still exist in the world.*
- 2. Those who have spent time in the Nether. Stronger than #1.*
- 3. Those who have spent time in the Abyss. Stronger than #2.*
- 4. Those who have spent time in the Evernight Castle. The elite among elites.*

I have only one piece of advice: If you want to pick a fight with them, don't. Give up.

Next, on to the outer ones. They are immortals, but not just in name. The outer ones are indestructible beings removed from the cycle of life and rebirth. It may be confusing, but the ones we call "immortals" are actually just unable to age. They can still die.

The outer ones are even higher than immortals. I'm not sure I should say it, but they're honest-to-goodness monsters. However, it's possible to talk to them as long as you don't get on their bad side. They look horrendous, but you can hold a conversation with them.

Supplement:

In descending order, the hierarchy is as follows: Immortal, Nether immortal, Abyss immortal, Evernight immortal, and finally the outer ones of the Medium. The undead are not affected by a greater power, so they are not listed here due to irrelevance.

Those related to Stellura in both the Medium and the realm of the dead are together called the Darklight races.

Among the outer ones, there are servitor races, independent races, and ruling races (in ascending order by strength) and their level of immortality increases accordingly, so I've heard. They wouldn't explain immortality in detail.

Finally, if you do meet immortals in the realm of the living, do not oppose them unless you wish for death. Once you die, you'll find them smiling at the gates of the Nether. I truly do not recommend it. You might not meet one in your lifetime, but you never know where life will take you.

Another thing. You remember that famous saying about Stellura? "If a vow sworn in the goddess's name is ever breached, then fearsome monsters shall emerge from the depths of the earth. They are her followers. There is no escape."

That actually refers to the outer ones. They took on that role to repay her for the Medium. If you ever meet an outer one, even if you scream or fall unconscious, they'll usually forgive you with a laugh. But the worst thing you can do is attack them out of desperation. Just say good night for a bit.

I pray that this information will be useful to you.

You have acquired information about the undead, immortals, outer ones, and Darklight races. Your status and Discern skill have been updated to reflect this information. Would you like to share this information with the other outsiders?

Umm, what? It feels like there could be serious issues if I don't share this information. It would be terrible if someone mistook an immortal for an undead and attacked them. The chances are low, but... Well, it would be a pain to write all of this on the BBS. If the system will do it for me, I'll gladly oblige.

Player Anastasia has acquired and shared information about the undead, immortals, outer ones, and Darklight races. Status and the Discern skill have been updated to reflect this information. Please see the help menu for details.

The help window now has info on the four races. My status, however, hasn't really changed. We outsiders have wills of our own, so I guess we can be treated as immortals. Since I'm here on the surface world, that puts me at rank 1, I guess?

In that case, perhaps I should look for the Nether. The problem is, I don't know where to go.

Still, Evernight Castle... I'm a princess, so I'm quite curious about it.

"What's going on, Sis?!" a message appeared.

"I got a system message while I was reading a book at the library, so I shared it."

"Wait...huh? There's a library? Where?"

"In the starting town."

"Huh? I ran around furiously trying to find one..."

"Maybe you need to ask a resident to find it? I heard about it from someone at the union."

"Can I post that on the BBS...?"

"Sure, but it's a library. Don't make a ruckus, okay?"

"I doubt too many people will use it..."

It's not like I'm trying to hide it, in any case. I'll gladly let her write about it for me.

A revelation has come from the gods. New outsiders will arrive in a month's time. The campaign has now begun to prepare for their coming!

Oh, looks like the event has started. I'll check the official site.

Hello, this is FLFO's management team.

This is a city event. It encompasses the starting town and the four towns that surround it. Let's work together to solve the problems plaguing the residents of these five towns.

You can also take escort quests at the adventurers' union and foster trade between the towns. Please contribute however you prefer.

You can take these quests the same way as usual, but they will pop up at a higher rate. You might meet an event monster along the way. There's a bonus to the rewards and EXP earned, so don't hesitate to take on the challenge.

As for the crafters, please produce plenty of C-quality goods. If you deliver the proper items and earn a good reputation, you might receive quests to craft items from pre-prepared materials.

If you make items below your level, you will get an EXP bonus. The bonus is higher the greater the difference between your skill level and the recipe level.

Good news for farmers and other producers! During the event, growth and harvest speed will increase, so please keep producing.

Harvest points will rise faster, and you'll also be able to harvest more times in a row. In addition, you can contribute to the towns by delivering herbs and ore.

The surrounding towns are now all open, unlike when you all first started out. But we are expecting twice the number of new players, so honestly, it will probably be just as hectic. Please do your best.

I see. I wonder if there are any books with Alchemy recipes here. I return the book to the shelf and ask.

"Excuse me. Do you have any books about Alchemy?"

"We only have the basics."

"That works for me."

"In that case, you'll find our selection on skills over here. From right to left, we have close combat, ranged combat, magic, and crafting, among others."

"Thank you. I'll look through them."

Let's see... Close combat...ranged combat...magic...hmm?

One book is glowing. Is that a magic book? I pick it up.

As for crafting, alchemy is...here. I'll get right to it.

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: Beginner's HP Potion

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: HP Potion

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: Beginner's MP Potion

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: MP Potion

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: Wood Arrow

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: Stone Arrow

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: Wood Bolt

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: Stone Bolt

Learned the basic Alchemy Recipe: Fertilizer

...etc.

That's a lot. Just what I needed!

Now then, what was that glowing magic book...? Flipping through it, there are parts that I can't make out. My Linguistics might not be high enough. It's not a very thick book, so perhaps I could try again while filling in some of the missing pieces myself.

I believe it's a basic text on magic. I'm quite curious, so I'll take my time.

Conditions have been met to unlock the Superior Magic Assist skill.

It looks like the conditions I met were to have Magic Assist at level 30 and to have proper knowledge of magic. It will cost 6 Skill Points to learn. And of course, I'm taking it. I now have 36 SP left.

It looks like Linguistics has reached level 10.

Faded Rapier of Protection has adapted to its user.

MANA MANIPULATION

A passive art. Less MP will be wasted when casting magic, reducing the MP cost.

Yes, it's better to have that than to not. Now, what was that about the rapier?

Oh, the Magic Assist on the applicable skills list just turned into Superior Magic Assist. That might boost the efficiency of my Spiral Magi Amp, so that's nice.

It's been a while, but I'll head to that granny's general store and buy myself an alchemy set. It was 7,000 gold, as I recall. I should have just enough on hand.

I put the book back on the shelf and take my leave.

"I'll be back."

"We'll be waiting."

From the adventurers' union, I step off from the main road, and there it is.

"Oh, you again?"

"It's been a while. I'd like to buy an alchemy set."

"I hear more outsiders are on their way. That's 7,000 gold."

"I figured it was a good time to pick up the skill."

"I see, I see. Alchemy is all about trial and error, so good luck."

"I have a mountain of materials that have been piling up over time, so I've got plenty of experiments to run."

"That's nice. Come back when you get Alchemist. I'll teach you something nice."

“Alchemist, you say? Understood.”

What is she going to teach me? Alchemist is the second-tier skill, so I'll come back once I reach that point.

I'll have to head to the union to collect my herbs and the other things I'll need for Alchemy. I'll deposit a few things while I'm at it. I think I'll try working with the herbs, zoomyshrooms, shadyshrooms, and distilled water. I'd also like to keep 10,000 gold on hand.

All right, time to do this. To start, I take a look at the alchemy set. There's no real-world equivalent, so I can't even imagine what's inside.

Huh. It's just a table and a few cloths with magic circles drawn on them. There's a cloth for synthesizing, one for refining, one for extraction, and one for decomposition—the arts I will acquire from here on out. I won't know what they do until I level up Alchemy. The cloths are each labelled with what they're used for, but there are no further instructions.

For a potion, I need distilled water, two medicinal herbs, and one zoomyshroom. I have plenty of herbs and shrooms. The problem is the water. Can I buy a still on its own? That should be cheaper than buying distilled water.

Although, am I even going to be making so many potions that I have to worry about it? I'm not so sure. I can't use potions myself, and Compounding potions are more effective.

Looking through my inventory, I'll run out of water before anything else. I'll buy a hundred. And if I pick up some sticks, I can use the banty feathers to make arrows.

As for the other recipes, the easiest one is fertilizer. I'll probably need a shovel, but other than that, I just need weeds and dirt. I can get both of those not far out of town. It looks like I can make glass as well. That's a synthesis of silica and quicklime. For silica, I can refine three quartz sand, and I'll need to extract quicklime from limestone, seashell, or coral. Unfortunately, my skill level isn't high enough for that.

For starters, I'll use everything I have on hand to make HP potions and see how high that raises my skill. I can decide what to do next from there.

While I was smoking meat, I managed to raise Alchemy to level 5. Back then, I made HP potions to earn levels, so I know the method. You just place each material on the synthesis cloth and use the art.

Sometimes it will fail and let off smoke. When that happens, you just put down new materials and repeat. With crafting skills, you can easily get to second-tier as long as you have materials to spare, and even failures give decent EXP. Occasionally, I successfully make an HP Potion. Quality is based not on the number of successes but the number of attempts; they're all rank C. I place the finished products in the delivery tab made for the event. There's no reason for me to carry them around.

