



Free Life? Santash

— IMMORTAL PRINCESS — Online

WRITTEN BY AKISUZU NENOHI
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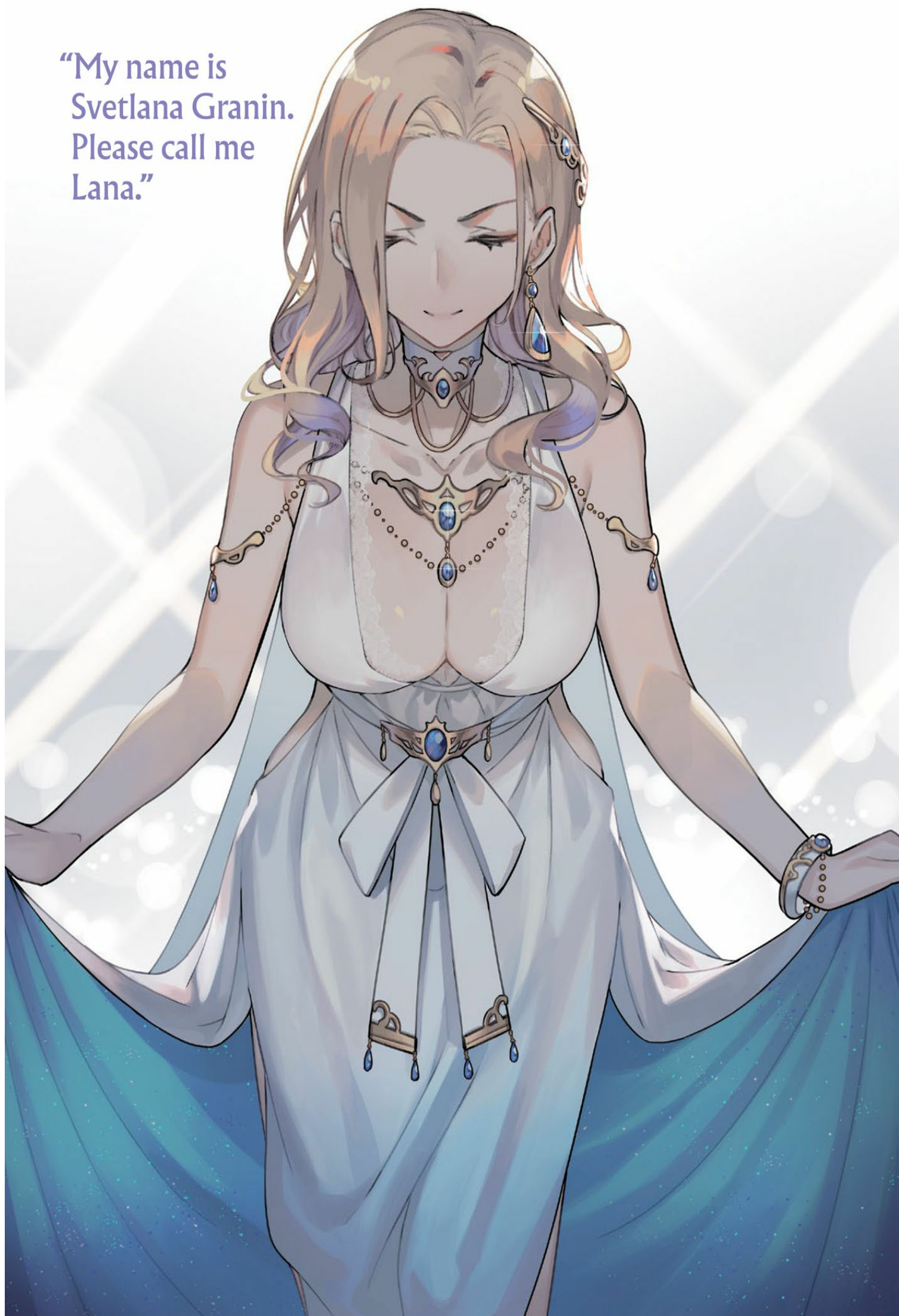
“Assemble, outsiders,
for war is upon us.
Our goal is to bring down
the great tree and halt its
corruption of the island.
May we all receive the
blessings of Sigrdrifa,
goddess of war! All troops,
begin your advance!”



"That's my throne!
Don't you touch it!"

"As of today,
it belongs to me."

“My name is
Svetlana Granin.
Please call me
Lana.”





FreeLifeFantasy

— IMMORTAL PRINCESS — Online



WRITTEN BY

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Seven Seas Entertainment



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CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

Anastasia:

The main character. Her real name is Tsukishiro Kotone, but she's known as "Princess"—not due to how she plays but because of her race and skills. She's a princess who blesses other immortal players. Anastasia's equipment includes her dress and rapier. However, the rapier is just for parrying, and she mainly fights with spells. You could probably think of her as a Jedi or a Sith who attacks with offensive magic. Anastasia evolves in this volume.

Alfred:

Alfred has evolved into the living armor race, and from there, he branched off again and became a Dullahan. He fights with a bastard sword, a large shield, and the full plate armor intrinsic to his race. Alfred is the main tank of his party. He evolves in this volume.

Honehone:

An inhuman player who appears in the game as a skeleton. His race is a lich. He fights with a long wooden staff. When in a party, Honehone exclusively attacks with spells.

Ame:

Ame is the brother of the two twins. His name comes from the "amethyst" part of the gem "ametrine." He belongs to the wraith race and appears as a transparent human with light purple hair and eyes. Ame is a lively young boy who refers to himself in third person. He fights with a synchronized playstyle.

Trine:

Trine is the sister of the two twins. Her name comes from the "citrine" part of the gem "ametrine." She belongs to the wraith race and appears as a transparent human with light yellow hair and eyes. Trine is a lively young girl who also refers to herself in third person. She fights with a synchronized playstyle.

Akirina:

The heroine's little sister. Her real name is Tsukishiro Akina, and she plays as a human. Akirina is equipped with a halberd and leather armor. She adores her big sister, although that doesn't mean they play in the same party. Akina is in a party with her two real-life friends, along with her internet friends. She plays as a hit-and-run attacker.

Nadia:

One of Akina's best friends. She plays as a fox beastman, carries a ukulele, and wears cloth armor. In their party, she serves as a bard who delivers buffs to those around her. Her songs are quite powerful, but her movements are restricted when she performs.

Helen:

Akina's other best friend. She plays as a rabbit beastman and has a longbow and leather armor equipped. Helen is a scout for her party, making use of her race abilities to listen for sounds out in the wild.

Tomo:

The heroine's childhood friend. He plays a human and has books and cloth armor equipped. Tomo serves as a magic attacker for his party.

Sugu:

The heroine's other childhood friend. He plays as a giant and has a two-handed hammer and leather armor equipped. Sugu plays as a muscle-headed attacker.

Eliza:

The daughter of a CEO and another of the heroine's childhood friends. Her nickname is Eli. She plays as a human with a whip and cloth armor for equipment.

Letty:

Eli's personal attendant. She plays as a human with a dagger and cloth armor equipped.

Abby:

The daughter of a CEO and the little sister's childhood friend. She plays as an angel with cloth armor and the kind of wand you'd see in Harry Potter. Abby also had a staff equipped, but it's only to provide her with modifiers, so she doesn't actually use it. Her dolls function like marionettes.

Dory:

Abby's personal attendant. She plays as an angel with martial arts weapons and cloth armor equipped.

Cecil:

The guildmaster of The Knights of Dawn. Cecil plays as a human with dual blades and leather armor. He's a handsome man who looks like he emerged straight from an otome game.

Norbert:

Norbert is the bard of Cecil's party. He plays as an elf and uses his mandolin as an instrument. He's like Snufkin from the Moomins who appears with a twang of the strings.

Kotatsu:

Guildmaster of The Critter Empire. A cat beastman. Fights with throwing weapons and wears leather armor. Uses whatever she can get her hands on to fight.

Musasabi:

Guildmaster of NINJA. As a monster slayer, he doesn't quite play as a ninja. No one could ever accuse Musasabi of not enjoying the game to the fullest.

Lucebarm:

Guildmaster of Furry Legion. Plays as a bear man who, thanks to having his beast settings maxed out, looks like a true anthropomorphic bear.

Mead:

A young elf woman. She fights with a longbow and wears leather armor. Mead plays as a huntress and looks exactly how you would expect an elf to look.

Fairellen:

A fairy who loves to fly. She fights with lightning spells, which are combinations of different attributes, and her race is an Eclesith.

Clementia:

A plant player who plays as a race that's just as rare as Anastasia's. She is an Alraune, taking the form of a person with green skin, and she rides atop a plant.

Cupid:

The person who discovered how to revive from a demon into an angel. This makes her the very first angel player. She fights with a short bow and wears cloth armor.

Mohawk:

A new character who cackles loudly and seems like he's playing a different game than everyone else. He's a hardcore roleplayer who acts like he's in a post-apocalyptic world. He fights with a dagger, wears leather armor, and uses fire spells to sanitize dirty things. According to Mead, he's a loud but nice person.

Vincent:

A new character who plays as a wolf race and uses Dark magic. The way he speaks makes him seem pathetic, so people call him Sad Puppy. He's a large wolf who fights with Dark magic.

Studylover:

Leader of the testing team. He plays as an elf. Studylover focuses on research skills, of course, and he gathers information about all aspects of the game's world.

Ertz:

A top player when it comes to Smithing skills. He plays as a dwarf and roleplays as a hearty man. Ertz = ore.

Dentelle:

A top player when it comes to Needlework skills. He plays as a human and will give you a discount in exchange for screenshots. Dentelle = lace.

Primura:

A top player when it comes to Woodworking skills. She plays as a bunny beastman. In real life, Primura is in eighth grade. Primura = primula flower.

Salute:

A top player when it comes to Compounding skills. She plays as a human and wears a white coat and glasses to look like a scientist. Salute = Health.

Nephrite:

A top player when it comes to Handcrafting. She plays as living machinery. Nephrite = Jade.

Steiner:

A new character who appears in this book and the guildmaster of Farmers' Uprising. He wears a straw hat and overalls and, of course, fights with farming tools.

MANAGEMENT

Yamamoto Ittetsu:

The person in charge of FLFO. He livestreams when he's bored. He's a supervisor but not an engineer himself. They say his stomach is made of a superalloy...

Yatsuzuka Hiroki:

A game master, also called a GM, who usually appears during events.

Mitake Yuzuha:

A game master, also called a GM, who usually appears during events.

Chapter 1:

Good Ol' Summertime Camping—Day 5

DESERTED ISLAND LIFE: DAY 5

Things have been tough, but you've made it to the fifth day.

After surveying the island with your fellow survivors, you're realizing that the ecology of this island might not make sense.

1. Stop whatever is happening on the island.

Hmm... So the ecosystem really was the issue after all? There's most likely something here that will confirm it, so the task at hand is to track it down. Time to get right into Day 5 of the event!

"Ah, good morning, Ms. Clementia."

"Morning!"

"There's something I'd like to ask you. Seeds weren't scattering during that storm, were they?"

"I didn't see any, no. If they did, how could we have even handled them? Would the game make us find glowing objects and do something? I really don't think they could do that, honestly."

"I suppose that's true... While the dragon was the center of it all, the direction of the wind would send them outside the area of play."

"Agreed. It wasn't a typical cyclone where the wind rotates around a single point."

The game sometimes makes things extra realistic, but not just to be a headache in ways that aren't fun for the player. Repairing the base isn't an uncommon game task...but since this is full-dive VR, the quality of the base directly affects our ability to sleep well. I'm sure everyone is happy to dedicate time to achieve that end.

For now, we've been able to deduce that the east contains some sort of large-scale event. We should work on surveying the north and west, not letting our guard down when it comes to the east.

"I have a report for you, Princess!"

"What is it?"

"Far fewer wyverns and lizardines are spawning in the north today!"

"I see. It sounds like we have little hope of farming EXP that way. Maybe we ought to prioritize exploring..."

"In that case, I'll take a nap!"

"Yes, thank you for your hard work. Good night then."

Having Mr. Skelly check for me saved some time. This must be Management's way of speeding up the event or a way of notifying us that a fun survival life is no longer on the table.

There are four more days left, including today. *I do wonder how it will all turn out...*

"It's not much, but here, have some farm-fresh produce!"

I should do some cooking.

"Waking up to the sound and smell of home cooking. I feel like a newlywed!"

"Save your dreams for when you're actually asleep."

"That smell's coming from the house next door."

"You're so mean!"

The scent of toast wafts through the air—having barbecue for breakfast would be a bit too heavy of a meal in real life.

Once everyone gradually wakes up from their slumber, it's officially the start of Day 5.

"*How was the north?*" Mr. Cecil asks me.

"I just received a report about that. It sounds like there are very few sightings of wyverns and lizardines."

"I see..."

"If the east is the main point of interest, then why don't we focus our efforts on surveying the north and west? I think we'll find what we're looking for in the west, since that's where Instinct acts up, but we can work on the north at the same time."

"It will also be easier to survey with the reduction in enemy spawns," he notes.

"Exactly. Even if all we find out is that there's nothing there, it'll be a good improvement."

Just as Mr. Cecil says, the best thing we can do is further explore the north and west. Parties with members who can fly will head for the north, while the rest of us will take the west. In other words, the north will belong to inhuman races like fairies, demons, angels, and spirit bodies.

Now that everyone's separated into the flying and non-flying parties, it looks like an even distribution, so the plan seems solid. My party includes Mr. Ame and Ms. Trine, so our destination is the north.

"The problem is that I have no idea how we'll find the key clue we're looking for..."

"Me neither."

"Well, let's just start at the perimeter and make our goal the great tree. We know for sure now that it's not just a regular old tree."

"For us in the north, let's start by exploring the mountain. Those of you who craft, please take care of the base for us."

"Sure!"

Now that it's decided, we get going quickly. The troops all take off, marching toward the north and the west.

We advance toward the north and its rocky surfaces, now even more exposed due to the sand being blown away. It's quite the dramatic change in scenery. I like this new look. The dynamic game mechanic that made it this way was also

brand new.

As we approach the mountain, we start to be targeted by the wyverns. Our flying players head off to face them while those who can't fight wyverns or lizardines investigate the tunnels.

"A Breath spell's coming our way! Stay away from it!" I warn my party.

"Okay!"

"Now it's over here! Stay back!"

"Okay!"

"The fliers defeated one, so another will spawn soon. Come to me if it starts to target you."

"Okay!"

I send Unit One at the enemies, shoot the occasional spell, and press forward while organizing the combat placements and exploration information from all the parties.

It's by no means a short operation, but in a way, it's rather simple. There are even fewer enemies spawning than I expected, which turns our search into smooth sailing. On the other hand, it definitely won't be easy to level up like this.

We take our lunch breaks and continue to search, but no one finds anything of significance. The storm partially destroyed and changed the appearance of the mountain, but it didn't seem to reveal anything new. Well, someone *did* find a new ore, but the Knocker player is already mining it.

Now that I think about it, I haven't grinded my Mining skill at all. I suppose I'll work on it when I'm in the mood.

"Do you have a moment, Princess?"

"Mr. Cecil? Go ahead."

"We've found the true nature of the Instinct alerts. Or to put it more accurately, their source."

“So you’ve finally found it? What’s causing them, then?”

“Actually, it came to us. It’s some sort of event NPC or something.”

“What? It’s a person?”

“No, it’s a level 64 silver fox that can talk. It asked me to send for my leader, and that it would be someone related to Stellura, so I figured it has to be you, right?”

“You’re probably right. Where are you at?”

“Head to the great tree in the west!”

“Very well.”

I notify Mr. Alf and the others, change Unit One into a horse, and head out on my way.

A silver fox, huh...? Those are supposed to be good-natured, right? I don’t know what it will be like in this game, but if it’s level 64, then it’s certainly stronger than us.

I rush to the great tree, ignoring any enemies in my path, and see the original party gathered around a fox. The creature is coated in silver fur, and although it is sitting quietly on the ground, I estimate that it’s over a meter tall in height.

“Oh, so you have come,” the silver fox says.

“I’m sorry for the wait. You called for me?”

“From what I have seen so far, you seem the most suited for leadership.”

I guess he saw the command skills I was using just like during the world quest? That must mean it’s me after all. I doubt anyone comes close to me in terms of command skills. It might also be because I’m the leader of the union here presently.

Well, I suppose the exact reasoning doesn’t matter. I’ll listen to what he has to say.

“If you wish to survive, then lend me your strength,” he says.

“What do you mean?”



“Have you been to the east? I’m sure you have seen it, at least.”

“The others have been there. As far as I’ve seen, it’s just a forest.”

“The east used to be a mere grassy field. Somewhere along the way, it turned to a great forest.”

Seeing as how this is a silver fox, I’m willing to bet that his sense of time differs from ours. “How many years ago was this?”

“It hasn’t been so much as a year. That is the problem. It has been in this state for half a year or so.”

“I see. That’s definitely strange.”

“Exactly. We even tried to burn the forest down. But we were unable to finish the job and can no longer touch that place. We have managed to hold the enemy back, but I do not know how much longer we may be able to do so.”

“So when we found those remnants of a battle in the center...”

“That is exactly what they were. I believe you battled them too—those vanguard soldiers.”

“You mean the Seedsters and Plantera Meatchoppers?”

“Yes. We are unable to subdue them by ourselves.”

“Those beings... What causes them?”

“The great tree monster of the east: Triffid.”

“Triffid?!”

Some of the people listening to our conversation reacted to this name. I need to ask about it.

“That’s the name of a carnivorous plant, right?”

“But the great tree doesn’t move, does it? Is that what comes next?”

“So it’s a self-propelled carnivorous plant? That’s not so unusual in fantasy settings.”

“That’s true.” I vaguely remember seeing something like that in a movie.

Well, for now, it sounds like we need to exterminate Triffid, the great tree in the east. That must be the finale to this camping trip. That means our next four days will be a battle against the eastern forest, with rest breaks in between.

“They are most persistent. You seem to already have their attention. Will you take on the challenge?”

“I would imagine that saying no isn’t a choice at this point.”

“Let’s do this!”

“You heard them. We’ll be happy to help.”

“I am grateful for your choice.”

A world quest has been activated.

Location: Event area island

All outsiders who enter the area of play will automatically join this quest.

Confirming quest scope...complete. Set to world quest.

Outsiders, please choose a role within the given time limit.

Ah, there it is. So this quest scope falls under “war” too.

I should check the help menu, since this role selection feature is new to me.

ABOUT QUEST ROLE SELECTIONS: Role selection is a way of choosing which job a person will perform.

Tank: The shield that attracts enemy attacks.

Attacker: Focuses on attacking enemies.

Healer: Restores health for allies.

Scout: Leave the reconnaissance to them.

Logistical Support: The troops’ lifeline.

Etc., etc. Available roles change depending on the active event. Additionally,

special events may activate depending on one's role.

Players who prefer crafting over direct combat are recommended to choose the role of Logistical Support. There are various jobs you can take on, such as the production of armor, potions, and food. You can even be the one to ship supplies out to the troops. Wars don't consist of mere combat alone. Without solid support at the front, back, and at both flanks, an army will crumble.

Tanks, will you choose a large shield, small shield, or a shield that makes it easier to evade? What weapons can the Attackers take? Will you mobilize by land, sea, or sky? Healers, will you choose restoration or provide other aid to the troops?

There are many options to consider. You will be able to alter your selection before it's finalized, so please take the time to calmly think it over, but be sure to choose within the given time limit.

If you find yourself in a role that doesn't suit your acquired skills, please contact Management. We will allow you to choose a new role during scheduled maintenance. However, abuse of this feature will result in account suspension.

Hmm...I see.

I'll take the role of Attacker, with Dark spells as my attack of choice. The mobilized subtype allows players to ride horses, but since we'll be in a forest, walking seems like the best choice.

Searching for outsiders to meet role requirements in the current world quest...

General Commander: confirmed. Squadron captains: confirmed. Sending requests to all confirmed players.

Approval from all applicants confirmed.

You have been granted the title of General Commander. Your role has been changed to General Commander.

Outsider role selection complete.

Now assigning troops to each captain.

“Whoa!! My vision!”

Why us first-wavers...? Ah, so this is different from the defensive war. Parties seem to be divided up based on roles. Defending Starting Town back then must have been like a tutorial. Not that it helps us much now, with a quest so different on our hands.

They really went and changed my role selection to General Commander... I suppose I understand why.

World quest: Reclaim the island’s ecosystem!

Location: Event area island

Scale: World quest

Victory conditions: Destroy Triffid, the great tree of the eastern forest.

Defeat conditions: Event timer runs out.

Phase 1: Reconnaissance phase now active.

Dispatch Scouts to the forest to dig up information.

Hmm. Now to take a look at the list of squadrons.

GENERAL COMMANDER: ANASTASIA Ground Unit Captain A: Cecil

Ground Unit Captain B: Kotatsu

Ground Unit Captain C: Lucebarm

Ground Unit Captain D: Musasabi

Mobile Squadron Captain: ???

Aerial Unit Captain: Fairellen

Reconnaissance Unit Captain: Mead

Music Captain: Norbert

LOGISTICS CAPTAIN: ELIZA Supplies: Steiner

Arms: Ertz

Consumables: Salute

Harvesting: ???

Transport: ???

I see... Wait, why is Eli a captain? I do agree that she's good at organizing. Ms. Mead was also assigned to recon instead of ground operations. Mr. Musasabi was assigned to a ground unit too.

The mobile unit captain, harvesting leader, and transport leader are names I don't recognize.

"So you're a ground unit captain, Mr. Musasabi?"

"Ha ha ha ha! How could a ninja ever be a scout?"

"What the hell is he talking about...? That's what ninjas are good at!"

"It's because these particular people may be ninjas, but they play as monster slayers."

"Oh...I see."

Ninjas are usually thought of as information gatherers. However, Mr. Musasabi's guild specializes in killing, making them a group of assassins. In short, they're a bunch of scary fellows.

"Let's see... We need to focus on the east now, right?"

"Indeed. We have kept the north and west in check, so they should not be a problem."

"Then we'll get going right away. What about you?"

“We will be heading out too. Although I should mention there are some animals that you shouldn’t attack out there, since they will attack you back.”

“Understood.”

With those words, Mr. Silver Fox stands up, takes a few steps, and fades away like a mirage. I think I get it now... That must be what activates Instinct.

“All right, my Troubleshooters. It’s mission time.”

“Yes, Lady UV!”

“Why is this one group so united?”

“Good day, Eli. You’re a captain too, I hear.”

“Indeed, for whatever reason. What on earth am I supposed to do with this role?”

“For now, let’s start with relocating. Our base can be in the center.”

“Yeah!”

We begin to move right away.

As we travel, I inform the other captains and units that we’ll be making the center area our base, so everyone should gather there. The Logistics Unit will probably struggle anywhere else.

“All right, Eli. Allow me to explain.”

“By all means.”

“Our goal is to bring down the great tree. Well, I’m sure the Ground Units can take care of that part.”

“That’s a job for the front lines.”

“Since you’re with the Logistics Unit, your goal is to organize those who aren’t fighting...or, in other words, the production team.”

“Will I even be able to manage?”

“I’m sure you can, once you understand the job description. Your first step should be to memorize the names at the top of your Logistics Unit UI.”

“So that would be Mr. Ertz, Ms. Salute, and the rest of them?”

“They’re the leaders of their own specialties, so you just need to figure out how to make use of them.”

“I see.”

“I’ll probably be calling out the things we need at the front lines, so please send the orders to their respective crafters. You should easily be able to determine the materials needed yourself, unless it’s related to Alchemy, so it probably won’t be too difficult. When you’re not getting orders from me, please be sure that materials are being distributed to the members of the Logistics Unit.”

“Hmm... Abby and the others can help too, right?”

“Yes, that’s an option. I’m sure it will be smooth sailing once you’ve made Abby your aide and have Ms. Letty and Ms. Dory help you both. Please take full advantage of the Transportation members too.”

“Very well. I understand.”

“Huh?!”

That sudden response must have come from the Transport team members who are sure to have a lot on their hands from here on out. They’ll become our workhorses. In fact, the Transport leader is an actual horse player. They’ll be okay, though. “Workhorses” are treated with love as the partners of all traders. They could even have Ms. Primura build a horse-drawn wagon. The only drawback would be the difficult terrain on this island...

Ah, but with their inventories, the leader can carry items themselves and then carry another team member on their back. I guess they don’t need a wagon after all. An inventory is such a convenient feature.

“Ah, Big Sis! The quests changed!”

“RESTORE THE ISLAND’S ECOSYSTEM!”

They say the eastern side used to be a grassy plain. Bring down the great tree that towers overhead!

1. Investigate the eastern forest as described to you by the silver fox.

Reconnaissance phase.

**** Time remaining: Three days, ten hours, thirty-five minutes.***

"I see. It looks like this quest will remain until the end of the event."

"I'm so pumped!"

"Princess, may I have a moment?"

"Ah, Ms. Mead. Are there any rules for the reconnaissance phase?"

"It ends once we've either explored the entire island or all members of the Recon Unit die and are forced out of the event. Then the next phase begins. We may be pressed for time in the final battle if we take too long."

"Is there a death limit?"

"It doesn't appear to count them. It must be about how much we can achieve before we die. The map also appears to function the same as dungeons, since the area is split up into circles."

"So each circle must show accessible areas?"

"Right. If we don't explore each of them to completion, I'm not sure if we'll be able to progress to the next step."

"I'd like to focus on checking out the areas further away."

"If possible, I'd like to leave the closer areas to the second-wavers."

The further deep into the island we go, the closer we'll get to Triffid, and the more dangerous it's sure to become. It will likely end up that the first-wavers with the better skills will take charge of those areas. I doubt we'll be able to contact them once they start, so I'll leave that to Ms. Mead, the captain of the Reconnaissance Unit.

I've arrived at the base in the island's center, so we split up into groups consisting of our respective units. This will be like an introductory meeting.

I've gained a gold crown as the General Commander, while captains each get

a silver crown. Behind the crown is an emblem that displays their unit, so everyone can immediately tell which group they belong to.

The Ground Unit's emblem is of shoes and some English letters; the Mobile Unit's emblem shows a horse and letters; the Music Unit's emblem is an instrument and letters; and the Aerial Unit's emblem is a pair of wings with letters. The color of the frames and letters are unique to each emblem too. As for the leaders of each specialty...they don't have a crown, but they still have their own emblem.

All of the images are very simple, but the one for Eli's Logistics Unit seems to be the messiest of them all.

With that, each of the leaders separate.

"Ground Unit Alpha! Gather on me!"

"Ground Unit Bravo, you're over here!"

"Come this way, Ground Unit Charlie!"

"Most honorable Ground Unit Delta, find yourselves here!"

"Reconnaissance Unit, this way."

"Let's meet up over here, Music Unit!"

"Mobile Unit, let's find a spot over there."

"See you in the skies, Aerial Unit!"

"Logistics, please split up into specialties and prepare to begin production. Be sure you have enough room!"

"Farmers! Time for crop makin'! Follow me!"

Everyone is loud and cheerful as they relocate.

The specialty teams take out their production kits, while the leaders set them up in ways that are most easy to use.

"I'll pick which crops to grow, so be sure they're ready to use right away! I'll be starting with wheat over here! To the east will be space to process it, so spread the fields out in every other direction!"

“Then we chefs should set up base near the processing space.”

Things are so much easier for the top brass when the people under them are this skilled. Everyone’s operating independently, so I’ll come to learn their plans and work on preventing conflicts that might arise.

It appears that the Logistics Unit is having a bit of a war of their own.

“Transport is using that area, so leave it open!”

“What about here?”

“That spot is fine.”

“Got it!”

Eli seems to be doing well. I should find something to do too.

The first task I must complete is assigning guards to those working on harvesting and transportation. I can probably dispatch the Mobile Unit to help Transportation. While they’re assigned there, the Mobile Unit will be allowed to attack whatever enemies they please.

Naturally, I’ll have some Music Unit members with the Ground Units, but I’d like some of them to stay back with the Rear Guard as well. I’ll have to tell Mr. Norbert.

Also, I need the chefs to make distilled water in advance, if possible. Ms. Salute with the Consumables Division will probably be able to make use of such large quantities.

“Priiincess!”

“What is it?”

“There’re fishermen in the supplies department!”

“Fishermen? That means... Eli!”

“Yes?”

“Please gather up everyone with Alchemy and Glassworking. We’ll need a group to head to the shore with the fishermen. Please also prepare potion bottles and salt.”

“Very well.”

We don’t need wagons, since we have our own inventories, but carriages will certainly be more efficient for transporting people. I’ll call for Ms. Primura and the horse player. Well, to be more accurate, he’s a centaur player.

“What is it?”

“Neeeiigh?”

“Would it be possible to make carriages so that we can transport more people? Also, please speak Japanese.”

“As long as we have wood, I think we can craft carriages. I just can’t guarantee that they’ll be comfy to ride in!”

“Ha ha ha ha! Where are we headed?”

“I want to send the alchemists and fishermen to the southern coast,” I tell them. “The miners should also head to the north.”

“Hmm... Yeah, we can get to the south. But in the north, the carriage will only be able to go so far before the rocks start to get in the way.”

“I see... How long will it take you to make carriages?”

“We have lots of carpenters, so...maybe ten minutes?”

“I don’t think we’ll need to transport too many people. One carriage is plenty for now. I’d appreciate it if you could get started.”

“Sure!”

“Transport Team, please start from this area and spread out in all directions.”

“You sure don’t go easy on us horses, Princess! But leave it to me!”

This should be a good start. Although, this horse player does seem like he’s doing some sort of roleplaying...

I see Ms. Mead’s Reconnaissance Unit off on their mission and continue to work on my overall assessment of the units. The Reconnaissance Unit told me they plan to be back by the end of the day at the latest.

Since the Ground Units don't currently have a task at hand, I'll ask them to watch over the Harvesting team for now.

"Mr. Cecil. I'd like your Ground Units to guard the Harvesting specialists. Is that possible?"

"Hmm...I guess so. We should really act once we have information from the Reconnaissance Unit, but since there's a unit assigned to each direction, I guess we can be on guard duty, since our assignment was for the west."

"Please do so. I'm going to call for the Harvesting Team's leader now."

"Got it!"

What else...? All that's left is—hmm? Oh dear, Eli is getting *way* too involved now.

"You're in the way!"

"What's that? Shut your mouth! We can do what we want!"

"What did you just say to me...?"

"LOL, the Logistics Unit captain's smile is terrifying!"

"I guess that's what they mean when they say someone's smile doesn't reach their eyes."

Eli and Abby both smile when they're angry.

Still...the whip in her hands suits her a little *too* well. I close my eyes and pray.
Eli, please be careful not to inflame any kinks amongst the young men.

But this is a race against time in the end. I probably need to intervene.

"Eli, there's no need to micromanage everybody. This is an online game, so there're going to be a lot of people here. I may be the General Commander, but I don't have the right to order them around for things like that, so please just act as if they're not here at all. You'd be surprised how many strange folks out there get a kick out of dragging others down. You'll never be able to manage them."

"I know all that, but they're *extremely* in the way."

"Then why not inform the Ground Units and have them practice their combat

skills on them?”

“I see. Combat practice... I imagine they’ll need lots of that.”

“Exactly. You can’t exercise without warming up first.”

“Scaryyyy...”

“Even scarier, they’re both smiling...”

“LOL, combat practice.”

“They can’t say no to combat practice.”

“I heard we’re doing combat practice?”

Rina has run up to us, swinging her halberd. Ah, the other players ran away. Well, Rina *did* place second in the martial arts tournament.

“How silly of them...”

“What unit are you in, Rina?”

“Mr. Cecil’s unit!”

“So you’re on guard duty?”

“I’ve got nothing else to do, so I’m joining them.”

“I see. Thanks for helping.”

“It’ll make things easier for us later on!”

With that, Rina walks away, still swinging her weapon. I can hear it cutting through the air. Wait...halberds are made of pure metal, right? She’s being dangerously careless right now, but I suppose I’ll look the other way.



Members of the Transportation Team are running all over the place, filling and emptying their inventory to wherever Eli instructs them.

As fast movers, Transportation falls under the Logistics Unit. Fast-moving fighters are probably the ones assigned to the Mobile Unit. This means people like horse and wolf players will be divided up too, resulting in a lot of inhuman players. There are also tamers and summoners, who are players with mounts. The selling point of each unit is their mobility, so their members' traits are only natural.

"Ertz is calling for you, Tasha."

"All right. I'll go see him."

Mr. Ertz is the leader of the Weapons Team, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Logistics Unit, meaning they go through Eli. I'll head his way now.

"You called for me?"

"Yeah, can you gather the Ground Unit leaders? I've finally produced the next step up after steel."

"Ah, so they can change their equipment now. I'll get them right away."

"Thanks for the help!"

Mr. Cecil and the other leaders arrive soon after I call for them. The allure of a new type of weapon is hard to resist.

"So there's something above steel now?" I ask.

"High-speed cobalt."

"Huh?"

"Rewards come after the event... We probably won't even be able to use it afterward."

Mr. Cecil and Mr. Ertz are talking about it, but I'm still stuck on the name "high-speed cobalt." I have no idea what that is. He explains that it's a combination of steel, chrome, cobalt, molybdenum, and vanadium.

I also have no idea why this makes the chrome "high-speed." Mr. Cecil seems equally clueless. I'll probably be all right if I simply remember that this material

is one level higher than steel in this game.

I have no need to change my weapon now, although I probably *should* start thinking about upgrades. The actual attack strength of my weapon is nothing compared to the current level of my equipment.

Someone playing with an Attacker's build can't have weapons lacking in strength. Divine Protection is most likely just a title. Hanging around the church and helping Ms. Luciana is probably a potential shortcut. Well, once the event's over, my goal is to try reaching the abandoned temple again.

Appraisal tells me that receiving protection strengthens not just my weapon but *all* of my equipment. The only problem is that I don't know what degree of strengthening I'll receive.

But there will be no getting to that point regardless of what I do during the event, so I put it out of my mind for now.

"By the way, my liege."

"Yes?"

"Are short naps feasible at the moment?"

"You're asking about getting enough sleep throughout the rest of the event to avoid the sleep penalty, right?"

"Most perceptive."

"Not to brag, but I could never do that."

"That appears to be a 'no.'"

"As someone who's had to kick her little sister out after she snuck into bed with her, I really despise having my sleep interrupted. Not to let my stubborn sister off the hook..."

"Are you for real, my liege...?"

My sister continues to sneak into my bed, as she figured out the conditions to avoid being immediately kicked out. The most vital element is the speed with which she slides in. I believe the other condition is to position herself with as few movements as possible. She told me that victory is decided by how fast she

can get into bed and adjust her positioning before I can tell her off.

I don't know what drives her to such extremes, but it seems like a real waste of effort.

"I always go back to sleep right away, so it's nearly impossible for me to wake up in the middle of my rest. However, I might awaken if monsters come and attack us..."

"Then why not establish a method of contact if you plan to slumber? We can test it ourselves."

"Yes, that's a good point. I'll likely be asleep by the time the Recon Unit returns."

We finish distributing equipment. Once Mr. Ertz returns from his blacksmithing, we'll discuss what to do during sleeping hours.

We can't all sleep at the same time, so the Ground Units will have to sleep in waves, splitting the players up into those on the front lines and those who get to rest.

Mr. Lucebarm and Mr. Musasabi say they'll be awake, so Mr. Cecil, Ms. Kotatsu, and I will sleep first. In the Logistics Unit, Eli and Abby will sleep first while Ms. Letty and Ms. Dory stay up.

The leaders of each group will probably choose their own assistants and sleep at slightly separate times.

"The real mission probably starts tomorrow or the next day."

"I am most fired up, my liege!"

Since there's unlikely to be any major developments until the Recon Unit returns, I'll work with Eli and the others to replenish our base during this time.

As much as I'd like to say this war is a battle of numbers, it's more accurate to call it a battle of preparation. There can be no victory without enough supplies, no matter how many strong you are.

I walk around the base, noting any changes or issues that I spot. Then I report problems to any players who might be able to fix them.

After all, the role of the General Commander is to make use of their personnel. *Thank you for listening, everyone*, I say silently.

The next three days are sure to be a lengthy battle.

It's time for me to go to bed, so for today, I'll leave the rest of the preparations to the others.

Official BBS 1

[What would you bring] Good Ol' Summertime Camping: Day 5 [To a deserted island?]

1. Management

This is a thread to discuss how to survive the second official event.

Please use it as a comprehensive thread for anything that relates to the event.

Day one here.

Day two here.

Day three here.

Day four here.

4532. Shipwrecked Adventurer

What a tragedy in the north.

4533. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah, the spawn rate is practically nothing now.

4534. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ah... Poor wyverns. It's pathetic how they just got eaten up like that...

4535. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Absolute demons.

4536. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Absolute demons who only give us travelers pocket change like we're

children.

4537. Shipwrecked Adventurer

And in all the chaos, there were people taming the wyverns too.

4538. Shipwrecked Adventurer

That's right... Dragon riders!

4539. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Fun fact: Wyverns are tasty.

4540. Shipwrecked Adventurer

They don't want to know that!

4541. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The summoners couldn't summon for a while, but what happened to the tamers?

4542. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Same thing happened to them, so don't worry.

4543. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Tamers' creatures die so they have to raise them all the way from square one again... It's so evil, I can't even laugh.

4544. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Them too, huh?

4545. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I don't even see any wyverns. How'd they do it...?

4546. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Apparently one of the wyverns wounded by the storm dragon managed to hold out by hiding.