Alchemy has reached level 10. You have earned 1 Skill Point.

Acquired Alchemy Art: Refine

REFINE

Materials can be converted to higher or lower grades.

I still have plenty of materials, so I'll keep at it.

Perhaps it's because it takes so little time, but a hundred trials do not raise this skill as much as cooking a hundred dishes did for Cooking. Thirty-two of my attempts successfully turn into HP Potions. The first fifty were all failures, so by the time I start succeeding, they're all C-rank in quality.

I can clearly see why Alchemy isn't popular. It takes two herbs, one zoomyshroom, and one distilled water to make a potion, and the quality caps at C. Ms. Salute can compound using one of each material and make a potion all the way up to B+ quality.

Thus, it's far better to make potions with Compounding, which is a potion-making skill to begin with. It takes a bit longer, but you can make multiple potions at once by adding more materials, so that's not much of a problem.

Alchemy is fast. It only takes as long as placing the materials. It does take

some MP, but it's hardly an issue with my mana pool, natural recovery, and the recovery bonus I get for being in town.

Now, where exactly is the strong point of Alchemy? Is it just a "jack of all trades, master of none" sort of skill? Most of what you can make is part of another skill's specialty.

I guess I'll just get it to second tier and see what happens. It shouldn't take much time at all. Let's check granny's store too.

"Back so soon? Did you forget something?"

"Do you have a still?"

"4,000 gold."

That's a lot. It must be most of the cost of the compounding set, and the rest is just for some little things. Not that that's going to stop me from buying it.

"Oh, right... Do you have a shovel?"

"What do you need it for?"

"I think I'll need it to gather quartz sand for glass and dirt for manure."

"If you're in the market for just one, you should get this one. But if you have the money, I'd recommend buying both of these."

The first tool she shows me is a pointed shovel, while the second has a flat tip. They're technically called a spade and a shovel respectively, though I tend to use those terms interchangeably.

Due to the sorry state of my inventory, I just buy the pointed spade for 200 gold, along with forty potion vials. That should get me through 280 of my herbs.

"If you want glass, head to the southern coast. You'll find both sand and shells there."

"Understood. I'll take a look."

That's good to know. I'll check out the coast once I've run out of potion materials.

Once I leave the shop, I get back to it again.

Alchemy has reached level 15.

Acquired Alchemy Art: Extract/Insert

21 out of 40 succeed. Well, I'm getting a little better.

EXTRACT/INSERT

You can extract substances from materials or insert new substances into them.

So you can take out and put in what you want...I suppose. That means I can make glass, but now I'm out of potion materials.

Glass has a pretty high recipe level. That must be because it requires Synthesis, Refine, and Extract/Insert. Does that mean it will give a lot of EXP as well?

The problem is, I don't know if producing potion vials counts as contributing to the event quest.

This event will go on for a week in real time, so I don't have to think too hard about my next move. I decide to head to Imbamunte in the south using the Stellura statue warp.

In an instant, the air is filled with the smell of the sea. I head even further south. I'm here anyway, so I might as well explore. Perhaps it is plainly obvious, but this town on the southern sea has a harbor. I could probably buy some seafood on the south side.

That shop over there is selling fishing rods and swimsuits. Swimsuits aside, fishing could be worthwhile. Although I don't really feel a need if I can just buy from the fishermen. I don't particularly like fishing, but perhaps it will affect the quality if I do it myself?

The things you buy from residents are generally C-grade, but there's a chance

I'll get higher quality if I do my own fishing. I put the idea on hold for now, since I'll die if I try sticking my hands into everything this game has to offer, especially on the crafting side.

Oh...what a beautiful ocean. It glistens as it reflects the sun's rays. Some of the coast is treated as part of the town and is covered by the safe zone. I should test and see if I can collect materials while in a safe zone.

I deploy my alchemy set, spread out the extraction cloth, and scoop a shovelful of sand onto it. When I use Extract/Insert, I get a popup asking me what I want to extract. I select quartz sand...and there's a *poof*. The sand scatters.

Management, are you serious? Are you harassing me? I can collect stuff, but it blows up if I fail? Jeez, there's sand everywhere in my clothes! There, I'll use the Clean art. Is that what you wanted?

I scoop up another pile of sand, place it on the cloth, and use the art. Though it annoys me, I'm getting quite a bit of skill EXP. It's a level 15 art, after all.

I can get six quartz sand from a scoop of ocean sand. It looks like I can extract quicklime as well, though only one per scoop. If I try to get it from the coral and shells, I get two.

I'm probably better off sorting through the sand and picking out any shells or coral bits I find. However, the shells need to be at least half intact; small shards give no reaction. When I'm using ocean sand, Extract/Insert is most likely picking the lime out from these fragments mixed in, leading to the lower rate.

Trial and error is everything, so I eventually get both materials up to C.

Oh, it's time for dinner. I'll use Clean on myself before logging out.

I get up, stretch, and help Mom with her cooking.

"What are you doing, Sis?"

"I'm eating dinner."

"Ha ha ha. What a coincidence, so am I! Not what I meant."

"I'm raising my Alchemy, as planned."

As we chat, I can hear someone talking about FLFO on TV. I look up to see a man on screen.

“Hello, everyone. I take care of, err...well... Anyway, I’m pretty important. My name’s Yamamoto Ittetsu from Future Software.”

That’s the developer and the overall guy in charge.

“Why did he have to think so hard to answer that...?”

“I think this show is aimed at kids. Elementary schoolers play the game too, and he needs to make sure he speaks at their level.” I answer my sister’s question as I listen to the interview.

“Production and management are quite different fields. What is it like to be in charge of both of them, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“Oh, well, to put it simply, I’m just the guy keeping both sides on track. I hear about the development and management situation from the leaders of both teams, and it’s my job to make sure they’re not headed in some crazy direction. I’m the one who knows best what every team is doing at any given moment. I need to keep a tight grip on them to make sure they don’t clash with one another. That’s a job for a pretty important guy, wouldn’t you say?”

“I see... Meaning you’re in a very stressful position. Oh, the stomach pains you must have.”

“I won’t deny that, but...my stomach is made of a superalloy!”

山本一徹

FLFO運営責任者



“I’m jealous.”

“To be honest with you, the team leaders might be having a harder time than me. My job is to wander around and get a feel for the situation. The team leaders have to do their own jobs, keep track of what their teams are doing, and report any problems to me so I can adjust things.”

This is the inside story of development, it seems. Future Software is an old and well-established game company, practically a household name at this point. They sell their own merchandise and are among the top tier of Japanese game companies. Their potential is so high that other companies can’t even compare.

“On to the matter at hand. Let’s talk about your game. You have a major announcement?”

“I do, I do. On August 1, we’ll have a major update, and we’ll be opening the game to 40,000 more players. In the latter half of August, we plan on hosting our second official event.”

“Oh, we’re finally on the second patch release!”

“The servers are stable, so this is our chance to grow. Please pick it up if you’re curious. Do note that this game was made to be quite realistic. My apologies to those who cannot distinguish games from reality, but please play in moderation.”

“Oh, yes... Come to think of it, can you kill other players in this game?”

“It’s not recommended, but it’s not banned either. You can play a villain if you want to.”

“Are there any defined rules about that?”

“Of course there are. You can’t just rely on your morals. If you want to play the bad guy, please give the rules a thorough read. Don’t say ‘I didn’t read that! I didn’t know about that!’ Ignorance is not an excuse. That’s why we waited so long for the laws to change.”

“So VR isn’t the wild west anymore.”

“If you have been a victim of malicious actions, please send a report to management before you decide to stop playing the game. You bought it because you wanted to enjoy it, right? Well, we made it because we want you to have fun. We keep logs of everything that happens in-game, and the management team can pull up videos whenever they want to. They go on patrol as well. Worst-case scenario, we can bring matters to court. In that case, we can provide conversation logs and videos. So let’s nip this problem in the bud. If you don’t want to go through pain, don’t break the rules.”

I do remember reading that—there are some rules for people RPing bad guys. You can’t incessantly go after a single player or blackmail them with real-life information. Though the unwanted content blocker exists, any assault with sexual intent can be brought to court.

“Let’s leave that dangerous topic at that. Is there anything else?”

“Do you want me to talk a bit about the update? I know you’ve all been waiting for it. We’re adding a guild system.”

So, a guild system to go along with the guild quests, is it?

“We also plan to add elite mobs that spawn in the fields. The next area’s mobs will be slightly lower level than the elites. Once you can defeat the elites of one area, it’s a good sign that you can move on to the next one. You can obtain the same drops in the next area, so there’s no need to stick around.”

“Guilds! Elite mobs!” my sister exclaims.

“So they’re like rare spawns.”

“Also, good news for any students out there. You can now upload and read your summer homework material in-game. Do your best, students! Incidentally, your account may be temporarily suspended based on what data you scan into the game. Worst case, you could be banned or even have your account terminated, so please be careful. We’re linking the game server to an external server, so if you try to upload a virus, you’ll just turn the students—and our company—against you.”

Interesting. Well, threats are serious business. I can see this company actually doing that.

“Oh, and I think it’s a good idea to mention this to all you working adult players out there. It’s good to teach the kids, but our company takes no responsibility if you do their homework for them and their grades drop. Also, we store whatever you upload on our servers, so please don’t try to do your job in-game. We’d love to have your confidential information, but your boss will yell at you.”

“That doesn’t make me happy at all! Why would I want to look at my homework in-game?”

“Hmm, maybe I’ll do my summer homework at the library, then.”

“We’re also tweaking a few features and fixing some bugs. The patch notes will be out about three days before the update, so please go through them. Finally, here’s a compilation of in-game footage. If you’re already playing the game, see if you can spot yourself. We’ll have a link to the video up on the website.”

The video starts with a POV shot of someone walking through the starting town. That’s all it is, and yet all the beastmen, giants, machinery, fae... They all reinforce that it truly is a fantasy. This must be a special management point of view. No one ever looks straight into the camera. They must not be able to see it, and so everyone’s acting naturally.

The footage leaves town and shifts to scenes of battle.

“Oh, you can change the gore setting. I’ll set it to 15+.”

There are quite a few shots of people fighting bears in the forest and stone turtles in the northern mountains. Is this a new feature?

Next...

“Oh, it’s another party fighting the coatl!”

“This must have been before we beat it.”

Several windows appear, each displaying a different party’s valiant effort. Some parties wipe, and others fight on.

“I see, so that’s how the others fought. They’re all dying from the poison.”

“Right? You need to get it down on the ground before you can do anything.”

“Oh, look, it’s us!”

In a window where a party was wiped, our footage appears. It gradually grows bigger until it takes up the whole screen, presumably because we beat it.

“Aina and Karen must be writhing in embarrassment.”

They’re my little sister’s party members and her friends in real life—Yanase Aina and Matsukane Karen. The former’s character name is Nadia, while the latter’s is Helen. They’re beastmen and they changed their hair colors, so I don’t know how many people will recognize them, but that’s not the problem. The problem is that Akina and I are very easy to recognize, so since they’re teamed up with us... Good luck not being recognized from now on.

Once the boss fight ends, next comes the tournament.

“Your stand sticks out like a sore thumb...”

“The line’s longer than I thought.”

There are flashes of battle, then they show the matches to decide third place, the semi-finals, and lastly the final match. It’s quite a long video.

“Come to think of it, the group that went to verify that information finally found the library.”

“Something else about the library: When I read a book, my Magic Assist evolved into Superior Magic Assist.”

“Huh...”

“The condition is to have Magic Assist at 30 and to have some proper knowledge on magic, apparently.”

“For real...? I’ll have to read up, then.”

“I needed a Linguistics skill, though.”

“Grrr...”

“I don’t know whether it will unlock if I pass it on verbally. If not, there will be droves crowding into the library, so I think they might allow that. I could read it aloud to you.”

“We’ll need to test that.”

After dinner, I take a bath and whatnot. The plan is to meet my sister in-game before I go to sleep. We'll confirm the conditions to unlock Superior Magic Support.

I log in and immediately get drenched by a downpour. It's really coming down. I guess there's a chance of this happening if I don't log out at an inn. By the way, being soaked is treated as a status ailment. You take double damage from lightning, higher freeze chance, and lowered Agility. I activate Ensoul and use the Clean art. This peculiar membrane seems to protect my feet as well. How useful.

This is my first time in the rain. It's been miraculously sunny up to this point... although that meant I was constantly taking sun damage.

The beautiful sea is now stormy. I should go to another area. I used my time before dinner collecting glass materials, so perhaps I'll go gather potion ingredients next.

"Yaaaah!"

I hear a voice from overhead and look up to see something small and green falling straight toward my chest. However, the unwanted contact blocker sends it flying into the sand.

I see its HP gauge draining, stopping only when it reaches the red zone.

Light Heal should work to fix them up. Whoever they are, they don't have much HP. We're in a safe zone, so I don't take any damage, but this poor soul took pure fall damage.

"A fae... Are you all right?"

"S-somehow..."

The sand is damp and sticky, so she gets up with quite a bit clinging to her. I quickly tidy her up with the Clean art.

Hmm, didn't I see her at the defensive battle?

"I knew it was you, Princess. Sorry about that. I was practicing manual flight in bad weather, and I lost to a strong breeze."

"I see. That sounds pretty hard. You're Ms. Fairellen, aren't you?"

“I’m Fairellen the fairy. The top fairy, for what it’s worth. Nice to meetcha!”

“A pleasure.”



It is evidently harder to fly through a storm, so she wanted to use this opportunity to get in some practice. She also said something about how there are conveniently no obstacles on the coast. Only a player would be crazy enough to head out to the beach during a storm. Incidentally, falling on the sand is better than falling in the ocean. Drowning isn't fun, I understand.

"If you're a fairy, does that mean you've unlocked the second tier of Magic Assist?"

"Unfortunately not. I've been searching the magic BBS since the beta."

"To be honest, I managed to unlock it at the library. I plan to meet my sister there at 9:00, so if you don't plan on getting Linguistics, do you want to come with me? We'd like to test a few things."

"Really? Was Linguistics 3 SP?"

"Yeah. I plan on posting on the BBS after we've tested it."

"Yes, ma'am!"

I register Ms. Fairellen on my friend list and say my temporary goodbyes. I should talk to Mr. Skelly and Tomo on the way to the statue. I'm sure they'll be there, so I can spend my time until then gathering potion materials.

I make it back to the starting town. If I want potion materials, I should head west...is what I'd like to say, but I haven't unlocked that area yet. Hmm...my Light Magic is about to go up. If I want to raise it while gathering, my best bet might be the east. I can sell the meat there, so I decide to do that.

Thus, my time is devoted to harvesting zoomyshrooms and medicinal herbs in the eastern forest. I can pick up shadyshrooms too, but... Well, I'll pick them up anyway. I can probably use them to raise my skills.

Mushrooms aside, but there are herbs all over the place, quite easy to gather. I haven't been doing it much lately, so my Gather skill has stalled at level 20. That's another thing I'd like to work on. I managed to unlock Mine by buying a pickaxe, but I haven't taken the skill yet. There are still plenty of things I want to do.

My food is selling well beyond my expectations. I don't have to worry about

making money, do I? However, I don't know how far I can go with my current equipment, so maybe I should dig for weapon materials. Hmm...it's an MMO, so there's no need for me to do everything myself. What to do, what to do...?

Despite everything, being in the top ranks is quite troublesome. You always want to have the right gathering skills for where you're headed. Everyone focuses on their own equipment first, so it takes a while before new materials enter circulation.

Materials that an adventurer can't use will likely be sold to their favorite crafters for a hefty sum. That's one way to make money. In that sense, now is the time to make a fortune in the north and west rather than heading east, but I can sell food I make using the eastern ingredients.

Considering my skills and my savings, the east is right for me. The only other locale I need is the south for seaweed. I get the feeling my field of activity is too narrow, but I'm sure it's the same for most people.

While I'm thinking and gathering, I run into a monster, but it's well below my level. I parry and fight only with Light Magic. It hasn't leveled up yet, but I move slowly, so it will take time and several battles to get to the library—I need to head back now.

I end up with a hundred and four herbs, fifty zoomyshrooms, and thirty-six paralyshrooms.

In front of the library, I find Rina's party, Tomo's party, Mr. Skelly, Mr. Alf, and Ms. Fairellen waiting. That's fourteen people including myself.

"You don't have any magic, do you, Mr. Alf?"

"No. But if I decide to pick it up later, it'll be convenient to have one condition out of the way."

"Good point. It's a bit early, but everyone's here, so let's get started."

Human, rabbit, fox, wolf, elf, giant, machinery, zombie, dullahan, skeleton, and fairy. We have quite a combination here.

"I didn't know you knew Fairellen, Princess."

"I knew of her from the Goblin War, but we only first spoke a few hours ago."

“I accidentally crashed into her during flight training.”

“Oh.”

When I enter the library, I find there are already a few people there. It's good to know there are other customers.

“Hey, hey. If it isn't the testing team,” someone from my group remarks.

“Hmm? Oh, that's quite the party.”

“Bring them along, Princess. It will make things easier.”

It looks like everyone apart from me knows who they are. They must be beta players.

Conquerors are those who keep pressing forward. However, the people of the testing team are strange ones who find meaning in exploring the worldbuilding, skill use, and other minor details. They like researching, and they publish whatever they find. They're certainly helpful.

“Ah, my first time meeting the princess. I'm Studylover. Nice to know you.”

“A pleasure. For now, I need to go get a book.”

I take out the magic book. There's no point if I don't have that.

“What are you trying to do?”

“It feels like a great mystery is about to be solved!”

“Oh? That's very curious.”

Mr. Skelly gives a grand proclamation, but we're just unlocking second-tier skills here.

“Studylover, do you have Linguistics?”

“With your sister's post and your information, I read the picture book and obtained it. It seems like it will be an indispensable skill to us!”

“Is it over level 10?”

“Err...it's at level 8.”

“Just short, then. I'll read aloud, so please listen.”

Level 8 does not translate everything, so I give a reading as I initially intended.

“The end.”

“Here it comes!”

“Superior Magic Assist?!”

“Could everyone in the testing team please spread this information?”