4547. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

For real? Well done, wyvern.

4548. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Sounds like he really put up a good fight while the others were being attacked.

4549. *Management*

We didn't expect it, but it made for a dramatic plot twist, so we'll allow it.

4550. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

H-holy...

4551. *Management*

All dragon species are prideful, so they have relatively high difficulty as enemies.

Please keep that in mind. As soon as you find yourself thinking "Ah, this one seems really weak," then it's already too late for you.

Oh, but perhaps if the dragon is a child, you may have a chance of being able to take it on as a pet...?

4552. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Hm...?

4553. Shipwrecked Adventurer

What the...?

4554. Management

Well, dragons don't really feel familial love...but it depends on the AI!

How easy it is to ride depends on your training and treatment of the dragon, so do your best!

4555. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Now that I think about it, Mr. Skelly summoned one already, huh?

4556. Shipwrecked Adventurer

A wyvern zombie! Yeah!

4557. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I heard Rotting Flesh goes away at level 30. Good luck, those with souls of the dead.

4558. Shipwrecked Adventurer

What bothers me more is how it's impossible to get enough capacity. Maybe I should stop playing as a human too...

4559. Shipwrecked Adventurer

So the human race really does have a hard time in this game?

4560. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh yeah, *really* hard. Undeads get Secret Art of Necromancy while the rest of us get Necromantic Magic.

Go look at the servants board for examples. Princess and Mr. Skelly are the ones posting info, so they're definitely not lies.

4561. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The undeads really spoil us with information.

4562. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I appreciate it, but are they really being smart about that? I feel like it would be safer to hide a little more of that stuff...

4563. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I think it's fine. They said there's some stuff they won't talk about too.

4564. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah, they don't mention the abilities of their equipment. Just that they don't break and they're not drops.

4565. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Of course they don't. The extra tier of equipment doesn't have a durability stat, so it's easy to guess that they don't break or drop.

4566. Anastasia

Troubling enough, the actual attack strength of my weapon is already inferior now, ignoring the special abilities it has. The upgrade conditions are unique too, so I know I'll just have to put a good amount of work into it.

By the way, how is progress going in the west?

4567. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The princess is here. Progress is...not great, since it's hard to walk.

4568. Shipwrecked Adventurer

So it's the sorta thing where the unique abilities are really good, but the actual weapon isn't very powerful? That's not uncommon at all... At least you can upgrade it!

We're spread out on the west and heading for the great tree in the center. No results so far.

4569. Anastasia

I see. So the storm left the forest in a bad state.

The shape of the northern mountain has changed, and now it sounds like there's a new type of ore that was unmineable before.

4570. Ertz

For real?! I'm dyin' to hear about it.

5471. Anastasia

The Knocker player is working on it, or so I've heard. They'll probably be there soon.

5472. Ertz

Yeah, I heard they evolved into a Knocker. Then don't come to me. Just wait, and I'll be there.

8301. Shipwrecked Adventurer

New event just dropped!

8302. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I doubt anyone here didn't get it.

8303. Shipwrecked Adventurer

You can't just ignore an event.

8304. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's a world quest!

8305. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hell yeeeeeah! Oh? This is nothing like the defensive war.

8306. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah?

8307. Shipwrecked Adventurer

This is the first world quest for second-wavers.

8308. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Agreed that it's different. We get to select roles?

8309. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hey, this is actually pretty detailed.

10012. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Looks like it gets chosen based on player race and skills.

10013. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I'm blinded again.

10014. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Damn, need to adjust my settings.

10015. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The captains... Yeah, they make sense.

10016. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Mobile Unit... Ah, it's that lady? Who's the Logistics captain?

10017. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Her Highness.

10018. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Who?

10019. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The lady having tea with the princess. The one with the bigger hair spirals.

10020. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ah, got it. They call her Eli, right?

10021. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Probably because her name's Eliza.

10022. Shipwrecked Adventurer

She definitely had something in mind when she designed her character, huh?

10023. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Probably. I heard she's been looking for silk to make her dresses. Also, there're those maid uniforms.

10024. Shipwrecked Adventurer

She must be RPing as a rich girl. I like that she's easy to remember.

10025. Shipwrecked Adventurer

She even uses a whip as her main weapon...

10026. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh, maybe she's not a rich girl, but a queen...?

10027. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Shhhhh!

10028. Shipwrecked Adventurer

...Reconnaissance phase, huh? That's Big Sis's unit.

10029. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It'd be best to follow our captains' orders, right?

10030. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah. This whole event depends on teamwork, and with the captains we've got, I doubt they'll give us any shady orders.

10031. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Even the second-wavers probably know these people. First-wavers *definitely* do.

10032. Shipwrecked Adventurer

But think about having captains for a world quest in the first place? They're

the people who are gonna take on the most annoying jobs for us, so my conclusion is that we should do whatever they order right away.

That's for you first-wavers reading this board.

10033. Shipwrecked Adventurer

They really know how to get a job done. It's like they can comprehend the actions of this entire group of people, more or less.

10034. Shipwrecked Adventurer

This. I'd go bald if it were me.

10035. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Same.

10036. Shipwrecked Adventurer

But this is an online game, right? I'm sure there're some people they can't keep an eye on...

10037. Shipwrecked Adventurer

True. I'll bet some people don't wanna cooperate with the group, so the captains just don't even bother with them.

10038. Shipwrecked Adventurer

For better or worse, you gotta just leave them alone.

10039. Shipwrecked Adventurer

So long as they don't get in the way, that is.

10040. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's not like you absolutely *have* to obey your leader's orders, but at the same time, it's not like the leaders even have to give orders in the first place.

10041. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The captains have the added pressure of the rewards not being very good, so once they die, there's less point in clearing it. It's a job based entirely on volunteering, after all.

10042. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Really? There are no real rewards?

10043. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Right now, there're no special rewards for the captains, at the very least. I guess their command skills go up more than usual.

10044. Shipwrecked Adventurer

If you get that, then you'll be thankful for what they do and follow their orders. Anyone playing the event's gonna want to get an S-rank clear, captain or not.

10045. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Still, there're gonna be some people who get jealous. Why not just let 'em do it? Princess and the rest of them probably want to be on the front lines like normal soldiers too.

10046. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Agreed. Well, I'm sure Management's got something in mind.

10047. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Let's just listen to what they tell us for now. Unless it's a really crazy order.

10048. Shipwrecked Adventurer

There's a voting system for things not decided by AI, but there's no need for it as long as no one's causing any problems.

10049. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Most of them are famous and popular players too... Honestly, I don't want petty people who would try to tear them down out of jealousy to be leaders...

10050. Shipwrecked Adventurer

This. They're not suited for it in the first place.

10051. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Completely agreed.

Chapter 2:

Good Ol' Summertime Camping—Day 6

“RECLAIM THE ISLAND’S ECOSYSTEM!”

They say the eastern side used to be a grassy plain. Bring down the great tree that towers overhead!

1. Investigate the eastern forest as described to you by the silver fox. Reconnaissance phase.

2. The Reconnaissance Unit has returned with information. Organize the information and begin to prepare. Preparation phase.

**** Countdown to battle: One day, one hour.***

**** Remaining time: Two days, eighteen hours.***

It's time for everyone to prepare. It looks like the battle starts tomorrow...at seven? It's six right now, so that must be right.

First off, I should see if anything's changed while I slept, and then I need to hear what information the Reconnaissance Unit gathered.

I get out of bed, check my UI, and find a summary of information sent to me from the Recon Unit. The other captains must have written the report for me while they were awake.

Reading it over, it looks like they've listed the enemy names, levels, and even weaknesses and drops. They also noted their positioning and patrol routes. All enemies are plant types, which means they're weak against blunt attacks and fire, but strong against water and dirt. Tree Magic is particularly hopeless.

“Morning, Princess!”

“Good morning, Ms. Clementia. How are you feeling about the prospect of battling plants?”

“My vines work as blunt weapons, so I think I’ll make it through. I’m rushing to level up my skills right now!”

“Do Rope skills apply to that?”

“Vine Whip is a race skill too, but one that doesn’t have any arts to speak of. I think it’s a skill that strengthens my actual vines themselves.”

It must be a race skill so that she can use part of her own body as a weapon—it’d negate the need to get new weapons but require her to level up the skill. She’ll also need to get Rope tree attack skills if she wants to use arts.

Ms. Clementia appears to be frantically raising her vine skills since she can’t use Tree Magic.

She waves her vines and hands at me before heading into the western forest.

As I walk around the base, greeting everyone and taking in any changes, the rest of the players gradually wake up too. I suppose I’ll start cooking breakfast.

Eli comes to join me, also on her own journey for updates about what happened overnight.

“Tasha, we’ve found that we don’t have enough potion bottles, so I sent out an additional group to get some. My survey tells me that the reason is a lack of glass. I hear that using Alchemy to make it is incredibly fast but taxing on MP. They’re simply playing at the beach while they wait for it to regenerate, but I think that’s fine for now, since there’s nothing they can do without MP.”

Alchemy allows for the instant manifestation of items, so long as you have materials and MP—emphasis on the MP. I was able to alchemize so much at the southern island of Imbamunte because I was in a safe area, which doesn’t exist anywhere on the event island. Here, automatic MP regeneration depends entirely on the player’s race and skills.

Alchemy also uses a lot of MP during item production at the top levels. It’s entirely reliant on the use of arts, after all. It costs no MP to cook food in a frying pan, but the same doesn’t apply to Alchemy. You simply have to deal with it when using Cooking’s Fast Reaction.

I return to my patrol once I've finished distributing breakfast. My Chef skill is going up, but if anything, I'd prefer to level up Alchemist instead. Unlike with cooking, it's all about using arts, which means my skill level is crucial.

However, there's not much I can do about it during this event. There's simply a lack of chefs here. I hope this event will inspire more people to take up the job...

After wandering around for a while, I'm approached by the Ground Unit leaders.

"Do you have a moment, Princess?"

"Would you like to have a strategy meeting?"

"Yeah, basically."

Since there's little purpose in relocating, we begin our meeting right where we stand.

"As planned, we dispatched groups to all four directions. After allocating time for combat, breaks, and standby, we'll allow them to do as they please for the rest."

"The target of our siege is in the center of the forest, of course."

"I considered having everyone group up and charge from one side, but I decided it would definitely be too hard to fight that way."

"I intend to have the Mobile Unit protect the Logistics Unit, since the forest wouldn't be an ideal battlefield for them."

"I see. Very well," I say. "Then let's have every unit in charge of the east stocked up with lots of consumables. It will be hard to replenish their supplies later."

"Yes, my liege!"

It looks like Mr. Musasabi's unit is in charge of the east. I should let Eli know. They'll have to circle around to the east side of the forest, which will take some time. This means they'll leave earlier than the others and will need to receive

supplies first.

“We now have enemies heading our way too, so there’s a bit of a defensive battle going on.”

“It is helping the Ground Unit members stave off boredom though.”

“So the enemies are finally making their move. Please be sure to conserve consumables while fighting them. The main battle starts tomorrow.”

“That should be fine. We’ll be prepared.”

We all busy ourselves in anticipation of the battle ahead. I occasionally help to subdue enemies, but my focus is on keeping up with the state of progress. This process repeats over and over again.

“Hey, Princess! Bring the little girl over here!”

“...Oh, you mean Rina? I’ll call for her.”

Mr. Ertz is holding a halberd, so I can assume he wants to give it to her. I ask the four Ground Unit captains to gather the others he asks for.

“Princess! Get Ms. Mead and Mr. Skelly!”

This request comes from Ms. Primura. I pass it along.

Most of her regular clients are producers, so she’ll probably be handing out items to them first. She appears to be focusing on making new items with the nicer materials she’s found instead of testing them. It’s only natural to upgrade your friends’ equipment first. Once that’s done, she’ll probably focus on people who are around the same level.

“Here, Princess. Give this a swing.”

Mr. Ertz hands me a high-speed cobalt rapier, and I test it out.

“It’s sort of...hard to swing. It feels strange in my hand.”

“Which means that high-speed cobalt oughta be saved for people who are over level 30. Thanks for the info!”

So this uncomfortable feeling is, in fact, a penalty for failing to meet the weapon’s required level. This game has equipment requirements, just as most games do. From what I’ve heard, the penalty only intensifies the farther away

you get from these requirements. Mr. Studylover told me that stats probably apply just as your level does. I'm sure Mr. Ertz wanted that confirmation. Appraisal won't give me that information yet.

"Kaaagome, Kaaagome!"

As I return to my patrol of the base, I suddenly hear someone singing. It's a man with a nice voice. He has a buff marker, so he must be with the Music Unit. Although...why *that* song? Well, the buff's effects aren't dependent on song choice, so technically any tune would work. His choice of song is weird, though.

All the crafters are busy with their work, looking like something's on their minds that they can't say out loud.

"Who's the one behind me? Oh?"

"It's me."

"You? I didn't notice."

"I'm bored."

"The game of the gods."

"The game of the gods."

"I thought you were going for horror, but it was actually a comedy?"

"Heh... Ah! You jerk! The quality of my item turned out bad!"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!"

So he chose that song because they wanted to play Kagome Kagome? I'm a bit mad that I actually chuckled at that.

It looks like it's time for Mr. Musasabi's unit to head to the east, followed by Ms. Kotatsu and Mr. Lucebarm's unit after that. I see them off with a wave.

Day six has been devoted fully to preparing for battle. Now it's time for bed.

For the remaining two days...we'll have to do our best.

Official BBS 2

[What would you bring] Good Ol' Summertime Camping: Day 6 [To a deserted island?]

1. Management

This is a thread to discuss how to survive the second official event.
Please use it as a comprehensive thread for anything that relates to the event.
Day one here.
Day two here.
Day three here.
Day four here.
Day five here.

2562. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Upham! Bring us medicine, Upham!

2563. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hey. Are you trying to die?

2564. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I can rest if no medicine comes, so it's fine.

2565. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Rejoice, for resupply is here.

2566. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Let them rest.

2567. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Didn't they say to bring it yourself?

2568. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I already ran out of the supply given to me, so I'm gonna take a break!

2569. Shipwrecked Adventurer

You're already done? You must be talented. Now get on to the next task.

2570. Shipwrecked Adventurer

So evil, lmao.

2571. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I once worked at a toxic company that sounded exactly like you!

2572. Shipwrecked Adventurer

They don't even have time to play video games. What are they even working for?

2573. Shipwrecked Adventurer

We work to live and to get the money to have fun, but when there's no time for that, it's totally pointless.

2574. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Management's failed if they can't even pay a decent wage.

2575. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Can you guys stop being so depressing? We're trying to camp over here.

2576. Shipwrecked Adventurer

That's right. Learn from Mr. Mohawk! He's having fun.

2577. Shipwrecked Adventurer

He's always having fun.

2578. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hang on. Are you sure we should be learning anything from that guy?

2579. Shipwrecked Adventurer

He's a good guy, if you can look past the character he plays. Just ignore that part of him.

2580. Shipwrecked Adventurer

That's an important reminder...

5642. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Takashiii! Where are you, Takashiii?!

5643. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Did Takashi get lost?

5644. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The second-waver Takashi went to the north where the single wyvern remains. Let's pray he survives. He's a close-range attacker.

5645. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Farewell.

5646. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Farewell, Takashi.

5647. Shipwrecked Adventurer

To be more accurate, I think he's gonna get hunted by a lizardine before the wyvern gets him.

5648. Shipwrecked Adventurer

This.

5649. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Honestly, even a raptor could get a solo second-waver.

5650. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ah...

5651. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh heavens! By the way, how's progress going?

5652. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's not.

5653. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The better way of putting it would be that there's no end in sight.

5654. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I don't know how many items to use. I've just gotta craft a bunch for now.

5655. Shipwrecked Adventurer

No progress, and no idea what to do currently.

5656. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Well, it's great for leveling up skills, so I don't really mind.

5657. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Agreed.

5658. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ground Unit reporting in. I'm bored.

5659. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Your job starts tomorrow.

5660. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Like it or not, you've got a lot of work to do tomorrow.

5661. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hee hee! The princess really knows how to work her horses!

5662. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Y-yeah. Wishing you the best, Transportation.

Chapter 3:

Good Ol' Summertime Camping—Day 7

“RECLAIM THE ISLAND’S ECOSYSTEM!”

They say the eastern side used to be a grassy plain. Bring down the great tree that towers overhead!

1. Investigate the eastern forest as described to you by the silver fox. Reconnaissance phase.

2. The Reconnaissance Unit has returned with information. Organize the information and begin to prepare. Preparation phase.

3. You’ve taken the time to get ready. Now it’s time to fight. Head for the great tree. Main phase.

**** Countdown to battle: One hour.***

**** Remaining time: One day, eighteen hours.***

One more hour, is it? I’ll cook, wake the other players, and then stay on standby.

“Thanks for waiting! It’s local and farm fresh!”

“Thank you very much. I’ll get started on it right away.”

The produce is “local” in the sense that it came from this base.

I immediately start to cook the meat and bread. By preparing the bread dough before bed, I’m able to give my MP time to regenerate while I sleep, which is very helpful. Fast Reaction is extremely draining to use.

The other players busy themselves by waking up their party members while I get on with the cooking.

“It’s morning!≡” said Skelly in his best attempt at a sultry voice. “Wake up, sleepyhead!≡”

“EEEEEEEEK! Knock it off! You’re so gross!”

“Such a waste of a nice voice, lmao.”

“It’s so deep...”

“I bet he instantly got goosebumps!”

“You woke up, didn’t you?”

“In the blink of an eye! Thanks!”

I hand out breakfast once I’m finished, then confirm any progress from the night before.

The other units are now dispatched, with only Mr. Cecil’s Ground Unit, the Mobile Unit, and the Logistics Unit remaining here at the base. The Recon Unit, Music Unit, and Aerial Unit are each split into four groups and stationed with the Ground Units.

A world quest marker hovers in the air over the great tree, Triffid. It shows a timer counting down. I wonder when that first showed up?

Everyone who’s finished with breakfast heads out to the east and begins to set up camp on the western side of the forest.

“Are you ready, ladies and gents?! It’s almost time to begin!”

“Yeeaaaah!”

“I’m sure we’ll get a speech from the princess, though!”

Ah, I haven’t done *that* yet. Just as Mr. Cecil said, I think that time will probably come.

The crafters continue to work diligently, but the countdown presses forward, and soon there’s only one minute left.

Suddenly, Instinct activates and everyone with the skill, myself included, turns around. The new arrivals are a group of animals led by the silver fox, who appeared out of nowhere like a mirage.

These are clearly special event monsters. I don’t see any other spawns of the same species, after all.

“All right. Are you ready?”

“Yes. We’ve done everything we could to prepare.”

“I look forward to seeing your efforts. I am sorry to ask this of you.”

“We can’t die, so if things get dangerous, please prioritize falling back and healing.”

“Understood.”

The countdown reaches zero, and the word “Ready” appears in the sky. It looks like it *is* time for me to give a speech, after all.

“Assemble, outsiders, for war is upon us. Our goal is to bring down the great tree and halt its corruption of the island. May we all receive the blessings of Sigrdrifa, goddess of war! All troops, begin your advance!”

Just like what happened during the defensive war, all the players—as well as the silver fox and his animals—are enveloped in a red light that soaks into their bodies.

Anastasia’s Royal Privilege has been activated. All stats will be increased during the current quest.

The sacred beast has agreed to cooperate with you. All animal followers of the silver fox will provide you with support.

Now entering main phase of the world quest: “Reclaim the island’s ecosystem!”

“Hooraaaaah!”

All of our troops plunge forward into the forest, along with the silver fox’s team of animals.

“‘Sacred beast’ sure is an interesting term they used.”

“Agreed...”

Mr. Cecil and I both look at the silver fox by our side.

“Hmm...? Ah, that is right. You are outsiders. You are connected—no, you

have the potential to be connected with the gods. Your current position is not a simple one...but we are alike, you undead.”

Undead fall under the domain of Stellura and are said to rule over the afterlife. While I’m undead, I have yet to travel to the Nether, so I suppose that makes my position complicated. For now, I should probably make a mental note of the term “sacred beast.”

“How about we start pressing forward as much as we can?”

“Indeed.”

We separate our parties slightly so that we’re spread out, then have them follow the vanguard.

The first areas they reached closest to the perimeter weren’t a problem for anyone. The real fight will start once we reach the areas we couldn’t traverse before due to the incredible enemy spawn rate. Until that point, we take our time progressing.

At my side, Mr. Cecil receives a report from the front lines. “The war has started, but they’re telling me there’re way fewer enemies than expected,” he informs me.

“It sounds like the other units have started to fight too, but they’re also seeing a lack of enemies.”

“Maybe different areas have different set spawn rates, and once a player enters, those enemies swarm you.”

“Which would mean if a lot of players enter simultaneously from different points, the enemies will just spread out more before coming to attack?”

“Or it might just be a mechanic in this event.”

Both options seem feasible. The farther outside you go, the wider the range becomes, which should result in more spawns. This also makes for an increase in swarms, which is why multiple parties couldn’t make it through before.

“Either way, please take a look at the map.”

“The area’s changing colors? It must be the completion rate.”

“Considering this game, I think it’s possible that these are areas with spawns.”

“Which means we’ll need the troops to mobilize in order to recolor the whole thing.”

“I’ll convey the message to them.”

“Sure thing.”

The map is circular in shape with the great tree in the center, and the surrounding areas are marked with different colors. However, areas that players have passed through lose their color and return to the normal map state.

By this game’s logic, it’s not hard to imagine that the colors refer to enemy territory. The different colors mean different species spawn there. In other words, the more we change enemy territory into our territory, the more enemy spawns we can prevent.

I relay this possibility to the other captains and have them keep it in mind as they continue onward. They should be able to quickly assess the accuracy of my theory.

“Ms. Mead, can you have the Recon Unit members take care of filling in the map?”

“Understood. I’ll let them know.”

Most of their members will be very light on their feet. They probably can’t engage in head-to-head combat, so I’ll have them fill in the map while occasionally slipping in and out of fights.

I’ve now started to hear the sounds of battle up ahead, but I also hear the voices of those on the front lines, so it appears we’ve caught up to them.

“Tremble under the might of my mana! Overspell! Watch closely as elements spring forth from thin air! Hexa Spell! Bow down before me! Ignisplode! Ah ha ha ha ha ha!”

They sound like they’re enjoying themselves. Good. The people around them seem to be squirming, but that’s probably just from bug bites. We’re in a forest, after all.

“Ignisplode” must be the combined art you get once Blaze Magic is at level 30. They also used Hexa Spell, so the result was six consecutive explosions. That player is definitely a first-waver. Their magic seems exceptionally effective on the enemies, perhaps because the blasts of wind count as blunt attacks.

Hmm...I’m a little wary of the areas with yet undiscovered land. The players heading in that direction must have gone separate ways and failed to cover the whole area. That’s pretty common in MMOs.

Perhaps I should ask the Aerial Unit to cover it, since they can move around quickly... I’d like as much aerial power to remain at the front lines as possible. The different angles of attack make it easier for the frontline troops to press forward.

“What is it?”

“There’re some areas remaining near the grounds we started from. I’m curious about what’s there.”

“Hmm...if it’s an enemy spawn point, we should probably take it out.”

“We’re destroying more and more points, which makes me think they’ll likely end up spawning behind us instead.”

“I don’t want to get hit from both sides... I’ve got nothing better to do, so wanna come with me to fill in that part of the map?”

“I don’t have anything to do either. Let’s go for it.”

Mr. Cecil and I take a few of the parties on standby, as well as our own parties, with us to fill in the map. I’ll call for Mr. Skelly, Mr. Alf, Mr. Ame, and Ms. Trine.

There’s also the possibility that the enemies will head in the opposite direction to target our base, so I’ll let the Mobile Unit leader know just to be safe.

“Please send two parties to the north. We’ll head south.”

“Roger.”

“Be careful, because enemies might already be spawning.”

“Got it!”

Not even the Recon Unit knows the number or frequency of enemy spawns. We have no choice but to head toward them under the assumption that they’ve already emerged.

We press forward with Mr. Alf and Mr. Raul, Mr. Cecil’s party’s tank, ahead of the rest of us.

“No movement yet... Wait, they’re here?”

“They are. It looks like they’ve been spawning.”

“Just one at the spawn point?”

It appears this spot really is a base for enemies to spawn at. One’s already up and moving. This is the perfect opportunity for us to gather information.

“Why don’t we observe for a while, Mr. Cecil?”

“You want to see if it leaves its area, don’t you?”

“Exactly. If they can leave before they catch sight of a player...”

“Yeah, we should get that figured out as soon as possible. Let’s do it.”

Mr. Skelly and I both summon wolves to be ready in case the enemy goes in either direction.

For now, we wait. If it doesn’t go anywhere, then that’s good to know.

“I sure hope it doesn’t move. That would make things much easier.”

“I think it’ll probably relocate. It’d be boring otherwise, you know?”

“True. It’ll be too easy if they don’t leave their areas. We’d be able to spread out, clear every area, and then head straight to the boss without any trouble.”

Mr. Skelly, Mr. Alf, and Mr. Cecil are entirely correct.

After some time, another enemy spawns, and the first heads off to a different area.

“I see. We’ll take out the one that left.”

“Got it. We’ll head straight into this area.”

Unit One, carrying the mace I gave him, runs outside the area and stops the enemy in its tracks.

These enemies appear to be Plantera Seedshooters. While they’re being controlled by a parasite themselves, the seeds they fire out aren’t reported to have a mind-controlling effect, as I’m sure the idea of seeds controlling players was too horrifying to implement. Not to say that the Seedsters aren’t horrifying in their own right...

Mr. Alf gets its attention and hits it with spells alongside Mr. Skelly. The twins are also circling around to attack from an angle.

The seeds shoot even faster than arrows. They bounce off of Mr. Alf’s large shield, thankfully, but this attack would be harder to defend against if they were able to get us from behind. The Seedshooters definitely prefer to attack with seeds instead of their vines. They don’t have much HP, so the Rear Guard will deal with them.

“Hmph!”

“Ow!”

Mr. Alf blocks a root attack with his large shield, but a seed lands a direct hit on Mr. Skelly.

After half of the Seedshooter’s HP is reduced, its AI seems to change. It looks like it can target two players at once now.

“Whoa... These things are dangerous.”

“Send the seeds toward the princess!”

“No thank you, I’m perfectly all right.”

“Aaah! Damn weed!”

Yes, there’s no doubt it’s going after a second target now. I draw aggro away from Mr. Skelly and block the seed attacks. Mr. Skelly is set up in a static position, so I don’t want him being targeted.

“Ah, can’t we just use the trees as shields?”

As Mr. Skelly hides behind a tree, only emerging for brief seconds to shoot attacks, a seed hits the tree and bounces off. It’s not the most exciting battle, but it does seem efficient enough.

Take a look at this, everyone. This is a Lich that, in some works, is referred to as the No-Life King.

Since this is a world quest, the Seedshooter dissolves into beams of light once it’s defeated.



“They’re a little annoying, but since the Rear Guard will deal with the bulk of them, it’s not too hard to take them out one by one.”

“It’s easy when you use the trees as shields!”

Mr. Cecil’s group managed to clear the whole area. Now we need to regroup and return to the battle.

“Behind us! There’re two more of them!”

“So there really *were* more that spawned!”

I manage to block the first shot thanks to Danger Sense, but the second hits me squarely on my upper left arm. I sure get hit there a lot...

Mr. Skelly put on his armor with Quick Change, so I’ll have him take one of the Seedshooters himself. Then I aim for the other one targeting Mr. Alf.

I think the spawn quantity and speed change depend on two things: the rate players exterminate them, and proximity to the spawn area.

“We’re currently battling two enemy reinforcements. How are things on your end?”

“We’re in battle too. We’ll head your way when we’re finished.”

“Understood.”

So Mr. Cecil’s party also ran into reinforcements. It sounds like more enemies had been spawning than we first thought. It’s a good thing we came this way to fill in the map.

I’ll have to inform the captains that we’re nearly certain that the colored areas are spawn territories. For that reason, we need to be sure to leave no space undiscovered.

After defeating the first enemy, I strike the second Seedshooter, which is clad in armor.

By the way, I’ve started to feel a strange sensation where the seed struck me earlier. This doesn’t seem like it’s going to be good.

Mr. Cecil’s party arrives after a while. “Looks like you’re almost finished.”

“Perfect timing. Please give this thing a smack for me.”

“You’ve got it!”

With our parties combined, the enemy is slaughtered in an instant.

Your race level has increased.

It looks like I’ve leveled up. Now I’m at level 29. But there’s a more pressing matter...

The underside of my left upper arm now has an icon showing. Oh no...my HP is going down. So it’s a drain attack?

I put my rapier away and use my dismantling knife to cut out the portion of my arm with the seed in it as quickly as possible. The pain isn’t as severe as in real life, nor do I need any anesthetic. This way, I’ll probably be able to avoid cutting off my whole arm in the future. Considering the penalty, that’s the last thing I want right now.

“Princess? What are you doing?”

“Oh, this seed was just attempting to control me, so I’m operating on myself.”

“For real? Am I in trouble too?”

“I had an icon on me, so your bones should be fine as long as you don’t see it there.”

“Is that unique to zombies? Are the plants in trouble too?”

“Possibly. I’ll need to inform Ms. Clementia. For that, I’ll go through Ms. Mead.”

Do plants like to consume rotten flesh? Well, I suppose zombies aren’t people, so there’s no problem with taking over their bodies. Aren’t you being a bit hard on us zombies, Management? Are you holding some sort of zombie grudge?

Now that I’ve dug out the seed and tossed it away, the control icon has disappeared, so I put away my dismantling knife. The underside of my upper

arm is red now, but it should regenerate with time. That's the one redeeming feature of this process.

"All right. Shall we return now?"

"Sounds good. I don't think we can keep going around killing everything..."

With that, we head back to meet up with the troops on the western border.

I summon Unit One as an owl, give him spells to use, and dispatch him to the Aerial Unit to help out as needed. I have to simultaneously confirm the state of the map and incoming voice chats from the captains, so I'll make Unit One fight to gain some skill levels, at the very least.

As we progress through the world quest area, the areas become more narrow and the enemies become stronger and more densely packed. However, the path we take means that we encounter fewer enemies per fight, meaning more people have time to rest, so I suppose it's actually a rather relaxing pace on our end.

"It's time for a resupply! Bring 'em in, Dropper!"

"Don't mind if I do!"

"Asshole!"

"That's not fair!"

Supplies occasionally come in from the Logistics Unit, so we're all well stocked. Our battle starts here and now.

I continue forward, occasionally rotating unit members, and once the first group of players are ready to go to sleep, I assign them a guard unit from those who are waiting on standby.

"They're starting to get a lot more aggressive."

"We can destroy their spawn points, so it's actually been easier than I expected."

"If we had to just press forward to one spot, it would have been hell."

"True. With Triffid in front of us and the little guys behind us, we might have

gotten separated from the Logistics Unit.”

A few enemies had already trickled down to them, but I heard that the Mobile Unit took care of things just fine. Things could have been ugly if we’d all charged toward one destination.

It appears that the Aerial Unit can’t fill in the map by flying above it, and they’re also having to deal with nasty antiair attacks. Ms. Fairellen had a smile on her face when she told me she’d nearly died, so I could tell it must have been very rough.

Naturally, the game is demanding we behave and stick to typical ground operations. A cheese strategy like flying over the battlefield was just too obvious. We should have predicted they wouldn’t let us. All that matters is that no one died in the process.

Judging by the state of our progress, we should be able to reach Triffid by tomorrow.

The troops continue to fight in the dark forest, illuminated only by the mass of Light spells. We should be able to continue with our battles through the night, since there’s a schedule for different players to take different shifts. Little by little, we press forward.

“Someone swap places with the kids! It’s their bedtime!”

“It’s time for me to turn in as well. I’ll leave the rest to you.”

I take out my bed, and suddenly, my sister slides in next to me. There’s nothing I can say about that.

It’s time for me to sleep too. After what felt like no time at all, it seems the final day of the event is upon us. We’ll spare no effort for the remainder of our time here.

Official BBS 3

[What would you bring] Good Ol' Summertime Camping: Day 7 [To a deserted island?]

1. Management

This is a thread to discuss how to survive the second official event.
Please use it as a comprehensive thread for anything that relates to the event.

Day one here.

Day two here.

Day three here.

Day four here.

Day five here.

Day six here.

7531. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hyah hah! What a harvest!

7532. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Harvest (Plants that move)

7533. Shipwrecked Adventurer

A bountiful autumn (War)

7534. Anastasia

This is bad! I'm gonna start with the fruits!

7535. Shipwrecked Adventurer

You what?! For real?

7536. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Grah! It's soooo sticky!

7537. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Merde!

7538. Shipwrecked Adventurer

This is f***ing crazy!

7539. Shipwrecked Adventurer

That's not even an exaggeration, lmao.

7540. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Even the enemy names have "crazy" in them. They're suicide bombers?!

7541. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Gyaaaaah! I'm really, really sticky!

7542. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Their crafty plan is to drain our MP by making us cast Laundry over and over again.

7543. Shipwrecked Adventurer

But the damage is actually gonna freaking kill me too. What's with their weird ways of harassing us?

7544. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Of course it's gonna pack a punch! They're suicide bombers!

7545. Anastasia

Their HP appears to be quite low. But they deal AoE damage when defeated behind enemy lines.

7546. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Give 'em hell, long-distance troops!

10862. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Why do they have tentacles??!

10863. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Stop grabbing the men and go for the girls!

10864. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hmph!

10865. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Don't do this! You want to hurt me, don't you?! It's just like in a dirty manga!

10866. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Don't do this! You want to hurt me, don't you?! It's just like in a dirty manga!
(Deeper voice)

10867. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ngh! Kill them! (Screamo yell)

10868. Shipwrecked Adventurer

My eyes and ears are on the receiving end of intense friendly fire.

10869. Shipwrecked Adventurer

This is so disgusting to look at.

10870. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's like a separate kind of violence.

10871. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Won't they grab Princess with their tentacles instead?

10872. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's no use! She senses them first and destroys them!

10873. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Damn it! She's too quick!

10874. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Whose side are you assholes on?!

10875. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's just gonna bind her. It's no big deal.

10876. Management

Hm, shall we go for it...?

10877. Shipwrecked Adventurer

No!

10878. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Everyone's traumatized.

10879. Shipwrecked Adventurer

That's actually kinda scary.

10880. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Push! Push!

10881. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Don't overwork yourselves, second-wavers!

10882. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I feel like we can make it!

10883. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Make it to the death screen, maybe.

10884. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah, I almost died.

10885. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I knew it. Getting too riled up always ends badly.

15731. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The enemies have incredible antiair weapons. This sucks.

15732. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

I know, right? All those bullets are tearing us weeds up.

15733. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

How about the accuracy of those bombers?

15734. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Of course they wouldn't let us go through the skies uncontested.

15735. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

It'll be done soon, so there's nothing we can do about it...

15736. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

All right, time to clean up.

15737. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

All right, time to rest.

Chapter 4:

Good Ol' Summertime Camping—Final Day

“RECLAIM THE ISLAND’S ECOSYSTEM!”

They say the eastern side used to be a grassy plain. Bring down the great tree that towers overhead!

1. Investigate the eastern forest as described to you by the silver fox. Reconnaissance phase.

2. The Reconnaissance Unit has returned with information. Organize the information and begin to prepare. Preparation phase.

3. You’ve taken the time to get ready. Now it’s time to fight. Head for the great tree. Main phase.

No changes to the quests. In other words, we haven’t made it to the center yet. The game doesn’t account for oversleepers!

As for the map... Hmm, it looks like we’ll make it there this afternoon. There’s only one more area between us and the boss now.

All right, time to wake up. The Logistics Unit will provide breakfast, so there’s no need for me to cook today. I’ll head straight for the front lines.

Should I wake up Rina? Right now, I can use a spell that would wake her up immediately.

“Mmph... Five more minutes...”

“You’re going to lose out on EXP...”

“Wha?! I...have...to...wake up!”

“Good morning.”

“Morning! I’ll be off, then!”

Now I can pick up my bed and head out myself.

“Good morning.”

“Good morning! We’ve been making good progress!”

“That’s good to hear.”

I greet the troops, then receive reports from the captains who are awake.

The fighting itself went without any trouble. As for the Logistics Unit...well, they experienced nothing *but* trouble. That is to say, they’ve been running at full gear all this time. But that was to be expected, so it’s not a problem.

I shoot the occasional spell at enemies from behind the rest while keeping my eye on the map, keeping an eye out for any potential obstacles.

After some time, a messenger from the Logistics Unit arrives.

“Breakfast delivery!”

“Hyah hah! We’ve got grub!”

“You’ve gotta eat with gratitude! Cry your eyes out while you eat!”

“Ah...! Ah! Hey, this is super hot! I’m only crying because my tongue’s burned!”

“When I once asked a chef if they could cool a dish down so that we can eat it faster, they said ‘What the hell’d you say to me?’ in a deep growl. So just suck it up and down it.”

“Ah. Okay.”

Chefs sure are passionate about their creations. Of course they’ll want their food to be eaten fresh out of the oven.

“It’s really good, but it’s scorching hot!”

“We’re probably just supposed to man up and eat it, since it’s only food. At least we get a little break.”

The breakfast notification goes out to the troops, so everyone awake takes turns between eating and fighting.

Thankfully, the sleeping children are awake now too.

“Good morning, Princess!” they say in unison.

“Good morning, you two. Please stay at the front lines again today. Just be sure not to die.”

“Okay!” they chime.

I see Mr. Ame and Ms. Trine off and take a look at the front lines...only to find that the enemies' levels have increased quite a bit. It looks like they're over level 40 now. Their movement patterns are simple, and with a smaller circle to traverse now, we have even more people on standby. Everything seems to be progressing smoothly.

Actually, there're some level 20 enemies mixed in there too, aren't there? Perhaps they're spawning for second-wavers to have something to fight. The first-wavers take the level 40 enemies while second-waver parties take on the level 20 enemies. Reinforcements are showing up rapidly, keeping the troops busy.

All enemy names also start with the word “Plantera.” So far, we've confirmed the existence of the Meatchopper, Seedshooter, Berrybomber, Crazybomb, and Technician.

There appear to be five types of enemies now that we're one area away from the boss. Each time they spawn, they appear as a random different level, so it's important for everyone to pay close attention to what they're up against.

“The damn fruit is level 40!”

“I hate these long-range attacks!”

“Stupid fruit!”

“Leave it to me! Reflect Shield!”

The Reflect Shield deflects the pile of fruit being flung at the troops right back into the enemy where it explodes.

It appears that Plantera Berrybombers hurl explosive fruit. The off-tanks also take turns shooting the fruit back.

“A Crazybomb's coming!”

“Stay baaaack!”

“I’ll save you! Area Guard!”

The Plantera Berrybomber randomly causes a Plantera Crazybomb to spawn next to it while attacking. It looks like the fruits thrown by Berrybombers can also move on their own. The Crazybomb tries to suicide bomb the largest nearby group of players three seconds after it spawns. A main tank then protects those players by casting Area Guard.

Plantera Technicians look like vines, so they’ll sneak their way up or down trees in order to bind players.

“Don’t do this! You want to hurt me, don’t you?! It’s just like in a dirty manga!”

“Shut up and get movin’!”

“Agh!! K-kill it!”

“Not again!”

“Why’s it only goin’ after the guys...?”

“Don’t make me say it, idiot!”

“Pipe down already!”

I think they’re having fun, although they’re a bit loud, since they’re right in the middle of an intense battle.

I continue to beat up the Meatchoppers, block the enemy seed and fruit projectiles from the rear enemy lines, and dodge vine attacks from overhead and underfoot...or so I’d like to say, but it’s not actually possible for one person to do it all by herself.

“Damn it! I wanna burn ’em all down!”

“We woulda tried that already if it was possible.”

“That’s right. If we could use fire, we’d have already burned ’em all with Fire or Blaze magic.”

“True!”

If any sparks from our fire reached the plains and spread to the west, this battle would all be for nothing.

It’s taken a lot of time, but we’re steadily getting closer to Triffid. I think we might even arrive ahead of schedule.

“Hmm...what’s this?”

“What?”

“Nothing. I just...nah, never mind. Princess! Something doesn’t feel right! Can you take care of it?”

I understand that you’d prefer to focus on fighting, but what am I supposed to do with that lead? I think to myself. Oh well...

If the “something” that doesn’t feel right is being felt by those engaging in combat, then it must be related to the enemies. I’m only just watching them myself, so I don’t feel anything strange at all.

“Hang on, hang on! I’ve got my hands full over here!”

That person is...a healer? All players’ HP seems to be going down a bit. Are they being shot more?

Maybe I should swap them out with the Standby Team. Then again, Mr. Cecil is in charge of timing the swaps like that. I should just focus on why the enemies are suddenly shooting more than before. Were we just unlucky enough to have a random spawn start drawing out higher-level mobs...?

It’s those in the middle guard, not the front lines, who are all losing HP, meaning the healers suddenly have much more work to do. This must be the work of Seedshooters and Berrybombers. The Technicians don’t actually do any attacking on their own. Perhaps ignoring them for too long causes our HP to start draining.

“This is bad. We’re gonna fall apart at this rate.”

“The tanks are still moving like normal, correct?”

“Of course. But now they suddenly can’t block attacks anymore.”

“That has to mean the enemies’ attack patterns have changed...”

Event monsters are, of course, event monsters, but they wouldn’t normally give machine learning capabilities to basic mob enemies, right? Having them take on the shapes of people or some sort of similar scenario would be better, but surely such advanced AI wouldn’t— “Ah!” I exclaim.

“Did you figure something out?”

“Possibly, but I’ll need to confirm it.”

Since Mr. Cecil is already here, I ask the leaders who are spread out in the other directions if the enemies have started firing more projectiles or if their AI has changed in any subtle ways.

“They’ve changed over here.”

“I, too, was wondering what should be done about it, my liege.”

“Hmm? I’m not seeing any changes.”

Myself in the west, Mr. Lucebarm to the south, and Mr. Musasabi to the east are seeing changes, but Ms. Kotatsu to the north isn’t seeing anything unusual. Therefore, the answer might lie in the farthest point from the north, or in other words, the south. I’m glad it was so clear right away. I wouldn’t want every enemy in every region to be affected like how players are with my command skills. That would just be a headache. I wasn’t sure if there was one specific enemy somewhere or maybe one on each side, so we would have had to search everywhere to find them all.

“Mr. Lucebarm, please search for a Ruling Class enemy. I believe a monster with command skills may have spawned in the south.”

“Got it. I’ll be on the lookout.”

We’ll have to start narrowing things down. If it’s not in the south, we’ll check the east, and if it’s not in the east, then it must be in the west.

Ms. Luciana taught me about enemies with command skills, who are referred to as Ruling Classes. When they’re around, the enemies start to act differently.

Unless there’s a unique AI at play or the devs have been changing the mob behaviors as we progress, this has to be the work of a Ruling Class enemy. If it’s

based on our progress, it wouldn't explain why Ms. Kotatsu isn't seeing any effects on her end.

"Got him! Take out the Plantera Commander!"

Once the commander is dead, I take another look at the fights and see that the projectile rate has returned to normal.

Now we know the cause if the enemies start to change again. We can also determine its location based on changes in the other parts of the event area, so we'll have to be sure to take them down quickly.

"Hm... Has it changed once again?"

"No?"

"Don't think so?"

"Everything seems normal here too."

"Huh? Was I perhaps imagining it?"

"I really don't see any changes here."

"Hmm? I see it, my liege! A Mini-Commander!"

"The Mini-Commander must only affect one single direction."

So commanders are a rare spawn that can occur? Just as their name suggests, they're enemies that possess command skills. The actual commanders aren't very strong, but that doesn't mean they're not tough, as their influence stretches in three directions. A Mini-Commander is smaller than a Commander and spawns with low HP, able to influence only one direction. That's as much as we've determined at the moment.

If us players ignore these two enemy types, we'll end up using too many potions—we have to take them out as quickly as we can.

The Ground Units and Aerial Unit are pushing forward together.

As soon as the Aerial Unit steps out in front, all the projectile-firing enemies turn their sights toward them. That's when the Ground Units take the opportunity to defeat the Meatchoppers and make a bit more progress

forward, luring out the mobs as they went. The Aerial Unit retreats before they end up on the receiving end of concentrated attacks. We also make full use of the Standby Team, having them encircle us so that there're no gaps as we move forward.

This is when the Berrybombers become a real nuisance. They aim for the most amount of people on the ground, where their bombs explode on impact. When shot into the air, they work the same as Aero Flak.

I don't know the exact details, but the bombs will only explode when they are within a certain radius of players. This makes dodging very difficult. Anything launched toward you will explode nearby, which makes it far different from dodging something like a lance spell.

And what was with the Seedshooters? Why have they started being so hyperactive all of a sudden? They're absolutely pelting the skies with seeds as if they were machine guns. I almost want to laugh, seeing the total bullet hell in the sky. The Meatchoppers stand in front of them, blocking their line of sight, so the Seedshooters have to focus strictly on airborne attacks.

This makes things even more difficult for the Aerial Unit, which is having to constantly dip in and out of the line of fire. They'll be destroyed if they fly above the enemies, so they have to stay back and send out attacks from above us instead.

"Hmm...Princess, I have a suggestion."

"What is it?"

Mr. Cecil brings up the prospect of waiting until everyone has finished their lunch shift, then charging forward as one massive group.

In other words, we'll head for the boss once we finish eating. I have no qualms with his idea, so I decide to give it a try. I relay the plan to the other captains.

The Resupply Team shows up a bit early as a result.

"Lunch delivery!"

"I want sushi!"

“Oh yeah? Take this, jerk.”

“You actually have it? Thanks!”

“Yeah, we’ve got guys out fishin’. Now line up!”

Lunch is surprisingly fancy. There’s steak, beef skewers, soup, grilled fish, and more. However, every dish is seasoned with either salt, barbecue sauce, or yakiniku sauce.

“You’ve even got pasta? That’s what I’ll go with.”

“Look, there’s meunière. I know what I’m havin’.”

“Yakisoba? I haven’t had yakisoba in forever.”

I have no need to eat, so I think I’ll join the fighting too. Since I’ve left Unit One in charge of all that until now, Secret Art of Necromancy is my only skill leveling up. There’re a few other skills I feel like I’m on the verge of gaining arts in, so I’d like to secure them before we reach the boss.

Eloquent Princess-style Protection has reached level 25.

You have learned the art Royal Reflect through Eloquent Princess-style Protection.

Darkness Magic has reached level 25.

You have learned the art Nox Mine through Darkness Magic.

Superior Magic Assist has reached level 30. You have gained 2 Skill Points.

You have learned the art Hexa Spell through Superior Magic Assist.

Secret Art of Necromancy has reached level 35.

You have learned the art Vision Ship through Secret Art of Necromancy.

What a haul! I'll fall back and look them over.

Royal Reflect: Return long-distance attacks, including spells.

Vision Ship: You can see what your summoned beings see. This requires a bit of practice.

Oh, I finally get a reflection art? And it even deflects spells? Most convenient. I don't think tanks have spell reflection abilities. Although, since I fight with self-defense moves, I'll be prioritizing my own protection. I'm not sure how well it will work either.

Vision Ship... I see. So it's like watching TV? I'll probably end up ignoring it until I get the hang of it. But this means I can use my servants for aerial recon and view images from the skies overhead. That's sure to come in handy.

Nox Mine is a Dark-type land mine, just like what Lizardines use. It's very easy to see and hard to get hits in with, but it's a spell that deals tremendous damage.

Hexa Spell simply allows six of the same spell to be cast at once. It's a good choice if you need some instant firepower.

I'll customize Royal Reflect to give it the shortest possible cooldown. I have a feeling I'll be using this in a big way from here on, so I may as well test it out now while the others are still chowing down on their lunches.

I activate Royal Reflect in order to take on the projectiles shot at me by Seedshooters and Berrybombers. It's testing time.

"Ouch... Princess?"

"Yes, sorry about that. It really let out a nice sound, didn't it? I didn't do it on purpose, so please don't glare at me like that."

"It does even more damage than a direct hit..."

"Oh, that's very good to know. Thank you for the great news."

“That’s not the point!”

I sent the projectile flying back like I was playing baseball or tennis but ended up accidentally sending it straight into a player. *I do beg your pardon!*

“Ah... This is difficult...”

“That’s the least of our concerns! Princess?!”

“Watch out!! This is dangerous!”

Unlike the Reflect Shield that tanks get through Small Shield and Large Shield, the angle of reflection with this move is controlled entirely manually. This makes it extremely difficult to use. Should I be thinking of this as some kind of batting cage?

“I see... So it still reflects even if you don’t swing it back? Ah, now I remember. Reflect Shield was the same way. Hmm...does hitting it back increase the damage?”

“Princess? Could you come to the front line already?”

“We’re glad you’re no longer in the rear, but now we’re worried about our own rears!”

“Ha ha ha ha! Time to get a second hole back there!”

“Stop it!”

“I suppose I’ll head to the front now.”

“Yes!”

Now it’s time to join the tanks and do some batting practice.

Royal Reflect is most convenient. I definitely want to perfect this art. I can fight at close range like usual, but reflecting long-range attacks with this will speed up the process. The one problem is the angle of reflection. It’s very hard to hit enemies with my return fire. Well, averting the attack alone is all I really need to do, but hitting enemies with that reflection would be a way of killing two birds with one stone. I’d like to learn how to aim better, if possible.

“Excuse me, General Commander? Princess? Why are you at the front lines?”

“Our Princess is a monster!”

“Are you praising me?” I ask.

“Yes, of course, absolutely.”

I feel like they’re not telling the truth, but I’ll let it slide. It appears that lunch is over now, so I’ll fall back now that I’m satisfied with this art.

“All hands, let’s fight our way toward the final area.”

“Roger!”

We wake the sleeping players, still traveling in their dreams, and press forward with everything we can, even if it means swapping out troops. Plenty of them are still itching to fight, after all.

Finally...

“I was first, my liege!”

It sounds like Mr. Musasabi’s eastern unit made it into the final area.

This is followed by the great tree in the center, Triffid, beginning to move and rattle its leaves.

“Raaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

It sure seems upset...or, more accurately, like it’s going to be a pain to handle.

“Hyah ha ha ha ha! Now that’s some erect wood right there! Can’t wait to snap it in half!”

“Don’t call it ‘erect wood’!”

I roll my eyes. “I see Mr. Mohawk is over there.”

“Heh...erect wood...”

Anyway, I should take a look at our quests.

“RECLAIM THE ISLAND’S ECOSYSTEM!”

They say the eastern side used to be a grassy plain. Bring down the great tree that towers overhead!

1. Investigate the eastern forest as described to you by the silver fox. Reconnaissance phase.

2. The Reconnaissance Unit has returned with information. Organize the information and begin to prepare. Preparation phase.

3. You've taken the time to get ready. Now it's time to fight. Head for the great tree. Main phase.

4. Triffid stands before you. Come together and bring it crashing down. Climax phase.

"It looks like we've reached the climax."

"Oh, the spawn frequency decreased?"

"It appears so. We've taken control of the other areas. This is the last of them."

"We don't know its attack patterns yet, so let's be careful."

The silver fox and his animals appear next.

"Now is the time to finally slaughter the beast," he says. "Remember not to fall still, even for a moment."

With that, Triffid's four HP bars materialize, and the battle begins.

There's plenty of space around Triffid, as there aren't many other trees. We're able to surround it this way.

The problem is that its branches are constantly flying around, crashing directly into the shields of the tanks and refusing to let the front lines advance closer.

"How are the skies, Ms. Fairellen?"

"It feels like I'm playing a shooting game, I guess. We're fighting up here too!"

It sounds like we won't be able to ask for aerial support.

Oh...? There's fruit raining from the sky and exploding. In fact, there's quite a lot of it.

“Princess! It looks like the fruit comes down when you stay in one place for too long!”

“I see. I’ll inform the others.”

“Please do!”

I check the log again and remember that the silver fox told us not to stand still. That was a stealthy way of delivering important information.

I decide to stand still in the middle section and make use of these explosives. When a fruit comes down toward me, I give it a full swing with Royal Reflect. It goes sailing straight into part of Triffid and explodes.



Spell after spell, home run after home run. It helps that the target is so large.

“How kind of it to supply me with fruit so that I can build DPS.”

“It’s trying to kill the Music Unit... Can it knock that off?”

Indeed, Mr. Norbert’s unit does appear to be struggling. All I can do is provide emotional support, so I hope they’ll give it their best.

“It’s really annoying to fight, but I don’t think it’s all that stronger than the others.”

“It seems that way for now. We certainly can damage it no matter where we strike from.”

“We’re draining its HP pretty fast. How’s the Aerial Unit doing?”

“They’re having their own fights up there, not that we can see them through the leaves...”

“RAAAAAAHHH!”

“Oh?”

“Is it mad? Wait, no, it’s—”

“It’s a stomp!”

Danger Sense suddenly turns the entire ground red, and the animals cease their attacks too. They’re probably preparing to flee.

Triffid stops swinging its branches, lifts them up, and after a moment of suspense, sends them slamming down into the earth. Shock waves ripple out from each branch, and the players all jump in time to dodge, including me, of course.

“Doesn’t look like anyone died.”

“Unlike golems, this attack doesn’t appear to deal instantaneous damage, my liege.”

“Although the radius is on an entirely different level...”

Some second-wavers appear to have been hit, since they’d never experienced the golems’ similar attacks, but none of them lost their lives.

More importantly, the animals jumped to dodge the slam and were now charging the branches.

“The animals have it right—that’s where we should aim. We’ll probably be able to break it down piece by piece.”

“Got it!”

From here on out, we continue to jump over each occasional stomp, then focus on attacking the frozen branches. Failing to dodge the stomp results in a knockback, meaning you have less time to hit the branches.

Triffid always uses the same moves after its war cry too. Its voice must be the telegraph. It’s a great tree, after all, so perhaps this is all it’s capable of.

“RAAAAAAHHHH!”

“Okay, I *really* think we pissed it off this time.”

“We’ve whittled down over half of its HP.”

The upper half of Triffid, which could perhaps be called its head, has started to frantically shake.

The result is a massive downpour of fruit from above.

“Heads up, everyone!”

“We’ll have to focus on evading them.”

“Oof...”

I send the fruit falling my way back at Triffid, but occasionally, two fruits collide in midair and explode.

This is actually decent practice for me. I prefer this to having to awkwardly move around.

“What’s with that burning smell?”

“Dunno... Whoa!”

“Ms. Fairellen, did you scorch the top of the tree?”

“Yep, sure did. You’ve gotta sterilize the filth!”

“I see. So it’s burning up top.”

That must be why its HP is draining so fast. Well, I'll leave the skies to them for now.

Triffid's branches appear to share a HP bar, so it doesn't matter which one we target. But since they still count as hits, it appears we can destroy individual branches.

A lot of them are already cracked and fewer in number compared to the start of our battle.

"The first HP bar is almost gone!"

"That was faster than I thought."

"Well, we should be able to get all four bars done today. I just don't think we'll be able to keep attacking the top half forever."

"You think so? I see it's starting to go bald..."

The Aerial Unit has removed a lot of the tree's leaves already, leaving it in a sad state.

"The first HP bar is empty!"

"GROOOOOOOOH!"

"Whoa, haven't heard that yell yet."

The many smaller branches start to twine around each other, forming two giant boughs that raise up in the air and freeze. The red flashing light must mean that it's charging up an attack.

Danger Sense activates and shows me that the ground is the place to avoid. The areas near the two branches turn completely red.

All of the animals, including the silver fox, dash off to a safe area. That must be the example to follow, so I'll head outside Triffid's range. I guide the others in evacuating. Anyone who refuses to follow will have to deal with their own fates.

Since this enemy is a tree, it's hard to tell which side is its front. I suppose it can't be the side with the fanned-out branches, at least.

Once the strong glimmer of light fades from the two boughs, they come plunging down, sending shock waves that ripple through the ground.

“Whoa... It’s like an earthquake attack?”

“It also seems to send a pillar up to hit whatever’s in the sky. Wouldn’t that kill you instantly?”

“Probably, since it’ll count as a fall... Ah, they died.”

“I thought so. Well, it’s their fault for not dodging something so obvious.”

This game shows no mercy when it comes to its obvious tells. If I could look at the attack and walk away, they should’ve been able to figure it out as well.

That earthquake move is probably going to continue being deadly as long as Triffid has most of its branches remaining. We need to get right to work on taking them out.

“Let’s keep calling that attack the Earthquake, like how Mr. Cecil did, since it’s easy to understand that way. Find the nearest person with Danger Sense the next time it comes and stick with them.”

“Roger! Don’t wanna get tossed up to heaven!”

The Earthquake deals damage both when it first tosses you up and when you fall back down again. It’s common in action games for the ground to be the strongest weapon of them all. Everyone trembles in the face of Mother Earth.

“ROOOOOHHHHH!”

“Hm...? Is that...a stomp?”

The ground turned red, which should mean a stomp, but Triffid’s voice is a bit different this time. I wonder why the animals have stopped attacking to retreat a bit further.

The slashing move is the same...

“It’s staggering the attack!”

“Don’t panic; just look at the nearby branches! If you’re in the back, please watch for the ripples!”

The branches go slamming down at staggered timings, sending out ripples

that collide and crash into each other.

“H-hey... Ack!”

“Wh-whoa...I made it!”

Ah...! I managed to dodge it.

This new attack pattern must be because we took out one of its HP bars. The staggered stomping becomes the new norm, and there’s no shortage of fruit raining down from above. Not that I struggle to send all the fruit back. This is the perfect way to level up my self-defense skills.

However, after some more time passes and Triffid’s head grows balder, the fruit stops falling for good. This allows the Aerial Unit to group up with us.

“We can’t damage it from above anymore.”

“Then let’s aim for the branches.”

“Got it!”

We continue to make good progress, breaking the branches each time Triffid finishes its stomp attack.

Once it looks like only half the branches remain, the second HP bar finally depletes.

Triffid used Earthquake at this point last time, so we’re able to avoid taking damage now. I can tell that no one wants to fall victim to it this time. With fewer branches, the speed with which they thrust upward is much slower as well.

“Now what comes next?”

Two bars left. I’m sure it’s going to change its patterns again...and there’s Danger Sense lighting up my feet again. Unfortunately, my luck runs out, as I was looking up at the wrong time. I’m hit with a sudden impact and the feeling of flying through the air.

“Whoa... I see!”

“Ow...!”

When I land, I see that Mr. Cecil, who didn’t make it either, is cutting into the

part of the tree sticking out of the ground. I join him as well.

After a moment, the branches draw back. The ground is closed up now.

“They swipe up from beneath the earth now...?” I say as I cast Dark Heal. “I’m glad the Ground Units all decided to stop.”

“No. Unlike you undead, I just barely have any health left at all.”

“Well, it’s my fault for getting distracted, even though we already destroyed its top half.”

“Next is the bottom half. We have the remaining branches and the roots, and then we’ll be done.”

“We have to draw out the roots somehow.”

We decide to have the free attackers stand by until a stomp comes, then wait for the root attack. All they have to do is dodge the blows and focus on the roots.

“The people with the axe weapons are making such satisfying sounds with them...”

“You’re right about that.”

I can hear constant “ka-chang, ka-chang” sounds. They’ve become genuine lumberjacks in this fight. It’s hard to make fun of them, though, seeing as how they’re probably receiving a special buff for that.

Since we commanders can’t go up to the front lines, we stay back and attack the roots as much as we can once they’re exposed. The group consists of myself, Mr. Cecil, Ms. Fairellen, and the twins, since it’s safer here.

“A scythe, huh? How heroic.”

“Indeed.”

Some root attacks also appear to occur during the stomps, so once Triffid lets out the cry that telegraphs a stomp, we walk a bit forward to interrupt the root attacks. Then we jump to dodge the stomp and wait for the roots to come out again. Rinse and repeat.

Hmm...it looks like the animals are helping the players too. It's strange to see them being head-butted to safety, but I doubt it deals damage.

There goes the third health bar.

"That makes three!"

"Let's see if we get a quake now."

"GWOOOOOOOOHHHH!"

"Oh, that's a new one."

The branches are gathering...but there're three of them? They aren't as big anymore either. The entwined branches are facing the north, east, and south.

I look at the map...and see that the south has turned red in a fanned-out shape.

"Oh?"

"That was fast."

"Princess! There're some safe areas spread around! Anyone who can't find them should follow an animal!"

I relay Mr. Lucebarm's information to the teams.

"It looks like it's taking up the whole map, but there are a few gaps that won't be affected."

So that's why the branch swings are so fast. Too fast, even. I want to know why it only uses one branch instead of the three separately... Ah, I see.

This time, the north turns red. Then the branch that slammed into the south comes our way, toward the west.

"Is this a set pattern that we're just supposed to wait out until it's finished?"

"Ah, that kind of attack? It'd really suck if we have to wait for its health to drain before it ends."

"Shall we have the Aerial Unit bomb it from above?"

"I like the sound of that."

"Let's do it. Unit One!"

I recall Unit One and turn him into a horse with Quick Change. Having come this far, I don't want to be the one to do the running myself.

I then order Ms. Fairellen to aim their bombs at the branches. But they're too thick, so bombs won't do much good.

Once it's finished attacking the north side, the east lights up in red, and the branches begin to sweep down from the north to the south. We therefore head to the border between north and west.

Once it's time for the west to be targeted, we head north and outside its attack range. Don't we just have to head back to the western side after that? We don't actually have to rush to each safe area. The one problem would be that it all seems too obvious; therefore, it's probably actually more complex. Well, there's nothing I can do about that now.

Oh, it looks like Mr. Skelly hopped on his wyvern at some point and is now helping out with the bombing. It must be easier that way. I still can't summon wyverns yet...

Once the boughs have thumped twice in each direction, the attack comes to an end, and we all return to our original positions. I'll turn Unit One back into an owl too.

We try to lure out the branches again, but this time, they're not showing up. They must have dried out. All that's left is to cut off the two large boughs and neuter Triffid's main attack.

"Just about half of its life left. We're getting close to the end..."

"Yep... I think I'll head to the front lines too."

"That sounds like a nice idea."

Mr. Cecil shouldn't have any trouble dodging a stomp. As a top player, I'm sure he's not lacking in firepower either.

I'll continue with my usual spell attacks. I expect the enemy's attack patterns to enter the final phase any moment now...

"RAAAHHH!"

Ah, is that the change?

The boughs spread out in each direction to periodically stomp again and again...

“This is just harassment!”

The other branches are attacking normally, so it’s harder to aim at them now that they’re all moving separately.

It’s quite a pain to have to jump with each stomp, even if that *is* an effective method of dodging it, and it’s definitely not the kind of attack you want to be hit with, considering what a punch it packs.

“Unit One, use Pillar attacks against the branches that hit the ground.”

CLACK CLACK

From up in the air, Unit One sends the Pillar at a branch as soon as it slams into the ground. This seems like the easiest way of handling things.

Ah, the Aerial Unit has started to move. I’ll leave it in their hands.

“RAAAAAAAHHH!”

This cry must be to telegraph the stomp, so I wait for the right time to dodge each branch. It looks like everyone in the other directions manages to do the same. There’re a lot of spots on the battlefield where the ripples from the impacts collide.

“Wh-wh-whoa!”

“This got way too hard all of a sudden!”

“What a demon, making us jump while we’re trying to play our instruments!”

Since the first branches down are likely to be the first ones up, we need to aim for the branches that will slam down last.

The stomps become weaker as the number of branches dwindle, until finally, we snap off the last of its appendages.

“RAAAAAAH...”

“Oh, is that a unique breakdown voice?”

“Kill it now!”

This is a unique cry, unlike the ones that occur when it's inflicted with certain status ailments or had parts broken off it. It's also possible that the backstory of this event will require us to use unique items from the island. That would make this a “unique breakdown” in a literal sense. Since it was so difficult to put it in this state in the first place, it would likely have its defenses down for a while—now's the time to hit it with everything we've got.

Triffid starts to tip over, trying to throw its short stumps where its branches once were at us. I'm not quite sure what the tree is going for now.

“Hyah ha! We diiid it, we diiid it!”

“I know you're a monster, but I don't care!”

“Bad luck, getting born as a plant!”

“That tree's about to become our materials!”

“Hee hee hee...I'm sure it's got wood for us, yeah? Hey, leave the wood. C'mon...leave it...”

Those people are definitely yokai, not lumberjacks. Leave the wood alone, yokai.

With its trunk's defenses appearing to be completely depleted, the players swarm Triffid, quickly robbing it of its remaining 30% HP.

“R... R... Raaaah...”

“We're victorious!”

“HOORAAAAH!”

World Quest: “Reclaim the island's ecosystem!” complete.

Confirming quest ranking...

General Commander knockouts...0.

General Commander deaths...0.

Captain knockouts...0.

Captain deaths...0.

Outsider troop knockouts...6,471.

Outsider troop deaths...0.

Relationship with sacred beasts...excellent.

Target suppression...100%

Target subjugation...100%

Clear ranking...S-clear!

Reward bonuses have been added due to receiving a perfect clear.

MVP voting is now open. Please select players in each category who contributed the most to the battle.

Rewards will be distributed in bulk upon completion of the event. Please enjoy your remaining island survival until in-game time reaches midnight.

Your race level has increased.

You have reached race level 30. New race skills are now available to you.

Some restrictions have been lifted as a result of reaching level 30.

Radiant Magic has reached level 25.

You have learned Lumen Mine through Radiant Magic.

Your servant's level has increased.

I see... We started in the afternoon, which means we spent about four hours fighting Triffid. We can now spend the remaining eight hours celebrating.

Oh, we'll be able to vote on who performed the most admirably? It looks like we can vote at any point until midnight. There are categories for the entire event and for the world quest itself.

The server will release the damage rankings and similar stats later, so there are some categories we can't use those measurements to decide on. We'll just have to go based on players that stood out to us.

"Stasia! Take this!"

"Oh, now I have all the magic seasoning sets."

Tomo gave me the last set I needed, so I won't waste any time in combining them together.

"Whoa...this is amazing. I need to take this back with me."

"Oh...? Man, I really want some curry."

"I have the ingredients, so I might as well make some."

"Yes!"

We return to the center base and find that, sure enough, a party is getting started.

I waste no time getting some ingredients from Mr. Steiner, then set up my cooking kit and getting to work.

I should also review my new skills. Now that I'm at level 30, I need to adjust my Secret Art of Necromancy templates too.

"What's the status of your evolution, Princess?"

"It didn't turn out to be like Mr. Alf's evolution."

"Really? Well, you're already High Undead and everything, so that makes sense."

"By the way, Mr. Skelly. Did you receive a message about having some restrictions added?"

"I sure did. It must have to do with game balance."

"I agree. It told me that my restrictions were loosened now that I was level 30."

"You don't say? Simple math would be that the superior levels start around 60 or so. Maybe you don't evolve, but you do get a lot stronger because of the

restrictions coming off?”

“For now, I’ll just look at the skills I’ve unlocked at level 30...”

“They’re really good!”

The following three shared inhuman skills are the ones I was hoping to get:

MANA OPTIMIZATION

Your monster instincts control the mana flowing through your body and fortify it for efficiency.

Increases all stats. Modifier amounts depend on base level and skill level.

WILD INTUITION

As an inhabitant of the wilderness, your instincts are sharper than most.

Strengthens Instinct and all subsequent skills.

LAW OF THE JUNGLE

You can’t live in the wild without a sensitivity to others around you.

Strengthens Danger Sense and all subsequent skills.

I like these quite a bit. Especially the one that raises all stats without any other conditions. Why wouldn’t I take it? Passive skills are extremely helpful.

“Should I take Combat Instinct too?”

“The level 20 one? I think Alf grabbed it. I stayed away from it, since I’d probably end up dying if I played like that.”

COMBAT INSTINCT

The lower your remaining HP, the more your stats increase.

Modifier depends on base level and skill level.

Having low HP is the trigger that activates the skill, so I see why Mr. Skelly doesn't take it. Undead have automatic restoration, making HP management... not difficult, per se, but lacking in means to heal with, so it's too risky to constantly aim for low HP.

I'll go with the three skills I unlocked at level 30. As for SP...they each cost 3 SP, for a total of 9. That's not a problem, since I still have plenty. I'll make a note of these three and claim them after the event is over.

"Hmm...I think I'll take the special skill for undead too..."

"What'd you get for being a zombie?"

"Hm? Are they different depending on race? Mine was Flinch Resistance."

"Lucky! Skeletons get Fall Damage Reduction, but that's total garbage."

"You're already very lightweight."

"Zombies get Flinch Resistance, living armors get Knockback Resistance, and skeletons get Fall Damage Reduction...? Damn you, Management!"

"Think of it as an opportunity to save up SP."

"But it's not a shared skill, so it doesn't cost much!"

"That's true."

Two SP? That seems like a little much. I bet it will alleviate my movement restrictions while shooting and my spell chant cancel rate, so I'll take this one too.

As far as I can tell from the description of Fall Damage Reduction that Mr. Skelly mentioned, it's not just for fall damage but also lessens the blow when you're sent flying into a wall. Although, even then, it still doesn't seem all that useful.

"I'd still probably be dead as soon as I hit the wall."

"Yes... Being blown into things *does* usually count as a blunt strike..."

I'll be taking four new skills, but I need all of them for my build, so I don't really have a choice.

In any case, it's time to start seasoning the curry.

"Mm?! I smell curry! Where is it?!"

It's only natural that it wouldn't take long for people to catch wind of the curry. It has a very strong aroma, after all. But I'm sure Tomo and Rina's parties will be able to finish it all amongst themselves.

"You smell like curry, Sis!"

"Don't be rude!"

"Ouchie..."

"How else was she supposed to react...?"

I'll be sure to give my sister's face a good squishing.

"I see you've managed to make curry. What spices did you use?"

"They were all from the magic seasoning set."

"Ah, I see."

Once they heard my response, all the chefs start to seek out people with the seasoning sets they're missing. I imagine I'll smell curry coming from other places around the base very soon.

I hand out the meals to Tomo, Sugu, and Rina's parties, ending up with two extra servings.

"Mmm, it's really good. I just realized I haven't had curry in forever."

"Me too, I'm pretty sure."

"Me three!"

Tomo and Sugu haven't had curry in a long time? As for Rina, well, we don't make curry much at home.

"So it's not just curry powder? There's a whole bottled spice set!"

"Do they want us to share with everyone?"

“Probably, if we feel like it. We can trade this for stuff...”

The magic seasoning sets contains light soy sauce, heavy soy sauce, and fish sauce. There’s miso, of course, but also mirin, ponzu, mayonnaise, and more. With all of these, one will have plenty to cook with.

Since all the seasonings are C-quality, the devs must want us to farm them ourselves if we want something better. Cooking quality affects both the flavor and the buffs of one’s meal, so it’s a very important stat.



I only chose to do in-game cooking since I also do it in real life. This set is all I need—I'm not going to commit all my playtime to getting the best ingredients.

If I had to choose...I think I'd prefer to focus my efforts on Alchemy, as far as production skills go.

"That reminds me, Mr. Skelly. Here, you can have your alchemy kit back."

"Ah, thanks!"

I'm sure it'll get sent back to him automatically when the event ends, but just to be safe, I wanted to return it now.

Not only are some players drinking, feasting, and chatting, but others have started engaging in non-lethal PvP contests. It's turning into a real bash now.

Finally, the evening draws to a close.

"Ha ha ha! It's me again! Time to go home!"

"The second official event is coming to an end. Did you enjoy it, everyone?"

"*Hell yeah!*"

Second official event: Good Ol' Summertime Camping! The End.

Calculating votes...complete. Rankings released.

Please select your rewards within one real world month's time.

You will now be returned to the normal map after five minutes have passed.

The rankings are out? Let's see, let's see...

Hmm... Overall, the crafters did very well. Mr. Ertz and the others are above me. I'm pretty high up, by the looks of it, though. Actually, Mr. Cecil's and Rina's combat teams seem surprisingly low. Well, the best way to earn points must have been to frantically craft items and distribute them to the others.

For the world quest, the captains are on the upper end with a mix of

members from all teams throughout. The top of the leaderboard is mostly made up of people with Compounding skills who helped the most with resupplies and those with high levels in Cooking. I see a lot of Transportation members up there too.

“You won’t be able to claim rewards once a month’s up! Don’t forget, guys!”

“Even if you tell us you forgot, we’ll have no choice but to ignore you.”

“If you’re ready to get going, you can open the menu to return to the main world!”

As planned, I’ll go with the magic seasoning set and a few infinity canteens. Three should be good. I’ll also take a confectionery set, barbecue set, and noodle-making set. For now, I’ll save the rest of my points.

“Great work, Princess!”

“Thank you. You too, Ms. Clementia.”

“See you later!”

“Indeed. See you again.”

“Add me, Princess!”

“Add me, Princess!”

“Of course.”

“Yaaay!”

“Yaaay!”

I say goodbye to Ms. Clementia and add Mr. Ame and Ms. Trine to my friends list.

“By the way, do you two have any plans tomorrow, Mr. Skelly, Mr. Alf?”

“Hmm?”

“Maybe just to go hunting?”

“There’s somewhere I’d like to go. Would you care to join me? I’m certain we’ll be able to do some hunting too.”

“Sure!”

“Sure!”

Considering their lower levels, Mr. Ame and Ms. Trine probably can't join us.

“I want to travel to the 2-2 area, so let's meet in Belstead. What time works for you?”

“I'm sure we've gotta sleep once we're done here, so I'm fine to go tomorrow morning!”

“True... How long do you think it'll take?”

“The enemies are level 35 and over, so I don't think it will be incredibly short.”

“Ten might be a bit late. How about we meet at eight?”

“I'm already sleepy and will probably still be sleepy when I log out, so that should be fine.”

“All right. Then we'll meet in the Belstead plaza at eight.”

“Got it!”

“Got it!”

With that, I exit the event area and return to the regular overworld map.

I find myself back in the same place where I entered the event, so I bid farewell to Mr. Skelly and Mr. Alf, then log out. First, I'll do my stretching and then get ready for bed. The event lasted all the way to midnight, so I've already lost some sleeping time.

Finally, I take the skills I wrote down before, and then it's time to go to sleep.

Official BBS 4

[What would you bring] Good Ol' Summertime Camping: Final Day [To a deserted island?]

1. Management

This is a thread to discuss how to survive the second official event.

Please use it as a comprehensive thread for anything that relates to the event.

Day one here.

Day two here.

Day three here.

Day four here.

Day five here.

Day six here.

Day seven here.

4315. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ruling Class, huh? Yeah, that's a pain.

4316. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I didn't think much of the goblin ones...but now I see how much they change things.

4317. Shipwrecked Adventurer

They say it'd be an even bigger change if it were a King instead of a General.

4318. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oof... Ouch! F*****ing seeds!