“Leave it to us! First, we’ll need to figure out the necessary keywords to unlock it. If you don’t have to read the whole thing, it will be much easier to spread.”

“Incidentally, my Instinct reacted to a book called *Stellura and the Darklight Races*.”

“Instinct... That’s the second tier of Detect, yes? Hmm...”

Everyone who unlocked the skill takes it immediately.

“Hoooraaah!”

“That’s a cry that should never have come from a fairy or a maiden.”

“I just unlocked three complex magics!”

“Huh?”

It looks like Ms. Fairellen has Water, Wind, and Earth magic. Water and Earth unlocked Wood Magic, Water and Wind unlocked Storm Magic, and Wind and Earth unlocked Lightning Magic. Tomo has Fire, Water, and Wind. His Fire and Wind unlocked Scorch Magic, while his Fire and Water unlocked Ice Magic. Like Fairellen, he got Storm Magic from Water and Wind.

“Ice has Glacies spells, Scorch has Ignis spells, Storm has Ventos spells. But my SP...”

“Wood has Frons, Lightning has Tonitrus. My SP is pretty low too...”

“Ah! I got Enchant Magic,” says an elf woman in Tomo’s party.

“Huh? I didn’t get that.”

“It seems to be Elemental enchantment magic. You need to use support magic a hundred times to unlock it. The Elemental spells buff weapons, and

Shield spells buff armor.”

She seems like a support player—a priest-type character—so she picks it up right away.

“There are quite a few skills that have Superior Magic Assist as a prerequisite.”

“Well, you’ll need superior techniques to use complex magic! This is wonderful information. The magic board will go wild. We’ll need to go through all the complex magics we can find.”

“My Light Magic is at level 29, so I might get a Light and Dark fusion once I max it. I’ll keep raising it as I gather herbs, but I’m going to call it a day.”

“We’ll be looking forward to the info. There aren’t many people who pick up both attributes.”

“Really?”

“The Light and Night Vision spells accomplish the same thing. Because of the bonus it gives to healing, many people take Light.”

“I see. I started out with Night Vision.”

“Ah, right. Because of your race.”

“Yes. All right, I’m going to bed.”

“Good night. Leave it to us to spread the news!”

I register Studylover as a friend, say my goodbyes, and log out at the inn this time.

Tomorrow, I’ll raise Light Magic and aim for a second-tier Alchemy skill. Gather is about to reach its second stage as well.

Good night.

Official BBS 5

[Are you Human] Race Comprehensive Thread 21 [Inhuman?]

1. Human Adventurer

This is a thread to discuss races in general. Post about your race either here or in one of the links below!

- Past threads: [http://*****](#)
- Human General: [http://*****](#)
- Inhuman General: [http://*****](#)
- Human: [http://*****](#)
- Beastman: [http://*****](#)
- Fae: [http://*****](#)
- Demihuman: [http://*****](#)
- Slime: [http://*****](#)
- ...etc.

>> 980 See you in the next thread!

468. Human Adventurer

So the second wave's about to come. We've got to put a race guide together for them.

469. Human Adventurer

>> 468 True; they'll be bombarding us with questions.

470. Human Adventurer

>> 469 I'm still as clueless as when I started! Especially about inhumans.

471. Human Adventurer

H-huh?!

472. Human Adventurer

Anast— Er, the princess!

473. Human Adventurer

Something was added to the help menu. Let's have a look.

474. Human Adventurer

Undead, immortal, outer ones, Darklight race, Nether, Abyss, Medium, Astral...

475. Human Adventurer

>> 474 From what I've read, the Abyss is like hell. Then what about the Nether?

476. Human Adventurer

>> 475 Isn't it like a government office sort of thing?

477. Human Adventurer

>> 475 Going off these notes, the Nether is both like an office and heaven. The Abyss is hell. The Medium is a paradise for the monsters called the outer ones, and the Astral is where you go to get reborn. That's how I understood it.

478. Human Adventurer

>> 477 I get the office part. The Evernight Castle, right? Where's heaven,

though?

479. Human Adventurer

>> 477 I decided based on the part that says *“Souls are judged before entering the Nether, and those that are bound for the Abyss are sectioned off.*

The Abyss is an underground city similar to the Nether, but it is for people who did bad things or thought evil thoughts.”

480. Human Adventurer

>> 479 Oh, I see.

481. Human Adventurer

>> 480 Huh? What’s up?

482. Human Adventurer

>> 481 If your soul is judged to be good, you get to stay in the Nether. Otherwise, you’re sent to the Abyss. Meaning the Nether is where the good people gather, and the Abyss is for the bad. That’s heaven and hell, right?

483. Human Adventurer

>> 482 I see! That cleared it up for me!

484. Human Adventurer

>> 483 Yeah. But that’s just my interpretation.

485. Human Adventurer

The elite immortals go to the Nether, the elites of the elites go to the Abyss, and the elites even greater than that go to Evernight Castle. So to the immortals, our princess and her comrades are still freshly hatched chicks.

486. Human Adventurer

>> 485 No way. Those three are headed straight for the Nether. They just have to find the entrance first.

487. Human Adventurer

>> 486 Right?

488. Human Adventurer

I checked another thread! According to the little sister, the info came from reading a book at the library in the starting town.

489. Human Adventurer

>> 488 Huh? There's a library? Didn't the testing team go looking for one?

490. Human Adventurer

>> 489 Apparently, you can't find it unless a resident tells you about it.

491. Human Adventurer

>> 490 So you need to trigger the flag...

492. Inhuman Adventurer

Is there any info on different races at that library? What we got this time is worldbuilding, like the races' relation to one another. That's not exactly what I was looking for.

493. Human Adventurer

>> 492 Better than nothing, right?

494. Inhuman Adventurer

>> 493 I guess so. I'd like to know my own race's place in the world.

495. Human Adventurer

>> 494 What race are you?

496. Inhuman Adventurer

>> 495 Wolf!

497. Human Adventurer

>> 496 You're food. End of story.

498. Inhuman Adventurer

>> 497 How cruel.

499. Human Adventurer

>> 497-498 Don't make me laugh. Wolf meat's just a light snack. I'm feeling it in my stomach. Oww...

500. Inhuman Adventurer

>> 499 Bark, bark... Awoooo!

501. Human Adventurer

>> 500 Quit it!

502. Human Adventurer

>> 500 Time to put you down!

503. Inhuman Adventurer

>> 502 I'll have the princess cook me up!

504. Human Adventurer

>> 503 Wink wink, nudge nudge, say no more.

505. Inhuman Adventurer

>> 504 Hee hee hee... Ha ha ha...

506. Human Adventurer

>> 505 You mangy mutt!

507. Human Adventurer

>> 506 This dog's hopeless.

508. Human Adventurer

Forget about the pupper. Can't management give us a bit more info on races?

509. Management

All human races besides machinery share the same stat total. With a few exceptions, the inhuman races have a higher stat total than machinery. Inhuman stats are highly unbalanced, and many of them have blatantly obvious weaknesses. Though they beat machinery in stats, you could say they're worse than the human races in almost everything else. Take the zombie, for instance. They have more Endurance than machinery, but every other stat is lower than a human's. In other words, their stat total is lower than average. When all the bonuses and demerits are factored in, the races' stats can actually differ considerably. This difference applies to races as a whole, not individual players.

As an example, a human receives a Speed modifier of 1, a dwarf receives a modifier of 0.8, and a zombie has a modifier of 0.5.

If you want a fun, balanced game experience, choose a human race. If you want to struggle with basic controls, pick an inhuman. It can be stressful to play

using a form that's too different from your real body, and some maps might be impossible for you to clear from the start. Inhuman races are for hardcore players.

Example: An undead player wanders into a Light dungeon.

As stated in the character creation screen, those races weren't created for people who'll get fed up the first time things seem unfair. It's pointless to complain to management; that's just how they are. In exchange for balance, inhumans have an evolution system and can have unique monster skills.

510. Human Adventurer

Management really replied.

511. Human Adventurer

Zombies...

512. Human Adventurer

I feel for you, zombies...

513. Management

We once received a complaint requesting that humans be able to fly too. However, our developers unanimously agreed, 'Why the heck should humans fly?' and it never happened. If you want to fly, pick a fae or a demon; they're humanoid enough. Even a ghost might work. The people you see happily flying around all have other disadvantages that balance things out, but they chose the sky regardless. And each of them fell to their deaths countless times while practicing. Effort is necessary, but they also have organs that humans don't.

The most important part is to overcome your fear of falling. I recommend starting at low altitudes. Just in case, you might want to attach a rope to a tree and tie it to yourself or cling to it. It's miserable when you start thinking you're just going to fall if you try to soar. I'm speaking from experience here. Flying freely is a kind of talent, and you can hold your head high. Once you've

mastered it, try manual flying too!

If you just want to fly and nothing else, birds are comparatively easier to handle. Their wings are where a human's hands would be, so they're easier to control. The downside here, of course, is that you don't have hands.

By the way, that famous player Anastasia is telling the truth when she says she's a zombie. Her stats are not publicly available, but we assure you she is receiving all the negative zombie modifiers. Since she found a special race, her base stats aren't exactly zombie-like, but she still has those zombie negatives.