4319. Shipwrecked Adventurer

They just keep coming...

4320. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's not like they do much damage. They just piss you off.

4321. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I know what you mean. It's so annoying.

4322. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It must be because it makes such a distinct noise when they hit you...

4323. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I hate how it feels like you got smacked by a paper fan.

4324. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Exactly!

4325. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I see. So it's the sound effect's fault?

4326. Shipwrecked Adventurer

That's my theory.

5862. Shipwrecked Adventurer

An early lunch break before we push through to the final area?

5863. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Lmao, why is the lunch such a feast?

5864. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

They're probably giving us a full banquet since this is the last day, right?

5865. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

It's sooo good!

5866. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Hey, Princess just started playing baseball.

5867. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

She what?

5868. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Yeah, she really *is* playing baseball.

5869. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

The princess hits a line drive.

5870. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

This is more like a batting cage than real baseball.

5871. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

But her opponent goes for a dead ball.

5872. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Damn, that was a nice noise.

5873. Shipwrecked Adventurer

So the princess now knows Reflect in addition to Parry?

5874. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh, that's true. She's never used that one before.

5875. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Don't you get Reflect Parry at level 15?

5876. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah, if it's the second tier of Parry...

5877. Shipwrecked Adventurer

What, she only just reached level 15? That's impossible...

5878. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah, it seems odd. Isn't Parry the princess's main defense skill?

5879. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Maybe she just doesn't use it while she's in a party with Mr. Alf?

5880. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah, I guess so...

5881. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's cute seeing her get dragged to the front because she's doing something dangerous.

5882. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's probably a matter of life or death to the tanks, who are getting shot in their asses...

5883. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hang on a second. Don't put your general commander on the front lines.

5884. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Princess isn't gonna die.

5885. Shipwrecked Adventurer

She'll probably do a better job surviving than the worst of the tanks...

5886. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah, I can easily see that.

5887. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Especially with all the shooting enemies in this event...

5888. Shipwrecked Adventurer

You know, the princess is really weird. How is she able to reflect like that? Even ignoring her reaction speed, how is the cooldown timer so fast...?

5889. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's possible she's got a cooldown buff. Maybe the secret is her equipment?

5890. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ah, I see. It's that equipment.

5891. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Being able to reflect like that makes her look even more like a J*di.

5892. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Is she gonna get a lightsaber and start jumping everywhere soon?

5893. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I really doubt she'll start jumping from place to place...

11250. Shipwrecked Adventurer

We made it to the boss!

11251. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Climax phase!

11252. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Four health bars?

11253. Shipwrecked Adventurer

We can't even get close to it! What do we do?

11254. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Dunno. But its HP is actually going down nicely.

11255. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I think the Aerial Unit is doing something up there?

11256. Shipwrecked Adventurer

We're playing some kind of bullet hell game where we dodge the seeds coming at us while we try to attack it.

11257. Shipwrecked Adventurer

For real?

11258. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The princess is playing volleyball this time. Or maybe tennis. Badminton works too.

11259. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Jiggle... Jiggle...

11260. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Shut up! Just watch the tree!

11261. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Nooo! I wanna stare at her body!

11262. Shipwrecked Adventurer

He's very blunt, lmao.

11263. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Let the builders surround her.

11264. Shipwrecked Adventurer

They'll all have different poses.

11265. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ah, something's coming.

11266. Shipwrecked Adventurer

What's it gonna be?

11267. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's a stomp!

11268. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh shit! Jump, second-wavers!

11269. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Jump when the ripples come! You've got this!

11270. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I know it makes sense, but I'm impressed by how fast you guys can switch from fighting the boss to posting on the boards.

11271. Shipwrecked Adventurer

This, for real. Whoops... There, we're all good.

11272. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Argh!

11273. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Don't tell me you actually got hit, idiot.

11274. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ah... A lot of people got hit with that one.

11275. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I'm sure a lot of people haven't been to the northern golem yet...

11276. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Well, it doesn't look powerful enough to kill us, so that's good.

11277. Shipwrecked Adventurer

All right, let's do what the princess said and wait for a stomp until we start attacking.

11278. Shipwrecked Adventurer

That's really all we can do. The trunk's too damn thick.

13641. Shipwrecked Adventurer

We took out the first HP bar!

13642. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh...? This looks scary.

13643. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Just *looks* scary? I'm absolutely scared.

13644. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh, we just have to run to where the princess is.

13645. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Evacuate, evacuate!

13646. Shipwrecked Adventurer

This is horrifying, lol.

13647. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Why didn't they run?

13648. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Dunno, but they put their bodies on the line to show us what happens.
Thanks, everyone.

13649. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I don't think we can live through that one.

13650. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Probably not...

13651. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's been given the name Earthquake.

13652. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh, that's easy to understand. It makes callouts easier.

15643. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Hey! Wait, wait, wait! Ah!

15644. Shipwrecked Adventurer

So the timing is staggered? This seems like it's gonna be hardest on the

middle troops.

15645. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's not much better for the front lines either. We aren't able to pay attention to where the ripples are coming from until it's too late.

16386. Shipwrecked Adventurer

How could they do that to the tree...?

16387. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Its precious leaves! Now it's all bald!

16388. Shipwrecked Adventurer

How could a human be so heartless?!

16389. Shipwrecked Adventurer

None of the players flying up there are humans, though.

16390. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Oh yeah. True.

17531. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Quake incoming!

17532. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yikes! Let's get to shelter.

17533. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It's not as powerful as before.

17534. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Is that because we broke the branches off?

17535. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Destroying parts of the tree must have an effect on attacks.

17536. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Oh? It's attacking from up top again?

17537. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

No, it's the bottom up!

17538. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

What a crude attack! How shameless!

17539. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

It's gonna rip new holes in our butts!

17540. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Shut your mouths and aim for the roots that just came out!

17541. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Using an axe is soooooo much more fun!

17542. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Listen to that satisfying sound.

17543. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Is it just me, or do some people have a slightly different animation when they attack?

17544. Shipwrecked Adventurer

It must be a special buff they're getting.

17545. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Looks like people with Logging get the buff when they use an axe.

17456. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Must be a combination that's strong against plants.

19121. Shipwrecked Adventurer

A... A quake?

19122. Shipwrecked Adventurer

I think so...?

19123. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ugh... I see what's different this time.

19124. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Stay on the borders between the areas, and it's really easy.

19125. Shipwrecked Adventurer

But everyone's got the same idea, so it's really crowded here.

19126. Shipwrecked Adventurer

They're saying there's multiple safe areas within the radius.

19127. Shipwrecked Adventurer

My agility's not great, so this is tricky...

19128. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Princess got on a horse and ran off to the side.

19129. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yeah, the captains definitely want to avoid dying. I don't care if she's on the sidelines. It's better for our mental stability.

20739. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Go ahead! Stomp some more!

20740. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Jiggle... Jiggle...

20741. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ah! You're a genius!

20742. Shipwrecked Adventurer

No one's jigglin' near me!

20743. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Sorry mine aren't big enough to jiggle for you!! Got anything else to say?!

20744. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Eek!

20745. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Why're you stepping on your own tail?

21420. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Yokai spotted.

21421. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Huh? A yokai?

21422. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Leave the lumber and go, yokai.

21423. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Ah, got it.

21424. Shipwrecked Adventurer

The lumberjacks are so burly, lmao.

21425. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Is it over?!

21426. Shipwrecked Adventurer

We did it!!

21427. Shipwrecked Adventurer

Time to feast!

21428. *Shipwrecked Adventurer*

Hyah ha! It's party time!

Chapter 5:

This Life and the Afterlife

I WAKE UP AND ENJOY a leisurely morning before logging into the game at the agreed meeting time.

Yesterday, I logged out as soon as I got back from the event. I don't need to prepare anything in particular—wait, no. I should head to the union and sort my inventory.

Due to my MP issues during the event, Space Magic has barely gone up at all. I want to keep leveling it up now that I'm back, but considering where I'm headed next, I definitely won't be able to spare the MP on Inventory Expansion.

Hm? Am I being followed? Is it a PKer? I wouldn't recommend killing me, but they might be wanting to give it a shot anyway. Sneaking around like that certainly makes them suspicious. Since I'm already going to the union, I'll unload my money under the assumption that someone's about to kill me.

I deposit tens of thousands of gold, leaving only 2,000 on hand. The area with the abandoned temple should also be very difficult, so this seems like a smart move. As for my item sets... There, I've combined them with my cooking kit.

Looking at my items on hand again, I don't have any rare items left. Although, I suppose I do still have dark parts...and sirloin and filets? Personally, I wouldn't see any value in killing me in this state. There's not a lot I can do... Oh, I see. It's because I absorb everything for capacity. The only valuable item I have on hand that I can think of might be the ring I got as a reward for taking out a boss.

I have some wood from Triffid that came as a reward for the world quest, but I can give all of that to Ms. Primura later. I'll always stick with my own current equipment, so I should use my money to buy new pieces for my servants.

That's enough organizing for now. I need to get going. I head to the statue in the town square and teleport to Belstead.

"Oh, hey there."

“Morning!”

“Good morning, you two.”

“Ready to head out?”

“Certainly.”

I invite them to my party and look over my gold and items on hand. I should tell them that a potential PKer is watching me too. But that will stay in party chat, of course.

“You don’t say?”

“It’s been about two months since the second-wavers joined now, so maybe they’re finally starting to get more active?”

“PKers and PKKers are a constant in MMOs, after all.”

Incidentally, PKers refers to player killers, but player-killer killers also exist as PKKers. They specialize in taking out those who target players. Although...it’s something of a game of back-and-forth.

We all summon horses and begin to head north.

“They’ve gotta be reckless, going after Princess like that!”

“Since her weaknesses are obvious, maybe that makes her easier to target, in a way? I just don’t see how the risk versus reward would seem worth it...”

“It’s hard to imagine they’re in their right mind in the first place if they’re after her... Maybe they have a personal grudge?”

“If they’re jealous of her, then the ‘rewards’ probably don’t matter.”

“What a petty person... It’s pointless to focus so much attention on others when you’re playing an MMO.”

“Agreed.”

“Agreed.”

We ride through the northern forest on our horses until we reach the area with the abandoned temple.

Hmm... I came here solo, but now that I think about it, wouldn’t it have been

faster to fly through on a wyvern? Aren't the only sky enemies those flying skulls? Oh well. It's too late to change now, so we'll stick to taking out the ground enemies as we press onward. We can get some hunting done that way too.

"Our goal is the center of the area."

"I researched this place as much as I could, but there was basically no information out there."

"I've only ever told Mr. Skelly about this, since he happened to be around. It's extremely valuable as a hunting ground."

"I doubt anyone would come here unless they've got Light magic or if they're after magic stones."

I inform the two of what I learned when I last hunted here. The main problems are the enemy reinforcements and their way of linking up.

"Hmm...would it be better to split up the party, summon everything we can, and take them on like it's a raid?"

"Ah, that's a good point. I'll bet we can make it through if the two of you summon your servants."

"I see. I can only summon four right now."

"Then I'll leave the party. You stay with her, Alf."

"Got it."

A raid party is formed of multiple smaller parties, so we invite Mr. Skelly now.

Considering my capacity, I'll go with one living armor servant at level 30, then leave the others at 20 with some multipliers, as well as a customized wolf. Together, my four servants come out as an armored unit, a skeleton, a skeleton wolf, and an owl. I'll give the owl Radiant Magic while I'm at it.

"Are you listening, Unit One? No Burst spells this time. Only use Explosions when and where I tell you to as well. Aside from that, you can fight normally."

CLACK

I wish I had the capacity to summon them all at level 30 with multipliers, as well as two customized body parts on the wolf. That would cost 8,100 capacity, leaving me 1,800 short. When I consider the prospect of summoning a wyvern... it's not looking good.

"I wish I could use dragons... I've gotta do something about this capacity!"

"I agree. Seventeen out of eighty-seven isn't fantastic..."

"Seriously!"

They start at an 8× multiplier, with seven more for multipliers. Only getting one wyvern for 17,000 capacity is a real pain... I still can't add one to my regular rotation yet. Their size would also be a problem in forests. Well, the benefit of using servants is that you can change them depending on the situation—I suppose it's a reminder to be sure to select carefully. I decided to go with an owl...but perhaps a spider would have also been sufficient. There are still materials I haven't tested out yet.

But back to the task at hand.

"I'll take care of the skulls if they show up, so please keep your eyes on the ground."

"Got it!"

"Got it!"

Mr. Alf has no long-range attacks. Mr. Skelly struggles to block enemy spells, so it will be easier for me to handle them.

Magical Catalyst contains the arts Material Barrier and Magic Barrier, which Mr. Skelly uses for defense. He explains that their strength is based off the user's Intelligence and Spirit stats. Perhaps I should take Magical Catalyst too... I'll bet I can use it with my rapier as well. But considering the state of my SP, it seems a bit sketchy right now. Judging by Super HP Regen and Superior Magic Assist, second-tier skills don't stop at level 30. Perhaps, in that sense, I still have enough to work with.

Oh, the flying skulls are here. I reflect the Dark spells they shoot at me and send back a few spells of my own.

“These skulls might actually make for good reflection practice.”

“Yeah, it’s harder to hit the flying types!”

“Well, we can’t spend too much time here... Unit One!”

I make the owl shoot a Lumen Shot from behind. Once they freeze, I follow up with Light Lance. These flying types usually have very low HP.

There’re eleven of us in total, including servants, so we’re able to push forward relatively easily. I’m sure it helps that I’m at a higher level now, but it’s much less of a headache than before.

“Oh, they’re wielding shields, swords, and bows? That’s a nice balance.”

“We should be able to defeat them, but I didn’t feel like I could make it past here before.”

“I’ll take care of the armored enemy. You guys take the rest.”

“Can I take the bow, Princess?”

“Certainly.”

The owl comes with me to face off against the skeleton archer, while I send my living armor servant at the skeleton soldier. The rest go to help fight Mr. Alf’s foe. While my servant holds off the soldier, Mr. Skelly should be able to finish it off. My owl and I have Light magic to take care of the archer, so I doubt the fight will last long. We can work on the living armor enemy as soon as we’re done.

Reflecting arrows back at the skeleton archer doesn’t seem to do much good. Arrows count as piercing weapons, which makes them less effective against its armor plating. However, it’s a good thing to have Reflect as an option now in addition to Parry. The arrows aren’t entirely useless, so I won’t waste them here.



I continue to shoot Light Arrow and Light Lance, and whenever the enemies pull out a bow, I switch to Royal Reflect and hold out my rapier along the line formed by Danger Sense. All that comes next is a bit of fine-tuning.

This lets me achieve the same results as Parry with even fewer steps on my part, so I definitely want to improve this skill. I also have Wild Instinct and Law of the Jungle now. I'm getting quite a lot of assistance from the game system.

My owl fires Lumen Shot from above the archer, wiping out a good chunk of its health, so I finish it off with an attack of my own.

Mr. Skelly's enemy is on the verge of defeat too. I'll help Mr. Alf take out the armored enemy he's fighting.

"Mr. Alf, can you send it flying?"

"Huh? Well, I guess it's possible."

"All right. Lumen Mine."

"I see."

My servants and I step back.

Mr. Alf gets on his horse and falls back a bit, at which point his horse kicks with its back legs. The enemy is knocked back from this move, straight into the Lumen Mine I just placed behind us, bringing a quick end to the foe. What an incredible combo.

"He shoots, he scores!" cries Mr. Alf

"Talk about a slam dunk!" responds Mr. Skelly.

"Yes, this way of doing things is nice and simple."

"By the way, Princess, I heard you can move Mines with Psychokinesis."

"Seriously?"

"The balls are our friends! Even if you die when you kick them!"

"Well, we'd certainly die if we kicked a Lumen Mine..."

It looks like Mr. Skelly is finished up too. We continue forward.

“Should I take Assignment Magic too, you think?”

“To fight against undead?”

“Yep.”

“They won’t target you since you’re the same race, but to be honest, it’s rare to encounter only one race per fight.”

“Indeed... And if we’re in a party, we can’t just leave you.”

“Well, it’s good enough to just use on my servants. I could use it on you too, couldn’t I, Alf?”

“I still don’t have a weapon with an attribute...”

They’re common in fantasy settings, but we still haven’t found any weapons with attributes yet. Nor is there any mechanic for resuscitation. I sure hope they turn up soon...

“Take that! Knockout! Direct strike! Whoa, my staff’s durability is way down!”

“What the hell are you doing?”

Magical catalysts aren’t meant to be used as blunt weapons.

Since we’re fighting undead, Dark and Shadow magic have no effect at all. Mr. Skelly must be very bored, considering the attack’s he’s using.

We defeat any undead that come our way and continue to head toward the center of the area where the quest marker resides. Since we’re all over level 30, it’s easy work for us.

Something that looks man-made has come into sight now.

“Oh? Flying skulls? They’re in the outer perimeter and near the center, but not in between.”

“If you’re going to keep an eye on the sky, Princess, should I summon a living armor servant too?”

“Can we even make it through?”

This place must have once been well developed due to the great temple that

used to exist here. But with all the time that's passed since it was abandoned, nature has completely reclaimed it.

The area is pretty open and spacious, however. Unlike before, it's relatively easy to see now. This should result in the game's favorite trick: an absolute swarm of enemies.

"Hmmm... Flying skulls count as skeletons, right...? Unit One, please go look at the town as an owl."

CLACK

"Vision Ship."

"Ah, I see. The ones up top and the archers are both skeletons!"

A perk of being inhuman is that the same races won't target you. With that trick up our sleeves, I share the owl's vision with the others to investigate.

"It's completely overtaken by vegetation. I see entrances in all four directions, but there aren't any enemies."

"No enemies? How could that be? Are we supposed to run straight in?"

Now what was it that Ms. Luciana said? I've got to check my notes...

Let's see... The temple was destroyed because it was swarmed with undead. The only cause of this was the statue of Stellura. That's why churches have statues at all four pillars now.

"If the statue's the issue, then why aren't undead going into the town?"

"Does a single statue of her still cause problems?"

"I'm curious about that too."

"For now, let's get moving. We should get to the front entrance."

"Sounds good to me."

We don't want the enemies to link up, so we leave and head for a place where we can see the temple's entrance.

Unit One stays at a distance as an owl, and I give him orders too. Actually,

they're all Unit One, since they exist in a cloud state, so I should order whichever one is closest to me. Once we arrive at the temple, I'll have Unit One bait the living armor enemies and fly into town. That might be a way to get through.

Once they see the owl, they chase him into the town. Then, they slow down, collapse, and disappear. No EXP for us.

"I see. That effect looked a bit unique. It must be the result of purification."

"So they get close, but when it's *too* close, they get purified? Or maybe they go there specifically to get purified? I don't know, but I think we should head straight for the temple."

"Agreed. Mr. Skelly, why not fly straight there? I think I'll stick to the ground."

"Hmm. Yeah, I'm not suited for running, so I think I'll do that."

"The princess would get targeted by the archers too, not just the skulls."

We say goodbye to Mr. Skelly before he takes off on his newly summoned wyvern.

"All right, then. Let's get going—hm?"

"What?"

"Oh, he's listed as pursuing a solo quest now."

As soon as he reached the territory making up the town, Mr. Skelly disappeared and his name turned gray in our party list. I look at my friends list and see it now displays him as being in the middle of a solo quest.

"Something weird started up. I think you should have been the one to come here, Princess!"

"I'm sure it's different from the quest I'm working on..."

"It's called 'The Road to the Nether'!"

"That's not it. But that's my ultimate objective, so it works out in the end. Let's join him."

"Ready to run?"

I recall all my servants and summon one back as a horse. Mr. Alf mounts his own horse, and it's off to the races.

We dash past everything that isn't a living armor on the road to town. When arrows and spells fly toward me, I either reflect them back or simply dodge them. Mr. Alf has protections against them all, so he's actually having an easier time of it.

Next, we pass through the broken, permanently open gate. As soon as I set foot in town, Mr. Alf disappears from my side, and I become isolated. It doesn't look like enemies are approaching either.

"THE ROAD TO THE NETHER"

The Nether is the afterlife—the gathering place of the elite undead.

You will face trials as you press forward, but if you prove yourself worthy, you may be able to reach the Nether.

1. Head to the abandoned temple.

Quest conditions: Undead Reward: Access to the Nether

I see. But I have to prioritize Ms. Luciana's quest first. I'll start by cleaning the chapel of the abandoned temple.

My map shows a quest marker to indicate the temple's location, so I'll head straight there. I doubt there's anything in this area unrelated to the quest.

I've made it to the front of the temple...and sure enough, it's in a bad state. I can almost imagine it collapsing if I do something stupid. The stone walls are covered in ivy, and the walls are crumbling too. Yet the pillars are still holding together, allowing the building to retain most of its shape. The temple may be nothing more than ruins, but it casts a nice atmosphere over the place in its own way. I would certainly like to visit a place like this in real life too—the decaying building and the vegetation reclaiming it from the ground up. I quite love this sort of thing.

All right, enough sightseeing. I need to head inside. The crumbling walls have

done little to protect anything in the temple's interior. It's covered in plants too. However, I can tell it was once a lavish place of worship. It's still easy enough to imagine.

Still, there must be some reason that this is called a temple instead of a church. It does appear to be constructed differently from the other churches I've seen. The entrance goes right into the chapel now. I believe that there's also some specific difference between a temple and a church in real life as well...

I'll definitely have to explore this place later. If I find anything of interest, it seems like it'll be a good idea to hand it over to Ms. Luciana. I'm after Stellura's divine protection, so I don't want to do anything foolish, if possible. Said protection sounds like it originated long ago, so there shouldn't already be someone in possession of it. If there is, though, they're probably in the Nether.

This must be the chapel. It's unnaturally beautiful when compared to the rest of the building. There's also a large door that looks impossible to open. I open the smaller door next to it and enter that way.

The first thing that catches my eye is a giant statue of Stellura. Surrounding her from three sides are smaller statues. A grand engraving is carved into one wall and rows of pews fill the room. It's truly unnatural how beautiful this place is. Perhaps the passage of time flows differently here? Well, for now, I should start by using Laundry. I certainly won't have enough MP to clean the whole place, so I'll have to keep waiting for it to cooldown. This appears to be a safe area, so it shouldn't take much time at all.

These three statues were clearly added hastily. According to Ms. Luciana, this was where they figured out they needed to place all four statues, so they must have placed the other three as soon as they learned that was the way to repel the undead. Although the purification around town still had an effect, the smaller statues didn't deactivate the larger one, meaning the undead still came in droves.

Destroying the statue of Stellura certainly would have been the quickest route, but I imagine they weren't eager to do that. Actually, considering the

preserved state of the chapel, perhaps it's more accurate to say they *couldn't* destroy it.

All right...have I managed to properly clean this place?

Quest: "Clean the Abandoned Temple" completed.

By fulfilling special requirements, you have achieved "Title: Stellura's Blessings."

STELLURA'S BLESSINGS

You have been blessed by the goddess Stellura.

Space Magic casting cost has been lowered.

REGARDING DIVINE PROTECTION FROM THE GODS:

Your actions in this world may earn you protection from the gods.

This protection grows stronger with each instance and will subsequently change titles from Blessing, to Protection, and then to Love.

Divine Protection is displayed as a title. The name and effects granted depend on the gods who are protecting you.

The conditions for receiving protection are also left to the gods.

Those seeking divine protection should attempt to do something worthy of their attention.

Good things, of course. Bad deeds that draw their attention will result in a visit from the assassins known as the outer ones...

So a blessing is one rank below divine protection... It won't change my equipment, but I think that just means I need to reach divine protection status. Or maybe there's some other condition I need to fulfill. Using Appraisal will be quickest. Let's see... It says "evolution required." Of course.

Now that I've finished Ms. Luciana's quest, it's time to work on the Nether quest. Hmm...what's that behind the statue of Stellura?

Whoa... This really feels like an entrance to Hell. There's a pitch-black staircase that appears to lead underground. It sure takes a lot of courage to even consider entering such a place. However, I have every intention of entering.

After some time descending into the total darkness with only the sound of my own footsteps to guide me, I arrived at what felt like a landing, just to find an ascending staircase. With nowhere else to go, I climb upward again. Suddenly, my view opens up as I emerge into a hallway.

"What's this? How unusual to have a visitor here. Please come right this way."

I can see the end of the hallway up ahead, so that must be where the voice is coming from.

I'm supposed to "prove myself worthy"...which means I can probably expect to start encountering my trials. I'm ready to go.

"Welcome, you undead who aspires to...become...an elite..."

She started with a big, welcoming smile on her face, only to gradually lose all emotion in her expression. Is she okay, I wonder? Actually, she has real skin and everything. She's a level 80 zombie, a High Undead murderklairs.

"Is this where I'm to undergo trials to get to the Nether?"

"Heavens, no! Is it really you? The woman who is to become our princess? Please come this way and allow me to guide you."

Wait, what about my trials? Oh well. If she says it's fine, then I'm sure it is.

"That was fast, wasn't it?"

"The person we've been waiting for is here."

"What...? The person we've been hearing of? I see..."

"Good day?"

The next person I see is a living armor character. He's a level 90+ High Undead

Lethal Knight.

The room is shaped like a ring around a platform that's raised above the rest of the floor. It looks like a space for close-quarters combat trials. There *was* a living armor waiting here, after all. Another person joins us as we pass through the room—yet another High Undead like the rest. It makes sense that they would be high level, since this is a testing ground.

However, we end up ignoring all of the trials in the end, heading straight to what is probably the final room. There looks to be another dark staircase leading out of here, so I imagine it's the last of them. The actual path to this point was a straight line.

“Welcome, our next princess. We here have truly, *truly* been waiting for this day. My name is Martinez, and I serve as second in command in our army.”

With that, the character kneels in front of me, appearing like what will be Mr. Alf's highest evolution. Shockingly, he seems to be a *level 100* Dullahan Royal Guard. I take a seat where he gestured for me to do so. It seems best to obey their orders for now, as I'd have no chance beating them in a fight. It's not just that they're a higher level than me—they might as well be endgame raid bosses.

“The second in command of the army does the trials?”

“It would usually be different, of course, but our leader is occupied at the moment, which is why I was waiting here.”



It seems just as strange to me that the second in command of the army would also be able to leave his post.

So is Martinez a general? I have no idea of the state of their military, of course, and it's hard to imagine the Nether's army is organized the same way as ones in real life. If he's second in command and also a knight, perhaps calling him "Vice-Captain Martinez" would be correct.

"Allow me to explain the current situation of the Underworld."

I start to get a very bad feeling. This is sure to turn into an event battle.

"My lady, we ask you to defeat the king who refuses to help us from his place at the throne."

"That's not very peaceful. You want me to start a revolt? Or I guess calling it a coup d'état would be more accurate..."

"That is the wish of our goddess, Stellura. The current Underworld is unable to properly function as intended. We're on the verge of seeing the spirits of the dead overflow into the world above."

"In other words, Stellura wants me to overthrow the useless king and take his place?"

"She told us that a new ruler would appear before us."

"And so I, being an undead, arrived here in the end."

"You have even received her divine protection. Please, I beg of you..."

For now, I'll take in as many details as I can.

"Long ago, there were once two people on the verge of becoming our ruler. But the king took power and drove the princess out. At the time, this was of no concern to us, but now things have taken a turn for the worse. We were unable to go out and search for the princess..."

That mummy?! I never expected to get her backstory here, but they never learned anything else about her after she was sent away. I still don't know where she went when she was above ground or how she ended up where I found her. Undead generally reside in the Underworld, so they were unable to

leave and search for her.

All I could speculate was that she lost a battle of succession.

“STABILIZE THE UNDERWORLD”

Win over the undead of the Nether and lead them to the throne room.

Send the foolish king of the Evernight Castle to the Abyss, claim the throne for yourself, and unleash your royal powers.

Enma’s Courtroom

Reincarnation Tower

Nether Army’s Training Grounds

Royal Villa

Evernight Castle Office

Quest activation conditions: Undead royalty Rewards: ???

This quest popped up once I received an explanation about the circumstances. I had no right to say no. In fact, I’m very much looking forward to the reward from this quest, so I have no intention of refusing. Considering the activation conditions, I doubt Mr. Skelly or Mr. Alf would receive this quest.

“We shall accompany you. Let us head first to Enma’s Courtroom. It contains the entrance to the Nether.”

I intend to obey and follow him, but it’s not like I have any other choice. It’s foolish to pass judgment on something like this when you’ve only received one side of the story...or is it impossible for undead to lie? I understand that embodiments of contracts and judgment aren’t allowed to deceive others, so if they’re using Stellura’s name, I probably don’t have anything to worry about.

Once the trial-givers and I reach the top of the staircase, I’m met with the sight of a massive lake. I can’t even see the opposite shore from where we are.

“We’ve been waiting. Welcome, you who is fit to be our ruler. We are

honored to receive you. Please join me on my vessel.”

A Charon... This must be Ms. Trine’s evolution. But it appears that this is actually the Sanzu river, not a lake. We all enter the boat while the Charon carries us to the opposite shore. Mr. Skelly and Mr. Alf appear to still be undergoing their trials.

I take my eyes off my friends list and survey my surroundings. There are many boats on the water, each carrying a deceased soul and a ferryman.

I *am* curious about why there are so many of these soul-carrying boats.

“The spirits of the dead will run aground... Does that mean these souls aren’t in their normal state?”

“Exactly. Since we can’t access our true power, we have fallen behind on transporting them.”

Vice-Captain Martinez explains that the king’s corruption means that royal powers aren’t functioning at all right now. Royal powers are related to the strength of the undead in the Underworld, but they also account for the purification of souls that have passed on, and even the expansion of territory in accordance with the souls of the dead. The powers haven’t entirely ceased, which is good, but things are out of whack enough to cause a work backlog.

“Why are some souls transparent while others aren’t?”

“Some souls have failed to comprehend and accept their own deaths. They typically grow transparent by the time they arrive at the opposite shore...but currently, simply looking around will tell you the whole story.”

Do the opaque souls look at the transparent souls, even those that are only slightly see-through, and think that they aren’t normal?

Hmm...it looks as though the place for undead who have finished their trials and the place for souls to board the boats are quite far apart. I also see some sort of building near the place where normal, non-undead souls board their boats.

“What’s that building over there?”

“That is the place where children await their parents... I suppose that would

be the best way of describing it.”

Ah...I remember something about how children who died first felt a duty to wait for their parents. I believe it’s called “Children’s Limbo.”

“But children don’t appear to be the only people there.”

“No matter how old one grows, to a parent, their child will always be their child.”

“I see. That’s true.”

“There are, of course, many reasons to be there, so it is also a place of ascertainment.”

It sounds like this is a place where one decides to live as if they’re in an orphanage or move on to be judged. The many reasons to be there include things like death by illness or monsters, of course, but also children who were given away due to poverty or sent away to become knights. Things like that. It’s a place for children to wait for their parents and also a place to see how parents will respond when reunited with their children.

“It looks like some people aren’t going that way and are headed straight for the other side.”

“We also don’t know why that happens. Perhaps they understand the direction to some extent. There must be many young children and those with lingering attachments to their families.”

God—*Stellura*—only knows.

“Why aren’t there any animal souls here?”

“The dimensions were separated by *Stellura* herself. This is the dimension of humanity.”

“It’s the most difficult one, to be frank. Having intelligence and emotions really complicates things.”

The Underworld is managed by the undead, while the living world stands as its opposite. Those referred to as humans appear to assemble amongst them in different tiers. They could be called different races of humans, like in real life, but this is also the realm for the beastfolk, elves, and their sort in the game

world.

Humanity, insects, animals, and monsters are separated in different dimensions, with each dimension containing separate tiers based on their karma. A rough comparison would be to say that Heaven and Hell exist as separate dimensions. However, excluding some monsters, bugs and animals typically act based on instinct, so their tier structure is different from humanity's.

Since I have nothing else to do while on the boat, I take in the necessary information about this realm that I'm to rule until we finally arrive at the shore.

"That didn't take very long, considering the size of the river."

"As I mentioned earlier, this voyage is to enact the process of turning souls transparent—of having them accept their own deaths by giving them time to process their emotions. For that reason, the voyages always last different amounts of time. As you can see, some souls hardly make any progress at all. Undead have no need for that process, so it is a short, straightforward journey."

"I see... We'll be on our way, then."

"May you receive the blessings of war."

After the ferryman sees us off, we proceed along a road until a large gate comes into view ahead. It resembles one that would stand in front of a nobleman's mansion. There's a long line in front, but it appears to be moving fairly quickly. It looks like we can simply cut to the front of the line of souls.

We pass through the massive gate and arrive in a building with high ceilings and a gothic-style chandelier faintly illuminating our surroundings. Near the entrance are a few hallways with some undead assigned to them, standing outside the halls.

"Every route is the same. No matter which path you take, they all lead you to an arbitrator."

Since this place is called Enma's Courtroom, the arbitrator will be someone akin to Enma. In other words, it's probably safe to assume they judge souls

based on their karma and decide if they go to Heaven or Hell.

The undead on the floor all kneel to me as I pass through the hallway directly in front. I feel like it's a bit too early for such formalities, but if I do manage to claim the throne, I'm sure such bows will become a normal greeting for me.

The hallway connects to a small room where an undead arbitrator meets with the souls of the dead, then sends them down another selection of multiple hallways. There I'm on the receiving end of kneels again. I pass forward through one of the halls.

"Tiers are decided in the previous room."

"And that's why they go forward through the halls?"

"No. The arbitrators divide souls on the main floor, and in the previous room, the arbitrator sorts you based on karma. If souls are a certain level of white in that room, they take this passage, but the darker they are, the more complicated the passage they're sorted into. These hallways cause those of the same level of karma to converge, and in these separate lines, they arrive at the final room."

"So there's more than one second room, each one with an arbitrator inside, and the main floor is to sort souls into each room?"

"Indeed. Karma plays no real role on the main floor."

"The arbitrators sort the souls in the second room, then as they progress, they merge with souls of the same karma as them and head to the final room together?"

"That is correct. The final room is large enough to see the other karmic groups, but a barrier prevents you from doing anything other than progressing straight forward."

I decide to keep going, since this part will be easier to understand when I see it.

We come out at a place that resembles the main floor but with a much different center. An incredibly luxurious chair sits on the raised stage where a single undead is seated.

The multiple lines head toward their respective hallways as the seated undead watches over them.

“That is the High Arbitrator giving final confirmations. The color of each line’s karma is similar, so it’s easy to tell if anyone sticks out and is in the wrong place.”

“Are the ends of those halls the Nether and Abyss?”

“Indeed. Let us talk as we proceed.”

Vice-Captain Martinez waits to approach the High Arbitrator with the remaining undead trial overseers.

“I see you’ve finally come...and with someone divinely protected too.”

“Everything is as planned.”

“I see. This is what everyone here wanted. There are no breaks in my lines, and the prime minister has waited a very long time as well.”

“An arbitrator’s going to come with us too, right?”

“Yes, I will go. I will call for a replacement.”

The High Arbitrator is apparently also joining us. We wait a bit for his replacement to show up, then continue to follow the vice-captain, sticking to the right until we exit the building.

“This is the Nether. The other road leads to the Abyss.”

“Is that Evernight Castle over there?”

“Indeed. It is in quite a state of decay, but that will change after today.”

After today...? So royal powers are capable of changing the castle too? I suppose castles are like a symbol of the land itself. But is it just me, or are the castle spires missing? I’m sure it’s lovely in its proper state, but right now, it’s just an incredibly sad sight.

“Now we will gather the warriors who are waiting for us. Where shall we enter from?”

Even though he’s suddenly acting like the kind of NPC that follows you around, I’m the one with no sense for this territory, so I wish *he* would take me

there. For now, I see that “Enma’s Courtroom” is completed on the quest screen, so we’re on to the next location.

“What’s the Reincarnation Tower?”

“It’s that pillar that extends into the heavens.”

It appears to stand in the plaza of the town at the foot of the castle. The tower, so tall one can’t even see where it ends, is where souls go when their time has come. Frankly, they make it sound more important than the castle itself. It stretches up to the Astral to help souls reincarnate.

“Where does the army train?”

“Inside the castle.”

The army’s training area is on castle grounds. The royal villa is probably there too, of course, as is the office. That means our route is basically decided.

“Let’s go from Reincarnation Tower to the training grounds, then to the villa, and then the office.”

“Allow me to guide you. Oh, we will see a statue of Stellura along the way, but the prime minister instructed us not to pray to her until after the king’s been dethroned.”

“The order must matter somehow, then.”

“It appears so. Now please stride boldly down this path.”

“We don’t have to sneak around until our troops are here?”

“No, we do not. The enemy has no firepower to speak of.”

Ah... So they had seen this coming for a long time and were simply waiting for a replacement to come.

“The difference between undead monsters and the souls of the dead is intelligence. And the difference between those souls and us undead is Stellura. In other words, we are all devoted to her, and despite the king being granted the great role that he has, we are falling apart. We would never lend a hand to such a poor leader.”

As he spoke, the vice-captain and the others took a defensive position around

me as my guards. Religious wars are famous in real life as well, so I can't make fun of such devotees. I guess I'll just have to dedicate myself to RPing this time around! I'm likely to run into a PvP battle if I ever have to be replaced as a ruler. Making enemies of the undead would certainly be a horrible result.

The souls of the Nether, who appear to be residents, stare at us as we go. I take a look at my surroundings. The buildings certainly are crumbling. If it were only the occasional structure, I could chalk it up to individual circumstances, but all of them are in disrepair. The ground under our feet here on this main street is also cracked. How curious.