Zombies were never popular among our management team, but we can't play favorites. We gave them modifiers that suited the setting and came out with a terrible race as a result. The team that designed the races are looking at her in awe. In that sense, she's one of the people management is keeping an eye on.

That is all. You can figure the rest out on your own. I'm getting back to work. (Although writing this was also part of the job.)

514. Human Adventurer

Those fairies definitely look like they're having fun flying around. But that race can only use magic, and their attributes can change their appearance, right?

515. Human Adventurer

>> 514 More specifically, every ten levels, their attribute changes to the element of the highest-level magic they know.

516. Human Adventurer

>> 515 What subraces have we confirmed so far?

517. Fairellen

>> 516 Their size ranges from between 30 and 60 cm. They mostly look like miniature human beings.

Fire: Salamander

They're lizards wrapped in flames. You might not want to be a lizard, but they are surprisingly strong.

Wind: Fairy

They have butterfly wings.

Water: Nixie

Can breathe underwater and receive an Agility buff when in water. Their sleeves and hair are always damp.

Earth: Pixie

They have dragonfly wings.

Light: Sprite

Technically humanoid, but they shine so bright you can't see them.

Dark: Nightmare

Technically humanoid but wrapped in too much darkness to make out.

Those are the elements we've confirmed so far. You can customize your appearance, but you will always take the coloration of your race attribute.

The residents call us "fae," and we apparently love mischief. Whenever you go shopping, make sure you alert the shopkeeper first! Otherwise, they'll think you came to play a prank.

518. Human Adventurer

The top fairy appears out of nowhere!

519. Human Adventurer

>> 517 Hmm! Can they all fly?

520. Fairellen

>> 519 It's more like floating for salamanders and nixies. Sprites and nightmares drift. Faeries and pixies do feel like they're flying. I like fairy the

most! By the way, I died from fall damage thirty-six times during the beta.

521. Management

>> 520 I'm impressed it was only thirty-six times. I almost got into quadruple digits! Although that includes when we were still fine-tuning the system... It's intentional that they all have different movement types.

522. Fairellen

>> 521 Thanks for all the testing!

523. Management

>> 522 Any time. Enjoy your journey through the sky. Don't let any flying mobs gobble you up.

524. Fairellen

>> 523 Been there, done that. Lately, I've been trying acrobatics on manual flight, and it's like I'm playing a different game entirely.

525. Management

>> 524 I'm glad you're enjoying it. It's Free Life Fantasy, after all. Live however you want, as long as you're not bothering anyone. We make sure to record whenever you fall, so don't worry.

526. Fairellen

>> 525 Now I'm worried.

527. Management

>> 526 Ha ha ha, it's fun to see what crazy things inhumans get up to.

528. Fairellen

Hey, you just called me crazy!

529. Human Adventurer

Any other info, management?

530. Management

Well, let's see... If it's about races, we're updating the machinery description for the August 1 patch. A lot of people complained that it was misleading.

531. Human Adventurer

>> 530. Oh, about MP and EP?

532. Management

>> 531 That's the one. We're correcting it—or rather, adding some clarifications. It might be up on the official site around Wednesday. That's not my department, so I don't know the details. This old man just manages races.

533. Human Adventurer

How many inhumans are there?

534. Management

Around 10 percent of the player base, so about 2,000.

535. Human Adventurer

More than I thought...

536. Management

Most of them are devils, animals, and fae.

537. Human Adventurer

Are there any angels?

538. Management

I can't tell you that.

539. Human Adventurer

Dammit!

540. Management

Or so I thought, but I just got the go-ahead. Yes, there are angels. They are a special derivation of devils, so do your best to find them.

541. Inhuman Adventurer

S-say what?!

542. Management

It's not an evolutionary tree that makes you an angel. There's no need to panic.

543. Inhuman Adventurer

>> 542 So you can become one at any time?

544. Management

>> 543 As long as you fulfill the requirements. I can't tell you those requirements, though. And angels aren't stronger, exactly. They just have different attributes.

545. Inhuman Adventurer

>> 544 Angels... They're supposed to serve the heavens, but what about this

world? Are they like an opposing faction to devils?

546. Management

>> 545 Ha ha ha, I can't tell you that. Do your best to gather info.

546. Inhuman Adventurer

Dammit!

Chapter 6:

Summoning Magic

THE SUN SHINES HIGH in a vivid blue sky. The classroom is silent, save for the sound of styluses tapping against displays.

I have to stay seated even after I've finished the test, so I've got nothing to do. The almighty sun is working overtime, and it's not doing me any favors. Test time should be over soon.

"Okay, time's up. Put down your pens and pads. Pass them to the back."

The silent, tense atmosphere abruptly relaxes, and the class fills with life. Pads are passed to the back of the room. The back-row students stand up and set them on the teacher's desk before returning to their seats.

"The test is now over. There's no cleanup today, so that's everything."

A few impatient students stand to leave but are urged to sit back down.

"Wait, wait, stay for a minute. Sit. First, I need to tell you the schedule."

Tomorrow, we'll come to school in the morning and do a major cleanup before noon, after which we'll go home. The day after that, there'll be a ceremony, and then it's summer break. The ceremony should be over by noon.

"I'll give you your homework after you're done cleaning tomorrow."

"Eh?!"

"Why're you so happy?"

"Whaaaa?!"

"Shut it! Now listen here! Don't cause any trouble over summer break! I want to relax too! I don't want anyone calling me in!"

"What are you going to do over summer break, Sensei?"

"I'm gaming hard."

"Which game?"

“FLFO’s second patch! Finally...”

“Eh?!”

“The patch notes said you can do your homework in-game. I wouldn’t mind teaching a few lessons in there from time to time.”

How generous. He won’t get a salary if he teaches in-game... Wait, the patch notes came out? Tomo and Sugu seem just as perplexed.

“If we ever meet...”

“I’ll wither away if I ever see Sensei in the game...”

“Hey, I don’t want to see you people either. It’ll snap me straight back to reality. That aside, you have to be here at the usual time tomorrow or the day after. I’m going to start grading. After that, I’ll be done with work. That is all!”

With that, the teacher leaves the classroom, and my classmates start clamoring. It’s Wednesday. I spent Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday grinding my Alchemy. I should make some progress today, and it’s high time I max out Light Magic as well. It would be nice if Gather went up too.

“Kay, let’s head back.”

“What should we do today?”

“No work to do, right?”

“Right. I guess I’ll walk around town.”



I head out with Tomohiro and Suguru. Their party seems to have the day off.

“What about you, Kotone?”

“My Alchemy, Light Magic, and Gather should level up soon, so I’ll work on them some more. I haven’t come across nearly as many enemies as I expected while gathering materials, so my magic isn’t leveling.”

“So you’re focusing on crafting today?”

“Well, we *are* in the middle of a crafting event.”

We chat on the way to the school gate, where my sister and her friends are waiting. It’s been a while since I’ve seen Yanase and Matsukane in real life. The six of us form a homeward-bound group.

“Come to think of it, little sister of mine...”

“What is it, big sister of mine?”

“Female players have started coming up to me to ask for beauty tips. There was even a GM among them.”

“Seriously?”

“I ended up writing a memo to give them after the first few.”

“Well, yeah. I told them you were knowledgeable, but they’ve really been hounding you, huh?”

I split my advice into several steps for them to try. If they feel the effects early on, that means their skin is pretty badly damaged. I divided my recommendations into cheap, normal, and expensive price points, and I suggested some perfumes as well.

“Ah, we need to get lunch. What should we do today?”

“I’m going to the bakery next door.”

“Bread, huh? A sandwich is nice now and then.”

“Sis, let’s do Moreburger today! It’s been so long!”

“Hmm...? Well, I suppose that’s fine once in a while.”

Yanase and Matsukane have food ready at home, so we split up in front of the

supermarket.

After we arrive home, the AC will take a while to cool the living room, so we end up eating in my room. Akina, why did you bring your food to my room instead of your own? Not that I mind... I scroll through the patch notes over my meal.

“There’s the guild and elite mobs they mentioned on TV. They also added a dice roll function.”

“They have 1d3, 1d6, and 1d100, and it’s also possible to change the numbers manually? They put a lot of effort into it.”

“The limit is 10d1000, huh... Honestly, 1d100 is more than enough.”

“There are also bug fixes and a support campaign for students.”

“They call it a campaign, but they don’t give you anything! Throw me a bone here!”

“It just says they’ll make it so we can load our homework in-game. It’s like, ‘Yes, we shall grant you the right to do your homework.’”

“Is that supposed to make me happy?”

None of the skills have been nerfed, and there isn’t anything else that really catches my attention. The update will roll out on August 1 as planned—three days from now.

I eat, take a shower, and log in.

After doing some stretches on the mattress at the inn, I head out. Yesterday, I spent my time producing potion vials, so I’m currently in Imbamunte.

First, I decide to go raise my Light Magic on the coast. I can focus on Gather after that, while I work on Alchemy. I set off after taking a hunt quest from the union.

I walk along the beach. Part of the coast belongs to the town and is considered a safe area, so I have to travel some distance if I want to encounter enemies.

It’s noon in real life, so it’s morning in-game. The weather is splendid, and the

ocean glistens in the sunlight. I'm going to get sunburned if I stay here. The sea is my natural enemy. I never go there in real life, though it's far enough away that it usually doesn't come up. In-game, this amount of sun exposure could prove fatal to me. Do your best, my parasol!

A little further down, I see other players engaged in combat. There are currently five types of enemies on the beach: carabine poisson, fresh fish, sea turtle, star flier, and feeler karkinion. They're an archerfish, a needlefish, a turtle, a starfish, and a hermit crab respectively...I think?

The carabine poisson launches magic from the ocean. The fresh fish charges like an arrow while floating in the air. The sea turtle... Well, it's a magic attacker with high physical defense. The star flier spins rapidly in the air as it charges at its targets. The feeler karkinion is more hermit than crab—like an octopus took the crab's place. What are those tentacles...?

I can see that their levels range from 24 to 30, making this quite a high-level hunting ground. The beach might be where to find the strongest foes around here. There are probably stronger ones out at sea, but that's not an option yet.

Time for me to hunt. There are way too many aggressive mobs here, and they have long-range attacks. I'll start with my sword drawn.

The issue with this hunting ground, on top of the fact that the enemies are strong, is that using Dismantle isn't always an option, and some bodies will have to be left. The carabine poisson attacks from the sea, and you need ranged attacks to beat it. You can see where this is going, right?

As I'm walking, a red line suddenly appears in my line of sight. This must be my Danger Sense displaying an enemy's AoE. Since it's one straight line, it's a carabine poisson—essentially a stationary turret. It seems to be predicting my movements and firing accordingly. The enemy AI is improving, although that means it doesn't hit me when I stand still.

The carabine's AI tries to shoot in the direction you're moving, so if you get the timing down, you can predict its attacks and force it to miss. That's not as easy as it sounds, though.

When it attacks, the carabine jumps out of the water, and it dives back in after it shoots. In short, if you don't hit it at the right moment, it will dodge

underwater. This is most certainly an annoying one.

My foe attacks with Water magic: arrows, lances, and explosions. It also has powerful, short-range shots. I don't know the name of its last spell, but it makes a wall of water. I'm assuming it's called Wall.

I want to unlock shot spells. They have a short cast time and high firepower in exchange for being incredibly short-range. That would be perfect for my fighting style, but you apparently only learn them at level 5 on second tier. I'll need to get my Light magic to second tier first.

I stand still to avoid its first shot and retaliate with Light Lance. It doesn't have much HP, and I manage to drop it by 40 percent with one attack. Just two more hits.

Its second shot is a Water Lance, and I use Magic Parry for the first time, countering with a Light Arrow. That's 70 percent down, 30 percent left.

Its third shot is another arrow, which I dodge, then I fire Light Lance for the kill. Its body falls and floats to the surface, only to be taken away by the waves. Hey, that's kidnapping! The elements stole my loot drops! Apparently, the waves sometimes carry them toward you, though.

For shot spells, arrows fly faster than lances. However, Water attribute shots seem to fly slower than the other attributes. This shouldn't be a problem.

Maybe I should turn off Dismantle on this hunting ground, since there are two enemies here that are a pain to collect. I don't have much of a choice, so I toggle it off. You get fewer drops when Dismantle is inactive, but that's better than getting literally nothing when you can't claim the body.

My enemies are finally using magic, so I can raise my Magic Resist. It's nice how my resistance goes up even if I guard or parry.

A short time after turning off Dismantle, I see another red line from the sea aimed at my chest. It's a fresh fish this time. It has a slender body with a pointed tip—an arrow-shaped fish that shoots through the air to impale me.

I focus on parrying it, and the next time it rushes me with its incredible speed, I smack it to the ground. Speed impacts damage in this game, and its HP dwindles as it scrapes along the sand. As it lies there, twitching, I stab with my

rapier. The sand beneath it makes a crunching sound. Its bar continues to drop until it disappears into polygons.

Usually, fresh fish are supposed to be rather annoying to deal with.

Fish-type enemies have low HP and defense, so they're easy to defeat. In exchange, they boast high offensive powers, and they're very nimble.

The star frier is just like the fresh fish, and it's over as soon as I smack it down and stab in my blade. The difference seems to be that the fresh fish stabs, while the star flier slices.

Next comes the feeler karkinion. Its tentacles swing out like whips; it must use blunt attacks. The problem with this one is the tentacles, which are fast and numerous. It doesn't have any magic, but those tentacles stretch quite far, and it can move around. Honestly, this one seems strongest.

The sea turtle is a turtle that uses Water magic, so it's over once you hit it with a blunt weapon or scorch it with Fire magic. It has the same spell list as the carabine poisson. The turtles fire straight at you, however.

The sea turtles drop shells, while the fresh fish drop horns. Now that I'm back to the normal drop table, it's really starting to feel like an MMO.

Perhaps it's because I've raised Discern, but I've started getting some C+ quality drops. I really need Discern to do a bit more of the heavy lifting.

Your Race Level has increased!

Light Magic has reached Level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Acquired Light Magic Art: Light Burst

Light Magic has reached its limit. You have unlocked: Radiant Magic, Holy Magic

Conditions have been met to unlock the Space Magic skill.

Finally! Light Magic is evolving into Radiant Magic and Holy Magic.

In addition, Light Magic combines with Dark Magic and Superior Magic Assist

to create the complex Space Magic. This is most likely related to Stellura.

RADIANT MAGIC

The regular evolution of Light Magic. Contains offensive light-attribute spells.

HOLY MAGIC

A special evolution of Light Magic. Contains spells specialized in healing and fighting the undead.

SPACE MAGIC

A complex magic made from the combination of Light and Dark. Contains spells that manipulate space. Has poor mana efficiency and contains no direct attacks, so it does not have many practitioners.

Skilled users can control attraction and repulsion forces and can even set up temporary safe zones.

Radiant Magic seems to be the regular path for Light, so I'll take it. Still, Holy Magic is quite enticing. It would be nice to have in a party because of its recovery and anti-undead spells. However, I can't use it if I'm partying with Mr. Alf or Mr. Skelly. I can't use it on myself, either. I don't have much SP to spare, so I'll ignore it. I'm definitely learning Space Magic, though, because of its tie to Stellura. It would be nice if it solves my inventory problem, but who knows?

They're both 6 SP. I lose 12 and am left with 30. That's not good.

The spells I learn are Lumen Explosion and Inventory Expansion.

INVENTORY EXPANSION

Your inventory space will increase based on skill level. However, your max

MP will be lowered.

I suppose I'll just have to use it to find out— Wait. Huh? *Lowered?!*

When I toggle Inventory Expansion on, around 80 percent of my MP bar turns gray. So that's what I have to give up...and it only gave me one extra inventory slot!

If it scales with skill level, that means I'll eventually get thirty extra slots, but do they expect me to fight with only 20 percent of my mana? Since it's a toggle, I doubt the skill level will go up unless I keep it on constantly. In that case...well, you know.

I get the feeling 80 percent isn't a number I can compromise on.

This goes beyond poor mana efficiency. Given the SP cost, it should be equal to a second-tier skill, and it should be able to go beyond level 30. If the MP cost goes down every ten levels, perhaps by level 30 it'll only take half?

Even if I do keep it on constantly, second-tier skills are notorious for having slow growth.

My MP is on the higher side, so I can manage with 20 percent. Worst-case scenario, I can use my melee skills. However, my main source of damage is still magic. I definitely won't have the MP to fight a boss.

Still, I've taken it, so I might as well raise it. I'll just have to turn it off for boss battles.

After I finish my union hunt quests, I'll move on to Alchemy. I'll be using my Dark magic now, so it should be quite a bit easier.

I fight the enemy spells with magic, and I smack down the ones that try to charge at me. The ones that dance, flailing their tentacles around, I slice and dice until those tentacles are no more.

Rapier has reached level 5.

Acquired Rapier Art: Penetrate

Eloquent Princess-style Protection: Rapier has reached level 5.

Acquired Eloquent Princess-style Protection Rapier Art: Royal Counter

PENETRATE

Unleash a penetrating blow, dealing 3× damage if you strike an enemy's weak point.

ROYAL COUNTER

Block and parry any non-magic ranged attack.

That one overwrote my Arrow Guard and Arrow Parry.

I'm finally getting a rapier art, but it doesn't say what happens if I don't manage to hit a weak point. I assume I'll deal normal or decreased damage. Still, I need to try it out and see.

Okay. It's not the same damage as usual—there's actually a very slight damage increase even if I don't hit a weak point. Not a bad result, but because of the MP cost, I'm better off using other arts unless I'm sure I can pick a weak spot.

Now then, I'll report to the union, collect my consignment money, make a deposit, and get back to crafting.

I warp to the starting town and log out to stretch a bit before returning to head east. I'll keep gathering until Gather levels up, or until dinner time. Oh, I'd better turn Dismantle back on. How nice it is to be on land.

I industriously pluck herbs and mushrooms, taking out the occasional deer and boar as I gather. The enemies in the east forest are now nothing more than a minor annoyance to me. I might end up using rabbit and wolf meat more than boar and bear.

Gather has reached level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Gather has reached its limit. You have unlocked Collect.

COLLECT

Gives a bonus to gathering based on skill level and lowers the rate at which harvesting tools lose their durability.