The Skytree doesn't hold a candle to Reincarnation Tower. But it's unfair to compare the creation of a god to a man-made building.

"Now we'll head to the training grounds, and once we've been to the royal villa, we're going to visit the prime minister."

"Let's bring a witness, just as we planned. You, who is worthy of ruling us. Please bring salvation to these souls of the deceased."

"I'll do everything I can."

One more person, the tower's guard, is going to join us as well. This "witness" must be someone there to observe the changing of rulers. The current king doesn't seem very strong, so I feel like we've already surpassed all the firepower we'll need. The next stop, the army's training grounds, will probably supply most of our fighting power. I actually feel a little bad going up against a single king with so many people... But it sounds like he's been the cause of his own undoing, so it doesn't particularly matter to me.

"Let's head to the training grounds now."

"Sure. Shouldn't we hurry up a bit too? There's a whole city's worth of souls."

"That usually changes depending on how many souls are around, but the expansion is too slow now, so there is little we can do."

The territory would usually expand with the royal powers, but now that it's unchanged, the population density has become particularly troubling. Then again, if modern-day Japan is any example, they can probably manage.

We pass the statue of Stellura on our way to the Evernight Castle. As instructed, no one pays her any attention. It sounds as if those instructions came from the prime minister, but I wonder if he knows something about my evolution route.

“How long has the prime minister had his job?”

“For the past thousand years or so, I believe. He’s the longest-serving member, after all, and has had his role longer than the general commander.”

“A thousand years...? Has the general commander also been around for a long time?”

“She started about 600 years ago, I believe.”

I suppose that makes sense for undead. If he’s been here for 1,000 years, then it’s certainly likely that he knows something about undead evolutions. A prime minister would be interested in gathering information. The others tell me he’s an Aversa Elder Lich.

Speaking of Liches, I wonder if Mr. Skelly and Mr. Alf are doing all right. They appear to still be undergoing their trials, judging by my friends list... Well, I won’t bother them while they’re doing solo quests. A single mistake during a solo quest, without anyone to help, can often lead to death. You need teammates around to cover for you. Players can even adjust whether or not they see messages at all during solo quests in the settings menu. This is done to prevent the tragedy of a sudden notification breaking one’s concentration.

Here we have the first castle I’ve ever seen in this game, although it’s very shabby. The spires of the castle aren’t just worn down—they’ve completely broken off. It seems like the perfect atmosphere for moon-gazing.

It appears our route is taking us straight to the training grounds without making any shortcuts. Oh, look, there’s a maid. There’s knights here too. Every last one of them steps off to the side, opening a path for us, and bows their heads.

Yeah, I really feel like a true princess now. Everyone here looks quite different. Some are skeletons, some are living armor, and some have spirit

bodies. I'm just thankful they're recognizably human in their shape. What a low bar to clear.

We avoid staircases and proceed deeper into the castle until we reach something akin to a courtyard.

"Straight that way is the royal villa, but these are the training grounds."

The royal villa is after the training grounds on the list, so we go around the sides instead of going straight through.

The courtyard is set up like a garden, but there's nothing in particular to see. It makes sense that nothing is blooming in the garden, considering the state of the castle. It's a real mess. You would think a ruler would care about these details, but perhaps it doesn't bother him at all? If I take the throne, I'll start by restoring this place.

After crossing through the sad courtyard, a surprisingly grand wall comes into view. It must be the one enclosing the training grounds. When I get closer, I notice cracks in it, but at least cracks are better than crumbling pieces.

The vice-captain notices one person in particular. "Oh, General Commander. Perfect timing."

"Martinez...? Heh heh, so the time has come. She even has divine protection."

"Yep, it's finally time to take him down."

The general commander is a beautiful woman with shoulder-length blonde hair and blue eyes that are slightly pointed at the corners. Her level, you ask? Why, it's 100, of course.

"My name is Svetlana Granin. Please call me Lana."

She's shown me some surprising courtesy. I introduce myself to her as well.

"I'm a spirit body race and an Einherjar Swordmaster."

Einherjar? Naturally, I don't have to look that one up. "You're a hero?"

"Well...I used to be. I'm only one mere spirit body here, but in my empire, I was of a little use."

The tone of her voice sounds like she just told a cheeky joke. This character is

surprisingly playful.

Her empire...wasn't it called the Dinait Empire on the southern continent? So that's where she's from? Vice-Captain Martinez told me she came here 600 years ago, but considering the location, I feel like so long as they haven't reincarnated, it's possible to run into heroes of legend here.

"Let's talk about the details later. Martinez, what's next?"

"Next up is the royal villa."

"Then on to the prime minister?"

"That's right."

"Let's be on our way, then."

Lana joins our merry band, and we head for the villa. The people in our party now are the Nether's highest level characters...but only some of them. There're still more. These immortal characters have unbelievably high levels.

Lana really reminds me of a princess knight. Since we're different races, our uniforms are completely different too. High zombies look the same as living beings, and high spirit bodies seem to have it easy as far as movement goes, but the same isn't true of skeletons and armor. What a pity for those bones and metal plates.

Still, Lana has quite the bold taste in dresses. The neckline is very low, and the long skirt fades from white to blue. Considering that plunging neckline, it's clear she's been blessed in the chest area. It's the upgraded version of a V-neck, after all...

As I watch her take long strides with perfect posture, her good looks accentuated by a pair of foxlike eyes, I'm impressed by how elegant she is. It's nice, actually. Very nice indeed. She must be over 170 centimeters tall. She's definitely not over 175, but she has a wonderful body all the same. However... isn't she the captain of the knights? So she should be the most skilled fighter in the Underworld. Or perhaps she's the brains who comes up with their strategies. But if she's an Einherjar, she must be able to fight. Einherjar are famous in Norse mythology. The valkyries gathered their brave heroes' souls in Valhallato fight in the battle of Ragnarök. She doesn't currently appear to have

a weapon, but I'm sure she can handle herself in a fight all the same.

Whoops! I was busy staring at Lana, but it appears we've arrived. I feel like we walked quite a ways. Lana doesn't hesitate to fling the front door open.

"Eleanora!"

She can also yell very loudly. That shouldn't be too surprising, considering she's a soldier.

A spirit body character phases down from above—probably from the hallway of the floor over us. She then materializes like Lana, so that she's no longer transparent.

"What's the matter, Lady Granin?"

"Our wait is finally over."

"Oh my...!" the newcomer says to me. "It's an honor to meet you. My name is Eleanora. I am both the head maid and personal maid here at the villa."

"She's actually the leading maid overall in the Underworld," Lana adds. "She instructs all the maids and ladies' attendants."

"Does that mean you're the oldest person here?"

"No, I'm actually rather young for an undead."

"That's right. However, we operate on the merit system. Age, influence, fortune—that sort of thing means nothing to us whatsoever."

I can definitely understand that. The Underworld is a completely independent space, and Lana would be over 600 years old too. Even the prime minister is over 1,000. Everyone who dies comes here as a solitary soul, so their money can do them no good. Undead are superior here. It doesn't even matter if you were a king in life.

"What we seek is the talent and character to fulfill one's given role. The only other requirement is devotion to Stellura."

"And that makes the only problem the king?"

"Yes, exactly. It really has us in a bind...although that will end today as well."

"Indeed. Let us hurry and have him make his exit. It will be worth it in the

end.”

Both of their smiles are extremely terrifying, so I think it’s time we get going to the next and final stop—the office...where the prime minister will be. It’s time to head out!

Eleanora, who has now joined us, tells me she will care for me as her new mistress if I manage to steal the throne. Since I’m to become the ruler, they insist I address them without formalities, although I don’t see the point in adjusting my current manner of speech.

As head maid, Eleanora wears a very simple Victorian maid’s uniform. It’s the typical kind with a long black dress and a white apron. Her brown hair is tied up into a ponytail with a ribbon. Everything about her appearance is simple. She also has violet irises. Nothing about her particularly stands out as unique, especially when standing next to Lana. But perhaps that’s best for a maid. A servant should never stand out more than their master. Eleanora is also a bit taller than me—probably around 165 centimeters.

The undead throughout the castle continue to kneel to me as we proceed, and after climbing a staircase, our goal is in sight. I can tell it’s the right room since knights are posted outside of it, unlike the rest of the doors. The knights are kneeling to me too.

Just like at the villa, Lana sends the door flying open.

“Oh? It’s just Granin...”

“Where is that man, Prime Minister?”

“In the throne room, as usual, I’m sure.”

“Then it’s time for us to go, is it not?”

“What...? Don’t tell me...”

“Good day, Prime Minister,” I greet him. “I believe we’ll be working together from here on out.”

“Oh... Finally...she’s finally here... Her soul and character are perfect. It doesn’t matter that she’s an outsider, I suppose.”

“I probably should have asked about that earlier. Is that all right?”

“I can tell by looking at your soul color. You also seem to have Stellura’s divine protection.”

“I received her blessing just before I came here.”

“No one unworthy would be given her blessing. She’s very strict.”

This is my first meeting with the prime minister, who is likely the highest evolution of Mr. Skelly’s race. Then again, sometimes there are certain things only given to NPCs. Since royalty exists here, Mr. Skelly should be able to evolve into it as well, so long as he doesn’t make any errors with his evolution route. MMOs aren’t very forgiving with do-overs.

The prime minister is a male skeleton, and since I only come up to his shoulders, he must be 190 centimeters tall or so? As for the rest of him...it’s a lot of bones, but he *is* wearing a very expensive-looking robe.

The quest can continue now that I’ve been to each place. It’s asking me to take my subordinates to the throne room.

“Let’s get going.”

We head to the throne room with the prime minister and his knights in tow.

“We would ask that you give us orders, my lady.”

“Me? I think Lana can handle that...”

“The leader’s job is to give orders to those who are able to resolve a situation.”

“That’s true. Can you fight, Prime Minister?”

“I specialize in Dark and Soul magics, which aren’t terribly effective against a fellow Undead. Although I’m sure I’m strong enough to take out that know-nothing.”

That know-nothing?!

Even as a spell-slinging Lich, it does seem accurate to say that he could physically defeat the king.

For now, I’ll take this as an indication that I don’t absolutely have to order them around, but I should still be thinking about how to divide up the people

I've gathered. Currently, we have the prime minister, the knights that were at the door, part of the Nether's army, their general commander and vice-captain, a few of the trial overseers, the gatekeeper from Reincarnation Tower who will serve as a witness, the arbitrator from Enma's Courtroom, and finally, the head maid. Hmm...

"All right, then. Prime Minister, I want you to guard me, and Eleanora will be at my side, of course. I'll leave the strategies to Lana and her troops to come up with. Those of you who are trial overseers, please watch over the entire battle for us."

The knights will join the prime minister in protecting me. The gatekeeper, arbitrator, and I will be watching the battle to study it.

"Does this seem all right?"

"Yes, it's a solid strategy. You've done well."

"Then I'll leave the rest to you."

We've arrived at a large, decorated door. Living armor characters stand at each side. Naturally, they're over level 90. Even the maids have been at least level 60 ever since we entered the castle. I can't help but laugh at the difficulty. It's like I'm in an endgame dungeon.

The living armors slowly open the doors for us to reveal a rectangular room with tall ceilings. Ignoring the faded colors throughout, it's a very lavish room. At the back of the room, sitting atop a large chair on a raised platform, is a man.

"You there. Why are you here?"

"You already know why," responded the prime minister.

"I'll be taking that seat from you. Lana!"

As per my orders, Lana brings her Nether troops forward, while I stick to the prime minister's side.

"Y-you little...! You can't have it! I won't let you! It's mine!"

The king has blond hair and blue eyes. His appearance makes him look more like a prince than anything—a sad little prince. He's like the kind who breaks off his engagement with a villainess only to get his just deserts in the end. The

more handsome he is, the more obvious his character flaws become in comparison. It's not a cute contrast at all. Words and deeds are very important... I'll need to be careful of that too.

The Nether soldiers steadily advance toward the prince (lol). I should probably refer to him as "the king" so long as he's still on the throne, but oh well.

I take a look at his level and see that he's in the 50s, so he *is* still quite a bit above me. It just doesn't matter, since I'm able to make use of Lana and her troops.

"Damn you, coward! I know I can't beat all of you! But if you agree, I'll fight you in a one-on-one duel!"

"Did you hear that, Lana? We may as well listen to his final request."

"What? But I don't want to."

"Lana says no. Please just give up."

"I was asking you, not her!"

"Goodness. Prime Minister...do inheritance rights exist here?"

"They do not."

"Then I have no reason to fight you whatsoever," I tell the prince. "I'll go ahead and fulfill my duty instead."

"Hi-yah! Take that!"

"AAAGH!"

Ah, they got him right away. The Nether troops seemed to disappear for a moment, and then suddenly the prince went flying. They must have all punched him at once.

"Aah! St-stop this at—ngh!"

Well, I hear they all had quite the grudge against him, so I understand why they want to use this time to pour salt in the wounds. Not that I have any intention of stopping them.

Please, take it out on him until you feel better.

Judging by the reactions of the Underworld residents, it appears that there are no other members of the royal family. If there were, surely they would have gotten rid of the prince right away.

“Arbitrator. We can send him to the Abyss, but will you judge him for us?”

“Of course. Please leave it to me.”

“Prime Minister, do I need to do anything before sitting on the throne?”

“Not at all. Feel free to take your seat.”

As for the prince, he’s been driven to a corner and surrounded.

“That’s my throne! Don’t you touch it!”

“As of today, it belongs to me,” I inform him.

“Get out of my way, all of you!”

“That’s a poor joke. *You’re* the one in *our* way. Do you plan to trouble us forever? Get out of our sight already,” Lana tells him harshly.

I ignore them for now, since it’s a scary situation and I don’t want to be involved. I head for the throne and take a seat.



You have taken the throne. Power is now available for you to grant under your rule.

Quest: "Stabilize the Underworld" complete.

By fulfilling special conditions, you have received "Title: Ruler of the Underworld."

You have acquired a home. Please see the help menu for information about housing systems.

A new ruler has been declared in the Underworld. The Underworld will now reclaim its true power. Death penalties for outsiders have been updated.

As they have their fun off to the side, Lana, Prime Minister, and the others start to glow with the same red light I saw during the world quest. It probably means that I've become their ruler, which means I'm also likely to have control over the Undead in the Underworld. I see waves rippling out from the throne itself, leaving everything in their wake purified and clean.

"AAAAAAH!"

Hm...? What was that last thing? Whoa, the housing menu opened up. Also, the prince is being ever so noisy. I'm the ruler, so he's officially been demoted to a prince now. Actually, since he's about to be sent to the Abyss, he's even less than that.

"Ah, how wonderful. Finally...finally we have someone true of heart... someone to serve..."

I'm sorry to interrupt you while you're so emotional, Prime Minister, but this isn't the time for that. Please come back to reality, old man. The princess needs you. I've been bombarded with too much information!

As for the first parts of the message...I'll have to look them over, but I don't see any problems there. I'm sure I've simply received the royal villa as my home.

The problem is the last of those system messages. As I recall, the current death penalty is a 50% reduction in gold on hand, which goes up to 75% for evil

players. I believe it also applies a temporary status reduction and equipment durability reduction.

“Damn you! Gaaah!”

“You’re still here...? Such a petulant little brat. Granin, stop fooling around and get rid of him already.”

First up is...

“Prime Minister, I need to confirm something. The Underworld consists of the Nether and the Abyss, correct?”

“That is right. The Underworld refers to all territory under Stellura’s domain.”

It seems I was correct, which means the ruler of the Underworld is in charge of both.

“So this is the Underworld, and above ground is the realm of the living?”

“Yes, though we generally refer to them as the present life and afterlife.”

“Ah...I see.”

I learned about this earlier when hearing about the tier separations. If the prime minister is saying this, then it must be true. It’s important to be sure that everyone is on the same page regarding definitions. Most important indeed.

I’ll take a look at the housing menu... Oh, my home is so big. It looks like I get the entire castle, and all the knights, maids, and other castle workers in residence will function as NPCs to assist me.

Wait, this isn’t actually the housing menu, is it? The castle is my place of work. It’s time to strategize! The castle, Enma’s Courtroom, and the town already exist, and it looks like I can upgrade them...but where do I get the money? I don’t exactly want to pay for it myself... I’ll have to look this over in detail.

Housing menu... Ah, here it is. Indeed, my only house is the royal villa. This also comes with helper residents led by Eleanora. I would guess that with normal houses, you can employ whatever residents you like, but since it’s part of the castle, it already comes with a set of employees.

“By the way, it looks like things have cleaned up nicely here.”

“It’s been revitalized with the arrival of a proper ruler! This is the true state of the castle.”

The illegitimate ruler was just dragged away by Lana and the arbitrator. Farewell, powerless little NPC. Thank you for all your help.

There sure are a lot of things I need to confirm. I’d like to start by figuring out the new death penalties... Ah, there it is. It’s part of my job, not my housing.

Hmm...oh, I see. When we die now, we go through the Nether once instead of directly respawning at the town square where we saved our games.

What’s going on here?

OFFERINGS TO THE NETHER GIVEN UPON DEATH:

Normal players: 30%

Criminal players: 75%

Huh... Ah, here it is.

NETHER OFFERINGS:

A place like a shrine or temple that players encounter upon death.

By paying an offering, they can return to their last save point.

This means that the money usually lost upon death will now go to the Nether? I imagine I’m supposed to use this money to expand the environments here. In other words, I can probably check on this whenever I feel like it.

It looks like I can’t mess with the numbers here. Well, that makes sense for death penalty money, but I feel like some other games have allowed such a thing in the past... I believe there was once a guild who specialized in PvP who would take over territories to change the death penalty setting... Well, that has

no connection to this game, and it would be a pain to deal with too, so I'm fine with leaving the numbers as they are.

Next up: my new title.

RULER OF THE UNDERWORLD

With the right to give orders to the inhabitants of the Underworld, you are exempted from death penalties.

You have gained the Evernight Castle villa as your home. Expansion of the Underworld is now possible.

I see. That's a great title. Now I don't have to pay money if I die.

The place where the souls of dead outsiders go is different from that of dead residents. It appears to be the Nether donation box I read about earlier. Once I've received enough donations, I'll work on making this place nice and lavish.

Watch me build a church with the money from your death penalties!

Hmm...maybe saying that to their faces would sound like bullying.

But before I dig into the details of housing...

"Prime Minister, I would like to evolve now."

"Then let us head to the plaza."

We then make our way to the statue of Stellura. I follow the prime minister there. This statue is already unlocked, and everyone has returned to their own positions. The person from Reincarnation Tower is headed our way too, so he joins us along with Eleanor, my personal maid; and the vice-captain, my new guard.

The previously worn-out and rotting interior looks completely new now. The work menu allows me to see the layout of the castle, so I definitely won't get lost. I can probably glance at it as I walk around to make sure, though.

The castle feels a bit empty, but that's because I've only just started with it. I'm sure expansions will become possible with time. That sort of thing is normal

for games.

I can open the work menu so long as I'm within a certain range of the castle... In other words, I can open it anywhere in the Nether or Abyss.

"Oh... The crystal lotuses have bloomed. That little rat..."

The prime minister is staring at a lotus. It's partially transparent, which must be why it's called a crystal lotus. There's quite a lot of them in bloom. I feel like I remember hearing that lotuses only blooming in the morning, but considering these are crystal, they probably aren't the same. The Nether is the land of eternal night anyway. I'll have to take a good look at them later.

When we arrive at the town, it looks like the knights have already been waiting for me. I walk through the path they've laid out for me and head straight for the statue. How long have they been preparing for this? When I sat on the throne, it resulted in an instant upgrade, so that's probably when they realized what had happened.

The guard from the prime minister's office is waiting for me at the statue too. This must have been his doing. I wonder when he came down here?

"We've been waiting for you. Thanks to you, this realm is beautiful once more. Our gratitude knows no bounds."

"But all I did was sit on the throne."

"Just having a ruler is most important. We look forward to seeing your reign, madame."

"I look forward to working with you as well, seeing as how I have a long ways to go."

"You'll gain strength in no time at all. That's what it means to be a ruler."

I wonder if that's true. However, to be meta for a moment, I'm actually a player, so my growth will probably be ridiculously fast.

Also, I'm "madame" now? Until now, I've been "our Princess" or "the one fit to be our ruler" to them, but they must have switched manners of address as soon as I took the throne. So I'm "madame" instead of "Your Highness"? I recognize the word, but isn't that for French women? I'll have to look it up... Ah,

I see...it used to be used for rulers and monarchs long ago. The people in the Nether appear very old, so I suppose that's a possibility.

I glance at the prime minister. He tells me to announce my arrival to the statue. I won't waste any time, then.

By reaching the Nether, a new evolutionary race has been unlocked.

The evolution marker has started flashing aggressively in a corner of my vision. I haven't seen it in quite some time.

NETHER PRINCESS

A member of the Nether's true royal lineage.

You've finally made it home.

AVERSA PRINCESS

A member of the Nether's true royal lineage.

Manager of the Nether and Abyss, ruler of the Underworld.

Nether versus Aversa?

"Did you get Aversa as an option?"

"Yes, I got Nether and Aversa."

"I recommend choosing Aversa."

"Like you, Prime Minister?"

"Yes. Nether only has about two more evolutions after that. It's a waste of an opportunity."

"What about Aversa?"

“That’s all up to you, madame. Aversa allows you an entrance to the Medium...but that’s all I’ll tell you.”

“Even though I’m an outsider...?”

“You’ve received divine protection. If you choose to go there, I will do everything in my power to assist you.”

“Very well. In that case, I’d like to evolve.”

“Eleanora, show her to her bedroom.”

“Of course. Allow me to lead the way.”

The knights forming a path for me fall back with us as well. Is there really a need for guards in this world? Although now that I think about it, they haven’t had anyone to enthusiastically guard in a long time, so they’ll probably calm down after they get used to it again. It doesn’t particularly bother me, so I’ll let them do as they please. Their AI seems quite advanced. I’ll have to behave in order to earn their approval.

Now I follow Eleanora into the royal villa in the castle’s courtyard.

“This building is a private area. If you need anything whatsoever, please send word to a maid or a knight.”

They range in level from 90 to 100, about as high as it can go. It appears that since the castle is my place of work and the villa is my private residence, this place will have a higher average level than the castle considering there are fewer people around.

My home isn’t just the building—it includes the garden outside too. It’s a very wide space and has to be one of the largest player houses in the game.

We enter the villa, climb the staircase on the main floor, and enter a room at the end of the hall.

“Beyond this door is your bedroom.”

The outer room contains a sofa and table—probably a place to relax in the evening. I imagine the bed is behind the door that Eleanora pointed out.

“All right. I’m going to go evolve now.”

“I’ll be waiting right here.”

The room receives a very pleasant amount of sunlight...? No, that doesn’t seem accurate. It receives a nice amount of moonlight. To people like us, sunlight streaming through the window would be a major downside. Not that the Nether has a “sun” in the first place.

I slide into the bed, which is quite plain. I’ll have to upgrade the blanket soon to make it feel more luxurious. Undead residents probably don’t sleep, so blankets would hardly matter to them. I’m just happy to have one at all.

Chapter 6:

Level 30 Evolution and Equipment Changes

Now commencing evolution to extra race—Aversa Princess.

The Immortal Princess, High Undead, is now evolving into the highest of undead—Aversa Princess.

Once again, my vision is obscured by the text in my log.

Updating race skills...

High Undead upgraded to Highest Undead of the Underworld.

Dark Aura upgraded to Clad in Death.

Undying Royalty upgraded to Underworld Royalty.

Now upgrading renewed skill levels.

New race skills added...

Darkness and Light Vision...acquired.

Arbitrator...acquired.

Blade of Arbitration...acquired.

Soul Chaser...acquired.

New occupations added.

With the title of royalty acquired, you may now set a family name.

Attributes updated.

Evolution complete.

Due to your low race level, you cannot use all of your powers. You will be partially restricted.

Your equipment has been optimized.

Yep, yep, everything showed up at once.

Finally, this is the moment I was waiting for. I'll read through each change, one by one.

Let's start with my stats:

Name: Anastasia

Race: Aversa Princess

Occupation: Ruler of the Underworld

Official title: Supreme Arbitrator

Attribute: Death

Genus: Highest Undead of the Underworld

Species: Aversa Royal Zombie

Skill points: 80

Ruler of the Underworld and Supreme Arbitrator...so I'm a friend of Enma?

My attribute has also changed from Dark to Death. According to the help menu, it's the higher form of the Dark attribute. It also appears to be the opposite of the "Holy" attribute, which is the higher form of Light. But the help menu doesn't give any specific examples of how Dark and Death are different.

There's also a mark next to my name now.

You may enter a middle and family name. Please be aware that these names can only be changed once.

I see. I'll deal with that later.

Next up are the skills.

I suppose I shouldn't be surprised when it's called "Highest Undead."

First of all, my modifiers changed from Great to Maximum. I also went from average purification resistance to invulnerable to purification. The same goes for critical hit resistance.

Environmental damage seems to be referring to things like hot and cold areas.

I'm now rid of one of my weaknesses—taking ongoing damage when exposed to sunlight. My previous damage sustained by Light and Holy magic went from a 4× multiplier to only a 1.5× multiplier for Holy magic. It looks like I don't have a Light weakness anymore. That must be a benefit of having a Death attribute.

I'm also curious about the absorption of Dark spells. I'll have to start letting them get direct hits on me.

It appears that my Magia Trace and Night Vision aren't displayed anymore.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT VISION

Regardless of how bright it is, you can view souls, mana, and the spirits of the deceased. A soul's color displays their karma.

It looks like this was updated in the help menu too.

Good people display brighter soul colors, while more evil people have a darker color. Adults are generally gray, while children are white.

CLAD IN DEATH

Inflict status ailments: Fatal poison, curse, weakness, instant death.

The rate at which these ailments will be inflicted increases with skill level.

The intensity of these status ailments will increase every ten levels.

UNDERWORLD ROYALTY

Increases stats of all party members with Dark attributes.

Lowers all Dark attribute damage decreases in accordance with skill level.

Grant your summoned servants your own skills in accordance with skill level.

Poison has turned into fatal poison. Instant death is a new addition too.

Undead receive maximized range on their Dark attribute spells.

These skill levels have been reduced to about half of what they were before. That must mean the skills themselves have grown much more powerful.

SOUL CHASER

As a pursuer of souls, you receive special Soul effects.

You receive effects when fighting against spirit bodies. Spirit body reductions are all neutralized, allowing you to easily take your fists to them.

Perks against spirit bodies? I suppose that makes sense for the people here to have. This must be why Lana and the others were able to beat up the spirit-bodied prince.

ARBITRATOR

You reap what you sow.

You are an agent of the gods who guides souls and, at times, punishes them.

Damage changes in accordance with soul color as seen through Darkness and Light Vision.

Brighter souls result in a damage reduction, while darker souls deal increased damage.

BLADE OF ARBITRATION

Changes arbitrator attacks into Soul attacks. Instead of damaging the flesh, these attacks pierce the soul.

So this skill activates based on the soul color I see with Darkness and Light Vision? In other words, it relates to karma values, which are a hidden mechanic in the game. I'm not sure it'll be a great help, but I doubt it will hurt either. I can't see myself fighting someone with a bright soul, though.

Hmm... Blade of Arbitration seems like it's meant for RPer's to fight against residents. Frankly, I don't see any point in a PK player using it... Well, it just happened to show up when I evolved, so there's no loss on my end, since it cost no SP. That's fine, but...

Wait. Rapier? My rapier...

[EQUIPMENT-WEAPON] ATHAME OF GUARDIANSHIP

Rarity: GO Quality: S+ Durability: — With the powers granted by the gods now unsealed, this weapon has been optimized for its owner.

The athame is a short dagger said to be used in rituals as a magical catalyst. What it's made of remains a mystery, as it was crafted by the gods.

Holding this weapon will magically catalyze a blade of light, meaning its shape will vary depending on the owner's skills.

Inflict physical damage based on your opponent's Spirit stat and inflict magic damage based on their Intelligence stat.

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

Attribute Bundling Structure: Activates blade of light based on user's magic attributes.

Appraisal Lv. 10

ATK: △ MATK: △

DEF: △ MDEF: △

Attack type: Stab, Slash

Affected by Skills: Rapier, Eloquent Princess-style Protection, Superior Magic Assist Appraisal Lv. 20

Eloquent Princess-style Protection: When applicable, weapon defense is modified to weapon miss.

Superior Magic Assist: Expandable

Counterattack Boost: Average

Weapon Defense Rate Boost: Average

Weapon Defense Shock Absorption: Average

Weapon Miss Rate Boost: Average

Critical Rate Boost: Average

Critical Damage Boost: Average

Magic Attack Boost: Average

Chant Speed Boost: Average

Defensive Skill Arts Repeat Cooldown Reduction: Average

Appraisal Lv. 30

With each granting of protection from the gods, this weapon will unleash further powers and become optimized.

The rapier guard and knuckle guards I've had all this time are removed and merged into a single dagger. It also has letters engraved on it that signals it as a magical item. I try holding my former rapier with its new and fancy decorations.

When I run mana into the dagger, it lights up and begins to form my blade, guard, and knuckle guards out of light. The blade looks to be the same length as the rapier I was used to. The light itself must be grayish due to my Death attribute. Hmm...well, at least it looks cool!

I've lost Ensol, but I'm no longer weak to sources of light now.

Instead of me needing to use Spiral Magi-Amp, the weapon itself has leveled up into a light blade, giving the blade itself an attribute.

The athame looks to be about thirty centimeters long. I'm quite familiar with this sort of thing. Similar weapons include lightsabers and beam sabers. The blade isn't cylindrical, by the looks of it, but they must have gone with an athame since magic is its power source.

I suspect there's a couple of geeks on the dev team. Should I spin this thing around too? I've already tested which move increases power between bunting or giving it a full swing. In other words, it sort of makes logical sense to swing my blade to deflect attacks. It's not extremely difficult...but yes, I'll need to practice.

But for now, I'll look over my remaining equipment.

It appears that the names have changed to the term "guardianship," and the modifiers all increased from minor to average.

[EQUIPMENT-WEAPON] RING OF GUARDIANSHIP

Rarity: GO Quality: S+ Durability: — With the powers granted by the gods now unsealed, this equipment has been optimized for its owner.

The ring collects its owner's excess mana to produce clear orbs.

Appraisal Lv. 10

DEF: △ MDEF: △

Appraisal Lv. 20

When equipped in an additional accessory slot, the ring will enter a state of Meditation in its wearer's place. The wearer will perpetually receive the benefits of Meditation without any penalties.

Appraisal Lv. 30

With each granting of protection from the gods, this ring will unleash further powers and become optimized.

[EQUIPMENT-STORAGE] POUCH OF GUARDIANSHIP

Rarity: GO Quality: S+ Durability: — With the powers granted by the gods

now unsealed, this equipment has been optimized for its owner.

Your blade belt and waist pouch are a single set.

Appraisal Lv. 10

DEF: △ MDEF: △

Appraisal Lv. 20

Storage Expansion: Average (20)

Storage Capacity: 4

Storage Volume: Average

Appraisal Lv. 30

With each granting of protection from the gods, this pouch will unleash further powers and become optimized.

This must be why the data looks a bit different.

My ring, which had once been counted as a shield, is now counted only as an accessory and takes up two of my ring slots.

The pouch has increased my storage expansion from ten to twenty, and I can now hang four things from my belt instead of two.

What else...? The rarity sneakily changed to Go—upgrading it from “extra” to “god” tier. That must be because of the blessing I received.

As for my dress, its design is different now too. Different parts of my outfit have changed as well, but their stats all have the same upgrades across the board.

First up is the Asymmetrical Dress of Guardianship. It drapes over only my left shoulder, while the skirt is layered to create a tiered look. The overall shape is shorter on the right side and longer on the left—a fishtail style. That’s helpful. The dress won’t get in my way when I swing my weapon with my right hand now.

A Mini Crown of Guardianship now sits squarely on the right side of my head.

My arms remain the same, but I wear Thigh-High Boots of Guardianship on my feet. They stretch all the way up to above my knees. Since my skirt is shorter on the right side, onlookers can probably catch a glimpse of my bare legs.

Black is my outfit's primary color now, with white and purple accents throughout. Purple is a very distinguished color, so it makes sense to see it here.

I may as well change up my hairstyle while I'm at it. It's time to debut a brand-new look. I'll head on over to the character creation screen.

I don't intend to change the color of my hair, so there's no need for the premium features. Hmm...isn't there a premium option unique to this game that uses special ribbons to permanently keep your hair up? Well, I'll come back to that once I decide on a hairstyle.

I'll go with a simple style that gives me bangs that stretch down to my eyes. The front of my hair can go down to my shoulders... No, I'll make it longer and let it hang back. Having it go down to my bottom looks good. I can keep my hair soft and glossy for now. Hmm... There's an option for a half ponytail. I think I'll braid the front of my hair and tie it to the back of my head. For that, I'll keep all my hair at the same length.

The option for a braided half ponytail is a premium one... Well, there's nothing I can do about that. I buy the slightly expensive half-ponytail parts, and then I'm finished. As for the previous ribbons I purchased...I'll put them away in my housing storage instead of my inventory.

For now, that's enough reading. I'll go back to the other room. I'm sure the prime minister is waiting for me.

"Thank you for waiting."

"Oh, this look suits you. Now please have a look at this as well."

He's directing my attention to a shelf. It seems like a perfectly normal storage unit with glass doors to me. But I'll head on over anyway.

The first item is a large, white key that appears as if it was made of silver. The

other is a very weathered old book. Why on earth are these things just sitting here of all places?

“Only those who are qualified can pick them up. Please try for yourself.”

If the former prince couldn't hold these, does that mean he wasn't qualified?

I can tell they're going to be powerful items, so I definitely want them, but it's impossible not to hesitate when I know the Lovecraftian backstories here. However, I can't wait for someone else to come along, so I reach out...and am able to take them.

Da-da-da-daaaaan! I've acquired a dangerous key and a dangerous book.

There's nothing to fear now.

By fulfilling special requirements, you have achieved “Title: Keeper of the Silver Key.”

By fulfilling special requirements, you have achieved “Title: Keeper of the Book of Eibon.”

I receive titles for these? Those special requirements clearly can't be for anything other than picking them up.

KEEPER OF THE SILVER KEY

You have been deemed worthy of keeping the Silver Key, which unlocks the gates of time and space.

You are sure to receive special blessings when it comes to space and dimensions.

Silver Key: Equippable

[EQUIPMENT-ACCESSORY] SILVER KEY

Rarity: GO Quality: S+ Durability: — A large silver key, roughly 12.7

centimeters in length, with lavish decorations.

This key contains the power to open dimensional gates. Its owner will surely be blessed in the areas of time and space.

Appraisal Lv. 10

MATK: △ MDEF: △

Appraisal Lv. 20

Space Magic Boost: Maximum

Space Magic MP Cost Reduction: Maximum

Space Perception Boost: Maximum

Balance Perception Boost: Maximum

Relocation portal cost nullified.

Creates relocation gates within safe areas.

Appraisal Lv. 30

There is said to be a gate that cannot be opened without this key.

What could be waiting on the other side?

KEEPER OF THE BOOK OF EIBON

You have been deemed worthy of keeping the ancient grimoire that contains forbidden knowledge.

You are sure to receive special blessings when it comes to magic.

Book of Eibon: Equippable

[EQUIPMENT-WEAPON] BOOK OF EIBON

Rarity: GO Quality: S+ Durability: — An ancient grimoire full of forbidden knowledge.

Also known as Liber Ivonis.

Allows its keeper to peer into the magical abyss.

Appraisal Lv. 10

MATK: △ MDEF: △

Affected by skills: Book, Superior Magic Assist

Appraisal Lv. 20

Intelligence Boost: Maximum

Spirit Boost: Maximum

Chant Reduction: Great

MP Cost Reduction: Great

Alchemy Quality Boost: Great Appraisal Lv. 30

As an ancient grimoire, the writing inside is very old.

Will you be able to read it?

Incredible. This is the MMO standard of “you snooze, you lose.” MMOs are a battle of resources, after all. I won’t hesitate to accept these.

The key is fine, but the book is certainly creepy. Hesitantly, I glance inside and find...illegible text. Of course I can’t read an ancient grimoire. Right, okay. I must be missing a branch skill from Linguistics.

I open it up and show it to the prime minister, but he can’t read it either. He writes the letters down on paper and points at the same ones in the book.

“Ah...I see. This doesn’t appear possible. It must be related to Mythical Languages. Madame, do you already have Linguistics?”

“I went with Magic Linguistics, but that’s where I’ve stopped.”

“I see. Without an instructor, who knows how long it will take you to reach that level by studying on your own. Shall I teach you?”

“I’d appreciate that.”

He agrees to teach me when I have free time, which I gladly accept. “Why don’t you give me sword lessons while you’re at it?”

“Hmm... Do you have a current fighting type?”

“It’s called Eloquent Princess-style Protection.”

“Oh ho. What about your personal style, madame?”

“I usually attack with spells. When the enemy attacks, I defend with Parry or Reflect, but I also use defensive moves when I have to.”

“Then you’ll want a defensive style for your blade, especially when it comes to parrying and reflecting.”

“Yes, if possible, I would like to perfect my reflections.”

“I see. Then come speak with me when you want to practice. I’ll be sure to inform Granin.”

It looks like I’m going to get some training in. I’m happy to have someone to teach me. My skills might even develop too.

I’ll inspect my equipment later... Ah, that’s right. I’d almost forgotten. “Would it be better for me to have a family name?” I ask.