6 SP, as usual. I have 26 left. Space Magic has reached level 2, and I now have two bonus inventory spaces. It looks like I get one slot per skill level. No change to my MP situation.

I still have time before dinner. I'll return to town and focus on Alchemy next.

"Hey there, Princess."

"Oh. Mr. Ertz. You're early today."

"Didn't have much else to do, so I hopped on. You get days like that sometimes. Oh, and this here is Nephrite. She made Salute's glasses."

"I'm Nephrite, and I've been leveling Handcrafting. Nice to meet you."

"A pleasure. I'm Anastasia."

Ms. Nephrite is a machinery woman with jade-green hair and eyes. Apparently, her work has been quite hectic lately, and she's finally found a day to kick back and play.

I sell my wolf claws and deer horns to Ms. Nephrite, while I have Mr. Ertz buy my horns. It all totals up to roughly 37,000 gold. There's still a need for these low-grade materials, since the second wave of players is coming.

I'm not opening my stall, but I deploy my cooking and alchemy kits. I light the burner on the cooking kit and add water to the still. It's a game, so the glass doesn't get scorched black.

"That's one way to use it. Are you making distilled water?"

"I'm hoping to reach the second tier with what I have on hand."

"What are you raising it with?"

“HP potions for the event.”

“Oh, so it’s a numbers game.”

“For now. I have enough to make 155. I’ll get more EXP processing my ingredients into Beginner’s HP Potions.”

“With the EXP bonus for low-level recipes, you should do well.”

“I hope so. I still haven’t opened the portals to the north or west, you know.”

“What, you haven’t?”

“I’ve been too busy working on my Cooking, Alchemy, and magic... Oh, that’s right. I need to post that info on the magic board.”

“Oh?”

I transfer the distilled water to potion vials and start making another batch as I write about Space Magic and Inventory Expansion on the board. Radiant Magic, Holy Magic, and Collect are already well documented.

“This goes beyond bad efficiency.”

“I think it will get better if I level it, but 80 percent is pretty bad...”

“I’m curious about how it mentions ‘attracting and repelling forces’ instead of just gravity.”

“It sounds like I could fly, right?”

“With mileage like that, maybe for a few seconds.”

“Yes, it would certainly be in seconds.”

I’m curious about that too. Since I’m on the board, I’ll look at the other magics. There’s a comprehensive list.

FIRST TIER:

Skill Name	Naming Convention
Fire Magic	Fire

Water Magic	Aqua
Wind Magic	Air
Earth Magic	Soil
Light Magic	Light
Dark Magic	Dark

SECOND TIER:

Skill Name	Naming Convention	How to Unlock
Flame Magic	Flame	Fire’s Second Tier
Stream Magic	Meer	Water’s Second Tier
Air Magic	Vento	Wind’s Second Tier
Land Magic	Earth	Earth’s Second Tier
Radiant Magic	Lumen	Light’s Second Tier
Holy Magic	Varied	Light’s Second Tier
Darkness Magic	Nox	Dark’s Second Tier
Shadow Magic	Shadow	Dark’s Second Tier

Then, the ones that need two attributes and Superior Magic Assist:

Skill Name	Naming Convention	How to Unlock
Ice Magic	Glacies	Fire + Water
Scorch Magic	Ignis	Fire + Wind

Magma Magic	Tera	Fire + Earth
Storm Magic	Ventos	Water + Wind
Wood Magic	Frons	Water + Earth
Lightning Magic	Tonitrus	Wind + Earth
Enchant Magic	Enchant & Shield	100 Support Uses

I'll have to add that Light and Dark gives Space Magic. I don't know what the naming convention is yet, but I'll add that once I figure it out. Enchant Magic, though it requires Superior Magic Assist, might be considered a first-tier skill based on the SP cost; apparently it levels as fast as a first-tier skill as well. Adding an element to your attack can be quite nasty against races with elemental weaknesses, but if you don't exploit a weakness, you generally only do 1.2× damage.

It's a must-have for a party. How very enticing.

Not that I have the SP for it.

Now then, back to mass production. I place the materials on the synthesis cloth and use Synthesize. Line them up and Synthesize. Then replenish my distilled water and Synthesize again...

"Pouring the water into the vials is the most annoying part of the process."

"Salute said that too. She'd like it automated."

"An automatic filler—I'd love that."

Soon, I become a potion-making machine. Once I'm out of materials to make HP potions, I synthesize the HP potions with distilled water. This makes two Beginner's HP Potions—I'm literally watering them down.

Pour distilled water into a pot, take out an HP potion, and Synthesize. Crafting is repetitive work. I must clear my mind, clear my heart...

"Alchemy looks like tedious busywork."

“Well, yeah. That’s one of the reasons it’s so unpopular. Not to mention the quality caps at C.”

“That would have been normal in other games, but with FDVR technology, it’s just too boring.”

“Mm-hmm... Cooking is a lot more fun.”

And I spend a long time on recovery because of Space Magic’s MP restriction. I use that time to pour the water.

Alchemy has reached level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Acquired Alchemy Art: Magic Refining Circle

Alchemy has reached its limit. You have unlocked Alchemist.

Conditions have been met to unlock the Necromantic Magic skill.

Specific requirements have been met. A specific skill has been modified.

Modified skill: Necromantic Magic

“All right, that’s... Hmm?”

“What’s wrong?”

“What the...?”

I find myself inadvertently gawking at the log, though even if I try backing up a bit, it doesn’t change anything. Looking at my list of available skills, Necromantic Magic is gray and I can’t select it—I can’t buy the skill. It says it requires 12 SP, but it’s a summoning skill, so the high cost is normal; I don’t understand why it’s grayed out.

Alchemist is...well, it’s 6 SP. I saw that coming.

Hmm...oh, there’s something on my monster skill list: “Secret Art of Necromancy.” Looks like necromancy is a race skill for me, so the required cost goes down to 8. That’ll put my remaining Skill Points at a measly 14, but I’ll take it!

You have fulfilled the conditions to unlock the title: Alchemist.
Conditions have been met to unlock the Undead Unifier Skill.

Please, no more! I'll have no SP left at this rate!

Undead Unifier is a high-level command skill. Since it's a monster skill, I can take it for 3 Skill Points, leaving me with 11. As expected of the command abilities of royalty, although I had to sacrifice my SP.

Specific requirements have been met. A specific skill has been modified.
Modified skill: Undying Royalty

Now it's Undying Royalty?

"You've been acting strangely for a while. What's wrong?"

"My SP vanished, just like that. Don't worry about me."

"O-okay..."

Now to check the skills and arts.

ALCHEMIST

In addition to providing knowledge on core technology, you can change the attributes of substances.

Core Processing: Process monster cores into a usable state. ○○ Cores will be converted into ○ Cores (Min ~ Max)

So I've finally found something to do with those cores.

UNDEAD UNIFIER

A skill that allows you to supervise the undead under your control, or in your party. The stats of all undead increase, and AI level may increase according to your skill level.

The AI level part is quite curious. Well, I'm sure there's something about that written under "Secret Art of Necromancy." I'll check how it works now.

SECRET ART OF NECROMANCY

Allows for the creation of low, mid, and high undead, up to huge size. Raising the level of this skill will increase the stats and skill levels of summons, as well as the maximum number that can be commanded.

Capacity can be increased with a dark ritual.

By paying extra, a servant may be summoned with up to triple the practitioner's level.

Special undead may be created through body modification.

So in other words, my skill level increases the skill levels and stats of my summons. The base level of the summons influences their AI. Capacity is the amount of flesh and blood I can store. I can customize the bodies of my undead to turn them into undead fighters and the like.

I can summon and dismiss them with MP, the same as any other summoner. And by taking in bodies with a dark ritual, the number of body types I can create increases. Does that mean I use a body to make a blueprint or something? However, if I do that, I lose the drops I would have gotten.

You can raise your capacity by taking in enemies or by using specific items. This means I'll need to acquire flesh and blood materials for necromancy... I must bid my drops adieu.

When my servants are defeated, I'll lose 10 to 20 percent of the capacity I used to create them. This rises to 20 to 40 percent if they are exorcized. If I dismiss them myself, I can reclaim all the capacity I used.

As for the difference between Necromantic Magic and the Secret Art of Necromancy... Without the Secret Art of Necromancy, you can't raise your capacity with dark rituals. You'll need to use those special items only.

Also, the capacity lost when servants are defeated is higher for Necromantic Magic, and normal necromancers cannot customize their servants.

This really is summoning magic exclusive to the undead. If you want to master it, you have to be one of them. Plus, those capacity items are presumably end-game content.

The undead can't actually take Taming. They can't play as beast tamers. Should they want to use mobs to fight, they have to be either summoners or necromancers.

That's about all I can get from the help menu and the skill descriptions. The rest I'll have to try for myself. It also looks like something changed with Undying Royalty...

UNDYING ROYALTY

Boosts the abilities of undead in the party based on your skill level.

Reduces the damage received from undead enemies based on your skill level.

By raising the level of this skill, it becomes possible to grant your own skills to summoned servants.

Hmm. This one is strong. I'll need to check to see if it's actually useful, but dinner is approaching, so I'll go over it in detail later.