“You plan to go above ground, madame?”

“Yes. I would like to raise my level.”

“In that case, then it will be necessary. It will likely save you a lot of trouble, so long as things haven’t changed.”

“What things?”

“I simply haven’t obtained any information about that world in so long...”

“I see. Are family names a common thing, and should I think of one myself?”

“We don’t mind if you take one, and if you have nothing in mind, feel free to

take the name Nemeseia. Your middle name can be whatever you please.”

Nemeseia is the royal family of the Underworld. It’s said to be very famous, but I don’t know how the living will react to hearing it. The name is said to mean “You’re dead, so forget the world of the living, and let’s party!” It’s surprisingly simple. Well, as keepers of the Underworld, we probably can’t have them clinging to life forever.

Let’s see if I can find any hits online... Huh, it looks like it *does* exist in real life. The goddess Nemesis’s festival is called Nemeseia. So that’s where it comes from? “The intention of the festival was to avert the nemesis of the dead who failed to receive the correct rites from the living.” That’s why they held it above ground. This means a festival carried out here... Well, it would be just as the prime minister described.

So Nemesis is the deification of righteous indignation? Her name must come up in the game as a reminder to properly send off the dead.

But setting that aside, the issue is the name. What should I choose for a middle name? Nemesis’s mother is Nyx, the goddess of night. I could do something with her name... Then again, I *am* supposed to be a devotee of Stellura, so is it really all right to use the name of another god? Eh, it probably doesn’t matter.

Let’s see...there’s the Moirai, the three sisters of fate. Atropos was the one who held the role of severing the threads of fate, and her name means “the inescapable.” Spinning the threads, measuring their lengths, and then severing them. Those three moments make up a human life.

Hmm...there’s also those whose names mean death: Moros, Thanatos, Keres...but do they sound bad as a middle name? They’re also a bit too direct.

How about Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia?

This name feels like it’s meant to be used when introducing yourself to residents, so I’ll have the players stick to Anastasia like always. Besides, they usually call me “Princess” anyway!

The prime minister tells me it’s an acceptable name, so I go ahead and update it.

Okay. My name is set, and I've looked over my skills and equipment. Next is finally time to look at housing.

A knock comes at the door. I tell them to enter.

"Pardon my intrusion."

"What is it?"

"Two undead have completed the trials."

"Oh? Are they a Dullahan and a Lich?"

"That's what I was told."

"Those two were attempting to enter the Nether with me. Let's see...there's something I'd like to do, so may I head to the throne room?"

"As you wish."

I check my friends list and see that their current location lists them as being in the Nether. I expect to see them soon.

I need to go to the throne room for my little joke. The prime minister agrees to accompany me, which should make it extra funny.

Ah, Rina's calling me. I thought this might happen.

"Siiiiis!"

"Your sister is busy right now."

"Yeah, I know, but I want info. It has to be you down there, right?"

"Um...to put it simply, I returned to my race's home, but since I'm royalty, I ended up getting a castle."

"Can anyone go there?"

"No, it's an event area just for undead. However, it sounds like you traverse through the Nether now when you die. I'll post information on the BBS once things have settled down here and I've gotten to grips with it all."

"Got it!"

I end the call and enter standby mode on my throne.

My two friends appear after a bit of time passes.

“Huh?!”

“What?!”

“Welcome to my humble castle!”

“She’s a real princess now...” they say in unison.

“That’s all I wanted to say. You’re ready to evolve, aren’t you, Mr. Alf? Does he need to pray, Prime Minister?”

“Indeed. You should both go together.”

“Then please show them the way. We can talk after that.”

I’ve finished what I wanted to do, so we leave the room. I read over my work and housing menus along the way, asking the prime minister about anything I don’t understand.

My range of operations includes the entire Underworld—both the Nether and the Abyss—but to be frank, there aren’t many options I can adjust. I suppose that’s only natural. The developers wouldn’t allow a single player to change *that* much about these places.

To be fair, the castle doesn’t really have many functions to begin with. The reason for that is that most functions simply aren’t necessary. The occupants of this world need neither food nor sleep. Without fields, there are no kitchens, and no bedrooms, of course. There’re just a few rooms prepared for the royal family. Visitors don’t come here either, so the guest rooms remain unused. It’s different from a human workplace on a fundamental level.

Since the royal family wasn’t functioning, the castle remained unchanged while the maids and knights simply pretended to carry out their jobs. I can just picture how their motivation had collapsed with a leader like that in charge.

As I reviewed the information, the other two returned. I join them and continue reading up on my new castle.

The categories I *can* adjust are castle expansions, expansions of the locations where outsiders return from death, the town itself, and a few environments in the Abyss.

But what's most important here is that the only housing similar to what other players get is my villa. All other locations are job sites that come with my race. As royalty, I'm supposed to manage the expansion of the town and environments, as well as adjust the places where my subordinates work.

In-game, the changes to the Nether are financed by outsiders via their death penalty tax. Naturally, I can only use that money for work. This means, to be frank, that I get no personal benefits from it. If anything, it's simply a pain. Well, it's probably here to be material for roleplaying.

Expanded parts of the Underworld are available to be used by anyone who can enter, meaning players aside from myself will get the benefits.

My personal home is the villa, referred to as a private area. This functions as normal. In other words, I have to pay for everything there.

I should probably look at this situation as having received a mansion, land, and maids, instead of having received a castle. The job of managing the Underworld is just the price I pay for all of that.

To sum up, I have a private area in the form of normal housing. The rest can be thought of as a work simulator game to RP with.

"In other words, the castle is like a simple guildhouse for the varieties of undead, right?"

"Looks that way. Honestly, there's not a lot to do there, other than use the free storage."

"On top of that, it's only for people who cleared the trials!"

"You two went through your trials, right?"

"Yep," they say.

"I went right past the trials and organized a coup d'état to send a sad prince to the Abyss," I tell them.

"No trials *and* a race quest? We got to skip a few, but we still did them!"

“Well, she’s royalty... I skipped a few trials too.”

They’re both extra races, which likely did them a favor or two.

I think I’ll have the two of them use whichever rooms they please. That’s the special perk they get for being trailblazers. They get to pick nice rooms for themselves, which I don’t need because of my separate villa. Or rather, the throne room itself is my special room in the castle.

“All right, I guess it’s time for me to evolve,” Mr. Alf says.

Mr. Skelly became a Lich at level 30, so his next evolution is still a ways off.

“Prime Minister, what should I start with?” I ask. “What does an Ultimate Arbitrator do?”

“Yes, of course... First, you must become stronger. You needn’t do anything as an arbitrator, as your subordinates can carry out that work. At the very least, you could check in with them occasionally. However, I would like information about the upper world.”

So I’m to go to the upper world, get stronger, occasionally drop in and see the others, and deliver information whenever I get the chance.

Showing my face around here is my job as a ruler. As an arbitrator, I don’t need to do anything, since my subordinates will take care of it. That means I should come back in between activities such as hunting. Aside from that, while I’m training or studying languages with the prime minister, I can chat with him during my down time to give him information about the upper world.

“It’s necessary to act in certain ways with my position, but my actions themselves aren’t restricted.”

“That is correct. Please share any concerns you might have with me. I’ll be happy to speak with you, of course, and do anything I can to mobilize those who can help. I’m sure they will all be eager to assist.”

I glance at Mr. Skelly, and we lock eyes. Having everyone work together to help me would be incredible. Honestly, they’re capable of at least double what we are. Their levels go up to 100, after all.

“I won’t ask them to do anything for my own selfish aims. Stellura would

probably be upset with me.”

“Likely, yes. Please be cautious. The opposite of a blessing is a curse. If things ever go very bad, she will even send the outer ones to you.”

So the opposite of a blessing is a curse? That important information snuck up on me again.

“Stellura adores the reliable and the honest...”

Considering that Stellura is probably a play on Yog-Sothoth, that’s a bit funny. Yog, the evil god, loving the reliable and honest.

“You may not tell lies for your own benefit. But compassionate lies, such as lying by ambiguity or to help someone else, are allowed. Have you looked at the undead with Darkness and Light Vision? All of them have white souls. They wouldn’t be able to become undead with anything less. The dark souls can’t be left in charge of this place. However, it appears the rules may be slightly different for outsiders.”

“I see...”

I’m glad to know the conditions. It seems like it will be annoying to constantly think about them, so I’ll continue acting as I always have.

Mr. Alf has emerged from his cocoon of light, looking even darker than before. He appears to be a Nether Dullahan now and a fellow High Undead. That means that as a tank, he now has Dark Aura.

“Hmm... These are really great skills.”

“By the way, Princess, what happened to your rapier?”

“Oh, it looks much cooler now. Take a look at this.”

I remove my athame, focus on it, and watch it expand into a rapier made of black light.

“No way! A light sword?”

“Whoa, that’s so cool! I didn’t know they have those!”

“Oh ho? An athame? Another rare magical catalyst. May I take a look at it?”
the prime minister asks.

I can't hand it over to him, so I go over and let him take a closer look.

"I see... Yes, this is god-tier quality, all right. What a fine piece. I'll inform the others that they'll be instructing you in how to use this weapon."

"Please do."

"So that thing's god-tier quality now?"

"I received Stellura's blessing from a quest, so it changed when I evolved."

"Whoa..."

All right, I should get equipped, then work on a bit of rearranging. My pouch and belt came as a set, so the pouch doesn't fill one of the belt's slots.

I used to keep my rapier on the left, but now that it's an athame, I'll move it to the right. The Silver Key can go next to it, and my pouch and dismantling knife will go to the right too. Finally, I'll hang the Book of Eibon where my rapier used to go.

Oh, by equipping the Silver Key, I can see the strength of gravity, and even myself above the ground with my mind's eye. It's a version of me doing more simplified movements.

But it's not just me—obstacles and the like are displayed too. There's an outline displayed over the sofa where I currently sit. This will definitely be useful once I'm more familiar with it.

The biggest problem is that it has a small range, and it can't discern colors and materials. If it's that bad, I would be better off closing my eyes and focusing on what's around me. I can tell the shapes of things and where they are at a 360-degree radius.

The version of me doing simplified movements is now in a 3D map. It only works with my surroundings, but it displays in my head, which is most convenient.

By fulfilling special requirements, you have unlocked Space Recognition Expansion.

“Mm... I just unlocked some sort of skill...”

SPACE RECOGNITION EXPANSION

Adds modifiers to Detect and Perception skills, as well as to deviation and magic range calculations.

“Whoa...thirteen SP?!”

“Oh? That’s gotta be a rare skill. Mine was sixteen.”

“I do think it’s rare. Hmph...I guess I’ll take it.”

Increases to Detect and Perception are required for skills like parrying and reflecting. This will allow me to better predict attack projections, leading to a higher rate of success.

Did the range on my 3D map get a little wider? That means this skill is going to level up on its own. How convenient.

“Support skills, huh? I’ll have to do some testing, but it’s already afternoon.”

“Yeah. Why don’t we take a little break?”

“Sounds good. Are we free to do what we want tonight?”

“Sure, that’s all right with me.”

We’ll go ahead and take a lunch break.

I say goodbye to the prime minister, return to the villa, and log out.

Official BBS 5

[Conquering...] Comprehensive Thread 76 [But how...?]

1. Passing Conqueror

This is a thread for comprehensive strategies.

Fill it with anything that has to do with conquering new grounds.

Past threads: http://****

>> 980 Take care of the next thread.

515. Passing Conqueror

All right... The event's over now, so since we're all higher levels, is it time to head out?

516. Passing Conqueror

We're back in action!

517. Passing Conqueror

Is our goal the fourth area?

518. Passing Conqueror

Sure is.

519. Passing Conqueror

I wanna go try to take on the south again.

520. Passing Conqueror

The south, huh? I'm curious what's over there.

521. Passing Conqueror

I just had a thought. What's the average level range in this world?

522. Passing Conqueror

Ah, good question. I asked the same thing at the union.

523. Passing Conqueror

Whoa, for real? What'd they say?

524. Passing Conqueror

That the average level for people who fight for a living is around 40.

525. Passing Conqueror

40...?

526. Passing Conqueror

The knights are 40, yeah. But they say the imperial guard are up to 50.

Adventurers are F-rank at level 10 and go up a rank every 10 levels, by the sound of it.

527. Passing Conqueror

In other words...you're C-rank at 40?

528. Passing Conqueror

Yep. They say you can't do escort missions unless you're that high up.

529. Passing Conqueror

Does the union see C-ranks as ready to fight?

530. Passing Conqueror

Veterans are up to 50 or 60. S-rank must be 70...which is probably the Hero class.

531. Passing Conqueror

We're still a bunch of noobs!

532. Passing Conqueror

Has anyone made D-rank yet?

533. Passing Conqueror

The very top first-wavers who take hunting quests are at D now.

534. Passing Conqueror

For real? Ah, I never really take those...

535. Passing Conqueror

They also drop off the materials they don't need. Your union ranking won't go up if the union can't make use of you.

536. Passing Conqueror

Oh?

537. Passing Conqueror

What's this?

538. Passing Conqueror

Where the hell is the Underworld??! Waaaaah!

539. Management

Oooooooh! Hyah ha! Amazing! So much faster than I predicted!

540. Passing Conqueror

Uh, are you doing okay, Management?

541. Passing Conqueror

Everything good?

542. Management

We apologize for failing to represent ourselves in a professional manner. The employee in charge of the Underworld simply lost control. Please pay them no mind.

543. Passing Conqueror

But I'm minding.

544. Passing Conqueror

Oh? The death penalty isn't as bad as before?

545. Passing Conqueror

Does that mean what I think it means?

546. Passing Conqueror

If the penalty's lowered, then I'm gonna go die real quick.

547. Passing Conqueror

S-sure. Good luck.

548. Passing Conqueror

The Underworld's where you go after you die, right? That means...

549. Passing Conqueror

Oh? Three names just popped into my head...

550. Passing Conqueror

Oh, so it was the princess?

551. Passing Conqueror

Of course it was her.

552. Passing Conqueror

I'm sure she'll have information for us soon.

553. Passing Conqueror

So I died, but instead of respawning at the plaza where I last saved, I'm in the afterlife. I'm gonna pee my pants.

554. Passing Conqueror

Wetter up!

555. Passing Conqueror

Swing and a piss!

556. Passing Conqueror

Stop with the baseball puns!

557. Passing Conqueror

Let's see... It really does look like the afterlife. There's some kind of line, but

an invisible wall's blocking me from getting closer.

558. Passing Conqueror

It looks like you can only move in a set area. I can only get to that run-down little shed right in front of me.

559. Passing Conqueror

You're going there? It really creeps me out.

560. Passing Conqueror

But where else is there to go? You can touch the river but not go into it.

561. Passing Conqueror

Yeah, I guess that's true...

562. Passing Conqueror

There's an offering box inside, lmao.

563. Passing Conqueror

And that's it?

564. Passing Conqueror.

I touched the offering box. It took 30% of my gold on hand, then sent me back to the town square.

565. Passing Conqueror

LOL. It's fundraising for the Nether.

566. Passing Conqueror

So that means that place is the Nether. It was like an actual Hell level.

Was that a line of dead residents...?

567. Cecil

Judging by my friends list, I think the princess is there? Mr. Alf and Mr. Skelly look like they're doing something else.

568. Passing Conqueror

Maybe they got to “return” to the Nether because they’re undead?

569. Passing Conqueror

Ah, I remember reading about that!

570. Akirina

It’s Sis there, but she said she doesn’t entirely know what’s happening either, so she wants us to wait for more info.

571. Passing Conqueror

Uh-huh. She’s gotta figure out what she can make public and what she has to keep secret!

All that’s changed for us is that the death penalties hurt less?

572. Passing Conqueror

What happens to that money, actually? We lose it when we die, but does the Nether take it?

573. Passing Conqueror

No, it didn’t go away when I died, but touching the offering box took 30% away.

574. Passing Conqueror

So that’s a big decrease in money lost when you die now.

575. Passing Conqueror

Imagining an IRL offering box that steals 30% of your money is terrifying.

576. Passing Conqueror

Offering (Theft). Do they know what an offering is?

577. Passing Conqueror

It’s a revival tax... I get it...

578. Passing Conqueror

In other words...they get money?! Not fair!

579. Passing Conqueror

Huh? What's going on there? Management?

580. Management.

Um, the Underworld System is...I see. The money doesn't go to individual players.

581. Passing Conqueror

Then that's fine.

821. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

I've finished sorting through what I learned in the Underworld. This will probably be a long post, but I'm going to send it now.

822. Passing Conqueror

The princess is here! Wait, what's with her name?

823. Passing Conqueror

A middle name and family name?!

824. Passing Conqueror

Wow! Please post it!

825. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

First of all, the Underworld refers to two realms: the Nether and the Abyss.

After completing a certain quest and becoming official royalty, I received the option to add a middle and family name.

As far as the story goes, I've become the caretaker of the Underworld, but it's a job that comes with my race, and once I expand the area, I believe other undead will be able to use it too. That is, if it's an area that players can go to. Expansions to the Underworld will be paid for with death penalties from other players.

By the way, only Undead can see the entrance to the Nether. I believe it's a unique instance specific to those races. Others arrive at the Nether when they die, by the sound of things, but that's the only way. Even if you come here,

there should be restrictions that limit your movement.

It seems like a goblin king can probably create a goblin village. Or if he's a ruling class, a general? If fairies, angels, and demons have their own lands, then you might have your own chances too. The same goes for any race that can act as an organization.

My distant dream is to create a dungeon where I'm the boss. However, I don't know if that's possible.

The following is a message to those in the same line of work as me: I'm referring to 2-2 on your map, the area with the abandoned temple, but you should probably head there soon, since that's where the entrance can be found. You'll be able to access new evolution routes. If you're looking for a separate route, then I wish you the best of luck.

Judging by what I've seen of the undead in the Nether, they're people whose talents came late in life. You should be able to see where your own evolution ends up by looking at the people of the Nether or Abyss. It's a great way to get a sneaky preview. Excluding those in important posts, the NPCs appears to be the standard evolutions. To those of you in my line of work, let's all do our best.

Mr. Skelly and Mr. Alf are currently investigating whether or not they can get houses in the Nether.

That's all!

826. Passing Conqueror

So long! Great post!

827. Management

>>825 We'll say that this post contains no lies.

828. Passing Conqueror

Certified true by Management!

829. Cecil

Princess, does your name have any effects on the game?

830. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

I'm not sure about that yet, but the prime minister told me that it will help avoid trouble above ground.

I'm wondering if it will unlock quests related to nobility or the church?

831. Cecil

Ah, I see... As a gamer, I'm interested in this, but it seems like a chore...

832. Passing Conqueror

The adventurers' union also mentioned that you can interact with nobles once you reach a C rank or above.

833. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

In my case, I feel it's more likely to be royalty or the church than anything else.

834. Passing Conqueror

Adventurers can probably take escort and collection missions where they'd be paired up with nobility.

835. Passing Conqueror

Hey, that's not fair! Let us pay for that!

836. Passing Conqueror

Look at the weirdo who showed up!

837. Passing Conqueror

Yeah, he's weird. Does he know what game he's playing? Go play a mobile game.

838. Passing Conqueror

Lmao, he's not just on the wrong thread, he's playing the wrong game.

839. Management

The players are already paying with their time, which is an irreplaceable resource. Imagine their anger if the hours they spent playing were surpassed by cold, hard cash. I would be angry at the very least.

840. Higher-Up

I would beat them to a pulp. Let's defeat them together.

841. Passing Conqueror

Why is Management talking to each other here? Just go visit each other's office... Meh, I guess it's fine.

842. Passing Conqueror

They sound a lot more like the users than the devs...

843. Passing Conqueror

The only thing that worries me is if Management's got enough budget. I pay my dues little by little...

844. Higher-Up

Yes, we're just fine. We get our money through crowdfunding, not gacha.

If anything, we're the ones who worry about how much people are spending sometimes, but we gratefully use that money for salaries and development costs.

845. Passing Conqueror

Yep, use it however you want.

846. Passing Conqueror

Who cares, so long as you're getting money! There're people out there with no time to spend!

847. Management

It's not a bad thing to spend money on a game, but we're the ones who decide what can be purchased, not you. Aren't pay-to-win games considered the lowest of the low already? You don't want to open the gates to hell...

848. Higher-Up

You're not suited for MMOs as a genre. The people who don't play can never catch up to the people who do. A video game should always be play to win, not pay to win.

By the way, the words “but I’m paying you!” won’t work on us. You already have to buy this game to make any more purchases in the first place.

849. Management

Well, as management, I didn’t expect the princess’s evolution to be what it was. I was shocked when I saw what she found, not to mention her posting info about the extra races right here on the forums...

850. Higher-Up

I don’t think it’s a problem, since the non-human players are very excited.

Spending in-game money on every little thing will only shorten your life span, and it barely even counts as a game anymore. MMOs are all about how much you can enjoy the work you do and feel a sense of accomplishment from it. We can’t let you buy your way to those feelings.

851. Passing Conqueror

But the customer is God!

852. Management

Oh, welcome, God. How did you end up falling down to the realm of the mortals?

853. Passing Conqueror

LOL

854. Higher-Up

There are also evil and wicked gods that the people despise. What era did you even step out of? No, it doesn’t matter. Let’s return to our individual discussions.

855. Passing Conqueror

See ya.

856. Passing Conqueror

Take care now.

857. Higher-Up

All right, someone else will deal with him, so I'll leave it to them. Now that the mood is soured...I'll reveal that we're on the verge of pushing a small update for roleplayers.

858. Mohawk

Hyah ha ha ha! Gimme deets!

859. Passing Conqueror

Look at that! It's Mohawk!

860. Higher-Up

I don't know if it's the sort of thing that will help you.

861. Mohawk

Damn, what a bummer!

862. Passing Adventurer

Lol @ Mohawk getting acknowledged by a higher-up.

863. Higher-Up

How could we *not* see such an intense character? Ha ha ha ha!

864. Passing Conqueror

That's true...

865. Higher-Up

The update is more for the chunnibyo kind of roleplayers. Until now, the way to activate the spell has been to say the spell name, but you won't have to do that anymore once you set whatever keyword you want!

866. Mohawk

So I can use Blaze magic when I yell "sterilize the filth!"?

867. Higher-Up

Uh, well...that will work just fine.

868. Passing Conqueror

Now he's gonna be even more apocalyptic. What about other arts aside from magic?

869. Higher-Up

Direct arts will apply too, of course. Please give it your best yell as you perform killing moves. You'll set keywords based on the art or spell you want to use.

870. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

I see... I'll have to think of some too.

871. Akirina

Princess roleplay!

872. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

I think that's better suited for Eli.

873. Higher-Up

By the way, if you set a keyword but aren't sure you want to use it, you can still use the magic name to activate the attack. If you're concerned about using the mechanic in a party, you don't have to worry about that.

874. Passing Conqueror

That's kind of a weird thing to be concerned about, but I get it!

875. Higher-Up

By the way, the poses you strike are up to you, so please do your best. We may or may not be considering adding a mechanic to set up poses in advance that you can activate from the settings, but it won't be in the next mini-update.

876. Passing Conqueror

That's too bad! So we can't take a bunch of recordings and save the best movements to do again whenever we want?

877. Higher-Up

Please keep an eye out for that in the future. Management, with smiles on our faces, will be watching you.

878. Passing Conqueror

Lmao, weird way of putting it.

879. Higher-Up

We just want to be sure you're enjoying our game!

By the way, we currently have no plans to let you purchase houses with real-world money. We'll be adding more furniture here and there.

880. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

Now seems like a good time to ask! I didn't see any information about what happens when you die with 0 gold on you.

881. Higher-Up

That remains unchanged. You'll lose some of your current EXP.

882. Passing Conqueror

Huh?

883. Passing Conqueror

Excuse me?

884. Higher-Up

What's this? You didn't know? Haven't you heard that you're supposed to send the dead to their graves with money? Without money, you'll have to pay some of your current EXP, depending on your level.

885. Passing Conqueror

So I didn't imagine losing that EXP?!

886. Passing Conqueror

I guess we can't actually deposit all of our money first to get by!

887. Passing Conqueror

Then if we die with two yen on us, do they take one?

888. Higher-Up

If you're repeatedly leaving one yen as a donation, which would you prefer:

having the undead pity you or laugh at you behind your back?

889. Passing Conqueror

They're both annoying!

890. Higher-Up

By the way, since the princess is in charge of the Underworld, she doesn't have to donate anything if she dies. She'll just hear "Oh, poor madame...how pitiful of you to die."

891. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

How disrespectful!

892. Passing Conqueror

LOL

[So many races] Comprehensive Inhuman Thread 38 [All of them inhuman]

1. Inhuman Adventurer

This is a thread for anything relating to inhuman races.

You can post general comments about inhuman races, but the links below will be helpful to choose from!

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

Comprehensive humanity: [http://*****](#)

Comprehensive inhuman: [http://*****](#)

Humans: [http://*****](#)

Beastfolk: [http://*****](#)

Fairies/Fae: [http://*****](#)

Demi-humans: [http://*****](#)

Slimes: [http://*****](#)

...etc.

>>980 Next thread's in your hands!

259. Inhuman Adventurer

Hmm... I see...

260. Inhuman Adventurer

You see what?

261. Inhuman Adventurer

Ah, take a look at the conqueror's board. The princess just dumped information there.

262. Inhuman Adventurer

Oh, I see it. I'll go read it now.

263. Inhuman Adventurer

The abandoned temple area... There's an abandoned temple?

264. Inhuman Adventurer

There has to be, since that's the name she used. So undead get stronger with age...?

265. Inhuman Adventurer

That makes sense. I think of undead as getting really strong after level 50.

266. Inhuman Adventurer

Where's "2-2"?

267. Human Adventurer

The northeast part of the map that's really hard, with the undead monsters.

268. Inhuman Adventurer

Ah, right, right. That's the place.

269. Inhuman Adventurer

So the undead players have to go there? Poor guys.

270. Human Adventurer

Wouldn't it be faster to just die to get to the Nether?

271. Inhuman Adventurer

Ah, that's true.

272. Inhuman Adventurer

It didn't work.

273. Inhuman Adventurer

You actually tried it already?

274. Inhuman Adventurer

Yeah, just like the others, I had my movement restricted.

275. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

You'll be an outsider unless you go through the entrance and complete the "trials." Right now, the only entrance I know of is the one in 2-2 at Stellura's temple.

276. Inhuman Adventurer

The princess appears.

277. Human Adventurer

So it's called the abandoned temple area because that's where Stellura's temple is?

278. Inhuman Adventurer

We probably need party members close to level 30 to get there...

279. Anastasia Atropos Nemeseia

I think it would be smartest to gather many undead and form a raid party. Once you arrive at the abandoned building in the center of the temple area, you'll receive a solo quest. That's when the real action starts. I don't know about the other races, but I'm sure you'll find something, so I wish you luck. I'll be going now.

280. Inhuman Adventurer

Thaaanks, Princess!

281. Human Adventurer

Beheaded.

282. Inhuman Adventurer

Swift and ruthless, lol.

283. Inhuman Adventurer

So do I have to also be some kind of royal or a member of the ruling classes to get there? I'm the leader of my party. Reckon I can make it?

284. Inhuman Adventurer

Yeah, maybe. You've got to have a specific party with your friends or something...

Chapter 7:

Sunday

LET'S SEE... I'll go with Western-style food for lunch today.

I look at the ingredients displayed on the fridge's readout, decide on a lunch, retrieve the ingredients, and begin to cook.

"Sis! Gimme deets!"

"What do you want to know?"

"Start from the beginning."

"Are you insane?"

"Give me an itemized list."

"Ah, sure..."

In other words, she wants to hear the important points from the beginning. All in all, it's not exactly a brief story.

I read a book in the library and learned about the existence of the Nether.

My alchemy teacher is an old granny, so when I asked her about an entrance to the Nether, she introduced me to a woman from the church who I then asked about it.

That woman was actually a higher-up who told me only undead could view the entrance, but she still told me where she highly suspected it would be.

I ended up getting destroyed when I went there right away, so I had to ignore the mission for a while and focus on grinding levels.

Since I managed to level up during the event, I went back for a revenge match, this time with Mr. Skelly and Mr. Alf.

I broke through and arrived at the abandoned temple. There, I found the entrance, went in, and was able to skip the trials because my race is that of royalty. Another quest activated instead.

I followed the quest, and once I sat on the throne, the message went out to all players.

I wanted to evolve fast, so I went and prayed to the statue of Stellura in the Nether's plaza.

After that, I met up with the other two after their trials, went over things with them, and that's where we ended.

"I see. So you haven't reviewed your skills yet?"

"I think I'll review my skills and equipment after lunch."

"Did your equipment change?"

"The designs did."

"Wow! Do you think you can still use them?"

"The modifiers were increased, so they should be fine."

My sister and I chat about the game as we eat. I also write up a post for the forums.

"Oh, some weird guy showed up."

"Management sure has a lot to deal with..."

"Well, I'll just ignore that. Sis, since you've got a job, does that mean the castle isn't part of your housing?"

"It's not. The castle and offering box are environments meant to be upgraded."

"Ah, got it, got it. That sort of thing."

"Well, I did get my own royal villa."

"I see. A villa?! Can I go too?"

"I don't know. I haven't even looked into housing items..."

That's something else I'll have to confirm. I'll be a bit lonely in my house if I can't invite her over. I can probably make fields and such too... I wonder if I can cultivate materials for Alchemy? But, again, it's something I need to confirm before I get carried away.

“I didn’t know you could pick a family name either!”

“I only picked the middle name. The prime minister gave me the family name. He said it’s been around forever.”

“Really? A name with a long history in the Nether... Maybe you shouldn’t go bringing it up too often?”

“I’m not even sure if those in the living realm know of it.”

“Then I should ask some residents about it.”

“Thanks. Tell me about it at dinner.”

“Got it!”

I finish lunch, read the BBS a while longer, get a bit of simple exercise in, and then log back in.

Going straight to the housing menu to see what I can set up, I see there’s a mini-statue of Stellura that acts as a portal. Placing this will allow me to warp from the statue.

But it costs 500,000 gold? I appreciate that they let you buy it from your savings and not just cash on hand, but I see myself going broke in the near future.

But since it’s a necessity, I’ll simply have to buy it. I’ll place it in front of the villa’s front entryway. This also activates a portal to my location. I’ll set my respawn point here while I’m at it as well. If I set my open house option to friends only, it means anyone on my friends list can visit my home via portals.

What else do I want to prioritize...? The kitchen, alchemy station, and fields for now. Houses are fundamentally a system for focusing on production, after all.

This tab is for in-game purchases... I’m sure everything can be made with production skills, so I’ll just put in my orders with Ms. Primura and Mr. Dentelle.

The only thing I need to rush to have ready is the mini-statue. I have a house, which is late-game content, so I’m in a good position. I can relax now. I can’t

just keep throwing away millions of gold.

Hmm... Would it be best to go straight to the prime minister to ask for lessons...? I really am curious about this Book of Eibon. Then I can move on to sword lessons when I need a change of pace. That seems like a good plan, doesn't it? I'll continue to do some shopping while I spend the day in the Nether.

With that decision made, it's time to descend on the Evernight Castle. I flag down a maid and ask where to find the prime minister.

"Prime Minister, please teach me languages right away. I'm planning to do sword training when I'm ready for a break."

"Oh, that's perfectly fine with me. It's a good thing to have high aspirations. That's youth for you, all right. But madame, I'll warn you now that you mustn't share this information with those from the realm of the living."

"Is that so?"

"Those above ground have their own way of life they must stick to."

I'm sure there're circumstances that justify it. Teaching this to others would just be a chore, so I don't mind keeping it to myself at all. I'll get right into the lesson.

It seems to take about fifteen minutes in real life.

Magic Linguistics comprehension has reached 10%.

I see the text notification out of the corner of my eye. That was faster than I expected.

Two and a half hours pass while the two of us converse. This makes for ten hours in the game.

Magic Linguistics comprehension has reached 100%.

With the completion of Magic Linguistics, you have unlocked Black Magic Linguistics.

“Oh, I just unlocked Black Magic Linguistics.”

“Excellent work, madame. I’m pleased to see you are a fast learner. Would you like to study Black Magic Linguistics as well? However, if you choose to do so, I must have you swear an oath to Stellura to never tell another soul.”

“An oath to Stellura?”

“You can learn from an old scholar, or study it yourself. Magic and Black Magic languages are very dangerous and require an oath upon being taught. I believe that, even now, they are not well known.”

The freedom to perform magic depends on several factors, including the ceremony, so that they won’t spread to others or be misused. It also explains the secrecy when being taught from master to pupil.

BLACK MAGIC LINGUISTICS

A unique language that few can understand.

Magic is the generic form, but black magic is its predecessor.

It is stronger than magic, but only some can handle it.

If you engage with high-ranking inhumans and form friendships with them...

High-ranking inhumans implies that it isn’t just the prime minister...perhaps I can search for other players to teach me too.

I spend the ten SP and learn the skill. It’s already a third-tier skill, but I believe Mythical Linguistics still exists ahead of this. The way of raising it was unique, but it appears there are some exceptions like this.

I swear my oath to Stellura, and since it’s before 3 p.m. in real life, I’ll keep going for now.

Black Magic Linguistics comprehension has reached 10%.

I expected as much, but now it's way harder to level up.

I just spent two and a half hours to reach full completion, but now I'm at 10% in three whole hours? It's almost 5 p.m. already.

Well...six hours in real life is one day in the game, so I have to use a full day to get to 20%? In other words, I need five in-game days to max out Black Magic Linguistics. Thirty hours—one day and six hours—in real life.

All right, time to do some sword training!

"Prime Minister, now that I know this will take a while, let's take a break and move on to weapons."

"I see. Follow me to the training grounds. She should be there."

We relocate from his office to the training grounds to find Lana.

"Granin."

"Oh, hello, Prime Minister," Lana greets him.

"Madame wants you to train her in the art of the sword."

"That's quick. It's lovely to see such an eager student. Allow me to observe your fighting style first."

"I'm only level 30, so please be gentle."

She asks me to start by shooting a spell at one of the wooden dummies used by the Nether army. But what about my sword? Oh well, I'll comply...

I can't see the dummy's status, so I don't know how strong my attack was... but the target's HP didn't seem to go down at all? Is the dummy modeled after these soldiers?

"Hmm, hmm..."

The prime minister and Lana seemed to have figured something out.

Next up is blocking an attack from Lana. I know she's going easy on me, but

she's really cutting it close. My light blade also seems to be creaking a little.

"Oh ho?"

She'll suddenly rush me from behind or from the side. Without my Silver Key skills, she would definitely be able to hit me. I can tell that the set is boosting my reaction speeds. It's a major improvement.

"Hmm...I see..."

She seems satisfied after testing me for a while, so we move on to long-range combat.

My goal is to reflect one of the prime minister's Dark spells. Even if the unthinkable happens and it hits me, I'll just absorb the spell, since it's a Dark attribute.

When the prime minister casts Dark Ball, I cast Royal Reflect and send it back. But the resistance I suddenly feel is unlike anything I've experienced, so I end up reflecting it in an unintended direction. Instead of a creaking sound, my blade *crackles* this time. It's really hard to correct my reflection angle when it requires *that* much strength.

"I believe it's modified to suit you as you currently are, madame."

"I agree," Lana says. "A true sacred weapon would have no trouble handling a spell of that strength. But it doesn't appear to let attacks go through it. As long as madame reacts, it should be able to block anything. That is to be expected of a sacred weapon."

"Then let us have madame perfect her current style. I was unable to perfect the defensive style myself. I tried, but it was unsuited for me. Your attack strength will be lacking, but you do have your spells, after all."

I'm a complete amateur at martial arts, so I would definitely like to start with the basics.

Lana's style originates from an ancient form of martial arts. But it appears very hard to replicate, so she agrees to modify her style into a base I can learn from.

I feel like her personality leaks into the way she practices with me, but her

response to this is a very valid, “Swords are meant as killing weapons, so if you can’t use them properly, there’s no point to them.”

She further explains that I should avoid unnecessary movements in situations where my life is on the line. She also has me try to recall our lessons once I return home and repeat them until my muscle memory kicks in. She’s a true soldier, that’s for sure.

“Please watch me first. This is a basic stance, and this is a protective stance. I use this one as a close-range fighter, so you need to learn this other stance, madame.”

Her posture is a bit different in each stance. Lana keeps her center of gravity forward so she can be ready to slash with her sword, but since my main attacks are long-range, I don’t need to learn that one.

“So madame will be using Eloquent Princess-style Protection to buy time and parry at close range until her knights show up. But from there, your goal is to make use of the enemy’s strength. You should be parrying close-range attacks and reflecting long-range ones. Is that correct?”

“Yes, that’s ideal.”

“Then I will fine-tune the lessons while you work on the basics, madame.”

“THE MAKING OF A MASTER”

Gain the approval of Svetlana, your sword teacher.

1. Claim the unlocked skill.

Quest giver: Svetlana Reward: Title

I just received a quest. I’ll be sure to have her teach me all the basics.

The prime minister leaves me to Lana’s care and returns to his office. Now I get to train along with the rest of the knights.

I’m definitely going to make full use of both Lana and the prime minister. Learning a style will take some time, but what skill will come of it? I certainly

look forward to finding out.

Lana and I chat over our break. Since she's my subordinate, it's important to interact with her and learn who she is as a person so that I know what to do if I ever really need her.

"Is your homeland the Dinait Empire?"

"It still exists?" she asks in return.

"It does. However, we outsiders are struggling to cross the ocean, so no one has been able to make it there yet."

"You're struggling against the enemies in the sea? Why not just chop them all into bits while they're swimming about?"

That's a believable line coming from a Swordmaster hero. She casually sneaks in the most ridiculous ideas. She must be referring to Distance Sword, the flying sword art that would make that possible... Oh, wait. She hasn't returned to the living world since she came here, so that means the art must have existed while she was still alive. This is truly what makes her a hero.

We continue to talk in between more practice until it's time for dinner.

"Sis, I found out that Nemeseia is a famous name even above ground!"

"Is that right?"

"One of the granny shopkeepers at the stalls told me only young babies haven't heard the name before."

"So it's common knowledge? Is it mentioned in picture books, then? Maybe it's a good thing I didn't decide to change my name."

"I think it's like how we use the names like Enma or Hades."

I see... Wait...

"So it refers to the highest power?"

"Huh? Yeah. The highest power in the afterlife."

I see. So that's what it means. It sounds like they don't know that "Nemeseia" is merely the name of the Underworld's royal family and a personal job title. I may be a royal arbitrator, but I was told the little prince (lol) wasn't one, so it's

actually a different job title from royalty. Royalty is royalty, and that's about it.

"In that world, it sounds like the people who can view a soul's karma and sort them accordingly are called arbitrators. They work in a place called Enma's Courtroom."

"Isn't Enma the judge of Hell?" she asks.

"That's right. I've become an arbitrator myself, but there're others too."

"They've got a bunch of Enmas?!"

"I don't know about a 'bunch'... They're more like police officers."

Just like how police officers can be called patrolmen, the arbitrators are probably called Enmas by others. Wait, do the people up top know that it's called Enma's Courthouse? Hmm...well, I don't think it matters.

"By the way, how did your clothes turn out?"

I open my device to show my sister.

"Whoa...a crown? You're like a real princess. And you changed your hair?"

"It seemed like a good time to try out a new look, so I went with something that suited the outfit."

"A braided half ponytail... That definitely works. Why not get a princess cut?"

"With blunt bangs? I associate that hairstyle with Japanese clothing..."

"Yeah, that's a good point..."

I finish my dinner, take a bath, prepare for bed, and then log in.

I have to work on the moves Lana taught me until I get those skills unlocked. I train with her a bit, return to my villa...and then it's time for bed.

Chapter 8:

Wednesday

I'VE SPENT A FEW DAYS as a shut-in, going back and forth between characters to have them train me. Four days later, it's now Wednesday.

I finish my breakfast and log in. My destination is the Evernight Castle. Along the way, I take in the sight of the blooming crystal lotuses in my villa garden. All I did was adjust my housing layout slightly without adding anything new in particular. My main goal right now is spending time with the prime minister and Lana, so the rest can come later.

"Let's continue, Prime Minister."

"I believe we're just about finished. However, I can't teach you Mythical Linguistics."

"Is that right?"

"It originates in the territory of the outer ones and was discovered many eras ago. It is not generally necessary to know."

"So this book is just very unique. I'll be asking for your help in the near future."

"Please do. Let us begin."

Black Magic Linguistics comprehension has reached 100%.

With the completion of Magic Linguistics, you have unlocked Mythical Linguistics.

MYTHICAL LINGUISTICS

The oldest language in existence and the source of all words. Believed to be lost to time long ago.

If you are able to interact with those connected to the gods, who have existed since ancient times...

I've upgraded to a rare skill, which means I'll lose 16 SP. All of these skills are really expensive. I imagine the skill I get from Lana will cost 16 SP too.

But I'll go ahead and take it. I'm sure I won't be able to read the text yet, but I want to check it anyway.

By fulfilling special requirements, you have acquired They Who Peer into the Magic Abyss.

Oh...? It didn't get unlocked or come from an equipment upgrade? I just get it?

THEY WHO PEER INTO THE MAGIC ABYSS

You have begun to understand the forbidden knowledge inside the ancient grimoire.

Some of this information pours into you...

Grants enormous modifiers to maximum MP and MP regen rate.

It looks like it came automatically once I understood the language. It's also a normal skill instead of a race skill. I'm not sure about its effects, but I like what I see. It's really fun to get all these upgrades. This is the true thrill of gaming.

All right. It's a bit early, but I think I'll have lunch now, then spend the afternoon with Lana.

I finish my lunch and head to the training grounds.

Mr. Alf is at the training grounds from time to time too, but he isn't around

today.

“Let’s have another good day of training, Lana.”

“Good day, madame. I’ll do whatever I can to support you.”

We have a bit of a practice battle instead of working on stances. Even this is enough to raise my skill levels. Well, I’m sure leveling up won’t be easy at this point in the game, but so long as I get *something* out of it, I’ll reach new levels eventually.

Clad in Death has reached level 20. You have earned 1 Skill Point. Effects increased.

Special Automatic Regen has reached level 20. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Special Automatic Regen has reached maximum level. Special Regen has been unlocked.

Life Absorption has reached level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

Eloquent Princess-style Protection has reached level 30. You have earned 2 Skill Points.

You have learned the art Royal Sphere through Eloquent Princess-style Protection.

Super MP Regen has reached level 20. You have earned 1 Skill Point.

Rapier has reached level 25.

You have learned the art Ecliksys through Rapier.

Skills that level up without offering me new arts simply move through the log without notifying me.

ECLIKSYS:

Pierce an enemy with your sword to explode them from the inside.

ROYAL SPHERE:

Defend yourself from all directions.

Ecliksys is a really powerful art, so long as you can manage to stab someone. If they dodge it, the explosion doesn't go off. This means that missing your stab just makes you vulnerable.

Using Royal Sphere surrounds you with a visible membrane that prevents attacks. It's convenient against AoE spells but comes with a very long cooldown time. Well, it's much better than not having it at all, so I'm all right with this.

Special Regen has the "automatic" part removed, so it's exactly what it seems like: The amount of self-healing you can do is increased. This costs 3 SP, so I'll go ahead and take it. It's essentially a necessary skill that really needs to be prioritized.

As I continue to level up these skills, I train more and more with Lana and the knights, until...

Your actions have unlocked Unparalleled Style: Blade.

Farewell, 16 SP. These rare skills are mercilessly gobbling down my SP...

Will you take Unparalleled Style: Blade?

Of course I will.

Unparalleled Style and Eloquent Princess-style Protection cannot both be equipped. Please pay careful attention to the description of Unparalleled Style

before making your decision.

It's unusual to see Management insist on such a warning. I'll do as I'm told and read the description carefully.

UNPARALLELED STYLE

Svetlana, the sword princess, has arranged her ancient martial arts style into a method of swordfighting.

It is an extremely practical style that demands the user protect themselves, slash at their opponent, and nothing more.

While this skill has no cooldown, you must learn the movement "style" first.

The easier it is to replicate, the more effective this skill becomes, but you will lose the semi-auto frequency of your arts.

[Ex: Fundamental Style]

In other words, I'll lose the game system's support for my body? I'm a manual fighter already, so I don't particularly need that.

But the flavor text has piqued my interest. "Svetlana, the sword princess, has arranged her ancient martial arts style into a method of swordfighting," they say? Svetlana being a sword princess is intriguing, but just how ancient is this style...? Ahh, I see. The Svetlana here has already died. I heard she came here about 600 years ago, so this must mean she uses her original ancient martial arts, but the sword style she uses is also from long ago. I suppose it's natural for something from 600 years ago to be called ancient.

Still, this is quite the gamble...

"What's the matter?"

"I unlocked Unparalleled Style: Sword, but I'm not sure if I should take it."

"I see... Unlike the outsider named Alf, you have no need to hesitate, madame. Art of Self-Defense will allow you to react to any situation and is a

great means of buying time. To me, it's nothing more than child's play."

"If there are fundamental styles, does that mean you'll teach me others?"

"Of course. I showed you at the very start, didn't I? Learning the basics will bring you to the other branches, so I'm sure you'll be able to get to that point soon. I'll be teaching you Airflow Style, Waterflow Style, and Mirror Style next."

So I'll get to learn three more styles from Lana.

Losing Eloquent Princess-style Protection will hurt my SP a lot...but I might not have a choice.

I haven't saved up enough SP to cover for what learning this skill will take.

"From what I've seen of your movements, madame, you don't appear to struggle. I think it likely you may even find it easier than you do with Art of Self-Defense."

Losing my cooldown timer is a big deal. I'll have to go through each style, but this becomes more acceptable if I think of it as part of my roleplaying. It's guaranteed to be a fun time for someone like me, a manual fighter.

All right, then. I'll go ahead and take it. I've only recovered four SP, so I'm losing six here...but farewell, Self-Defense.

You have acquired Unparalleled Style: Sword

By fulfilling special requirements, you have achieved "Title: Heir to the Ancient Sword Art."

"Athame of Guardianship" has been optimized for its owner.

"THE MAKING OF A MASTER"

Gain the approval of Svetlana, your sword teacher.

1. Acquire six "styles."

Quest giver: Svetlana Reward: Title

HEIR TO THE ANCIENT SWORD ART: This title belongs to someone who takes up the sword art of Svetlana, the sword princess and specialist in this style more than any other ancient kind.

While it has been passed down through many generations above ground, it now resembles mere swordplay to others.

You can activate this style's effects to the maximum.

It must still be used in dojos and knight's orders above ground, although it sounds like it's deteriorated now. It's obviously not very effective anymore, even if that's reasonable after 600 years.

My athame lost Eloquent Princess-style Protection and switched to Unparalleled Style. It looks like it raises its effects when I use style subtypes, not Fundamental Moves. I guess that means it won't have any effect for me yet.

Ah, separate from Space Recognition Expansion, I watch the simplified me perform the moves, so I just need to copy those. Well, not that I'll have time to watch it during battles. I suppose I can leave it on automatic at the very least.

It's still 3 p.m. in real life. I should spend some time learning the next three styles for my athame's sake. I need to get my muscle memory down or I'm really going to struggle in fights.

"First up is Airflow Style, which focuses on your footwork. Most of it is covered in Fundamental Style, so you should get this down quickly. It's the easiest branch to learn."

By fulfilling special requirements, extra arts have been added to Unparalleled Style.

"Waterflow Style is a special method of dodging attacks. The stance itself isn't difficult, although whether you can implement it properly is a separate issue. It adds layers on top of what you would have been doing with Art of Self-Defense, so I believe you'll find it to be quite straightforward."

By fulfilling special requirements, extra arts have been added to Unparalleled Style.

“Finally, we have Mirror Style. It’s a special stance for reflecting long-range attacks. Both the stance itself and applying it are difficult, but with your Space powers, I’m certain you’ll make even better use of it than me.”

“That’s a lot of pressure.”

“I never get my hopes up for people who don’t deserve it. If you can master this style, you’ll always be all right, even if you find yourself surrounded. Please give it the effort it deserves.”

She sure is grinning. I can tell she means it. I’ll do it, of course, since this is the style I want the most.

By fulfilling special requirements, extra arts have been added to Unparalleled Style.

“I’d expect nothing less from you, madame. You’re quick to learn, agile enough to move how you please, and a patient student. Your body also has the right core for it. I sincerely enjoy teaching you.”

“But it took over half a day just to learn three styles...”

“That’s quick. In fact, it’s nothing short of a miracle. There are three more fundamental styles left now. What would you like to do?”

We’re already getting close to 7 p.m. in real life. I think that’s enough for today. But before that, I want to ask about the remaining styles.

“The ones that remain are Anti-Human Style and Anti-Monster Style. As the names suggest, they’re attack styles for facing each type of enemy. Finally, there’s Protective Style, which prioritizes defenses. From what I’ve seen of your mock battles, I doubt you’ll have much use for them. Please focus on Airflow,

Waterflow, and Mirror.”

“Very well. I’d like to head above ground soon, so I think we’ll leave it here for today.”

“I’ll be waiting whenever you’re ready to return.”

“Thank you. Let’s train again soon.”

I still have a bit of time before dinner, so I’ll look over my new skills.

Ex Fundamental Style contains multiple arts.

These include Sword Strengthen, Slash Strengthen, Leg Strengthen, Defense Strengthen, Dodge Strengthen, and Reflect Strengthen. All six arts can be activated from Ex Fundamental Style, but their modifiers are rather weak. In exchange, each art can be paired with your current style for a buff.

Using Ex Waterflow Style causes you to lose Sword and Slash Strengthen, but Dodge Strengthen gets a huge modifier. The other modifiers remain unchanged.

Ex Mirror Style also makes you lose two arts while giving you a huge boost to Reflection Strengthen. The other modifiers, again, remain unchanged.

Indeed, these are very powerful...but only if you have your own Style you can work with. Without it, all modifiers go to 0. The skill comes down to how accurately you can recreate the moves you see in your head.

Deviations in mental moves may come down to skill levels being too low or a dependence on the Intelligence stat. The prime minister and Lana sure make it sound like there’s something behind that mechanic. Earlier, Lana told me, “You’re quick to learn, agile enough to move how you please, and a patient student. Your body also has the right core for it.” It sort of feels like the quick learning is Intelligence, the movements are Agility, the patience is Spirit, and the core might be my body control...

As for the prime minister, perhaps Intelligence plays a role for the teacher as well? It could affect how easy they’re able to make the subject material to understand, and how much the student is able to comprehend in the end. Since this is a video game, there’s definitely some sort of internal mechanic that counts stats in terms of numbers. I believe there must be a way to reference

those numbers somehow.

Lana also told me that practicing my styles will have effects in addition to working out. Wouldn't that be what raises my mental capacity? I, the actual player, can memorize movements that way too, so I think I'll focus on practicing the styles from here on out instead of doing core training.

The other thing I'm curious about is my athame's Attribute Bundling Structure. Death, Light, and Dark simply turned to instant death, curse, Light, and Dark attributes, which was favorable. The blade itself is black and white, meaning Death is a darker color than "Dark."

Space, though, is the problem. I don't get this one. Compared to other attributes, its sword damage is reduced by about 40%. Also, I like the color of Space the most. It looks like the night sky—a dark blue with little white specks like stars. It's so lovely.

What comes to mind when you think of the Space attribute? Certainly not blade attacks, at least, which explains why the damage is so low.

Dimensional attacks that ignore distance would probably be showing up already if they were possible, so that can't be it... Now that I think about it, Space governs our inventories, doesn't it? Can I destroy my opponent's inventory and send their items flying everywhere? That's too evil, even for a game... I can't imagine it's a possibility. I believe in you, Management.

"Ah...!"

"Whoa... Hmm?"

"Well done, madame."

I deflected the stray bullet coming at me. I need to look into this. "Lana, do you know anyone here who specializes in magic?"

"Of course."

"I want them to help me test something."

I have them shoot spells at me, which I stop with Parry or Reflect, changing attributes each time.

What I've just learned from this is that it's easier to parry spell attacks by

matching my blade's attribute to the attribute of the spell. However, the easiest method of them all is to just use the Space attribute.

In other words, direct attacks with the blade itself are weaker but with better Reflect modifiers. While I'm at it, I ask Lana to help me test out close-range attacks. I find that these are easy to handle too, meaning I must also have modifiers for defensive moves like Parry and Reflect. It may be called "Space," but it functions like a barrier.

I should probably start using my blade as a Space weapon and attack with my spells. If I want to attack with the sword, I can use Death, Dark, or I can switch to Light if it's against an enemy with Light as a weakness, like undead.

Using a Space blade decreases my MP by 5% with each instance. The other attributes barely make a dent in comparison. Death isn't a spell—it's my own personal attribute—so it probably doesn't cost me anything to use.

That seems like enough for now. I thank the people who helped me, return to the villa, and then it's time for dinner.

"Sis! I just read that the mini update comes out tomorrow!"

"Really? So we'll get that new system?"

"Yeah, it'll be there!"

I reckon there'll be an increase in cringe players in the near future.

Perhaps I'll add some shortcut words as well. Some of my spells can be very long, after all.

I finish dinner, take a bath, and log back in before bed.

Now that I've addressed all the pressing matters, I think I'll look over some other things I'm curious about.

[MATERIAL] CRYSTAL LOTUS

Rarity: EP Quality: A This phantom flower that blooms in the Nether is said to reveal the true nature of whoever touches it.

Doctors and alchemists long to obtain such an item, as it can only be found in the Nether.

The lotus glows white when I pick it up. Hmm...by “revealing one’s true nature,” do they mean a person’s karma?

I move to the lake in my garden, which is connected to the river, and scoop up some water.

[MATERIAL] WATER OF REMINISCENCE

Rarity: EP Quality: A Water from the river that runs through the Nether. It contains an incredibly high amount of magical energy.

Doctors and alchemists long to obtain such an item, as it can only be found in the Nether.

I think I’ll put this in one of my infinite flasks.

Next up is dirt and the mining area in one corner of the garden.

[MATERIAL] PURE DIRT

Rarity: EP Quality: A+

Purified dirt that contains an incredibly high amount of magical energy.

Doctors and alchemists long to obtain such an item, as it can only be found in the Nether.

[MATERIAL] MOON NETHER LIGHT

Rarity: EP Quality: C

Moon Clear Light that has transformed under the eternal moonlight of the Nether.

It is treasured as a material for magic catalysts, but Nether materials are extremely valuable.

That makes sense, since my Mining skill is low. It's not great quality at all. At least I can still mine it, though.

[MATERIAL] HOLY PUNICA

Rarity: EP Quality: A+

A sacred white pomegranate seen as a symbol of restoration.

White pomegranates are incredibly rare.

All of these items must be of such high quality because I collected them from the castle grounds. Their rarity surely comes from the fact that they're goods from the Nether, a place people can't easily enter.

Hmm...I think I'll bring them to my teacher. I'm sure she'll tell me how to use them above ground.

I fill a large empty bottle with the water and collect five pieces each of the other items.

Then I teleport to Starting Town from the mini-portal in my home. It's been so long since I set foot in this world. Hello, land of the living.

I'll go ahead and stop by my teacher's house.

"It's been a while, Master."

"Oh, it's you... It looks like you've been to the Nether."

"Yes, and I have some things I want to show you."

"Items you took from the Nether? I can imagine some already... Well, let's see what you've got."

I line them up on the counter one by one.

"I've heard rumors of these, but I never thought I'd see them myself..."

Hmmm... I'll tell you what I know. How's that sound?"

"Please do."

The crystal lotus, which displays the color of a soul, is a sought-after flower in this land.

The Water of Reminiscence and its high energy content is desired by all people who would be considered witches.

"I think the church will want Holy Punicas. For the dirt and crystals and everything else, there's almost no ways to get them, so there're plenty of people who would be interested in getting their hands on these. Be careful how you handle things."

"I see..."

"So, Ruler of the Underworld. Can you see soul colors now?"

"Yes, I can."

"It'll be a simple way of telling who's trustworthy and who isn't. If you take any of these to the church, be sure to hand them off to Luciana directly. Is your plan to sell them?"

"I think other outsiders will be able to bring these items back with them, aside from the Moon Nether Light, that is. I don't think there will be a short supply of water and such."

"Other witches are probably going to show up without an invitation... Good grief. But that's to be expected when the prospect of owning Water of Reminiscence is on the table. It's a medicine, so that's not a bad thing."

"I'd be happy to give you as much of it as you like. You're my master, after all."

"How lucky I am to have a student like you. I'll take everything besides the lotuses and fruit. Ah, also...next time you collect water, use a magic vessel, or else you're wasting it."

With that, the old woman returns from the back of her store with a large bowl to pour the water into. It's made out of magic clay. I do remember her saying that it's best to store magic energy in things that contain the same energy.

“Perhaps I’ll make magic clay by mixing Pure Dirt, Water of Reminiscence, and an orb.”

“I won’t tell you not to, but that will be a waste of a lovely bowl that can only be made if you own a production area.”

Now that I think about it, I should ask her about something she said just before that stuck out to me.

“That aside, what are witches, exactly?”

“Ah, you didn’t know? Right...they undergo certain training to be able to wield a different sort of mana, which they use to create various medicines referred to as the witches’ secret brews.”

Long ago, the witches’ research resulted in them producing extremely effective potions.

However, both the witches themselves and the materials they used were lacking in numbers, resulting in a low output of potions. Only the royal family, dukes, and the upper levels of nobility could get their hands on them. After they switched to a manner of production that anyone could utilize, these new creations became the less-effective potions that we know today.

The extra-effective potions made by witches are called “the witches’ secret brews” to distinguish them.

“The word ‘witch’ refers to anyone who has undergone the training and receives a dramatic extension in life span. To become a witch, you have to search for a teacher and have them accept you as a student. Secret brew recipes are passed down to those students. Even if the recipes are stolen, there’s no point in trying them, since you need the unique mana possessed by witches.”

“I see. Well, magic medicine doesn’t affect me in the first place, but I’m just glad to know that witches aren’t my enemy.”

“Are they enemies in the other realm?”

“I wouldn’t say ‘enemies,’ but they are despised. I’d imagine everyone has a very different mental image of what a ‘witch’ is like.”

“No one lays a hand on them here. Doctors are generally admired. You’ll make too many enemies if you try something like that.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

Didn’t I have something else I wanted to ask her about? What can she help me with...?

I remember my sister telling me that my family name is famous enough for even children to know...but what about Lana? As the hero of the south, it’s possible she’s not known on this continent.

“Master, have you ever heard of a hero named Svetlana?”

“Svetlana, the hero of the south? Even children know of her. There’s a picture book that tells her story.”

“A picture book? I should bring it back and show her.”

“Huh?! Don’t tell me...”

“Yes, she’s in the Nether. She’s teaching me swordfighting.”

“Don’t bring her that book, or she’ll probably die a painful death all over again.”

“That’s too bad. Then I’ll just tell her about it. Anyway, I’ll be leaving now.”

“I think I’ll get straight to crafting something...”

I’ll have to keep delivering her more items from time to time.

I leave the shop and log out. The update is coming tomorrow, so I won’t be able to log in until after maintenance.



Official BBS 6

[The thrill] Secret Tavern Thread 9 [Is all that matters]

This is a cumulative thread for evil players. Only evil players can see this thread.

If you're going to town, you're gonna need Sneak Step or Disguise. Otherwise you'll get caught by gatekeepers.

Death penalties for evil players have been added.

Current penalty is a loss of EXP. Dying with stolen items gives you a high rate of dropping them. If you're killed out of revenge, you drop all items stolen from that person. Respawning puts you in a special jail temporarily. Be sure to remember this.

Don't forget to read the official rules about being an evil player.

Criminal RP rules: http://****

Past threads: http://****

>>980 Next thread's up to you.

632. Shadow Dweller

Our numbers are goin' up with the second-wavers here.

633. Shadow Dweller

True.

634. Shadow Dweller

Are there no red guilds?

635. Shadow Dweller

Of course there are. Which are you? A villain roleplayer or just normal scum?

636. Shadow Dweller

What's with those choices? I'm an RPer.

637. Shadow Dweller

Then go on a kill streak to find the guild. They love playing as villains there.

638. Shadow Dweller

There're some people who have a conscience and always follow Management's rules. Others hate that sappy shit.

Both sides exist. So you've gotta be sure if you actually like RP or if you're just scum.

639. Shadow Dweller

I see. So everyone in the guild's been on a kill streak?

640. Shadow Dweller

Yep. However, they avoid people whose kill streaks are clearly full of children. Red guild members won't even approach parties that have kids. Targets start at high schoolers and up. If that bothers you, then find someplace a little more lenient.

641. Shadow Dweller

No, I don't care, but I thought you couldn't even attack little kids in the first place.

642. Shadow Dweller

That's right. The guilds avoid parties with kids because they want kids to prioritize having fun in the game. They won't aim for other party members

either.

In fact, most first-wavers are like that. I'm sure some of them don't think it's fun going after kids, of course. But ever since the second-wavers came in, a lot more people don't care about that sort of thing.

643. *Shadow Dweller*

I see. Thanks for the tip.

644. *Shadow Dweller*

Sure thing. Have fun.

821. *Shadow Dweller*

By the way, what happened to the guy who said he was going after the princess?

822. *Shadow Dweller*

Haven't heard anything yet.

823. *Shadow Dweller*

He's probably still preparing.

824. *Shadow Dweller*

Guys like that just pick targets out of jealousy, not actual returns, cuz they've got no balls. Who cares about them? I just pray we don't get dragged into it. I've got a bad feeling about the whole thing.

825. *Shadow Dweller*

Yeah, she's got guards, like a personal army. A lot of them are top tier...

826. Shadow Dweller

She's top tier too, but she does have one obvious weakness...

827. Shadow Dweller

If she's got an obvious weakness, then why not target her?

828. Shadow Dweller

Because it's not worth the risk whatsoever.

829. Shadow Dweller

She doesn't drop equipment, and she usually absorbs enemies with Secret Art of Necromancy, so she's never carrying their drops. She also probably deposits all her money. But she might drop a lot of food ingredients?

Sure, she probably gives a lot of EXP...but I don't wanna have to battle her bodyguards for that.

830. Shadow Dweller

Just how many fans do you think she has...?

831. Shadow Dweller

You'd have to avoid Starting Town and Belstead for a while.

832. Shadow Dweller

If you flee somewhere, better go north or west.

833. Shadow Dweller

Yep. Just definitely wanna avoid those death penalties.

834. Shadow Dweller

Her Detect and Perception skills are probably really high, right?

835. *Shadow Dweller*

At the very least, we know her Perception skills are high.

836. *Shadow Dweller*

PK is more about information than anything else.

Chapter 9:

Thursday Afternoon

I WAKE UP IN THE MORNING and log in early like usual. Since I logged off in the Starting Town plaza, I warp to my house, practice my fighting styles, and then log off.

I kill time during the maintenance period by eating breakfast, lounging around, and doing a bit of exercise. We can still use the BBS, and I see that it's moving faster than usual. The people who would normally be busy playing the game are posting now too.

After my exercise, I take a shower, then check on the update changes. That's when my sister bursts into the room and yells, "Maintenance is done!" before running off again.

I suppose I'll log in. After waiting in the login queue, as is standard after maintenance, I arrive in my house where I logged out this morning.

First, I'll redeploy Inventory Expansion, since the update deactivated it. What once took 60% of my MP now takes just over 20%. This must be a benefit of my key and guardianship. I can't say for sure, since the calculations aren't public, but it seems likely that the more I level up the skill and see MP reductions, the weaker the effects will start to become.

"Are there any problems around here?" I ask a maid.

"Nothing in particular. Everything is normal."

I then take a look at the keyword customization system added in the update.

Each spell allows you to set two separate keywords for activation. That makes for three ways of activating them in total, including their proper names.

You can also pay money to purchase an extra three slots, for a total of six ways to activate a spell.

These expanded slots apply not to the entire skill but to each individual art and spell. Each one costs 100 yen to expand, though. Setting up all the expansions in the beginning seems difficult, but so long as I have those two slots, I won't run into any trouble.

What else...? My display name on the BBS can now be set to either my first or last name. The full name was a bit long, so I'll stick with just my first name for now.

Next up is to set my keyword for the Silver Key. I want transportation gates to activate when I say "open"... There we go. As for the destination, I can probably use my mind for that.

Magic Missile is a bit lengthy, so I'll go with "MM" or "missile." Explosion is also a little too long, so I'll just go with "explode" like how I do "prod" for Poison Prod. Shortening them seems to be the way to go for now.

Let's see... I can level up, work on crafting or gathering, or study some more. What a difficult choice. If I go with crafting, it will have to be Alchemy. As for gathering, I could mine for resources that will get me equipment for my servants. Mythical Linguistics is also next up on my list of things to study.

Another option is to go report to Ms. Luciana at the church, since she was the one who told me where the entrance to the Nether was. Her quest is how I managed to receive divine protection too.

Oh, it looks like one of the clear orbs is ready.

[MATERIAL] CLEAR ORB

Rarity: EX Quality: — Magic energy condensed into the shape of a sphere.

This orb is a powerful source of energy, as it contains no impurities, but caution is required when using.

Cannot be traded.

Once my equipment changed, it started to produce clear orbs instead of regular orbs. I'm not sure what the exact difference is, to be honest, but since

I'm the one creating them, the creation speed that had been ramping up with regular orbs has probably fallen back down to normal now.

I feed the clear orb to Unit One and see that it has about twice the effect on him as a regular orb. I'll have to search for something to use my orbs on. Oh, I can just ask the prime minister.

Now I'm off to the Evernight Castle next door.

"Prime Minister!"

"What's the matter?"

"What can I do with these orbs?" I ask him.

"Hmm. They have many uses. To be frank, they're an extremely pure form of monster stones. They can be used with any instance of magic energy use, such as Alchemy or Necromancy."

"So I should use them as a simple substitute for monster stones?"

"Exactly. However, I'm not sure if you can handle them in your current state, madame."

"Please explain."

He tells me that when Mana Control isn't enough to process items with certain amounts of energy, the items will self-destruct. You have to control the energy inside the item, subdue it, and change its form, which is why it's quite difficult to produce a vessel for energy. This goes not just for Alchemy but for other production methods as well.

As for how to avoid losing energy and even adding more to the item, he explains that's a way in which professionals can show their true skills.

"Some inexperienced people even die when they attempt this, but that won't be an issue in your case, madame."

"Is that so?"

"Because you're an outsider, madame. Ha ha ha!"

"..."

He's not telling me he believes in me. He's saying it doesn't matter if I die. Is it

just me, or is that disrespectful?

“I do want you to become stronger, madame. I’d be happy to help you, but I won’t hold your hand either.”

“Then I’ll work on it right next to you so you can’t avoid the explosion.”

“Oh, your attempts to bother me are cute. Ha ha ha... Aside from the damage, I don’t want my furniture destroyed, so I’ll have to ask you to refrain from doing that. Damaging my personal property will do nothing to impress me.”

Damn...I don’t stand a chance.

“Ah, that reminds me. You obtained your current alchemy circle from the realm of the living, yes?”

“I did.”

“Then what do you say to the prospect of upgrading it?”

“I can do that?”

“You should be able to read the text in the circle, at the very least. I’ll simply guide you toward raising your efficiency.”

“I see...”

“To be honest, it all depends on whether or not you can understand what you read.”

“That sounds like a challenge.”

This damn Elder Lich... However, he’s just given me some very helpful information. I need to do this soon, or even now. I decide to take a look at the text, which remains undecipherable.

“Hmm. It’s still too soon for me to read this.”

“I figured as much. Let me show you what to do with your hands. An alchemy circle is a combination of parts. Each one relies on the other in ways that affect its overall efficiency. In other words, optimizing the blocks causes them to intertwine and form clusters, which, of course, requires an efficiency check as well. This process is then repeated.”

“Then I need to start by taking apart the clusters.”

“Indeed. Break down the clusters into blocks and improve the words that form the blocks. Then you build it back up again.”

In other words, it’s like computer programming in the form of a magic circle...? Well, the efficiency will probably be displayed, so it’s easy to tell. That makes the process rather simple.

“Destroy it, rebuild it, use it, destroy it, rebuild it, use it...it’s repetitive work,” he warns me.

“Wait. Can’t I just look at the maximum efficiency of each block to form the clusters?”

The prime minister blinks at me in surprise. “Madame, you can tell the efficiency rate?”

“Yes, I can...”

“Do you have any idea how I’ve struggled...? Is this the Book of Eibon’s doing?!”

Hee hee...got him on that one.

“All right. I’m going to go to the upper world.”

“Sure... Be safe...”

I leave the depressed prime minister here and head above ground.

I’ve used statues to relocate all this time, so I think it’s time to try out my Silver Key.

“Open.”

The key floats forward, digs into the ground in front of me, and allows me to choose my destination. I select Starting Town. The key rotates, sending a shadow expanding in the air, until it forms the same black staircase that leads into the Nether. The key then disappears and, with a little jingle, returns to my belt.

What a nice flourish!

I enter the threshold and descend the staircase until I reach a landing. It’s then that the entrance closes behind me. The next staircase is one I ascend until

I see a light up ahead. That must be the realm of the living. Once I reach the top, the black staircase disappears. I've arrived near the statue in the town square. I think I'll head to the church.

By this point, I no longer feel any effects of the church's purification. It's probably because I've had that aspect nullified, not simply because I'm no longer weak to Light.

Let's see...who do I recognize? Ah, there's someone.

"Excuse me. Would it be possible to see Ms. Luciana? If she's busy, then I can come back some other time."

"C-certainly. Please wait here."

"Thank you."

This person probably knows about my evolution, so judging by their reaction, it's all right for me to be here.

If I pray here, will the pup lord come to see me again? *Lord of Tindalos...can you hear me? I have a wish...*

Ah, there he is.

"What is it?"

"Lord of Tindalos...I'd like you to teach me languages."

It seems like a bad idea to say the book's name right now, so I tap on it to convey what I'm talking about.

"Oh...? I see. So the original was in that castle. Very well. Do you want to learn now?"

"No, some other time."

"Then call me when you're ready. It's not like I have much else to do."

"Very well."

"Also, I see you have the Silver Key in your possession. Search for the gate inside the Nether. It's probably a bit too soon for that, however."

"The...gate?"

“It’s either in the northeast or northwest. Well...that’s only if you want to find it.”

With that, he went on his way. I’ll have to explore the Nether later.

Now that I think about it, from the residents’ perspectives, the pup lord is a rare character. But I only brought him here for a favor, so I hope they don’t mind him.

“Thank you for waiting. I’ll lead you to her.”

I follow the nun with the gray embroidery into the church. Wait, aren’t nuns supposed to be lower ranking in terms of their status within the church? But she has gray embroidery like Ms. Luciana... I doubt I can accurately compare this to real life. It’s not like this church’s symbol is a cross or anything.

Ms. Luciana was waiting for me in a fancy room that appears to be for guests. “Welcome, Ms. Anastasia.”

“I’m sorry to bother you.”

The nun who led me here leaves, then another worker pours us black tea before leaving the two of us alone.

“First, I’d like to report that I cleaned the chapel at the abandoned temple and received Stellura’s blessing.”

“Goodness me. How unusual for Stellura to bestow divine protection...”

“I wanted to come here to give thanks for the protection, as well as report that I made it safely to the Nether.”

“Congratulations. However, divine protection is a standard gift, so there’s no need to give thanks.”

“Then consider this a souvenir instead. Here you are.” I present her with five Holy Punicas.

“Th-this is... And so many...?”

“There’re lots of them in the Nether, so please feel free to accept. I also have this.”

“This is...a phantom crystal lotus! Would it be possible to deliver these two

items to us periodically? The church will become your official client.”

“It depends on the amount, but I’m also curious about how you use these.”

“We’ll display the Holy Punicas at the statues. The crystal lotuses will be loaned out.”

“Loaned out?”

“The crystal lotus displays its holder’s true nature. Someone can hand one to a noble, for example. If the flower turns black, then their house will be searched. We’ll lend these out to those who apply.”

“I see. Then that works for me.”

Three flowers will be plenty for now. Four fruits will also be enough according to Ms. Luciana, so I’ll keep one for myself.

Ms. Luciana then says that these are displayed in special decorative containers, so she leaves to go get one.

I drink my black tea as I wait for her to return. But this reminds me that I should exchange my leftover event points for tea leaves. I want to make my own blends, so I’ll buy some of each. That’s something I can work on when I want to take it easy for a while.

Ms. Luciana returns with many people behind her, each carrying a glass case that contains visible magic energy.

“You recognize these, yes? Each one of you will place one item in each case. The fruits go in front of each statue, with flowers in between them. You’ll be alternating between fruits and flowers in your placements.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

The fruits don’t change, but the flowers start to lose some of their bright white shine. But if the average adult’s aura is gray in color, these people are comparatively very bright. They leave the room, carefully cradling the boxes. I’m sure things will proceed smoothly from here out.

I’m a bit troubled by my reward. I’m really only doing my job, after all. Peace here above ground will result in less work to do in the Abyss. Besides, all I did was bring things I found in the Nether. I don’t know how much they’re worth.

I'll only take a fee for collecting the items, since bringing them here was easy. I steer the conversation in that direction.

"I suppose I don't need proof of my status? If people won't obey me even if I make myself known to them, they're likely to ignore any statuses given to me by the church. Giving off an aura would probably be quicker."

The aura spells affect others upon touch, so naturally, I keep them turned off while in town. Now that I've evolved, just bumping into me wrong could result in instant death.

After that, we discuss a time for the next delivery, I receive my reward, and I head out on my way.

All right. I'm back at the town square...but what should I do now?

For the time being, I feel like I've reached a stopping point with quests related to my race. As for the gate the pup lord mentioned...I'm guessing that will be my next evolution quest, which is still ten levels away. There's no need to rush.

I could gather equipment for my servants, or work on Alchemy...

Presumably because I was near the statue, a player immediately logs in right next to me.

Our eyes met. Still, he looks familiar...

"Ah, aren't you my teacher?"

He's staring up at the sky, clearly embarrassed.

"So the princess is my student... Hm? That means your sister..."

"She's my actual sister."

"I see... I won't say anything about this. I just can't believe a top player is in my class. The black hair is a new look for you."

"Tomo and Sugu are around too, so you actually have *three* top players."

"Them too...? Are you kids even doing your homework...? Ah, I guess that's rude to ask."

“I finished mine a while ago already.”

“Well, all I can do is remind them not to forget about it. Hmm...just be careful not to say anything that gives away your personal information. Is that all right to say too?”

“I’m well aware.”

“Good. Are you having fun in here?”

“Yes, lots of it.”

“Right, right. That’s great. Well, I’ve got some hunting to do...with students.”

“So they *did* find you.”

“Yes, although I’m sure it’s not much fun to play this game with your teacher.”

With that, he walks away.