"For now, I'm going to go eat dinner."

"Cool, see you later."

"See ya."

I'll log out for the time being. Now, what to do?

I should really tell Mr. Skelly.

I have a meal and a bath and return to the game. I already fulfilled my objective of raising my skills, so I'll take my time with the Secret Art of Necromancy.

"Welcome back."

"Is it just you, Ms. Nephrite?"

"Ertz went to eat."

"It's dinner time, after all."

Then, Ms. Primura comes in a rush.

"Hiya! Primura has arrived!"

"Good day."

"Howdy."

She begins to set up her stall like she's done a hundred times before. A line quickly forms by the shop, and Ms. Primura begins taking orders. The line seems to be for repairs.

DARK RITUAL

Absorb enemy corpses to obtain a blueprint or flesh.

CORPSE CALLING

Use acquired flesh to create a body based on a blueprint.

I'm having a staring contest with the UI. There's now a special menu option to manage my summons. Most notable are the bars that say:

Capacity: 0/5,000,000 AI Level: 1/101 Active Summons: 0/1

I don't know how much capacity is required, so I don't know if that's a lot or a

little. The AI level defaults to a max of 100, and it looks like Undead Unifier increases it to 101. Active summons will probably rise with my skill level.

There's also a window for usable templates, but I don't have any right now, so I don't really know what to do with it. I have two customization options: job customization and body customization. I don't have any options in either one yet.

Point is, it's all a big unknown at the moment. I suppose I'll conduct a few Dark Rituals on rabbits and wolves to get started.

"All right, I'm heading out for a bit."

"See ya."

"Have fun."

I part from Ms. Primura and Ms. Nephrite and head for the south gate, as it's the closest. Rabbits and wolves inhabit the whole region, so it doesn't really matter where I go. I'd like to take care of this before the second wave of players arrives.

The ones that run are the rabbits. The ones that don't run are the battle-hardened rabbits. Essentially, the rabbits have two AI patterns. It's a pain to chase the fleeing ones, so I just slice down a rabbit that charges at me.

Hm. It's telling me that my skills are conflicting with one another. Secret Art of Necromancy is at odds with Dismantle's function of leaving bodies behind. I'll disable Secret Art of Necromancy and see if I can do this with Dismantle.

My rapier sends a rabbit to the other side, and I use Dark Ritual. A black magic circle made of shadow appears on the ground. Countless hands flood out of the circle and drag the rabbit to hell. There won't be any materials left when I do this.

You have obtained Rabbit Body through Dark Ritual.

Dark Ritual has increased your capacity by 1.

A wolf pounces on me before I can see what that means. It takes an inconveniently long time to absorb bodies with Dark Ritual.

You have obtained Wolf Body through Dark Ritual.

Dark Ritual has increased your capacity by 1.

I'll defeat one more and try stepping back from the ritual for testing purposes. Okay, it looks like Dark Ritual fails and the body vanishes if you're too far away. I'm curious to see if absorption speed will increase with skill level, but that's impossible to verify that yet. I'll just write down the current absorption time and check back later.

Next...

Dark Ritual has increased your capacity by 1.

Dark Ritual has increased your capacity by 1.

Is this correct? Both rabbits and wolves only increase it by one each? Well, they're some of the first enemies in the game. The important thing I need to know is how much capacity it takes to summon.

My summonable units are rabbit zombie, skeleton rabbit, wolf zombie, and skeleton wolf.

The initial cost is $(\text{Evolution Level} \times 10) \times \text{Size}$. Rabbits and wolves haven't evolved, so it's $(1 \times 10) \times \text{Size}$. The costs for the servant's size are Tiny: $\times 1$, Small: $\times 2$, Medium: $\times 4$, Large: $\times 6$, Huge: $\times 8$. Since the rabbits and wolves both have this modifier set to 1, they must be considered tiny.

Meaning that the initial cost of a rabbit or wolf summon is $(1 \times 10) \times 1 = 10$. More will be added with additional customizations.

Now for those customizations!

Huh. It's not letting me do job customizations. Either rabbits and wolves

aren't good enough, or my level isn't high enough.

I can select a few options for body customizations. It looks like I can add extra arms, and the preview is quite graphic. I can add four parts max, though the costs are pretty harsh—1 Part: $\times 2$, 2 Parts: $\times 4$, 3 Parts: $\times 6$, 4 Parts: $\times 8$.

So far, I've figured out that the total cost formula seems to be: (Evolution Level $\times 10$) \times Size \times Class Customization \times Body Customization \times Extra. The multipliers for job customization are still unknown.

Now, if I use the lowest initial cost and the highest modifiers...the lowest initial cost is 10. Plugging in the highest values from before, $(1 \times 10) \times 1 \times 8 \times 3 = 240$. It could be even higher with a custom job—I can assume it'll at least double the price: 480. I'll need to absorb 480 bodies if I want to do that to a rabbit or wolf. Yep, it's a grind game.

I should be thankful it's only in the triple digits.

For now... Oh, I should head back to the catacombs. The blueprints I acquire are probably based on the genus of the enemy. I want a humanoid, so I'll have to absorb zombies. I want a lot of them. Will I be able to equip them if they're human-shaped?

I'll know soon enough. I absorb another five foolish wolves who come straight to me before I set out.

I'll be home soon, my dear catacombs. It's a shame you're so far away. If only I had a body I could ride. I'm starting to see all sorts of possibilities, and greed in an MMO is necessary to maintain motivation. Greed's a big boy. A real stand-up guy.

Hello, zombie...and goodbye!

You have obtained Zombie Body through Dark Ritual.

Dark Ritual has increased your capacity by 3.

Oh, that's a lot of capacity. Nice. Let's check a few things while I'm at it. I'll take down some foes on the second and third floors as well.

I slay five of the enemies on each floor, but I don't get any more bodies—only capacity. The capacity I receive seems to be locked at 3. Perhaps capacity has nothing to do with level, and it's instead based on size?

They die far too easily when I use Light-attribute attacks, so this will be a nice place to grind my capacity. The problem is that it won't help raise most of my skills.

For the time being, I'll head back. I need to check in with the old lady at the general store. I look over the zombie specs along the way.

I can now create zombies and skeletons, and both have job customization options. I can make fighters and archers at double the cost. If I customize their jobs, their stat builds will shift in the appropriate direction. Hmm...oh, it looks like I can give them equipment, though I have to prepare it myself. The day I go mining in the northern town can't be far away. I can't shake the feeling, though, that weapons will be useless if their AI level is too low.

Skeletons are probably going to become my main summons. To be honest, they're weak to blunt attacks, so they don't make for the best meat shields. If I was hunting solo with no one else around, I wouldn't mind the zombies. Their Decaying Body status doesn't affect me, as I am their kin. But in any other situation...

I wonder how long properly armed skeletons can hold out.

Incidentally, zombies and skeletons are categorized as small. They have twice the size cost of the tiny ones. The only skills I can grant with Undying Royalty are my race skills, and only one skill per unit.

Oh...?

I can't grant High Immortal, but I can I transfer one of its effects?

I can give them purification resistance?!

Though at this point, they won't survive without Super HP Regen. I'll lose all my capacity the moment they step out into the sun. That happened to me before, and I won't make the same mistake again.

To avoid accidents, I'll set the default to Super HP Regen. That makes their

Automatic HP Regen redundant, so I'll switch it out with something else.

Physical Immunity would be the safe option. Magical Resistance won't save them from melting at the slightest touch of heat. Okay, now they'll deploy with Physical Resistance, Physical Immunity, Low Undead, Decomposing Body, and Super HP Regen. For skeletons, Decaying Body is replaced with Bone Body. I can't remove Low Undead or Decomposing Body.

I can change the combination at any time, so I can probably customize it for each situation. Am I supposed to make a template for each hunting ground and save it as "For ____"?

How kind of the devs.

The skill levels and skill evolutions of my servants scale with the level of Secret Art of Necromancy. It has nothing to do with SP—they'll rise as long as I raise my Secret Art of Necromancy skill. However, I can see myself having a hard time raising it in the near future.

Now let's go back...and sleep!

My catacomb home is so far away.

I can stop by the general store tomorrow after the school cleaning. I get a room at the inn, stretch, and log out.

Afterword

HELLO EVERYONE, this is Akisuzu Nenohi.

Even if I write about darkness in an online game, I know it's no fun to look at, so I tried to keep it to a minimum in FLFO Volume 2. It's thanks to you that this volume could be released.

I think I should take some time to explain a few terms here about dice rolls. The terms 1d3, 1d6, and 1d100 came up, which are terms mostly used in tabletop RPGs. You can interpret this as (Number of Dice)d(Number of Faces). 6d3 means rolling a three-sided die six times. 3d6 means rolling a six-sided die three times. 1d100 is one roll of a 100-sided die.

The upper limit, 10d1000, will generate random numbers between 1 and 1000 in the log ten times. 100-sided dice are practically spheres already, and past a certain point, it has to be done digitally.

I'm pretty sure everyone reading a VR MMO story knows the terms "tank," "DPS," and "aggro." I wasn't actually given many characters for this afterword, so I have to cut it here. Let's meet again in Volume 3!

—AKISUZU NENOHI



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