Well, that just means his students like him enough to want to play with him, so that seems like a good thing. Our teacher appears to like the affection they show too, although I’m not sure if he really wants to spend his vacation playing games with students.

With that out of the way, what’s next on the agenda?

There’re quite a few skills I still want to take, but I lost all that SP before. Some of the skills I want include Magic Catalyst and Shadow Magic. The former branches off into Book, while the latter is part of Dark magic, which I have modifiers for. Together, they cost six SP. The problem is that Book also needs six SP. I can take Shadow Magic for three SP as a race skill, but considering my athame and Book of Eibon, I should really go with Magic Catalyst...

I’m also curious about the passive buff skills regarding knowledge. They include critical hit buffs and status ailment infliction rate increases.

The normal ways to gain more SP are to raise your base level or skill levels. Looking at the amounts I’ll get when I level up my skills, raising some of them would definitely earn me more SP.

All right. I'll take Magic Catalyst and Shadow Magic. I'll still be able to claim my next rare skill so long as I leave sixteen SP for next time.

"Athame of Guardianship" has been optimized for its owner.

"Book of Eibon" has been optimized for its owner.

[EQUIPMENT-WEAPON] ATHAME OF GUARDIANSHIP

Rarity: GO Quality: S+ Durability: — Libertà: Consumes an orb to add additional damage to the next attack.

Attribute Bundling Structure: Activates blade of light based on user's magic attributes.

Telekinetic Fit: Use the palm of your hand to guide your athame and send it flying.

Appraisal Lv. 10

ATK: △ MATK: △

DEF: △ MDEF: △

Attack type: Stab, Slash

Affected by Skills: Rapier, Magic Catalyst, Unparalleled Style, Superior Magic Assist Appraisal Lv. 20

Magic Catalyst: Reduces MP of Attribute Bundling Structure.

Unparalleled Style: Grants effectiveness boost when using branch style of combat.

Superior Magic Assist: Stretches blade from dagger size to two-handed sword size.

Counterattack Boost: Average

Weapon Defense Rate Boost: Average

Weapon Defense Shock Absorption: Average

Weapon Miss Rate Boost: Average

Critical Rate Boost: Average

Critical Damage Boost: Average

Magic Attack Boost: Average

Chant Speed Boost: Average

Defensive Skill Arts Repeat Cooldown Reduction: Average

[EQUIPMENT-WEAPON] BOOK OF EIBON

Rarity: GO Quality: S+ Durability: — Resonance: Focusing on a spell will cause objects around the owner to float.

Auto-Spell: There is no need to hold anything with your hands.

Anti-Spell: Automatically resist enemy spells directed at owner.

Affected by skills: Book, Superior Magic Assist

Appraisal Lv. 10

MATK: △ MDEF: △

Appraisal Lv. 20

Intelligence Boost: Maximum

Spirit Boost: Maximum

Chant Reduction: Great

MP Cost Reduction: Great

Alchemy Quality Boost: Great

Hmm... What? Magic Catalyst reduces the cost of using my athame, and I can control it with my mind. What am I supposed to do with that? On second thought, that's probably a convenient change, and I'll bet it can cut through anything with ease. Perhaps...I'm supposed to let the Force guide me?

The Book of Eibon has gained Resonance, Auto-Spell, and Anti-Spell. I like that I can ignore the book and focus on my fighting style. I'm not sure how Anti-Spell

will work specifically.

Since the second-wavers have probably started to move over to the second area, the area around Starting Town should be open now. I think I'll go test things out.

I haven't been to the eastern plains in so long. There looks to be plenty of space for my research.

I currently only have Shadow Bind, the first art of Shadow Magic, so rabbits make for good test subjects. I also lack anything other than passives for Magic Catalyst. I read about Shadow Magic on the magic forum while trying it out for myself to get a feel for it.

Focusing on the spell causes a chant gauge to appear. At the same time, the Book of Eibon unhooks itself from my belt and rises up in the air. The speed of the gauge and the speed of the book's pages flipping synchronize, and once I've finished chanting, the book closes and remains on standby. It opens up again when I activate the spell...how cool!

Shadow Bind causes strings to appear from the shadows at your feet and around your environment, which restrain an enemy. The size and number of strings you receive depend on your skill level and Intelligence, and you can watch how the enemy tears them off to measure the remaining effect time. Cooldown times are the same as AoE spells or a little longer.

Since Shadow Bind activates from the ground, it's difficult to use on flying enemies, but it's not impossible, since you can select a target and have them pursued. However, this needs further review, since the behavior of sky enemies appears unique. Frons Bind is a tree spell, but it works in the same way.

Little is known about resistance to binds, but it likely depends on Strength, Spirit, or size.

Hmm...I see. These descriptions come from the BBS.

The rabbit sure can't break free from it at all. My Dark modifiers must also be what's giving me so many strings, and thick ones too. However, it's hard to know for sure while I'm using them on the weakest opponent possible. Will it get free when the effect time runs out, or will it manage to resist and tear off the strings...? It seems like, for rabbits, it's the former.

Once it's free from the shadow strings, the rabbit charges forward and rams me in the stomach, falling back to the ground again. Then I bind it once more.

Just like in other games, resistance to status ailments can increase, so with each binding, the effect time is reduced a bit more. That's why the rabbit is able to escape quicker this time before it rams into me again, but my Physical Resistance blocks it.

For now, I only know this one bind spell, so I can probably remove the "shadow" and just go with "bind" as my activation phrase.

Next, I hold my palm over my athame and feel it fly up to my hand. I channel Death into the knife as I use it to attack the rabbit.

Huh...? It's doing a shooting motion, but the rabbit isn't taking any damage. Is this a bug? I switch to Dark and go for another slash, but the rabbit's HP bar remains the same. It doesn't seem to be hurt at all. What's going on?

Hmm...the most likely culprit is Blade of Arbitration. It's the only skill I haven't investigated yet. Once I turn it off and go for another slash, I'm able to kill the rabbit.

It's starting to seem like a skill meant for torture. The rabbit must not have looked to be in pain because its soul isn't very dark. Monsters generally operate based on instinct, I would imagine. That means there's little likelihood of them having karma at all. Arbitrator adjusts attack power based on the quality of the target's soul. Blade of Arbitration is a skill that doesn't reduce the target's HP... or so it seems. Is it just there for worldbuilding? Or maybe a quest?

Well, I have plenty of rabbit meat already, so I'll absorb this one. Ah, I need to gather more capacity too. I really want enough to start making regular use of wyverns. I can collect capacity while I work on leveling up myself and my skills, so I can probably put it out of my mind.

The third area would be most suited for leveling up, but I have to use spells against those ostriches. Right now, I want to fight on the ground to practice my stances.

I head toward Starting Town and switch to the forum with information about areas. Conveniently enough, they've organized the area posts with their respective enemy races and levels.

I take a look at Barberek, the third area of the east. The enemies in the southern region range from 34 to 37 and consist of higher-tier trolls and ogres... meaning there'll be barbarians and soldiers, which are both grapplers.

The trolls in Belstead weren't particularly difficult. As for ogres, I ran into them as elite mobs, right? That was the jerk who stole my left arm.

Hmmm...I think I would end up dead if they surround me. I'll go test my skills on the Belstead trolls instead.

I enter town and activate my Silver Key.

This time, it floats straight forward and asks me to decide a destination in the air. I select Belstead, causing the key to turn and rip apart the air before me. Maybe those stairs only show up when going between the world of the living and the dead, and this effect plays when going from town to town? I can see the statue of Stellura on the other side. My key has returned to me already, so I walk forward into Belstead as the tears close up behind me.

Although it can only be activated in safe areas, having the Silver Key is very convenient. I don't have to walk to the statues, and I can probably teleport to the safe areas outside of town too.

All right. I'm going to summon Unit One as a wyvern and fly to the southern forest.

Once we arrive, I recall the wyvern and summon a skeleton, wolf, and owl. Their job is to watch our surroundings as I battle the trolls.

Long time no see, Mr. Troll. I've missed you.

I activate my athame with Space affinity. The Book of Eibon floats up at the

same time, meaning combat readiness must be another condition it looks for.

Trolls don't use spells, so now's my chance to make use of Waterflow Style.

I head over to the troll, making sure my servants are standing watch. I'll bait it with an arrow. As soon as the book's pages stop turning, I send out the arrow.

Wow...that was a big hit to its HP. Arrows can do that much damage? Evolving doesn't change the restrictions that come with my base level, so that can't be what's responsible for the dramatic increase. That means it has to be a buff coming from my equipment. After having such a weak set, it's finally been improved. I'm sure the buffs from the book and key count for a lot too, but at times like these, you can really feel just how strong you've become.

That's enough of getting emotional over my equipment strength. The troll appears to be charging right at me.

This is my first real battle with my new fighting style! Whoa...! Oh...um, am I playing on easy mode? Lana is a maniac, and this troll is just no match for me. It's slow and its movements are easy to predict. I felt all emotion drain from my expression. It's hard not to picture Lana grinning and holding up a peace sign right now.

It's a bit inconvenient that I can't use Break Parry to forcibly mess with the enemy's balance. I'll have to dodge the side-sweeping attacks by jumping up into the air...

Even without the poor balance, the troll just fell right over. I change my blade's attribute to Death, plunge it into the troll's weak point with Ecliksys, and defeat it with a serving of piercing and explosion damage.

Only the bottom half of the troll remains.

"Is this art just garbage for my build? It doesn't work alongside Dismantle at all."

Should I just be grateful that chunks of meat didn't go flying everywhere? As I recall, you can't absorb an enemy without sixty percent of them or more remaining. Well, I should be good. More than sixty percent of it must be here.

For now, I'll relocate. It's actually become hard to fight foes as slow as trolls

when I'm used to fighting Lana.

I've heard Mr. Alf is getting stronger...or rather, more skilled. I'm sure Lana used him as a punching bag. Since he's a tank, he just needs to take all the blows with his shield.

"Did anyone see anything while I was busy?" I ask my minions.

Unit Three, the owl, returns to me and stares off in one direction.

That's toward the town... If there's a world quest there, everyone should get the notification no matter where they are, but I didn't get one. So what could it be?

It's probably faster to see for myself. I use Vision Ship and send the owl back out.

He sits in a tree and looks toward a group of players approaching... I see. That's suspicious indeed. What are they being so sneaky for?

That reminds me. Wasn't a PKer watching me? I completely forgot after staying in the Nether for so long.

I'm done with my tasks here and could return to town on a wyvern, but I don't have anything in particular on me that I don't want to lose, and I'm sure these players will be more fun to handle than the troll.

Just to be safe, I'll activate Raum Escudo, the art from Space Magic that blocks distance attacks. It's faster to use than Parry, so this is a good safeguard.

Space Magic has reached level 25.

You have gained Return through Space Magic.

RETURN:

Head back to your respawn point or the nearest town. Cooldown time: 30 minutes.

Unable to be used in event maps.

I see. This sort of spell is typical in MMOs. How handy. I've heard that it's typical for it to have long cooldown times, so if anything, thirty minutes seems to be on the quicker end. I doubt it will bother me. If I survive this fight, I'll use Return to go back home.

From the owl's vision, I can make out a full party of three sorcerers, two archers, and one player using melee attacks. Both of the archers have longbows. The other probably has a dagger and no shield. Two of them carry long staves, while the other wields a short staff.

I see... If they're using longbows, they probably don't have Arrow Rain. I can leave them be. Critical hits and status ailments won't be a problem for me either, so I can also ignore the dagger user.

I change Unit One from a skeleton into a wolf and have them all hide in the distance until the fight starts. A sneak attack from two wolves and an owl above will definitely surprise those sorcerers. Plus the fact that the wolves are actually wolf zombies too, of course. I need them to be able to hit hard.

As for how to aim for the players' weaknesses, I had asked the prime minister during our language lessons how to deal with AoE spells. Now I'm confident that I'll be able to survive whatever comes.

I hide behind a tree and wait for the players to show up. Even if I don't have a direct line of sight, Space Recognition Expansion will allow me to determine where they are. Judging by their black souls, these are definitely PKers, or evil players at the very least. I don't need to hold back this time.

I activate my athame with Space affinity and raise my Spirit and Intelligence with Light Enchant and Dark Enchant. The Book of Eibon rests at my back. I can't have my chanting spotted in advance.

It's crucial to make sure they don't spot me first. Not only do I need to get the drop on them, but it also gives me more time to prepare.

"Oh, good day to you. Are you out hunting?"

"Wha?! Y-yeah, we're just hunting."

I'm not sure if they're just buying time or if they believe they can win, but it's polite of them to respond to me. It's also polite of them to wait for my servants to take their positions.

The melee fighter is chanting something. He tried to hide it, but he's dealing with an opponent who can see magical energy.

"Is that so? Since you appear to be second-wavers, please do be careful of the trolls."

"Thanks for the warning. I appreciate it, so let me warn you too. PKers have been getting real active lately."

"Oh, really? Well, I won't lose without putting up a good fight, but thank you anyway."

"You think so...? Then it'll be a good memory to take to your grave!"

The players chant in unison: "Lumen Explosion."

I thought as much. I'll use the spell I was chanting too.

"Dark Burst."

I resist the bombs of light from Lumen Explosion with my own Dark shock wave that emanates from my body. My one spell isn't enough to counteract all four of theirs, obviously. But my HP's only down a bit over twenty percent. I have my new upgraded equipment, and my magic defense was always quite high from the start. I also have my assisting spells now too. That 4× damage multiplier is just too much... But even equal damage spells from all four of them would usually only do this much damage to me, so if anything, it's less than I expected.

It's less than the players expected as well. "Wh-what?!" they cry out.

"Unfortunately, my magic defense is quite high... Unit One?"

The PKers scatter hastily, but that's when my servants surround the sorcerers and bite their legs to drag them down. They could probably do this against heavy armor, so it's even easier against sorcerers. I'd given my servants Clad in Death, which is dishing out status ailments left and right.

The owl ambushes the remaining sorcerer, smacking him in the back of his

head.

“Damn! She’s got flying servants!”

“Oh, I see you’re still able to take your eyes off the battle. We can’t be having that. Magi-Amp. Hexa Spell. Nox Missile.”

“Wha—?!”



Down goes one. Farewell, archer...it only took three hits to kill you. I'm pretty certain second-wavers won't have any anti-magic equipment to speak of. Few first-wavers even do, after all.

In the first place, no one should ever let their eyes wander from their opponent in a PvP battle. Especially with me being at such a higher level. I can easily kill them with a ranged attack if they let their guard down. That will teach them not to get in my way.

The dagger user charges at me, but he gets to experience my Waterflow Style. He has a lot of magic energy channeled right now. It feels like Light magic. At this range, he could hit me with a Shot or Lance spell. I think I'll chant a Shot myself.

"Light Lance!" the player shouts. "Wait...wh-what...?!"

I send it back with Mirror Style and my own Nox Shot to complete the package. The player appears to have died and gone to heaven, he's so happy.

I'll use Mirror Style to have some fun with one of the archers who looks bored.

"Huh...?!" he says.

"This is excellent practice. Feel free to fire more if you wish. It's hard to hit your opponent, isn't it?"

Walking while maintaining the stance is tricky. I wonder if the fully upgraded style would make it any easier.

"Shut your mouth and take this! Meteor Shoot!"

"You've made a grave mistake..."

"Charge Shot!"

I send back the two arrows coming at me, one from above me at an angle and the other flying straight toward me.

I could have been in real trouble if Ms. Mead had been the one with the bow. This sort of thing all comes down to player skill. Practice makes perfect, and nothing else.

“You won’t be a problem for me if you can’t synchronize attacks.”

“This can’t...be happening...”

Unfortunately for them, their Meteor Shot hit *my* intended target and not theirs. It’s lights out for that player. Their HP had already been in the red thanks to the occasional reflections I managed to land. I *was* aiming for the player, but it’s a difficult skill to execute.

Unit One herds the sorcerers into one spot for me, so I draw closer and blow them all away with a combination of Magi-Amp and Dark Burst. Dark sure is a great magic type. It’s very powerful indeed. I still can’t quite use Light spells, so these buffs to my Dark magic are a real blessing.

Your race level has increased.

Magic Catalyst has reached level 5.

You have acquired the art Magical Smite through Magic Catalyst.

MAGICAL SMITE:

Smack your opponent with your own attribute. Creates knockback.

I see... More delicious EXP for me.

This art must be for creating distance between yourself and the enemy. My attribute in this case would be Death. Human players wouldn’t have any attributes, would they? In other words, the spell would simply knock back their opponent with basic mana.

It looks like I received some reward money for killing the evil players. That was more fun than fighting the troll, and I even got some cash out of it. Not bad, all in all.

I head back to Belstead...and my Instinct triggers. Someone’s here.

“Oh, wait!”

“You don’t seem like an evil player.”

“I was chasing the PKers. Well done with them.”

“I see. So you’re a PKKer.”

“Damn. I didn’t expect them to be targeting you, Princess.”

“I spent so much time shut away in the Nether, I completely forgot that I’d been feeling eyes on me.”

“I see, I see. By the way, do you mind if I post about this online?”

The fairy floating behind him means he’s recording his game. I doubt it will cause me any trouble, so I’ll allow it. “Sure, go ahead.”

“Great. I’m gonna go get people talking about this.”

“I’ll be on my way then.”

“See ya.”

“Return.”

I arrive in Belstead, the nearest city.

Bonus Story:

Camping Event—The Banquet

IN THIS VIDEO GAME, we have a hunger meter, although we don't actually feel the pangs of hunger, which means this all-you-can-eat (in more ways than one) banquet is really nothing more than celebratory.

"I want some booze."

"Not possible."

Not only do we lack the ingredients for booze, but since this isn't a safe area, we'd run out of MP too quickly while trying to make it. Alcohol takes a lot of time. I could probably make fairy nectar mead if I wanted to, but I don't have much nectar in the first place. It's not suited for mass production.

"Just put some soy sauce on the clams and they're incredible!"

"By the way, does this game have poisonous shellfish?"

"...Dunno."

"Well...who cares?"

"Shellfish turn poisonous because of the plankton they eat, so if you get sick, then we're all getting sick!"

We have meat and veggies from the forest, fish and shellfish from the ocean, and even some extra fruit. We don't even have to worry about seasonings and spices, since they appeared as a special event item. What a wonderful position to find ourselves in.

"Anyone wanna sing karaoke with the orchestra?"

"Lmao, talk about fancy accompaniment."

"Singing with a live orchestra doing the backing track? That's insane."

The Music Unit really is an orchestra, after all...

I look around the area and see some players indulging in food, others dueling

for fun, and now a round of orchestra karaoke. It's total chaos.

What's going on over there?

"What's wrong, Sis?"

"Oh, I was just wondering what the deal with *that* was."

"He keeps the penguin costume on when he eats?"

"It's a very efficient penguin onesie."

This world is full of mysteries indeed...

Now that I think about it, I remember Ms. Fairellen saying she wanted to try eating sweets made with honey. They may not be sweets, but I can certainly cook up some pancakes.

"Do you have any fairy nectar, Ms. Fairellen?"

"Hm...? Just a little."

"It's not dessert, but I was thinking of making pancakes."

"Oh! Sounds great!"

"The seasoning set contains whipped cream too. Would you like some?"

"There were strawberries in the forest..."

"Ellen, take mine too."

"Oh? Then I'll harvest the nectar. Please gather some strawberries!"

"Very well."

Ms. Fairellen and Ms. Mead leave for the forest, so I do some prep in the meantime. Only fairies can harvest that nectar, so while Ms. Fairellen gathers enough for two, Ms. Mead will search for enough strawberries for two servings.

I see them on their way back now. I can start up the grill.

"We brought some for you too, Princess."

"With all of this, it should be plenty!"

I gratefully accept their bounty and decide to cook pancakes for myself as

well. I use the fairy nectar as a topping instead of the C-quality maple syrup I have. Then I set the strawberries on top, coat it in whipped cream, and it's all ready to eat.

"So good!"

"Since when did you get pancakes...?"

"Honestly, I just cook pancake mix a lot on a whim..."

"Same. I never know how to use the whipped cream."

"And it's a pain to prepare the strawberries."

"But at the same time, I don't crave pancakes so badly that I'll go all the way to a restaurant and spend over a thousand yen on them."

"I know what you mean. I just buy desserts at a convenience store to bring home!"

"It's so simple that way."

Well...I suppose I wouldn't go out for pancakes unless I was invited. Knowing my sister, she'd much prefer to stay at home and game than go out for pancakes.

"I want some too, Sis."

"We're out of strawberries."

"Just gimme a lot of whipped cream."

I'll cook enough for Rina's party too.

"I'll take extra syrup and no whipped cream."

"I want extra whipped cream, please!"

"Normal's fine."

"Same for me."

Ms. Noelia, the DPS, wants extra syrup, while Ms. Griselda, the tank, wants extra whipped cream. Ms. Nadia and Ms. Helen go with plain pancakes. I cover theirs with syrup, since I'm out of fairy nectar, and hand them out.

"Mmm... It's been so long since I had pancakes!" my sister says.

That's true. I never cook pancakes.

We finish eating and are chatting among ourselves when Eli and Abby show up.

"Let's sing karaoke, Tasha."

"You too, Rina!"

"It's orchestra karaoke. This opportunity doesn't come every day."

That much is certainly true. It's a very unique opportunity, so I may as well sing with them.

"You girls are gonna sing?"

"Can you do Western music?"

"We sure can!"

Eli and I pair off, as do Rina and Abby, for a round of duets.

Eli and I pick our song and consult with the performers. While they're checking the music, we both warm up our voices a bit, and soon, it's time to sing.

"Hang on. They're both really good singers."

"That's some impressive volume."

"Are they professionals?"

"Their English is perfect!"

Singing with an orchestra actually feels very grand. It's quite fun.

"Oh my. I unlocked the Song skill."

"So did I... Well, I'm sure I'll be fine without taking it."

"I wonder what modifiers it has?"

I haven't done much research into this skill. For now, we simply switch places with Rina and Abby.

"These two...are pretty good too?"

"They're *actually* good. But for some reason, it also feels cute."

“I get it. The last two were like real singers.”

“Yeah, that was a shock...”

As for Song... Hmm. It’s not bad to have, but I don’t feel obligated to take it.

“I don’t hate the look of it.”

“Me neither. But we can supplement our games with more realistic skills, so it doesn’t seem like we need to go out of our way to spend SP on it.”

“It’s not like we plan on having a street concert anytime soon.”

Street performers can earn money from residents during their concerts. Song also makes it easier to increase your vocal volume and other perks like that. People who train for such arts in real life probably don’t need this skill, unlike Ms. Nadia or the musical buffs group. Without it, they can’t use any arts.

“Okay, singing ‘Soran Bushi’ is hilarious.”

“Why did they choose that song?”

“That’s quite a change.”

“Now it really feels like karaoke!”

It feels more true to form when it’s a big mess. Everyone chooses whatever song they want, so there’s no uniformity at all.

“This is a Vocaloid song, right?” I ask Rina.

“It sure is. I think it’s one of Luka’s!”

Despite all the different people here, we all share a love of video games. Anime songs, video game music, and Vocaloid songs usually come with that territory. “Soran Bushi” and “Daichi Sanshou” fit in nicely as memes. It was amazing watching everyone gather as soon as “Daichi Sanshou” started to play. They said they remembered the song better than they thought.

“Sis! Let’s sing ‘Magnet’!”

“I don’t mind.”

“You’ll take Luka’s part, Sis.”

“Sure thing, sure thing.”

Do I even remember this song? It's been a while, but it'll probably come back to me once I hear it!

"Damn, they're good."

"This song takes me back..."

"Where can we stream the princess and her sister's song covers?"

"They're exclusive to concerts."

"Damn!"

Yes, I did end up remembering the song in the end. Thank goodness.

"Hey, you two. Can I upload that online?"

"Ah...may I have the recording? I'll upload it myself," I tell them.

"I want it too!"

"Sure thing. I filmed it from the front row!"

I think I'll download the video and post it on my own channel. I accept the file and ready it for an upload.

Oh, Mr. Mohawk is here too, as is the dog...Mr. Sad Puppy, I believe.

"Mohawk... Do you like punks?"

"Hee hee hee! Where'd that come from all of a sudden?"

"Nah, I just feel like you're really into RP all the time."

"My reason for going with a mohawk...was nothing in particular."

I've just heard the most breathtaking conversation. Is he serious?

"For real? So it's not your true character coming out?"

"I'm serious. I just wanted to be someone I'm not in real life."

"But why a punk with a mohawk of all things? Surely there were plenty of better options..."

"You've never met a guy like me in real life before, have you?"

"Thankfully, I haven't."

“If I really had to answer seriously...I guess I’d say the mohawk hair during character creation stood out to me.”

In other words, his goal was to roleplay, but he never picked what kind of character he wanted to be, so he just messed with the character creation screen until he landed on the mohawk and felt drawn to it.

“You seem like a very level-headed person when you ditch the RP, Mr. Mohawk.”

“Hyah hah hah! If it isn’t the princess. Ask what you want from me, but I’m never ditchin’ the dirty jokes!”

“Lmao, he gets praised and lashes out at her.”

“Roleplay isn’t simple. You either need to be quick witted to deploy a calculated approach or level-headed like Mr. Mohawk and just let loose.”

“Aren’t you roleplaying, Princess?” Mr. Sad Puppy asks me.

“Only when I feel like it,” I reply.

“Ah, so you get into character depending on the situation.”

“Exactly.”

There are actually very few true roleplayers in this game. Mr. Musasabi and his party of monster slayers are like me in the sense that they roleplay when it suits them. Mr. Mohawk is probably the only true roleplayer on my friends list. Mr. Steiner is a farmer, not a roleplayer, so he doesn’t count, since that’s just his playstyle.

“What about the young ladies and their maids?”

“They’re only dressing up to look a certain way, but they act exactly the same as they do in real life.”

“That still feels like something.”

“That’s just the way they are.”

They’re well-mannered young ladies in real life, after all. Mr. Mohawk is the opposite. There’re the players who want to be someone completely different than in real life, and the ones who base their character off their real-life selves.

It all comes down to personal preference and mood.

“You’re really nothing like your true self at all, Mr. Mohawk.”

“Hee hee hee!”

“LOL, he’s so crazy.”

“Crazy” is indeed the vibe he gives off as he starts to lick his knife.

“I hope you cut your tongue.”

“We may have a new Darwin Award winner on our hands.”

“Hyah ha ha ha! The thing they give to the people with the dumbest deaths?”

The Darwin Award is a sarcastic “honor” named after Charles Darwin, the evolutionary biologist. It’s given to those whose own foolish actions leave them without any children to leave behind in the world. By removing themselves from the gene pool, they contribute to the evolution of humanity...a most tongue-in-cheek award indeed.

“Hee hee hee! So there’re conditions for that thing?”

“For real?”

“Indeed. They have them all worked out.”

First, you can’t receive it if you have children before your death. After all, you’ve continued your lineage. You also can’t win if your goal in death was to receive a Darwin Award. Shocking amounts of idiocy have to be produced organically. The final rule is that it must be natural selection—in other words, you can’t kill yourself. Suicidal people can’t be candidates, as the point of the award is to bestow it upon people too stupid to realize the possibility of death from their own actions. Candidates must also not suffer from mental illness, and all deaths must be documented via means such as witness testimony or security cameras to provide proof.

“Those are the necessary requirements.”

“Lmao, so sarcastic.”

It’s all a form of black humor, or course. People really *do* die for these things, after all.

“Howdy, folks!”

“It’s the plants!”

Ms. Clementia arrives, riding her entirely unrecognizable plant.

“Good day. Have you gotten the hang of controlling your friend there yet?”

“Just a little. I’m sure those tentacles are gonna be handy once I get them down.”

“I’m a zombie, so I have to be careful around tentacles...”

“I really want to get good at using this thing.”

“Please work your hardest, then.”

As we listen to the orchestra karaoke and dine on our meals, we wolf, zombie, and plant players enjoy some inhuman chitchat.

Tomo and Sugu wander our way and join the conversation too. After a while, it’s finally time for the party to end.

“Ha ha ha! Time for me to head on home!”

It was truly an entertaining event in the end. Not that I’ve forgotten that storm on the fourth day.

Bonus Story:

The Prime Minister's Depressing Life

O STELLURA, what are we to do? If we're to bring about his destruction, I'm prepared to kill him, right here and now.

But I do understand. He's already lost those powers of his that expand from the throne. This means you've lost all hope for him. I simply cannot stop praying to you. We must receive a replacement, and fast.

I am not capable of being king and exist only as an aide to the ruler. It suits me better that way, but most importantly, it's what was asked of me. I'll carry out whatever you want of me to the best of my abilities...but I still have my own thoughts. Why must I work for such an imbecile?! Even as an employee, I have my pride! I would never serve this foolish king were it not for my master's orders...!

Organizations require leaders at the top, both in life and in death. The king commands them all. The further up the chain you go, the more responsibilities befall you, and the less people are able to understand you. With the title of king comes a queen, his one and only wife, permitted to make comments and stand as his final stronghold. No one else may stand at his side. We are merely associates. Subordinates. How fortunate it would be for the king to be granted friends.

I came here well over a thousand years ago. I watched over many people, interacted with them, and sent them on their way. I know very well that leading others is not an easy role. But on occasion, there are those with a natural charm. They could be described as charismatic. How wonderful it would be if such souls were born to the royal family with each generation. However, they are uncommon types of people. Extremely rare, even, and we are not so lucky.

I never had any intention of telling the king to be more charismatic from the very start. Most royals surely gain such skills later in their reigns. Close aides especially know the hardships of their kings—their masters. They know that,

ever since they were young princes, they've been working themselves so hard that they cough up blood. We, too, have worked hard to support our masters. We're comrades in arms, witnessing each other's pain and effort as we struggle along the same path.

The final stronghold of the royal family are the imperial guards. The queen may be the king's mental fortress as his wife, but the imperial guards are the physical barriers around him. Before the king takes the throne, his knights and captains will have watched him as he put in great efforts as a prince during childhood. For the knights who aimed to become the next imperial guards, that would be what they witnessed from him. Some even chose their path *because* of what they saw in him. They believed he would make their place of birth, their motherland, a better place. That was why they were willing to put their lives on the line to protect the royal family and exterminate its enemies.

I'm sure the powers sought by the prince, his aides, and his knights are all different. But all of them put in the hard work to achieve those powers. To them, that is their pride.

But compare all that to our little brat. That incredible idiot... He may have your approval, Stellura, but I hope he falls from that throne any day now!

"Oh, Prime Minister. Praying again?"

"I want our new ruler as soon as possible."

"You're very earnest."

"Honestly, it's about time that Granin makes a move."

"Ah... Well, it's not just the general commander..."

"The same goes for you."

We undead who reside in the Underworld are all devoted to Stellura. If we weren't, we would be spirit bodies or spirits of the dead. We would never have become undead were it not for Stellura's will. It's unthinkable that the little brat has the nerve that he does.

"It's supposed to take a long time... But I do wonder if the throne is truly so desirable to him."

“I don’t know what goes on in the heads of simpleminded men.”

“The territory won’t change unless the crystal lotuses bloom. There’s no point in thinking about it now.”

“Does that fool even know that? Or maybe he wishes he *didn’t* know.”

“As a devotee of Stellura, I don’t wish to end up like him, forgetting who my master is...”

“To us, it will always be Stellura.”

It’s a bit late to be thinking about this, considering the sad state we’ve fallen to. We’ve already been abandoned by our master.

A valuation is something given by others, while rewards come from the master. Adventurers are evaluated based on their work performance for their clients, then given rewards from the adventurers’ union and granted an adventurer’s rank. Knights are evaluated by their colleagues, superior officers, and sometimes by the civilians. The king then grants them rewards in the form of peerages, promotions, and prestige. Servants are evaluated by the sons, daughters, and wives of the master of the household, while said master rewards them with extra compensation or vacations. The exact hierarchy and rewards granted change, but they’re the same system.

“I wonder what the point of it all was in the end.”

“I don’t know...”

Our role is similar to that of knights. *“You work for your master, and your master alone.”*

But the little brat has forgotten the role bestowed to him by his master, and once abandoned by her, who is left to evaluate him? I know he swore an oath to her. But with that oath broken, there’s no other recourse. The goddess is particularly harsh on us in this regard. Our master is not a source of infinite love.

The Underworld may have a ruler in the form of a king, but he is not our master. He is merely a ruler. Only the master of the undead, Stellura, can grant rewards to any of us...including the rulers.

“Valuations and rewards aren’t the same at all. Only our master can grant him with rewards.”

“I’m sure the fool thinks of himself as the ruler now.”

“Well, I hope he’s learned the truth.”

“It’s too late to go back. That must be why he clings to his symbolic throne so desperately.”

But all we need to do is leave him be. This situation is much more desirable than having to deal with a fool who can also get things done. It’s better on our overall mood that he isn’t actively creating new problems.

A replacement will arrive at the threshold soon. May you guide them with skill and grace.

What...?

“Prime Minister...!”

“You heard that too...? I see.”

“Who shall we tell?”

“I’ll tell Granin and Eleanora. You can tell the arbitrators, then go wait at the threshold.”

“I’m to greet them?”

“If Granin leaves, even that fool will know something’s amiss.”

“I don’t know what to say... Even he might notice the general commander going missing. She sticks out quite a bit.”

“Bring the replacement to the courtroom, training grounds, royal villa, and then to me. They shouldn’t pray to Stellura’s statue until after they’ve sat in the throne, got it? I’ll leave it in your hands, Vice-Captain.”

“Understood.”

The king won’t notice if Martinez is gone. Granin is too intense to do the

same. Martinez has lots of personnel under him, so once I tell Granin, she should be able to find someone to fill his role for the time being.

What kind of person will our next ruler be? If I'm to guide them with skill and grace, they will have to be a newcomer. Ah, how I truly, truly look forward to it. I won't ask much of them for now. They simply must not forget their role and their devotion to our master. They needn't be a talented genius. I simply wish for them to be a hard worker. We have plenty of time, after all. So long as they constantly aim to be an ideal ruler, we will always be there to help them in turn and become their ideal subordinates.

Afterword

GOOD DAY! My name is Akisuzu Nenohi.

This was Volume 5 of the series. It covers the end of the camping event, which didn't wrap up in Volume 4, and the heroine's evolution. This book contains a lot of alterations...or rather, additions from the original web version. I think I added the most new content to this book out of all of them so far.

By the way, did you see that cover?! Well, I guess it's next to impossible to buy a book without looking at the cover. But it's an updated design for Anastasia's equipment that was never revealed in the web version. Her equipment was supposed to start out as the "faded" set and only gain colors after the upgrade, but the first volume already showed them in color. Well, it's probably not good to use faded colors on the cover of a book. Yes, that's right. With that in mind, I changed the design in the novel version. It's lovely. So, so lovely.

All right. For those of you who read the afterword first, this next part contains a lot of spoilers.

We finally arrive at the areas controlled by the undead—the Nether and the Abyss. To describe them in a simple way, they're like the afterlife. Feel free to think of the Nether as Heaven and the Abyss as Hell.

The Underworld is where undead reside. The Underworld is a way to refer to both the Nether and Abyss together. The outer ones reside in the Medium. The Underworld and Medium are referred to as the Realms of the Dead, which fall under the domain of Stellura. Undead and Outsiders in these areas all worship Stellura and could be referred to as devotees. We'll probably dive into them more in the future.

The elder undead refer to the heroine as "madame" once she takes the throne. This comes up in the book, but it's not a normal way to refer to royalty.

I looked it up and found that it used to be used for royalty and rulers in the past. I chose this word from the comments I received on the web version of the story. Someone provided a lot of options for me, so I went with one from that list. “Your Majesty” would be the normal manner of address, but it’s long in Japanese. That’s the biggest problem. It’s important to consider your character count in a novel. They use this manner of address at the start of all their lines to her. Do you know what that means? It increases the likelihood that their Japanese dialogue doesn’t fit on a single line. It’s important to consider that sort of thing.

There are also new additions to the story. In the web version, the heroine takes the throne without any trouble. At the time, even though this was clearly a major event, I didn’t want to bother thinking up the scenes, so I worked on the other parts of the book instead. Indeed, that prince (lol) doesn’t exist in the web version. He’s a new character—the kind that seems like a threat but is powerless. That powerlessness means we won’t see him again in the future. He just appears to get a laugh, poor guy. Despite this, he has an illustration... What’s going on with that?

The truth is that this chapter—the judgment of the NPCs on Anastasia—is an initial determination for affinity stats, as well as a sequence that will affect affinity fluctuations for some time after that. First impressions are very important... That was the theme. The undead can’t have Enma, the top figure in their world, being too merciful. Leniency to wrongdoing will only cause more trouble in Anastasia’s position, as it results in no punishment.

As for some extremely important information... To put it bluntly, all of this is meant for roleplayers, so if you’re not a roleplayer, there’s no need to worry about it, honestly. You can walk away with only the gift of an expensive house for free and nothing more.

There are two bonus chapters this time due to an excess of pages. One dives into the after-event banquet, and the other one surprisingly stars the prime

minister. Additionally...there's one more thing I need to tell you about.

Only after I finished writing the chapter from the prime minister's point of view did I realize that since this is a game, the prime minister would be an AI. I realized it was more like a backstory for him than a way to see his perspective. This made me decide not to go with Eleanora's story, "The Maid's Work," or anything with Svetlana. How sad. None of them are controlled by real people.

To conclude, things like the prime minister's story may be a rarity.

I'll end the afterword here.

Did you enjoy reading Volume 5? I hope to see you again in Volume Six!

October, 2020



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